



CHAPTER II.

THE SHOWMAN'S GRANDCHILD.

THREE months later the showman again appeared at Sidmouth, but did not set up his box as usual. Leaving it at his lodging he went at once with his grandchild to Mrs. Walsham's.

"I have come, madam," he said after the first inquiries about the child had been answered, "on a particular business. It will seem a strange thing to you for a man like me to ask, but things are not quite as they seem, though I can't explain it now. But I am beating about the bush, and not getting any nearer. I have come to ask, madam, whether you would take charge of the child for two years. Of course I am ready to pay anything that you may think proper."

"But I don't take boarders," Mrs. Walsham said, much surprised at the proposition. "I only take girls who come in the morning and go away in the afternoon; besides, they are all a good many years older than your grandchild. None of the girls who come to me are under twelve."

"I know, ma'am, I know; and I am sure you must think it a great liberty on my part to ask such a thing," the sergeant said apologetically. "It is not the teaching I want, but just a home for her."

Mrs. Walsham felt puzzled. She did in her heart feel it to be a liberty. Surely this wandering showman would find no difficulty in getting his grandchild taken care of