

contrary, is still alive ; and, if the Doctor is not fatigued, ready at any moment for a fourth encounter.

(To be continued.)

LAST NO. OF "NICHOLAS NICKLEBY."

(Continued from page 378.)

Turning from the dreadful fate of the usurer, we have this delightful sketch of a dinner party given by the Brothers Cheeryble, and

MATCH MAKING.

"The old butler received them with profound respect and many smiles, and ushered them into the drawing-room, where they were received by the Brothers with so much cordiality and kindness that Mrs. Nickleby was quite in a flutter, and had scarcely presence of mind enough even to patronise Miss La Creevy. Kate was still more affected by the reception, for knowing that the Brothers were acquainted with all that had passed between her and Frank, she felt her position a most delicate and trying one, and was trembling upon the arm of Nicholas when Mr. Charles took her in his, and led her to another part of the room.

'Have you seen Madeline, my dear,' he said, 'since she left your house?'

'No, Sir,' replied Kate. 'Not once.'

'And not heard from her, eh? Not heard from her?'

'I have only had one letter,' replied Kate, gently. 'I thought she would not have forgotten me quite so soon.'

'Ah!' said the old man, patting her on the head and speaking as affectionately as if she had been his favourite child. 'Poor dear! what do you think of this, brother Ned? Madeline has only written to her once—only once, Ned, and she didn't think she would have forgotten her quite so soon, Ned.'

'Oh! sad, sad—very sad!' said Ned.

The brothers interchanged a glance, and looking at Kate for a little time without speaking, shook hands, and nodded as if they were congratulating each other upon something very delightful.

'Well, well,' said brother Charles, 'go into that room, my dear, that door yonder, and see if there's not a letter to you from her. I think there's one upon the table. You needn't hurry back, my love, if there is, for we don't dine just yet, and there's plenty of time—plenty of time.'

Kate retired as she was directed, and brother Charles having followed her graceful figure with his eyes, turned to Mrs. Nickleby and said—

'We took the liberty of naming one hour before the real dinner time, ma'am, because we had a little business to speak about, which would occupy the interval. Ned, my dear fellow, will you mention what we agreed upon? Mr. Nickleby, Sir, have the goodness to follow me.'

Without any further explanation, Mrs. Nickleby, Miss La Creevy, and brother Ned, were left alone together, and Nicholas followed Charles into his private room, where to his great astonishment he encountered Frank whom he supposed to be abroad.

'Young men,' said Mr. Cheeryble, 'shake hands.'

'I need no bidding to do that,' said Nicholas, extending his.

'Nor I,' rejoined Frank, as he clasped it heartily.

The old gentleman thought that two handsomer or finer young fellows could scarcely stand by side than those on whom he looked with so much pleasure. Suffering his eyes to rest upon them for a short time in silence, he said, while he seated himself at his desk,

'I wish to see you friends—close and firm friends—and if I thought you otherwise, I should hesitate in what I am about to say. Frank, look here. Mr. Nickleby, will you come on the other side?'

The young men stepped up on either side of brother Charles, who produced a paper from his desk and unfolded it.

'This,' he said, 'is a copy of the will of Madeline's maternal grandfather, bequeathing her the sum of twelve thousand pounds, payable either upon her coming of age or marrying. It would appear that this gentleman, angry with her (his only relation) because she would not put herself under his protection, and detach herself from the society of her father, in compliance with his repeated overtures, made a will leaving this property, which was all he possessed, to a charitable institution. He would seem to have repented this determination, however, for three weeks afterwards, and in the same month, he executed this. By some fraud it was abstracted immediately after his decease, and the other—the only will found—was proved and administered. Friendly negotiations, which have only just now terminated, have been proceeding since this instrument came into our hands, and as there is no doubt of its authenticity, and the witnesses have been discovered (after some trouble), the money has been refunded. Madeline has therefore obtained her right, and is, or will be, when either of the contingencies which I have mentioned has arisen, mistress of this fortune. You understand me?'

Frank replied in the affirmative. Nicholas, who could not trust himself to speak lest his voice should be heard to falter, bowed his head.

'Now, Frank,' said the old gentleman, 'you were the immediate means of recovering this deed. The fortune is but a small

one, but we love Madeline, and such as it is, we would rather see you allied to her with that, than to any other girl we know who has three times the money. Will you become a suitor to her for her hand?'

'No, Sir: I interested myself in the recovery of that instrument, believing that her hand was already pledged to one who has a thousand times the claims upon her gratitude, and, if I mistake not, upon her heart, than I or any other man can ever urge. In this it seems I judged hastily.'

'As you always do, Sir,' cried brother Charles, utterly forgetting his assumed dignity, 'as you always do. How dare you think, Frank, that we would have you marry for money, when youth, beauty, and every amiable virtue and excellence, were to be had for love? How dared you, Frank, go and make love to Mr. Nickleby's sister without telling us first what you meant to do, and letting us speak for you?'

'I hardly dared to hope.'

'You hardly dared to hope! Then, so much the greater reason for having our assistance. Mr. Nickleby, Sir, Frank, although he judged hastily, judged for once correctly. Madeline's heart is occupied—give me your hand, Sir; it is occupied by you, and worthily and naturally. This fortune is destined to be yours, but you have a greater fortune in her, Sir, than you would have in money were it forty times told. She chooses you, Mr. Nickleby. She chooses as we, her dearest friends, would have her choose. Frank chooses as we would have him choose. He should have your sister's little hand, Sir, if she had refused it a score of times,—aye, he should, and he shall! You acted nobly not knowing our sentiments, but now you know them, Sir, and must do as you are bid. What! You are the children of a worthy gentleman! The time was, Sir, when my brother Ned and I were two simple hearted boys, wandering almost barefoot to seek our fortunes; are we changed in anything but years and worldly circumstances since that time? No, God forbid! Oh, Ned, Ned, Ned, what a happy day this is for you and me; if our poor mother had only lived to see us now, Ned, how proud it would have made her dear heart at last!'

Thus apostrophised, brother Ned, who had entered with Mrs. Nickleby, and who had before been unobserved by the young men, darted forward, and fairly hugged brother Charles in his arms.

'Bring in my little Kate,' said the latter, after a short silence.

'Bring her in, Ned. Let me see Kate, let me kiss her. I have a right to do so now; I was very near it when she first came; I have often been very near it. Ah! Did you find the letter, my bird? Did you find Madeline herself, waiting for you and expecting you? Did you find that she had not quite forgotten her friend and nurse and sweet companion? Why, this is almost the best of all!'

'Come, come,' said Ned, 'Frank will be jealous, and we shall have some cutting of throats before dinner.'

'Then let him take her away, Ned, let him take her away. Madeline's in the next room. Let all the lovers get out of the way, and talk among themselves, if they've anything to say. Turn 'em out, Ned, every one.'

Brother Charles began the clearance by leading the blushing girl himself to the door, and dismissing her with a kiss. Frank was not very slow to follow, and Nicholas had disappeared first of all. So there only remained Mrs. Nickleby and Miss La Creevy, who were both sobbing heartily; the two brothers, and Tim Linkinwater, who now came in to shake hands with every body, his face all radiant and beaming with smiles.

'Well, Tim Linkinwater, Sir,' said brother Charles, who was always spokesman, 'now the young folks are happy, Sir.'

'You didn't keep 'em in suspense as long as long as you said you would, though,' returned Tim, archly. 'Why, Mr. Nickleby and Mr. Frank were to have been in your room for I don't know how long; and I don't know what you weren't to have told them before you came out with the truth.'

'Now, did you ever know such a villain as this, Ned?' said the old gentleman, 'did you ever know such a villain as Tim Linkinwater? He accusing me of being impatient, and he the very man who has been wearying us morning, noon, and night, and torturing us for leave to go and tell 'em what was in store, before our plans were half complete, or we had arranged a single thing—a treacherous dog!'

'So he is, brother Charles,' returned Ned, 'Tim is a treacherous dog. Tim is not to be trusted. Tim is a wild young fellow—he wants gravity and steadiness; he must sow his wild oats, and then perhaps he'll become in time a respectable member of society!'

This being one of the standing jokes between the old fellows and Tim, they all three laughed very heartily, and might have laughed longer, but that the brothers seeing that Mrs. Nickleby was labouring to express her feelings, and was really overwhelmed by the happiness of the time, took her between them, and led her from the room under pretence of having to consult her on some most important arrangements.'

Tim Linkinwater and Miss La Creevy, the amiable portrait painter, give the following rich scene:

COURTSHIP.

'Now Tim and Miss La Creevy had met very often, and had always been very chatty and pleasant together—had always been great friends—and consequently it was the most natural thing in the world that Tim, finding that she still sobbed, should endeavour to console her. As Miss La Creevy sat on a large old-fashioned window-seat, where there was ample room for two, it was also natural that Tim should sit down beside her; and as to Tim's being unusually spruce and particular in his attire that day, why it was a high festival and a great occasion, and that was the most natural thing of all.

Tim sat down beside Miss La Creevy, and crossing one leg over the other so that his foot—he had very comely feet, and happened to be wearing the neatest shoes and black silk stockings possible—should come easily within the range of her eye, said in a soothing way:

'Don't cry.'

'I must,' rejoined Miss La Creevy.

'No don't,' said Tim. 'Please don't; pray don't.'

'I am so happy!' sobbed the little woman.

'Then laugh,' said Tim, 'do laugh.'

What in the world Tim was doing with his arm it is impossible to conjecture, but he knocked his elbow against that part of the window which was quite on the other side of Miss La Creevy; and it is clear that it could have no business there.

'Do laugh,' said Tim, 'or I'll cry.'

'Why should you cry?' asked Miss La Creevy, smiling.

'Because I'm happy too,' said Tim. 'We are both happy, and I should like to do as you do.'

Surely there never was a man who fidgetted as Tim must have done then, for he knocked the window again—almost in the same place—and Miss La Creevy said she was sure he'd break it.

'I knew,' said Tim, 'that you would be pleased with this scene.'

'It was very thoughtful and kind to remember me,' returned Miss La Creevy. 'Nothing could have delighted me half so much.'

Why on earth should Miss La Creevy and Tim Linkinwater have said all this in a whisper? It was no secret. And why should Tim Linkinwater have looked so hard at Miss La Creevy, and why should Miss La Creevy have looked so hard at the ground?

'It's a pleasant thing,' said Tim, 'to people like us, who have passed all our lives in the world alone, to see young folks that we are fond of brought together with so many years of happiness before them.'

'Ah!' cried the little woman with all her heart, 'that it is!'

'Although,' pursued Tim—'although it makes one feel quite solitary and cast away—now don't it?'

Miss La Creevy said she didn't know. And why should she say she didn't know? Because she must have known whether it did or not.

'It's almost enough to make us get married after all, isn't it?' said Tim.

'Oh nonsense!' replied Miss La Creevy, laughing, 'we are too old.'

'Not a bit,' said Tim, 'we are too old to be single—why shouldn't we both be married instead of sitting through the long winter evenings by our solitary firesides? Why shouldn't we make one fireside of it, and marry each other?'

'Oh Mr. Linkinwater, you're joking!'

'No, no, I'm not. I'm not indeed,' said Tim. 'I will if you will. Do, my dear.'

'It would make people laugh so.'

'Let 'em laugh,' cried Tim, stoutly, 'we have good tempers I know, and we'll laugh too. Why what hearty laughs we have had since we've known each other.'

'So we have,' cried Miss La Creevy—giving way a little, as Tim thought.

'It has been the happiest time in all my life—at least, away from the counting-house and Cheeryble Brothers,' said Tim.

'Do, my dear. Now say you will.'

'No, no, we mustn't think of it,' returned Miss La Creevy.

'What would the Brothers say?'

'Why, Heaven bless your soul!' cried Tim, innocently, 'you don't suppose I should think of such a thing without their knowing it! Why they left us here on purpose.'

'I can never look 'em in the face again!' exclaimed Miss La Creevy, faintly.

'Come,' said Tim, 'let's be a comfortable couple. We shall live in the old house here, where I have been for four-and-forty year; we shall go to the old church, where I've been every Sunday morning all through that time; we shall have all my old friends about us—Dick, the archway, the pump, the flower-pots, and Mr. Frank's children, and Mr. Nickleby's children, that we shall seem like grandfather and grandmother to. Let's be a comfortable couple, and take care of each other, and if we should get deaf, or lame, or blind, or bed-ridden, how glad we shall be that we have somebody that we are fond of always to talk to and sit with! Let's be a comfortable couple. Now do, my dear.'