

but the warm welcome, the hearty manner, the homely unaffected commiseration of the good old man, went to his heart, and no inward struggle could prevent his showing it.

"Come, come, my dear sir," said the benevolent merchant; "we must not be cast down; no, no. We must learn to bear misfortune, and we must remember that there are many sources of consolation even in death. Every day that this poor lad had lived, he must have been less and less qualified for the world, and more and more unhappy in his own deficiencies. It is better as it is, my dear sir. Yes, yes, yes, it's better as it is."

"I have thought of all that, sir," replied Nicholas, clearing his throat. "I feel it, I assure you."

"Yes, that's well," replied Mr. Cheeryble, who, in the midst of all his comforting, was quite as much taken aback as honest old Tim; "that's well. Where is my brother Ned? Tim Linkinwater, sir, where is my brother Ned?"

"Gone out with Mr. Trimmers, about getting that unfortunate man into the hospital, and sending a nurse to his children," said Tim.

"My brother Ned is a fine fellow, a great fellow!" exclaimed brother Charles as he shut the door and returned to Nicholas. "He will be overjoyed to see you, my dear sir. We have been speaking of you every day."

"To tell you the truth, sir, I am glad to find you alone," said Nicholas, with some natural hesitation; "for I am anxious to say something to you. Can you spare me a very few minutes?"

"Surely, surely," returned brother Charles, looking at him with an anxious countenance. "Say on, my dear sir, say on."

"I scarcely know how, or where, to begin," said Nicholas. "If ever one mortal had reason to be penetrated with love and reverence for another: with such attachment as would make the hardest service in his behalf a pleasure and delight: with such grateful recollections as must rouse the utmost zeal and fidelity of his nature: those are the feelings which I should entertain for you, and do, from my heart and soul, believe me!"

"I do believe you," replied the old gentleman, "and I am happy in the belief. I have never doubted it; I never shall. I am sure I never shall."

"Your telling me that, so kindly," said Nicholas, "em-