

you would only make her worse, if I took you to her now; I wouldn't dare to risk it. You see we can't get her to sleep; and we thought of buying something to quiet her at the chemist's. Yes, sir, it would be better to get a doctor to her. But I wasn't going to the doctor. If I must tell you, I was obliged to take the sheets off the bed to raise a little money—I was going to the pawnbroker's.' She looked at the parcel under her arm, and smiled 'I may take the sheets back again, now I've met with you; and there's a good doctor lives close by—I can show you the way to him. O, how pale you do look! Are you very much tired? It's only a little way to the doctor. I've got an arm at your service—but you mightn't like to be seen walking with such a person as me.'

Mentally and physically, Amelius was completely prostrated. The woman's melancholy narrative had overwhelmed him: he could neither speak nor act. He mechanically put his purse in her hand, and went with her to the house of the nearest medical man.

The doctor was at home, mixing drugs in his little surgery. After one sharp look at Amelius, he ran into a back parlour, and returned with a glass of spirits. 'Drink this, sir,' he said—'unless you want to find yourself on the floor in a fainting fit. And don't presume again on your youth and strength to treat your heart as if it was made of cast-iron.' He signed to Amelius to sit down and rest himself, and turned to the woman to hear what was wanted of him. After a few questions, he said she might go; promising to follow her in a few minutes, when the gentleman would be sufficiently recovered to accompany him.

'Well, sir, are you beginning to feel like yourself again?' He was mixing a composing draught, while he addressed Amelius in those terms. 'You may trust that poor wretch, who has just left us, to take care of the sick girl,' he went on, in the quaintly

familiar manner which seemed to be habitual with him. 'I don't ask how you got into her company—it's no business of mine. But I am pretty well acquainted with the people in my neighbourhood; and I can tell you one thing, in case you're anxious. The woman who brought you here, barring the one misfortune of her life, is as good a creature as ever breathed; and the other one who lives with her is the same. When I think of what they're exposed to—well! I take to my pipe, and compose my mind in that way. My early days were all passed as a ship's surgeon. I could get them both respectable employment in Australia, if I only had the money to fit them out. They'll die in the hospital like the rest, if something isn't done for them. In my hopeful moments, I sometimes think of a subscription. What do you say? Will you put down a few shillings to set the example?'

'I will do more than that,' Amelius answered. 'I have reasons for wishing to befriend both those two poor women; and I will gladly engage to find the outfit.'

The familiar old doctor held out his hand over the counter. 'You're a good fellow, if ever there was one yet,' he burst out. I can show references which will satisfy you that I am not a rogue. In the meantime, let's see what is the matter with this little girl; you can tell me about her as we go along.' He put his bottle of medicine in his pocket, and his arm in the arm of Amelius—and so led the way out.

When they reached the wretched lodging-house in which the women lived, he suggested that his companion would do well to wait at the door. 'I'm used to sad sights: it would only distress you to see the place. I won't keep you long waiting.'

He was as good as his word. In little more than ten minutes, he joined Amelius again in the street.

'Don't alarm yourself,' he said;