

I won't stand hard words. And, now, with your permission, I will retire to take off these rags and dress for dinner."

She withdrew with a sweeping courtesy, which would have shown offended pride but for the good-natured nod of the head which accompanied it.

"Did you ever see such an abominably impudent minx?" inquired the colonel, addressing her vacant chair. "Is such conduct credible in a Christian country?"

As the chair was an ordinary chair, and not a spirit-medium—as that article of furniture sometimes is—it did not so much as lift a foot in reply.

In the absence of its negative testimony the colonel was compelled, therefore, to believe the evidence of his own eyes, which he proceeded to objurgate accordingly. Then, pulling out his watch, "It wants an hour yet to dinner," said he, "So I'll just step down to the commissary's, and ask him what he thinks about it."

CHAPTER VII.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

ACTING-DEPUTY-ASSISTANT-COMMISSARY-GENERAL RAY occupied apartments in barracks, which were not more numerous, and much less magnificent than his titles. They were shabbily furnished, and the furniture, even in its best days, had not been good. The look-out of the principal rooms was upon the dusty barrack square; and the quiet of home-life was apt to be disturbed by the sudden roll of drums, the unexpected squeak of fifes, and occasionally, by the quarrels of the soldiers at the canteen. The seamy side of military life was, in short, always presented to the inmates of this establishment; they lived, as it were, inside the Punch show. Fortunately—since their quarters were so limited—the family was small; consisting only of the commissary, his wife—a confirmed invalid, whom creeping paralysis at present permitted to move herself about in a patent wheel-chair, but to whom even that limited freedom of movement was soon to be denied—and their daughter, Grace, whose acquaintance we have already made.

The trio exhibited a marked contrast to one another. The head of the house was a tall, muscular Scotchman, of about sixty years of age, who bore his years, not, indeed, "lightly—like a flower"—but with that comparative convenience which comes of a strong digestion, and absence of fine feelings. He had been a good deal knocked about in his