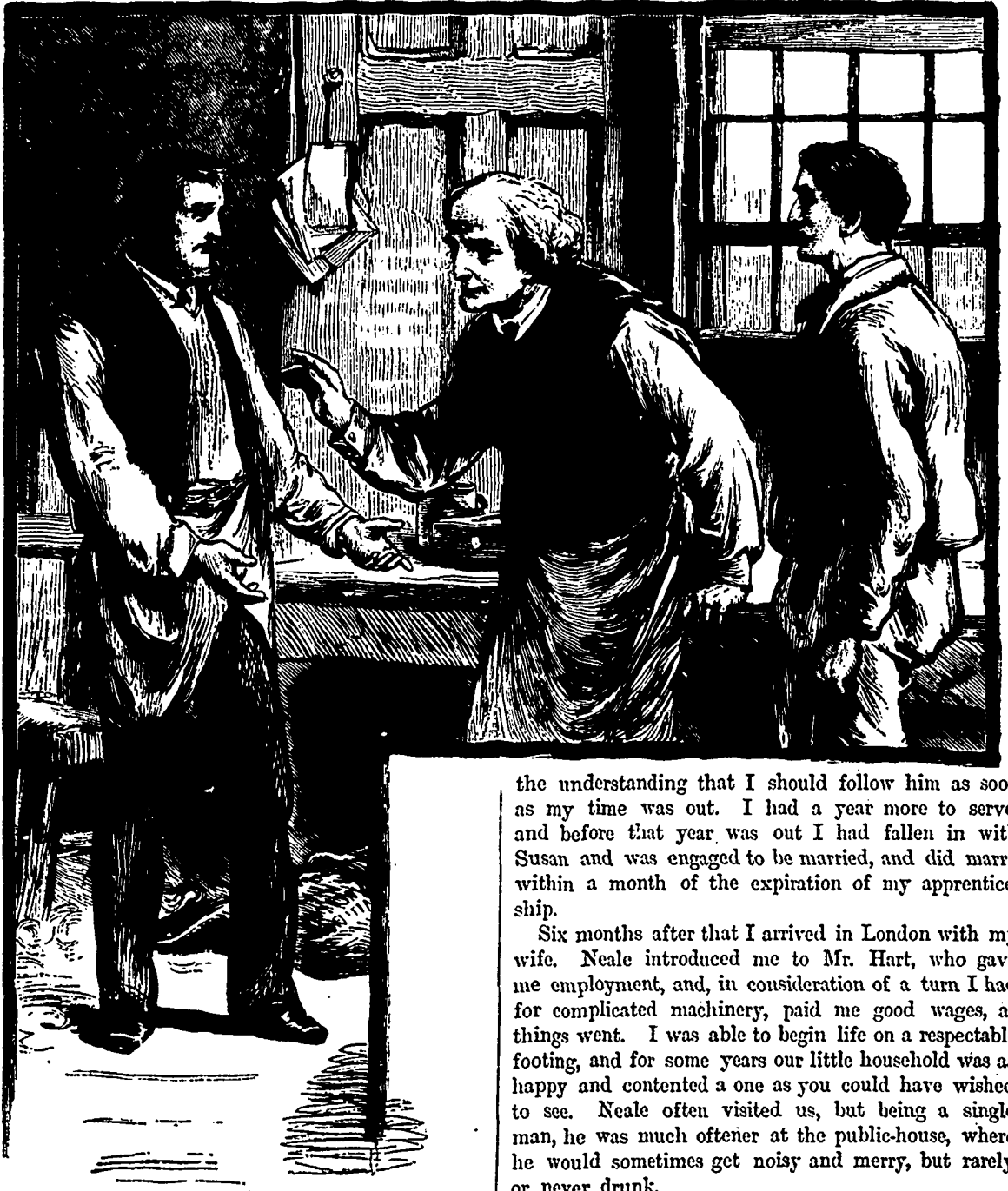


OUT OF THE SLOUGH, AND OTHER SKETCHES.



My old comrade, Dick Neale, was the man who, more than any other man, was the occasion of my first becoming a drunkard. We had been schoolboys and apprentices together at the old town of Derry; his indentures expired before mine, and he came up to London to seek employment, with

the understanding that I should follow him as soon as my time was out. I had a year more to serve, and before that year was out I had fallen in with Susan and was engaged to be married, and did marry within a month of the expiration of my apprenticeship.

Six months after that I arrived in London with my wife. Neale introduced me to Mr. Hart, who gave me employment, and, in consideration of a turn I had for complicated machinery, paid me good wages, as things went. I was able to begin life on a respectable footing, and for some years our little household was as happy and contented a one as you could have wished to see. Neale often visited us, but being a single man, he was much oftener at the public-house, where he would sometimes get noisy and merry, but rarely or never drunk.

When my boy was born, Susan was laid by for some time, and her mother was here nursing her. To get out of the way of the women, Neale took me with him to the "Anchor" (the very worst name for a drinking house, which ought to have the symbol of despair, not of hope, for a sign), and there for some weeks we spent our evenings, in the company of a set