

Chapter XVIII - Father and Daughter

There is a hush through Mr Dombey's house. Servants gliding up and down stairs rustle, but make no sound of footsteps. They talk together constantly, and sit long at meals, making much of their meat and drink, and enjoying themselves after a grim unholy fashion. Mrs Wickam, with her eyes suffused with tears, relates melancholy anecdotes; and tells them how she always said at Mrs Pipchin's that it would be so, and takes more table-ale than usual, and is very sorry but sociable. Cook's state of mind is similar. She promises a little fry for supper, and struggles about equally against her feelings and the onions. Towlinson begins to think there's a fate in it, and wants to know if anybody can tell him of any good that ever came of living in a corner house. It seems to all of them as having happened a long time ago; though yet the child lies, calm and beautiful, upon his little bed.

After dark there come some visitors - noiseless visitors, with shoes of felt - who have been there before; and with them comes that bed of rest which is so strange a one for infant sleepers. All this time, the bereaved father has not been seen even by his attendant; for he sits in an inner corner of his own dark room when anyone is there, and never seems to move at other times, except to pace it to and fro. But in the morning it is whispered among the household that he was heard to go upstairs in the dead night, and that he stayed there - in the room - until the sun was shining.

At the offices in the City, the ground-glass windows are made more dim by shutters; and while the lighted lamps upon the desks are half extinguished by the day that wanders in, the day is half extinguished by the lamps, and an unusual gloom prevails. There is not much business done. The clerks are indisposed to work; and they make assignations to eat chops in the afternoon, and go up the river. Perch, the messenger, stays long upon his errands; and finds himself in bars of public-houses, invited thither by friends, and holding forth on the uncertainty of human affairs. He goes home to Ball's Pond earlier in the evening than usual, and treats Mrs Perch to a veal cutlet and Scotch ale. Mr Carker the Manager treats no one; neither is he treated; but alone in his own room he shows his teeth all day; and it would seem that there is something gone from Mr Carker's path - some obstacle removed - which clears his way before him.

Now the rosy children living opposite to Mr Dombey's house, peep from their nursery windows down into the street; for there are four black horses at his door, with feathers on their heads; and feathers tremble on the carriage that they draw; and these, and an array of men with scarves and staves, attract a crowd. The juggler who was going to twirl the basin, puts his loose coat on again over his fine dress; and his trudging wife, one-sided with her heavy baby in her

arms, loiters to see the company come out. But closer to her dingy breast she presses her baby, when the burden that is so easily carried is borne forth; and the youngest of the rosy children at the high window opposite, needs no restraining hand to check her in her glee, when, pointing with her dimpled finger, she looks into her nurse's face, and asks 'What's that?'

And now, among the knot of servants dressed in mourning, and the weeping women, Mr Dombey passes through the hall to the other carriage that is waiting to receive him. He is not 'brought down,' these observers think, by sorrow and distress of mind. His walk is as erect, his bearing is as stiff as ever it has been. He hides his face behind no handkerchief, and looks before him. But that his face is something sunk and rigid, and is pale, it bears the same expression as of old. He takes his place within the carriage, and three other gentlemen follow. Then the grand funeral moves slowly down the street. The feathers are yet nodding in the distance, when the juggler has the basin spinning on a cane, and has the same crowd to admire it. But the juggler's wife is less alert than usual with the money-box, for a child's burial has set her thinking that perhaps the baby underneath her shabby shawl may not grow up to be a man, and wear a sky-blue fillet round his head, and salmon-coloured worsted drawers, and tumble in the mud.

The feathers wind their gloomy way along the streets, and come within the sound of a church bell. In this same church, the pretty boy received all that will soon be left of him on earth - a name. All of him that is dead, they lay there, near the perishable substance of his mother. It is well. Their ashes lie where Florence in her walks - oh lonely, lonely walks! - may pass them any day.

The service over, and the clergyman withdrawn, Mr Dombey looks round, demanding in a low voice, whether the person who has been requested to attend to receive instructions for the tablet, is there?

Someone comes forward, and says 'Yes.'

Mr Dombey intimates where he would have it placed; and shows him, with his hand upon the wall, the shape and size; and how it is to follow the memorial to the mother. Then, with his pencil, he writes out the inscription, and gives it to him: adding, 'I wish to have it done at once.'

'It shall be done immediately, Sir.'

'There is really nothing to inscribe but name and age, you see.'

The man bows, glancing at the paper, but appears to hesitate. Mr Dombey not observing his hesitation, turns away, and leads towards the porch.

'I beg your pardon, Sir;' a touch falls gently on his mourning cloak; 'but as you wish it done immediately, and it may be put in hand when I get back - '

'Well?'

'Will you be so good as read it over again? I think there's a mistake.'

'Where?'

The statuary gives him back the paper, and points out, with his pocket rule, the words, 'beloved and only child.'

'It should be, 'son,' I think, Sir?'

'You are right. Of course. Make the correction.'

The father, with a hastier step, pursues his way to the coach. When the other three, who follow closely, take their seats, his face is hidden for the first time - shaded by his cloak. Nor do they see it any more that day. He alights first, and passes immediately into his own room. The other mourners (who are only Mr Chick, and two of the medical attendants) proceed upstairs to the drawing-room, to be received by Mrs Chick and Miss Tox. And what the face is, in the shut-up chamber underneath: or what the thoughts are: what the heart is, what the contest or the suffering: no one knows.

The chief thing that they know, below stairs, in the kitchen, is that 'it seems like Sunday.' They can hardly persuade themselves but that there is something unbecoming, if not wicked, in the conduct of the people out of doors, who pursue their ordinary occupations, and wear their everyday attire. It is quite a novelty to have the blinds up, and the shutters open; and they make themselves dismally comfortable over bottles of wine, which are freely broached as on a festival. They are much inclined to moralise. Mr Towlinson proposes with a sigh, 'Amendment to us all!' for which, as Cook says with another sigh, 'There's room enough, God knows.' In the evening, Mrs Chick and Miss Tox take to needlework again. In the evening also, Mr Towlinson goes out to take the air, accompanied by the housemaid, who has not yet tried her mourning bonnet. They are very tender to each other at dusky street-corners, and Towlinson has visions of leading an altered and blameless existence as a serious greengrocer in Oxford Market.

There is sounder sleep and deeper rest in Mr Dombey's house tonight, than there has been for many nights. The morning sun awakens the old household, settled down once more in their old ways. The rosy children opposite run past with hoops. There is a splendid wedding in the church. The juggler's wife is active with the money-box in another quarter of the town. The mason sings and whistles as he chips out P-A-U-L in the marble slab before him.

And can it be that in a world so full and busy, the loss of one weak creature makes a void in any heart, so wide and deep that nothing but the width and depth of vast eternity can fill it up! Florence, in her innocent affliction, might have answered, 'Oh my brother, oh my dearly loved and loving brother! Only friend and companion of my slighted childhood! Could any less idea shed the light already dawning on your early grave, or give birth to the softened sorrow that is springing into life beneath this rain of tears!'

'My dear child,' said Mrs Chick, who held it as a duty incumbent on her, to improve the occasion, 'when you are as old as I am - '

'Which will be the prime of life,' observed Miss Tox.

'You will then,' pursued Mrs Chick, gently squeezing Miss Tox's hand in acknowledgment of her friendly remark, 'you will then know that all grief is unavailing, and that it is our duty to submit.'

'I will try, dear aunt I do try,' answered Florence, sobbing.

'I am glad to hear it,' said Mrs Chick, 'because; my love, as our dear Miss Tox - of whose sound sense and excellent judgment, there cannot possibly be two opinions - '

'My dear Louisa, I shall really be proud, soon,' said Miss Tox

- 'will tell you, and confirm by her experience,' pursued Mrs Chick, 'we are called upon on all occasions to make an effort It is required of us. If any - my dear,' turning to Miss Tox, 'I want a word. Mis- Mis-'

'Demeanour?' suggested Miss Tox.

'No, no, no,' said Mrs Chic 'How can you! Goodness me, it's on, the end of my tongue. Mis-'

Placed affection?' suggested Miss Tox, timidly.

'Good gracious, Lucretia!' returned Mrs Chick 'How very monstrous! Misanthrope, is the word I want. The idea! Misplaced affection! I say, if

any misanthrope were to put, in my presence, the question 'Why were we born?' I should reply, 'To make an effort'

'Very good indeed,' said Miss Tox, much impressed by the originality of the sentiment 'Very good.'

'Unhappily,' pursued Mrs Chick, 'we have a warning under our own eyes. We have but too much reason to suppose, my dear child, that if an effort had been made in time, in this family, a train of the most trying and distressing circumstances might have been avoided. Nothing shall ever persuade me,' observed the good matron, with a resolute air, 'but that if that effort had been made by poor dear Fanny, the poor dear darling child would at least have had a stronger constitution.'

Mrs Chick abandoned herself to her feelings for half a moment; but, as a practical illustration of her doctrine, brought herself up short, in the middle of a sob, and went on again.

'Therefore, Florence, pray let us see that you have some strength of mind, and do not selfishly aggravate the distress in which your poor Papa is plunged.'

'Dear aunt!' said Florence, kneeling quickly down before her, that she might the better and more earnestly look into her face. 'Tell me more about Papa. Pray tell me about him! Is he quite heartbroken?'

Miss Tox was of a tender nature, and there was something in this appeal that moved her very much. Whether she saw it in a succession, on the part of the neglected child, to the affectionate concern so often expressed by her dead brother - or a love that sought to twine itself about the heart that had loved him, and that could not bear to be shut out from sympathy with such a sorrow, in such sad community of love and grief - or whether she only recognised the earnest and devoted spirit which, although discarded and repulsed, was wrung with tenderness long unreturned, and in the waste and solitude of this bereavement cried to him to seek a comfort in it, and to give some, by some small response - whatever may have been her understanding of it, it moved Miss Tox. For the moment she forgot the majesty of Mrs Chick, and, patting Florence hastily on the cheek, turned aside and suffered the tears to gush from her eyes, without waiting for a lead from that wise matron.

Mrs Chick herself lost, for a moment, the presence of mind on which she so much prided herself; and remained mute, looking on the beautiful young face that had so long, so steadily, and patiently, been turned towards the little bed. But recovering her voice - which was

synonymous with her presence of mind, indeed they were one and the same thing - she replied with dignity:

'Florence, my dear child, your poor Papa is peculiar at times; and to question me about him, is to question me upon a subject which I really do not pretend to understand. I believe I have as much influence with your Papa as anybody has. Still, all I can say is, that he has said very little to me; and that I have only seen him once or twice for a minute at a time, and indeed have hardly seen him then, for his room has been dark. I have said to your Papa, 'Paul!' - that is the exact expression I used - 'Paul! why do you not take something stimulating?' Your Papa's reply has always been, 'Louisa, have the goodness to leave me. I want nothing. I am better by myself.' If I was to be put upon my oath to-morrow, Lucretia, before a magistrate,' said Mrs Chick, 'I have no doubt I could venture to swear to those identical words.'

Miss Tox expressed her admiration by saying, 'My Louisa is ever methodical!'

'In short, Florence,' resumed her aunt, 'literally nothing has passed between your poor Papa and myself, until to-day; when I mentioned to your Papa that Sir Barnet and Lady Skettles had written exceedingly kind notes - our sweet boy! Lady Skettles loved him like a - where's my pocket handkerchief?'

Miss Tox produced one.

'Exceedingly kind notes, proposing that you should visit them for change of scene. Mentioning to your Papa that I thought Miss Tox and myself might now go home (in which he quite agreed), I inquired if he had any objection to your accepting this invitation. He said, 'No, Louisa, not the least!'" Florence raised her tearful eye

'At the same time, if you would prefer staying here, Florence, to paying this visit at present, or to going home with me - '

'I should much prefer it, aunt,' was the faint rejoinder.

'Why then, child,' said Mrs Chick, 'you can. It's a strange choice, I must say. But you always were strange. Anybody else at your time of life, and after what has passed - my dear Miss Tox, I have lost my pocket handkerchief again - would be glad to leave here, one would suppose.

'I should not like to feel,' said Florence, 'as if the house was avoided. I should not like to think that the - his - the rooms upstairs were quite

empty and dreary, aunt. I would rather stay here, for the present. Oh my brother! oh my brother!

It was a natural emotion, not to be suppressed; and it would make way even between the fingers of the hands with which she covered up her face. The overcharged and heavy-laden breast must some times have that vent, or the poor wounded solitary heart within it would have fluttered like a bird with broken wings, and sunk down in the dust'

'Well, child!' said Mrs Chick, after a pause 'I wouldn't on any account say anything unkind to you, and that I'm sure you know. You will remain here, then, and do exactly as you like. No one will interfere with you, Florence, or wish to interfere with you, I'm sure.

Florence shook her head in sad assent'

'I had no sooner begun to advise your poor Papa that he really ought to seek some distraction and restoration in a temporary change,' said Mrs Chick, 'than he told me he had already formed the intention of going into the country for a short time. I'm sure I hope he'll go very soon. He can't go too soon. But I suppose there are some arrangements connected with his private papers and so forth, consequent on the affliction that has tried us all so much - I can't think what's become of mine: Lucretia, lend me yours, my dear - that may occupy him for one or two evenings in his own room. Your Papa's a Dombey, child, if ever there was one,' said Mrs Chick, drying both her eyes at once with great care on opposite corners of Miss Tox's handkerchief 'He'll make an effort. There's no fear of him.'

'Is there nothing, aunt,' said Florence, trembling, 'I might do to -

'Lord, my dear child,' interposed Mrs Chick, hastily, 'what are you talking about? If your Papa said to Me - I have given you his exact words, 'Louisa, I want nothing; I am better by myself' - what do you think he'd say to you? You mustn't show yourself to him, child. Don't dream of such a thing.'

'Aunt,' said Florence, 'I will go and lie down on my bed.'

Mrs Chick approved of this resolution, and dismissed her with a kiss. But Miss Tox, on a faint pretence of looking for the mislaid handkerchief, went upstairs after her; and tried in a few stolen minutes to comfort her, in spite of great discouragement from Susan Nipper. For Miss Nipper, in her burning zeal, disparaged Miss Tox as a crocodile; yet her sympathy seemed genuine, and had at least the vantage-ground of disinterestedness - there was little favour to be won by it.

And was there no one nearer and dearer than Susan, to uphold the striving heart in its anguish? Was there no other neck to clasp; no other face to turn to? no one else to say a soothing word to such deep sorrow? Was Florence so alone in the bleak world that nothing else remained to her? Nothing. Stricken motherless and brotherless at once - for in the loss of little Paul, that first and greatest loss fell heavily upon her - this was the only help she had. Oh, who can tell how much she needed help at first!

At first, when the house subsided into its accustomed course, and they had all gone away, except the servants, and her father shut up in his own rooms, Florence could do nothing but weep, and wander up and down, and sometimes, in a sudden pang of desolate remembrance, fly to her own chamber, wring her hands, lay her face down on her bed, and know no consolation: nothing but the bitterness and cruelty of grief. This commonly ensued upon the recognition of some spot or object very tenderly dated with him; and it made the ale house, at first, a place of agony.

But it is not in the nature of pure love to burn so fiercely and unkindly long. The flame that in its grosser composition has the taint of earth may prey upon the breast that gives it shelter; but the fire from heaven is as gentle in the heart, as when it rested on the heads of the assembled twelve, and showed each man his brother, brightened and unhurt. The image conjured up, there soon returned the placid face, the softened voice, the loving looks, the quiet trustfulness and peace; and Florence, though she wept still, wept more tranquilly, and courted the remembrance.

It was not very long before the golden water, dancing on the wall, in the old place, at the old serene time, had her calm eye fixed upon it as it ebbed away. It was not very long before that room again knew her, often; sitting there alone, as patient and as mild as when she had watched beside the little bed. When any sharp sense of its being empty smote upon her, she could kneel beside it, and pray GOD - it was the pouring out of her full heart - to let one angel love her and remember her.

It was not very long before, in the midst of the dismal house so wide and dreary, her low voice in the twilight, slowly and stopping sometimes, touched the old air to which he had so often listened, with his drooping head upon her arm. And after that, and when it was quite dark, a little strain of music trembled in the room: so softly played and sung, that it was more like the mournful recollection of what she had done at his request on that last night, than the reality repeated. But it was repeated, often - very often, in the shadowy solitude; and broken murmurs of the strain still trembled on the keys, when the sweet voice was hushed in tears.

Thus she gained heart to look upon the work with which her fingers had been busy by his side on the sea-shore; and thus it was not very long before she took to it again - with something of a human love for it, as if it had been sentient and had known him; and, sitting in a window, near her mother's picture, in the unused room so long deserted, wore away the thoughtful hours.

Why did the dark eyes turn so often from this work to where the rosy children lived? They were not immediately suggestive of her loss; for they were all girls: four little sisters. But they were motherless like her - and had a father.

It was easy to know when he had gone out and was expected home, for the elder child was always dressed and waiting for him at the drawing-room window, or on the balcony; and when he appeared, her expectant face lighted up with joy, while the others at the high window, and always on the watch too, clapped their hands, and drummed them on the sill, and called to him. The elder child would come down to the hall, and put her hand in his, and lead him up the stairs; and Florence would see her afterwards sitting by his side, or on his knee, or hanging coaxingly about his neck and talking to him: and though they were always gay together, he would often watch her face as if he thought her like her mother that was dead. Florence would sometimes look no more at this, and bursting into tears would hide behind the curtain as if she were frightened, or would hurry from the window. Yet she could not help returning; and her work would soon fall unheeded from her hands again.

It was the house that had been empty, years ago. It had remained so for a long time. At last, and while she had been away from home, this family had taken it; and it was repaired and newly painted; and there were birds and flowers about it; and it looked very different from its old self. But she never thought of the house. The children and their father were all in all.

When he had dined, she could see them, through the open windows, go down with their governess or nurse, and cluster round the table; and in the still summer weather, the sound of their childish voices and clear laughter would come ringing across the street, into the drooping air of the room in which she sat. Then they would climb and clamber upstairs with him, and romp about him on the sofa, or group themselves at his knee, a very nosegay of little faces, while he seemed to tell them some story. Or they would come running out into the balcony; and then Florence would hide herself quickly, lest it should check them in their joy, to see her in her black dress, sitting there alone.

The elder child remained with her father when the rest had gone away, and made his tea for him - happy little house-keeper she was then! - and sat conversing with him, sometimes at the window, sometimes in the room, until the candles came. He made her his companion, though she was some years younger than Florence; and she could be as staid and pleasantly demure, with her little book or work-box, as a woman. When they had candles, Florence from her own dark room was not afraid to look again. But when the time came for the child to say 'Good-night, Papa,' and go to bed, Florence would sob and tremble as she raised her face to him, and could look no more.

Though still she would turn, again and again, before going to bed herself from the simple air that had lulled him to rest so often, long ago, and from the other low soft broken strain of music, back to that house. But that she ever thought of it, or watched it, was a secret which she kept within her own young breast.

And did that breast of Florence - Florence, so ingenuous and true - so worthy of the love that he had borne her, and had whispered in his last faint words - whose guileless heart was mirrored in the beauty of her face, and breathed in every accent of her gentle voice - did that young breast hold any other secret? Yes. One more.

When no one in the house was stirring, and the lights were all extinguished, she would softly leave her own room, and with noiseless feet descend the staircase, and approach her father's door. Against it, scarcely breathing, she would rest her face and head, and press her lips, in the yearning of her love. She crouched upon the cold stone floor outside it, every night, to listen even for his breath; and in her one absorbing wish to be allowed to show him some affection, to be a consolation to him, to win him over to the endurance of some tenderness from her, his solitary child, she would have knelt down at his feet, if she had dared, in humble supplication.

No one knew it! No one thought of it. The door was ever closed, and he shut up within. He went out once or twice, and it was said in the house that he was very soon going on his country journey; but he lived in those rooms, and lived alone, and never saw her, or inquired for her. Perhaps he did not even know that she was in the house.

One day, about a week after the funeral, Florence was sitting at her work, when Susan appeared, with a face half laughing and half crying, to announce a visitor.

'A visitor! To me, Susan!' said Florence, looking up in astonishment.

'Well, it is a wonder, ain't it now, Miss Floy?' said Susan; 'but I wish you had a many visitors, I do, indeed, for you'd be all the better for it, and it's my opinion that the sooner you and me goes even to them old Skettlesees, Miss, the better for both, I may not wish to live in crowds, Miss Floy, but still I'm not a oyster.'

To do Miss Nipper justice, she spoke more for her young mistress than herself; and her face showed it.

'But the visitor, Susan,' said Florence.

Susan, with an hysterical explosion that was as much a laugh as a sob, and as much a sob as a laugh, answered,

'Mr Toots!'

The smile that appeared on Florence's face passed from it in a moment, and her eyes filled with tears. But at any rate it was a smile, and that gave great satisfaction to Miss Nipper.

'My own feelings exactly, Miss Floy,' said Susan, putting her apron to her eyes, and shaking her head. 'Immediately I see that Innocent in the Hall, Miss Floy, I burst out laughing first, and then I choked.'

Susan Nipper involuntarily proceeded to do the like again on the spot. In the meantime Mr Toots, who had come upstairs after her, all unconscious of the effect he produced, announced himself with his knuckles on the door, and walked in very briskly.

'How d'ye do, Miss Dombey?' said Mr Toots. 'I'm very well, I thank you; how are you?'

Mr Toots - than whom there were few better fellows in the world, though there may have been one or two brighter spirits - had laboriously invented this long burst of discourse with the view of relieving the feelings both of Florence and himself. But finding that he had run through his property, as it were, in an injudicious manner, by squandering the whole before taking a chair, or before Florence had uttered a word, or before he had well got in at the door, he deemed it advisable to begin again.

'How d'ye do, Miss Dombey?' said Mr Toots. 'I'm very well, I thank you; how are you?'

Florence gave him her hand, and said she was very well.

'I'm very well indeed,' said Mr Toots, taking a chair. 'Very well indeed, I am. I don't remember,' said Mr Toots, after reflecting a little, 'that I was ever better, thank you.'

'It's very kind of you to come,' said Florence, taking up her work, 'I am very glad to see you.'

Mr Toots responded with a chuckle. Thinking that might be too lively, he corrected it with a sigh. Thinking that might be too melancholy, he corrected it with a chuckle. Not thoroughly pleasing himself with either mode of reply, he breathed hard.

'You were very kind to my dear brother,' said Florence, obeying her own natural impulse to relieve him by saying so. 'He often talked to me about you.'

'Oh it's of no consequence,' said Mr Toots hastily. 'Warm, ain't it?'

'It is beautiful weather,' replied Florence.

'It agrees with me!' said Mr Toots. 'I don't think I ever was so well as I find myself at present, I'm obliged to you.'

After stating this curious and unexpected fact, Mr Toots fell into a deep well of silence.

'You have left Dr Blimber's, I think?' said Florence, trying to help him out.

'I should hope so,' returned Mr Toots. And tumbled in again.

He remained at the bottom, apparently drowned, for at least ten minutes. At the expiration of that period, he suddenly floated, and said,

'Well! Good morning, Miss Dombey.'

'Are you going?' asked Florence, rising.

'I don't know, though. No, not just at present,' said Mr Toots, sitting down again, most unexpectedly. 'The fact is - I say, Miss Dombey!'

'Don't be afraid to speak to me,' said Florence, with a quiet smile, 'I should be very glad if you would talk about my brother.'

'Would you, though?' retorted Mr Toots, with sympathy in every fibre of his otherwise expressionless face. 'Poor Dombey! I'm sure I never thought that Burgess and Co. - fashionable tailors (but very dear),

that we used to talk about - would make this suit of clothes for such a purpose.' Mr Toots was dressed in mourning. 'Poor Dombey! I say! Miss Dombey!' blubbered Toots.

'Yes,' said Florence.

'There's a friend he took to very much at last. I thought you'd like to have him, perhaps, as a sort of keepsake. You remember his remembering Diogenes?'

'Oh yes! oh yes' cried Florence.

'Poor Dombey! So do I,' said Mr Toots.

Mr Toots, seeing Florence in tears, had great difficulty in getting beyond this point, and had nearly tumbled into the well again. But a chuckle saved him on the brink.

'I say,' he proceeded, 'Miss Dombey! I could have had him stolen for ten shillings, if they hadn't given him up: and I would: but they were glad to get rid of him, I think. If you'd like to have him, he's at the door. I brought him on purpose for you. He ain't a lady's dog, you know,' said Mr Toots, 'but you won't mind that, will you?'

In fact, Diogenes was at that moment, as they presently ascertained from looking down into the street, staring through the window of a hackney cabriolet, into which, for conveyance to that spot, he had been ensnared, on a false pretence of rats among the straw. Sooth to say, he was as unlike a lady's dog as might be; and in his gruff anxiety to get out, presented an appearance sufficiently unpromising, as he gave short yelps out of one side of his mouth, and overbalancing himself by the intensity of every one of those efforts, tumbled down into the straw, and then sprung panting up again, putting out his tongue, as if he had come express to a Dispensary to be examined for his health.

But though Diogenes was as ridiculous a dog as one would meet with on a summer's day; a blundering, ill-favoured, clumsy, bullet-headed dog, continually acting on a wrong idea that there was an enemy in the neighbourhood, whom it was meritorious to bark at; and though he was far from good-tempered, and certainly was not clever, and had hair all over his eyes, and a comic nose, and an inconsistent tail, and a gruff voice; he was dearer to Florence, in virtue of that parting remembrance of him, and that request that he might be taken care of, than the most valuable and beautiful of his kind. So dear, indeed, was this same ugly Diogenes, and so welcome to her, that she took the jewelled hand of Mr Toots and kissed it in her gratitude. And when Diogenes, released, came tearing up the stairs and bouncing into the

room (such a business as there was, first, to get him out of the cabriolet!), dived under all the furniture, and wound a long iron chain, that dangled from his neck, round legs of chairs and tables, and then tugged at it until his eyes became unnaturally visible, in consequence of their nearly starting out of his head; and when he growled at Mr Toots, who affected familiarity; and went pell-mell at Towlinson, morally convinced that he was the enemy whom he had barked at round the corner all his life and had never seen yet; Florence was as pleased with him as if he had been a miracle of discretion.

Mr Toots was so overjoyed by the success of his present, and was so delighted to see Florence bending down over Diogenes, smoothing his coarse back with her little delicate hand - Diogenes graciously allowing it from the first moment of their acquaintance - that he felt it difficult to take leave, and would, no doubt, have been a much longer time in making up his mind to do so, if he had not been assisted by Diogenes himself, who suddenly took it into his head to bay Mr Toots, and to make short runs at him with his mouth open. Not exactly seeing his way to the end of these demonstrations, and sensible that they placed the pantaloons constructed by the art of Burgess and Co. in jeopardy, Mr Toots, with chuckles, lapsed out at the door: by which, after looking in again two or three times, without any object at all, and being on each occasion greeted with a fresh run from Diogenes, he finally took himself off and got away.

'Come, then, Di! Dear Di! Make friends with your new mistress. Let us love each other, Di!' said Florence, fondling his shaggy head. And Di, the rough and gruff, as if his hairy hide were pervious to the tear that dropped upon it, and his dog's heart melted as it fell, put his nose up to her face, and swore fidelity.

Diogenes the man did not speak plainer to Alexander the Great than Diogenes the dog spoke to Florence.' He subscribed to the offer of his little mistress cheerfully, and devoted himself to her service. A banquet was immediately provided for him in a corner; and when he had eaten and drunk his fill, he went to the window where Florence was sitting, looking on, rose up on his hind legs, with his awkward fore paws on her shoulders, licked her face and hands, nestled his great head against her heart, and wagged his tail till he was tired. Finally, Diogenes coiled himself up at her feet and went to sleep.

Although Miss Nipper was nervous in regard of dogs, and felt it necessary to come into the room with her skirts carefully collected about her, as if she were crossing a brook on stepping-stones; also to utter little screams and stand up on chairs when Diogenes stretched himself, she was in her own manner affected by the kindness of Mr Toots, and could not see Florence so alive to the attachment and society of this rude friend of little Paul's, without some mental

comments thereupon that brought the water to her eyes. Mr Dombey, as a part of her reflections, may have been, in the association of ideas, connected with the dog; but, at any rate, after observing Diogenes and his mistress all the evening, and after exerting herself with much good-will to provide Diogenes a bed in an ante-chamber outside his mistress's door, she said hurriedly to Florence, before leaving her for the night:

'Your Pa's a going off, Miss Floy, tomorrow morning.'

'To-morrow morning, Susan?'

'Yes, Miss; that's the orders. Early.'

'Do you know,' asked Florence, without looking at her, 'where Papa is going, Susan?'

'Not exactly, Miss. He's going to meet that precious Major first, and I must say if I was acquainted with any Major myself (which Heavens forbid), it shouldn't be a blue one!'

'Hush, Susan!' urged Florence gently.

'Well, Miss Floy,' returned Miss Nipper, who was full of burning indignation, and minded her stops even less than usual. 'I can't help it, blue he is, and while I was a Christian, although humble, I would have natural-coloured friends, or none.'

It appeared from what she added and had gleaned downstairs, that Mrs Chick had proposed the Major for Mr Dombey's companion, and that Mr Dombey, after some hesitation, had invited him.

'Talk of him being a change, indeed!' observed Miss Nipper to herself with boundless contempt. 'If he's a change, give me a constancy.'

'Good-night, Susan,' said Florence.

'Good-night, my darling dear Miss Floy.'

Her tone of commiseration smote the chord so often roughly touched, but never listened to while she or anyone looked on. Florence left alone, laid her head upon her hand, and pressing the other over her swelling heart, held free communication with her sorrows.

It was a wet night; and the melancholy rain fell pattering and dropping with a weary sound. A sluggish wind was blowing, and went moaning round the house, as if it were in pain or grief. A shrill noise

quivered through the trees. While she sat weeping, it grew late, and dreary midnight tolled out from the steeples.

Florence was little more than a child in years - not yet fourteen- and the loneliness and gloom of such an hour in the great house where Death had lately made its own tremendous devastation, might have set an older fancy brooding on vague terrors. But her innocent imagination was too full of one theme to admit them. Nothing wandered in her thoughts but love - a wandering love, indeed, and castaway - but turning always to her father. There was nothing in the dropping of the rain, the moaning of the wind, the shuddering of the trees, the striking of the solemn clocks, that shook this one thought, or diminished its interest' Her recollections of the dear dead boy - and they were never absent - were itself, the same thing. And oh, to be shut out: to be so lost: never to have looked into her father's face or touched him, since that hour!

She could not go to bed, poor child, and never had gone yet, since then, without making her nightly pilgrimage to his door. It would have been a strange sad sight, to see her' now, stealing lightly down the stairs through the thick gloom, and stopping at it with a beating heart, and blinded eyes, and hair that fell down loosely and unthought of; and touching it outside with her wet cheek. But the night covered it, and no one knew.

The moment that she touched the door on this night, Florence found that it was open. For the first time it stood open, though by but a hair's-breadth: and there was a light within. The first impulse of the timid child - and she yielded to it - was to retire swiftly. Her next, to go back, and to enter; and this second impulse held her in irresolution on the staircase.

In its standing open, even by so much as that chink, there seemed to be hope. There was encouragement in seeing a ray of light from within, stealing through the dark stern doorway, and falling in a thread upon the marble floor. She turned back, hardly knowing what she did, but urged on by the love within her, and the trial they had undergone together, but not shared: and with her hands a little raised and trembling, glided in.

Her father sat at his old table in the middle room. He had been arranging some papers, and destroying others, and the latter lay in fragile ruins before him. The rain dripped heavily upon the glass panes in the outer room, where he had so often watched poor Paul, a baby; and the low complainings of the wind were heard without.

But not by him. He sat with his eyes fixed on the table, so immersed in thought, that a far heavier tread than the light foot of his child

could make, might have failed to rouse him. His face was turned towards her. By the waning lamp, and at that haggard hour, it looked worn and dejected; and in the utter loneliness surrounding him, there was an appeal to Florence that struck home.

'Papa! Papa! speak to me, dear Papa!'

He started at her voice, and leaped up from his seat. She was close before him' with extended arms, but he fell back.

'What is the matter?' he said, sternly. 'Why do you come here? What has frightened you?'

If anything had frightened her, it was the face he turned upon her. The glowing love within the breast of his young daughter froze before it, and she stood and looked at him as if stricken into stone.

There was not one touch of tenderness or pity in it. There was not one gleam of interest, parental recognition, or relenting in it. There was a change in it, but not of that kind. The old indifference and cold constraint had given place to something: what, she never thought and did not dare to think, and yet she felt it in its force, and knew it well without a name: that as it looked upon her, seemed to cast a shadow on her head.

Did he see before him the successful rival of his son, in health and life? Did he look upon his own successful rival in that son's affection? Did a mad jealousy and withered pride, poison sweet remembrances that should have endeared and made her precious to him? Could it be possible that it was gall to him to look upon her in her beauty and her promise: thinking of his infant boy!

Florence had no such thoughts. But love is quick to know when it is spurned and hopeless: and hope died out of hers, as she stood looking in her father's face.

'I ask you, Florence, are you frightened? Is there anything the matter, that you come here?'

'I came, Papa - '

'Against my wishes. Why?'

She saw he knew why: it was written broadly on his face: and dropped her head upon her hands with one prolonged low cry.

Let him remember it in that room, years to come. It has faded from the air, before he breaks the silence. It may pass as quickly from his

brain, as he believes, but it is there. Let him remember it in that room, years to come!

He took her by the arm. His hand was cold, and loose, and scarcely closed upon her.

'You are tired, I daresay,' he said, taking up the light, and leading her towards the door, 'and want rest. We all want rest. Go, Florence. You have been dreaming.'

The dream she had had, was over then, God help her! and she felt that it could never more come back

'I will remain here to light you up the stairs. The whole house is yours above there,' said her father, slowly. 'You are its mistress now. Good-night!'

Still covering her face, she sobbed, and answered 'Good-night, dear Papa,' and silently ascended. Once she looked back as if she would have returned to him, but for fear. It was a momentary thought, too hopeless to encourage; and her father stood there with the light - hard, unresponsive, motionless - until the fluttering dress of his fair child was lost in the darkness.

Let him remember it in that room, years to come. The rain that falls upon the roof: the wind that mourns outside the door: may have foreknowledge in their melancholy sound. Let him remember it in that room, years to come!

The last time he had watched her, from the same place, winding up those stairs, she had had her brother in her arms. It did not move his heart towards her now, it steeled it: but he went into his room, and locked his door, and sat down in his chair, and cried for his lost boy.

Diogenes was broad awake upon his post, and waiting for his little mistress.

'Oh, Di! Oh, dear Di! Love me for his sake!'

Diogenes already loved her for her own, and didn't care how much he showed it. So he made himself vastly ridiculous by performing a variety of uncouth bounces in the ante-chamber, and concluded, when poor Florence was at last asleep, and dreaming of the rosy children opposite, by scratching open her bedroom door: rolling up his bed into a pillow: lying down on the boards, at the full length of his tether, with his head towards her: and looking lazily at her, upside down, out of the tops of his eyes, until from winking and winking he fell asleep himself, and dreamed, with gruff barks, of his enemy.