

rived at Glottonbury, they make roundabout inquiries concerning Priestley and the Mordaunts, and there our hero learns, for the first time, of the colonel's death, and the subsequent departure of his widow. So that it is no surprise to Moxon and himself to be received by Oliver only when they present themselves at Fen Court.

Of course the natural astonishment excited by the assertion that Tommy is Lord Muiraven's lawful heir has to be allayed by the explanation given above. And then Oliver, who has received the golden key to the mystery that has puzzled them, and knows much more about it than Saville Moxon, becomes quite friendly and intimate with Muiraven, and wants him to stay at the Court, and when his invitation is declined on the score of his visitor's anxiety to find Mrs. Mordaunt and the boy, shakes hands with him warmly, applauding his zeal, and wishing him all success in his undertaking, with an enthusiasm that awakens the barrister's suspicions.

"What the deuce was that fellow so friendly about?" he inquires, as they journey back to town. "Why is he so anxious you should neither eat, drink, nor sleep, till you get on the track of old Mordaunt's widow?"

"Why, you know perfectly well she has the boy."

"What of that? she won't eat him, I suppose; and what difference can a day, more or less, make to you before you see him?"

"You have evidently not much idea of paternal affection," says Muiraven, as he strikes a fuscé on the heel of his boot.

"Well, where the father has never seen his child, and didn't even know he had got one—I can't say I have."

"I have already told you that I have seen him."

"And liked him?"

"Very much! He is a charming little child!"

"Indeed! How curious! Now, I wonder if your liking for him arose from a natural instinct, or from any extraneous circumstances that may have surrounded him? That question would form rather a neat psychological study."

"I don't follow you, Moxon."

"No? By-the-way, Muiraven, what became of that girl—now what was her name?—Miss—Miss—St. John, wasn't it?—whom you were so keen after, a few seasons ago?"

"Keen after! How you do exaggerate, Moxon! Why she—she is Mrs. Mordaunt. I thought you knew that!"

"Oh!" says Moxon, quietly.

"Pray have you any thing more to say on this subject?" remarks his friend presently, with some degree of pique.

"Nothing whatever, my dear fellow—nothing whatever. Only pray let us do all in our power to get on the track of that *charming child* as soon as possible."

"Moxon, I hate you!" says Muiraven shortly.

But he cannot afford to dispense with his aid nevertheless. The next day finds them at Laburnum Cottage, the residence of Mrs. Cavendish; and even that lady's state of flutter in receiving one of the aristocracy in her tiny drawing-room, cannot prevent her treating them to a burst of indignation at the conduct of her niece.

"So wrong—so very wrong—" she affirms, with just a sufficient chance of breaking down to render it necessary to hold her cambric handkerchief in her hand—"so unusual—so peculiar—so strange of Mrs. Mordaunt to leave us without the slightest clew to her place of residence. And she might die, you know, my lord, or any thing else, and not a soul near her. I'm sure I feel quite ashamed if any one asks after her. And there was not the least occasion for concealment; though, as I always say, we can expect no one to believe it."

"Mrs. Mordaunt has probably her own reasons for acting as she does."

"Oh, you are very good, to make excuses for her, my lord. But she was always willfully inclined. And the colonel, whom we thought so much of, has behaved so badly to her, leaving all his money away to his nephew; and then, to make matters look worse, Irene will continue to keep a dirty little boy whom she picked up in the village, although—"

"That dirty little boy is my son, Mrs. Cavendish."

Mrs. Cavendish turns pale—starts, and puts up her handkerchief to her eyes. It cannot be true; and, if it is, that he should stand there and confess it!

What are the aristocracy coming to? Saville Moxon is so afraid the lady is about to faint, that he rushes to the rescue, giving her the whole story in about two words. Upon which she revives, and becomes as enthusiastic as Oliver was.

"Oh, my lord, I beg a thousand pardons! I used the word 'dirty' most unadvisedly. Of course she has kept him scrupulously clean, and has treated him just like her own child. And I always said—it was the remark of every one—