



Vol. III.—No. 69.

FOR WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 29, 1866.

4D OR SEVEN CENTS.

THE LION IN THE PATH

(From the Publisher's advanced sheets.)

CHAPTER XLIV. THE MERCER'S AMBITION.

It was an awkward circumstance for both the mercer and his daughter, that he had that evening determined to enter upon a theme with her of a nature which happened to be peculiarly antagonistic to the influences just now left by Paul. But painful as the unexpectedly chivalrous behaviour of Paul made this duty, it was a duty, and Sir Richard was a man who never paused when he saw that fact clear before him. So, after dinner, while he was enjoying himself over a glass of wine of some peculiarly choice vintage, he managed to put aside his recollections of his late 'prentice, and speak thus to Christina:—

"Teena, how do you like our noble merchant friend?"

"How can you ask me that? I like him very much."

"I can see he is very much impressed with you."

"Indeed!" said Teena, with a little affectation of surprise that was almost coquettish.

"Indeed, and indeed, and indeed! And so now, Mistress Teena, what have you got to say for yourself?"

"Am I, then, a criminal?" she asked, archly.

"Certainly, and before a severe judge, who is going to try you for a case of felony—stealing this unfortunate nobleman's heart."

"Not guilty! I cry," said Teena.

"Ah! but if he says guilty—what then?"

"He won't do anything of the sort, papa," said Teena, suddenly, with an entire change of manner that startled the mercer.

"You speak as if you would not like him to be able to say so."

"Papa, I have never thought of such a thing. I don't want to think of such things!"

"And even if he does?"

"Oh, but he doesn't—I am sure of that!" said Christina, with an animated and decided tone.

"What, is my little daughter so learned in the signs and tokens of love, that she knows at a glance the true love from the false?"

The vivid blushes in Christina's face told the mercer this was a home stroke, though it didn't seem to show him that he was at all advancing the idea he was inly cherishing. However, he returned to the charge, saying—

"Teena, darling, you are not only a good but a sensible girl. Now, I want you to forget, for a bit, all the ordinary, nonsensical, romantic notions of school-girls, and listen to me like a woman, who esteems it the highest compliment to her to be addressed in frank truthfulness and simplicity. This nobleman's family did, as you know, lay the foundations of my fortune. I would give much to be able to acquit myself of that obligation. You may say I am doing so by incurring so much danger for him, in preserving his secret, but that it's, at best, only a negative benefit as regards him. Since he has been here, I have noticed he never meets you without his eyes being insensibly attracted towards you. His voice, when he speaks to you,



Lord Langton and Maria Clementina Preston at the Foundling Hospital.