CHAPTER XLVII - Jo's Will

As Allan Woodcourt and Jo proceed along the streets where the high church spires and the distances are so near and clear in the morning light that the city itself seems renewed by rest, Allan revolves in his mind how and where he shall bestow his companion. 'It surely is a strange fact,' he considers, 'that in the heart of a civilized world this creature in human form should be more difficult to dispose of than an unowned dog.' But it is none the less a fact because of its strangeness, and the difficulty remains.

At first he looks behind him often to assure himself that Jo is still really following. But look where he will, he still beholds him close to the opposite houses, making his way with his wary hand from brick to brick and from door to door, and often, as he creeps along, glancing over at him watchfully. Soon satisfied that the last thing in his thoughts is to give him the slip, Allan goes on, considering with a less divided attention what he shall do.

A breakfast-stall at a street-corner suggests the first thing to be done. He stops there, looks round, and beckons Jo. Jo crosses and comes halting and shuffling up, slowly scooping the knuckles of his right hand round and round in the hollowed palm of his left, kneading dirt with a natural pestle and mortar. What is a dainty repast to Jo is then set before him, and he begins to gulp the coffee and to gnaw the bread and butter, looking anxiously about him in all directions as he eats and drinks, like a scared animal.

But he is so sick and miserable that even hunger has abandoned him. 'I thought I was amost a-starvin, sir,' says Jo, soon putting down his food, 'but I don't know nothink--not even that. I don't care for eating wittles nor yet for drinking on 'em.' And Jo stands shivering and looking at the breakfast wonderingly.

Allan Woodcourt lays his hand upon his pulse and on his chest. 'Draw breath, Jo!' 'It draws,' says Jo, 'as heavy as a cart.' He might add, 'And rattles like it,' but he only mutters, 'I'm a- moving on, sir.'

Allan looks about for an apothecary's shop. There is none at hand, but a tavern does as well or better. He obtains a little measure of wine and gives the lad a portion of it very carefully. He begins to revive almost as soon as it passes his lips. 'We may repeat that dose, Jo,' observes Allan after watching him with his attentive face. 'So! Now we will take five minutes' rest, and then go on again.'

Leaving the boy sitting on the bench of the breakfast-stall, with his back against an iron railing, Allan Woodcourt paces up and down in the early sunshine, casting an occasional look towards him without

appearing to watch him. It requires no discernment to perceive that he is warmed and refreshed. If a face so shaded can brighten, his face brightens somewhat; and by little and little he eats the slice of bread he had so hopelessly laid down. Observant of these signs of improvement, Allan engages him in conversation and elicits to his no small wonder the adventure of the lady in the veil, with all its consequences. Jo slowly munches as he slowly tells it. When he has finished his story and his bread, they go on again.

Intending to refer his difficulty in finding a temporary place of refuge for the boy to his old patient, zealous little Miss Flite, Allan leads the way to the court where he and Jo first foregathered. But all is changed at the rag and bottle shop; Miss Flite no longer lodges there; it is shut up; and a hard-featured female, much obscured by dust, whose age is a problem, but who is indeed no other than the interesting Judy, is tart and spare in her replies. These sufficing, however, to inform the visitor that Miss Flite and her birds are domiciled with a Mrs Blinder, in Bell Yard, he repairs to that neighbouring place, where Miss Flite (who rises early that she may be punctual at the divan of justice held by her excellent friend the Chancellor) comes running downstairs with tears of welcome and with open arms.

'My dear physician!' cries Miss Flite. 'My meritorious, distinguished, honourable officer!' She uses some odd expressions, but is as cordial and full of heart as sanity itself can be--more so than it often is. Allan, very patient with her, waits until she has no more raptures to express, then points out Jo, trembling in a doorway, and tells her how he comes there.

'Where can I lodge him hereabouts for the present? Now, you have a fund of knowledge and good sense and can advise me.'

Miss Flite, mighty proud of the compliment, sets herself to consider; but it is long before a bright thought occurs to her. Mrs Blinder is entirely let, and she herself occupies poor Gridley's room. 'Gridley!' exclaims Miss Flite, clapping her hands after a twentieth repetition of this remark. 'Gridley! To be sure! Of course! My dear physician! General George will help us out.'

It is hopeless to ask for any information about General George, and would be, though Miss Flite had not already run upstairs to put on her pinched bonnet and her poor little shawl and to arm herself with her reticule of documents. But as she informs her physician in her disjointed manner on coming down in full array that General George, whom she often calls upon, knows her dear Fitz Jarndyce and takes a great interest in all connected with her, Allan is induced to think that they may be in the right way. So he tells Jo, for his encouragement,

that this walking about will soon be over now; and they repair to the general's. Fortunately it is not far.

From the exterior of George's Shooting Gallery, and the long entry, and the bare perspective beyond it, Allan Woodcourt augurs well. He also descries promise in the figure of Mr George himself, striding towards them in his morning exercise with his pipe in his mouth, no stock on, and his muscular arms, developed by broadsword and dumbbell, weightily asserting themselves through his light shirt-sleeves.

'Your servant, sir,' says Mr George with a military salute. Good-humouredly smiling all over his broad forehead up into his crisp hair, he then defers to Miss Flite, as, with great stateliness, and at some length, she performs the courtly ceremony of presentation. He winds it up with another 'Your servant, sir!' and another salute.

'Excuse me, sir. A sailor, I believe?' says Mr George.

'I am proud to find I have the air of one,' returns Allan; 'but I am only a sea-going doctor.'

'Indeed, sir! I should have thought you was a regular blue-jacket myself.'

Allan hopes Mr George will forgive his intrusion the more readily on that account, and particularly that he will not lay aside his pipe, which, in his politeness, he has testified some intention of doing. 'You are very good, sir,' returns the trooper. 'As I know by experience that it's not disagreeable to Miss Flite, and since it's equally agreeable to yourself--' and finishes the sentence by putting it between his lips again. Allan proceeds to tell him all he knows about Jo, unto which the trooper listens with a grave face.

'And that's the lad, sir, is it?' he inquires, looking along the entry to where Jo stands staring up at the great letters on the whitewashed front, which have no meaning in his eyes.

'That's he,' says Allan. 'And, Mr George, I am in this difficulty about him. I am unwilling to place him in a hospital, even if I could procure him immediate admission, because I foresee that he would not stay there many hours if he could be so much as got there. The same objection applies to a workhouse, supposing I had the patience to be evaded and shirked, and handed about from post to pillar in trying to get him into one, which is a system that I don't take kindly to.'

'No man does, sir,' returns Mr George.

'I am convinced that he would not remain in either place, because he is possessed by an extraordinary terror of this person who ordered him to keep out of the way; in his ignorance, he believes this person to be everywhere, and cognizant of everything.'

'I ask your pardon, sir,' says Mr George. 'But you have not mentioned that party's name. Is it a secret, sir?'

'The boy makes it one. But his name is Bucket.'

'Bucket the detective, sir?'

'The same man.'

'The man is known to me, sir,' returns the trooper after blowing out a cloud of smoke and squaring his chest, 'and the boy is so far correct that he undoubtedly is a--rum customer.' Mr George smokes with a profound meaning after this and surveys Miss Flite in silence.

'Now, I wish Mr Jarndyce and Miss Summerson at least to know that this Jo, who tells so strange a story, has reappeared, and to have it in their power to speak with him if they should desire to do so. Therefore I want to get him, for the present moment, into any poor lodging kept by decent people where he would be admitted. Decent people and Jo, Mr George,' says Allan, following the direction of the trooper's eyes along the entry, 'have not been much acquainted, as you see. Hence the difficulty. Do you happen to know any one in this neighbourhood who would receive him for a while on my paying for him beforehand?'

As he puts the question, he becomes aware of a dirty-faced little man standing at the trooper's elbow and looking up, with an oddly twisted figure and countenance, into the trooper's face. After a few more puffs at his pipe, the trooper looks down askant at the little man, and the little man winks up at the trooper.

'Well, sir,' says Mr George, 'I can assure you that I would willingly be knocked on the head at any time if it would be at all agreeable to Miss Summerson, and consequently I esteem it a privilege to do that young lady any service, however small. We are naturally in the vagabond way here, sir, both myself and Phil. You see what the place is. You are welcome to a quiet corner of it for the boy if the same would meet your views. No charge made, except for rations. We are not in a flourishing state of circumstances here, sir. We are liable to be tumbled out neck and crop at a moment's notice. However, sir, such as the place is, and so long as it lasts, here it is at your service.'

With a comprehensive wave of his pipe, Mr George places the whole building at his visitor's disposal.

'I take it for granted, sir,' he adds, 'you being one of the medical staff, that there is no present infection about this unfortunate subject?'

Allan is quite sure of it.

'Because, sir,' says Mr George, shaking his head sorrowfully, 'we have had enough of that.'

His tone is no less sorrowfully echoed by his new acquaintance. 'Still I am bound to tell you,' observes Allan after repeating his former assurance, 'that the boy is deplorably low and reduced and that he may be--I do not say that he is--too far gone to recover.'

'Do you consider him in present danger, sir?' inquires the trooper.

'Yes, I fear so.'

'Then, sir,' returns the trooper in a decisive manner, 'it appears to me--being naturally in the vagabond way myself--that the sooner he comes out of the street, the better. You, Phil! Bring him in!'

Mr Squod tacks out, all on one side, to execute the word of command; and the trooper, having smoked his pipe, lays it by. Jo is brought in. He is not one of Mrs Pardiggle's Tockahoopo Indians; he is not one of Mrs Jellyby's lambs, being wholly unconnected with Borrioboola-Gha; he is not softened by distance and unfamiliarity; he is not a genuine foreign-grown savage; he is the ordinary home-made article. Dirty, ugly, disagreeable to all the senses, in body a common creature of the common streets, only in soul a heathen. Homely filth begrimes him, homely parasites devour him, homely sores are in him, homely rags are on him; native ignorance, the growth of English soil and climate, sinks his immortal nature lower than the beasts that perish. Stand forth, Jo, in uncompromising colours! From the sole of thy foot to the crown of thy head, there is nothing interesting about thee.

He shuffles slowly into Mr George's gallery and stands huddled together in a bundle, looking all about the floor. He seems to know that they have an inclination to shrink from him, partly for what he is and partly for what he has caused. He, too, shrinks from them. He is not of the same order of things, not of the same place in creation. He is of no order and no place, neither of the beasts nor of humanity.

'Look here, Jo!' says Allan. 'This is Mr George.'

Jo searches the floor for some time longer, then looks up for a moment, and then down again.

‘He is a kind friend to you, for he is going to give you lodging room here.’

Jo makes a scoop with one hand, which is supposed to be a bow. After a little more consideration and some backing and changing of the foot on which he rests, he mutters that he is ‘wery thankful.’

‘You are quite safe here. All you have to do at present is to be obedient and to get strong. And mind you tell us the truth here, whatever you do, Jo.’

‘Wishermaydie if I don't, sir,’ says Jo, reverting to his favourite declaration. ‘I never done nothink yit, but wot you knows on, to get myself into no trouble. I never was in no other trouble at all, sir, 'sept not knowin' nothink and starwation.’

‘I believe it, now attend to Mr George. I see he is going to speak to you.’

‘My intention merely was, sir,’ observes Mr George, amazingly broad and upright, ‘to point out to him where he can lie down and get a thorough good dose of sleep. Now, look here.’ As the trooper speaks, he conducts them to the other end of the gallery and opens one of the little cabins. ‘There you are, you see! Here is a mattress, and here you may rest, on good behaviour, as long as Mr, I ask your pardon, sir’--he refers apologetically to the card Allan has given him--’Mr Woodcourt pleases. Don't you be alarmed if you hear shots; they'll be aimed at the target, and not you. Now, there's another thing I would recommend, sir,’ says the trooper, turning to his visitor. ‘Phil, come here!’

Phil bears down upon them according to his usual tactics. ‘Here is a man, sir, who was found, when a baby, in the gutter. Consequently, it is to be expected that he takes a natural interest in this poor creature. You do, don't you, Phil?’

‘Certainly and surely I do, guv'ner,’ is Phil's reply.

‘Now I was thinking, sir,’ says Mr George in a martial sort of confidence, as if he were giving his opinion in a council of war at a drum-head, ‘that if this man was to take him to a bath and was to lay out a few shillings in getting him one or two coarse articles--’

‘Mr George, my considerate friend,’ returns Allan, taking out his purse, ‘it is the very favour I would have asked.’

Phil Squod and Jo are sent out immediately on this work of improvement. Miss Flite, quite enraptured by her success, makes the

best of her way to court, having great fears that otherwise her friend the Chancellor may be uneasy about her or may give the judgment she has so long expected in her absence, and observing 'which you know, my dear physician, and general, after so many years, would be too absurdly unfortunate!' Allan takes the opportunity of going out to procure some restorative medicines, and obtaining them near at hand, soon returns to find the trooper walking up and down the gallery, and to fall into step and walk with him.

'I take it, sir,' says Mr George, 'that you know Miss Summerson pretty well?'

Yes, it appears.

'Not related to her, sir?'

No, it appears.

'Excuse the apparent curiosity,' says Mr George. 'It seemed to me probable that you might take more than a common interest in this poor creature because Miss Summerson had taken that unfortunate interest in him. 'Tis MY case, sir, I assure you.'

'And mine, Mr George.'

The trooper looks sideways at Allan's sunburnt cheek and bright dark eye, rapidly measures his height and build, and seems to approve of him.

'Since you have been out, sir, I have been thinking that I unquestionably know the rooms in Lincoln's Inn Fields, where Bucket took the lad, according to his account. Though he is not acquainted with the name, I can help you to it. It's Tulkinghorn. That's what it is.'

Allan looks at him inquiringly, repeating the name.

'Tulkinghorn. That's the name, sir. I know the man, and know him to have been in communication with Bucket before, respecting a deceased person who had given him offence. I know the man, sir. To my sorrow.'

Allan naturally asks what kind of man he is.

'What kind of man! Do you mean to look at?' 'I think I know that much of him. I mean to deal with. Generally, what kind of man?'

'Why, then I'll tell you, sir,' returns the trooper, stopping short and folding his arms on his square chest so angrily that his face fires and

flushes all over; 'he is a confoundedly bad kind of man. He is a slow-torturing kind of man. He is no more like flesh and blood than a rusty old carbine is. He is a kind of man--by George!--that has caused me more restlessness, and more uneasiness, and more dissatisfaction with myself than all other men put together. That's the kind of man Mr Tulkinghorn is!'

'I am sorry,' says Allan, 'to have touched so sore a place.'

'Sore?' The trooper plants his legs wider apart, wets the palm of his broad right hand, and lays it on the imaginary moustache. 'It's no fault of yours, sir; but you shall judge. He has got a power over me. He is the man I spoke of just now as being able to tumble me out of this place neck and crop. He keeps me on a constant see-saw. He won't hold off, and he won't come on. If I have a payment to make him, or time to ask him for, or anything to go to him about, he don't see me, don't hear me--passes me on to Melchisedech's in Clifford's Inn, Melchisedech's in Clifford's Inn passes me back again to him--he keeps me prowling and dangling about him as if I was made of the same stone as himself. Why, I spend half my life now, pretty well, loitering and dodging about his door. What does he care? Nothing. Just as much as the rusty old carbine I have compared him to. He chafes and goads me till-- Bah! Nonsense! I am forgetting myself. Mr Woodcourt,' the trooper resumes his march, 'all I say is, he is an old man; but I am glad I shall never have the chance of setting spurs to my horse and riding at him in a fair field. For if I had that chance, in one of the humours he drives me into--he'd go down, sir!'

Mr George has been so excited that he finds it necessary to wipe his forehead on his shirt-sleeve. Even while he whistles his impetuosity away with the national anthem, some involuntary shakings of his head and heavings of his chest still linger behind, not to mention an occasional hasty adjustment with both hands of his open shirt-collar, as if it were scarcely open enough to prevent his being troubled by a choking sensation. In short, Allan Woodcourt has not much doubt about the going down of Mr Tulkinghorn on the field referred to.

Jo and his conductor presently return, and Jo is assisted to his mattress by the careful Phil, to whom, after due administration of medicine by his own hands, Allan confides all needful means and instructions. The morning is by this time getting on apace. He repairs to his lodgings to dress and breakfast, and then, without seeking rest, goes away to Mr Jarndyce to communicate his discovery.

With him Mr Jarndyce returns alone, confidentially telling him that there are reasons for keeping this matter very quiet indeed and showing a serious interest in it. To Mr Jarndyce, Jo repeats in substance what he said in the morning, without any material

variation. Only that cart of his is heavier to draw, and draws with a hollower sound.

'Let me lay here quiet and not be chivied no more,' falters Jo, 'and be so kind any person as is a-passin nigh where I used fur to sleep, as jist to say to Mr Sangsby that Jo, wot he known once, is a-moving on right forards with his duty, and I'll be wery thankful. I'd be more thankful than I am aready if it wos any ways possible for an unfortnet to be it.'

He makes so many of these references to the law-stationer in the course of a day or two that Allan, after conferring with Mr Jarndyce, good-naturedly resolves to call in Cook's Court, the rather, as the cart seems to be breaking down.

To Cook's Court, therefore, he repairs. Mr Snagsby is behind his counter in his grey coat and sleeves, inspecting an indenture of several skins which has just come in from the engrosser's, an immense desert of law-hand and parchment, with here and there a resting-place of a few large letters to break the awful monotony and save the traveller from despair. Mr Snagsby puts up at one of these inky wells and greets the stranger with his cough of general preparation for business.

'You don't remember me, Mr Snagsby?'

The stationer's heart begins to thump heavily, for his old apprehensions have never abated. It is as much as he can do to answer, 'No, sir, I can't say I do. I should have considered--not to put too fine a point upon it--that I never saw you before, sir.'

'Twice before,' says Allan Woodcourt. 'Once at a poor bedside, and once--'

'It's come at last!' thinks the afflicted stationer, as recollection breaks upon him. 'It's got to a head now and is going to burst!' But he has sufficient presence of mind to conduct his visitor into the little counting-house and to shut the door.

'Are you a married man, sir?'

'No, I am not.'

'Would you make the attempt, though single,' says Mr Snagsby in a melancholy whisper, 'to speak as low as you can? For my little woman is a-listening somewheres, or I'll forfeit the business and five hundred pound!'

In deep dejection Mr Snagsby sits down on his stool, with his back against his desk, protesting, 'I never had a secret of my own, sir. I can't charge my memory with ever having once attempted to deceive my little woman on my own account since she named the day. I wouldn't have done it, sir. Not to put too fine a point upon it, I couldn't have done it, I dursn't have done it. Whereas, and nevertheless, I find myself wrapped round with secrecy and mystery, till my life is a burden to me.'

His visitor professes his regret to hear it and asks him does he remember Jo. Mr Snagsby answers with a suppressed groan, oh, don't he!

'You couldn't name an individual human being--except myself--that my little woman is more set and determined against than Jo,' says Mr Snagsby.

Allan asks why.

'Why?' repeats Mr Snagsby, in his desperation clutching at the clump of hair at the back of his bald head. 'How should I know why? But you are a single person, sir, and may you long be spared to ask a married person such a question!'

With this beneficent wish, Mr Snagsby coughs a cough of dismal resignation and submits himself to hear what the visitor has to communicate.

'There again!' says Mr Snagsby, who, between the earnestness of his feelings and the suppressed tones of his voice is discoloured in the face. 'At it again, in a new direction! A certain person charges me, in the solemnest way, not to talk of Jo to any one, even my little woman. Then comes another certain person, in the person of yourself, and charges me, in an equally solemn way, not to mention Jo to that other certain person above all other persons. Why, this is a private asylum! Why, not to put too fine a point upon it, this is Bedlam, sir!' says Mr Snagsby.

But it is better than he expected after all, being no explosion of the mine below him or deepening of the pit into which he has fallen. And being tender-hearted and affected by the account he hears of Jo's condition, he readily engages to 'look round' as early in the evening as he can manage it quietly. He looks round very quietly when the evening comes, but it may turn out that Mrs Snagsby is as quiet a manager as he.

Jo is very glad to see his old friend and says, when they are left alone, that he takes it uncommon kind as Mr Sangsby should come so far

out of his way on accounts of sich as him. Mr Snagsby, touched by the spectacle before him, immediately lays upon the table half a crown, that magic balsam of his for all kinds of wounds.

'And how do you find yourself, my poor lad?' inquires the stationer with his cough of sympathy.

'I am in luck, Mr Sangsby, I am,' returns Jo, 'and don't want for nothink. I'm more cumfbler nor you can't think. Mr Sangsby! I'm wery sorry that I done it, but I didn't go fur to do it, sir.'

The stationer softly lays down another half-crown and asks him what it is that he is sorry for having done.

'Mr Sangsby,' says Jo, 'I went and giv a illness to the lady as wos and yit as warn't the t'other lady, and none of 'em never says nothink to me for having done it, on accounts of their being ser good and my having been s'unfortnet. The lady come herself and see me yesday, and she ses, 'Ah, Jo!' she ses. 'We thought we'd lost you, Jo!' she ses. And she sits down a-smilin so quiet, and don't pass a word nor yit a look upon me for having done it, she don't, and I turns agin the wall, I doos, Mr Sangsby. And Mr Jarnders, I see him a-forced to turn away his own self. And Mr Woodcot, he come fur to giv me somethink fur to ease me, wot he's allus a-doin' on day and night, and wen he come a-bending over me and a-speakin up so bold, I see his tears a-fallin, Mr Sangsby.'

The softened stationer deposits another half-crown on the table. Nothing less than a repetition of that infallible remedy will relieve his feelings.

'Wot I was a-thinkin on, Mr Sangsby,' proceeds Jo, 'wos, as you wos able to write wery large, p'raps?'

'Yes, Jo, please God,' returns the stationer.

'Uncommon precious large, p'raps?' says Jo with eagerness.

'Yes, my poor boy.'

Jo laughs with pleasure. 'Wot I wos a-thinking on then, Mr Sangsby, wos, that when I wos moved on as fur as ever I could go and couldn't be moved no furder, whether you might be so good p'raps as to write out, wery large so that any one could see it anywheres, as that I wos wery truly hearty sorry that I done it and that I never went fur to do it, and that though I didn't know nothink at all, I knowd as Mr Woodcot once cried over it and wos allus grieved over it, and that I hoped as

he'd be able to forgive me in his mind. If the writin could be made to say it wery large, he might.'

'It shall say it, Jo. Very large.'

Jo laughs again. 'Thankee, Mr Sangsby. It's wery kind of you, sir, and it makes me more cumfbler nor I was afore.'

The meek little stationer, with a broken and unfinished cough, slips down his fourth half-crown--he has never been so close to a case requiring so many--and is fain to depart. And Jo and he, upon this little earth, shall meet no more. No more.

For the cart so hard to draw is near its journey's end and drags over stony ground. All round the clock it labours up the broken steps, shattered and worn. Not many times can the sun rise and behold it still upon its weary road.

Phil Squod, with his smoky gunpowder visage, at once acts as nurse and works as armourer at his little table in a corner, often looking round and saying with a nod of his green-baize cap and an encouraging elevation of his one eyebrow, 'Hold up, my boy! Hold up!' There, too, is Mr Jarndyce many a time, and Allan Woodcourt almost always, both thinking, much, how strangely fate has entangled this rough outcast in the web of very different lives. There, too, the trooper is a frequent visitor, filling the doorway with his athletic figure and, from his superfluity of life and strength, seeming to shed down temporary vigour upon Jo, who never fails to speak more robustly in answer to his cheerful words.

Jo is in a sleep or in a stupor to-day, and Allan Woodcourt, newly arrived, stands by him, looking down upon his wasted form. After a while he softly seats himself upon the bedside with his face towards him--just as he sat in the law-writer's room--and touches his chest and heart. The cart had very nearly given up, but labours on a little more.

The trooper stands in the doorway, still and silent. Phil has stopped in a low clinking noise, with his little hammer in his hand. Mr Woodcourt looks round with that grave professional interest and attention on his face, and glancing significantly at the trooper, signs to Phil to carry his table out. When the little hammer is next used, there will be a speck of rust upon it.

'Well, Jo! What is the matter? Don't be frightened.'

‘I thought,’ says Jo, who has started and is looking round, ‘I thought I was in Tom-all-Alone's agin. Ain't there nobody here but you, Mr Woodcot?’

‘Nobody.’

‘And I ain't took back to Tom-all-Alone's. Am I, sir?’

‘No.’ Jo closes his eyes, muttering, ‘I'm wery thankful.’

After watching him closely a little while, Allan puts his mouth very near his ear and says to him in a low, distinct voice, ‘Jo! Did you ever know a prayer?’

‘Never knowd nothink, sir.’

‘Not so much as one short prayer?’

‘No, sir. Nothink at all. Mr Chadbands he wos a-prayin wunst at Mr Sangsby's and I heerd him, but he sounded as if he wos a- speakin to hisself, and not to me. He prayed a lot, but I couldn't make out nothink on it. Different times there was other genlmen come down Tom-all-Alone's a-prayin, but they all mostly sed as the t'other 'wuns prayed wrong, and all mostly sounded to be a-talking to theirselves, or a-passing blame on the t'others, and not a- talkin to us. WE never knowd nothink. I never knowd what it wos all about.’

It takes him a long time to say this, and few but an experienced and attentive listener could hear, or, hearing, understand him. After a short relapse into sleep or stupor, he makes, of a sudden, a strong effort to get out of bed.

‘Stay, Jo! What now?’

‘It's time for me to go to that there berryin ground, sir,’ he returns with a wild look.

‘Lie down, and tell me. What burying ground, Jo?’

‘Where they laid him as wos wery good to me, wery good to me indeed, he wos. It's time fur me to go down to that there berryin ground, sir, and ask to be put along with him. I wants to go there and be berried. He used fur to say to me, 'I am as poor as you to- day, Jo,' he ses. I wants to tell him that I am as poor as him now and have come there to be laid along with him.’

‘By and by, Jo. By and by.’

‘Ah! P'raps they wouldn't do it if I wos to go myself. But will you promise to have me took there, sir, and laid along with him?’

‘I will, indeed.’

‘Thankee, sir. Thankee, sir. They'll have to get the key of the gate afore they can take me in, for it's allus locked. And there's a step there, as I used for to clean with my broom. It's turned wery dark, sir. Is there any light a-comin?’

‘It is coming fast, Jo.’

Fast. The cart is shaken all to pieces, and the rugged road is very near its end.

‘Jo, my poor fellow!’

‘I hear you, sir, in the dark, but I'm a-gropin--a-gropin--let me catch hold of your hand.’

‘Jo, can you say what I say?’

‘I'll say anythink as you say, sir, for I knows it's good.’

‘Our Father.’

‘Our Father! Yes, that's wery good, sir.’

‘Which art in heaven.’

‘Art in heaven--is the light a-comin, sir?’

‘It is close at hand. Hallowed by thy name!’

‘Hallowed be--thy--’

The light is come upon the dark benighted way. Dead!

Dead, your Majesty. Dead, my lords and gentlemen. Dead, right reverends and wrong reverends of every order. Dead, men and women, born with heavenly compassion in your hearts. And dying thus around us every day.