

and the other mending stockings, the fineness of which at once informed the experienced eye of the beholder, that they did not belong to the family wardrobe.

Everything was very clean and very tidy, and through the window a glimpse might be caught every now and then of a small servant, whose proportions might have rivalled Dick Swiveller's immortal marchioness, flitting in and out of the brewhouse in the yard. The regular work of the establishment was evidently going on, without reference to the return of the all-important personage who now stood, gloomy and mortified, before the blazing fire, near which his mother sat, darning and watching the Dutch oven in which the sausages for his dinner were toasting.

Presently, when the first greetings and inquiries were over, the old lady rose, and, folding up her work, set about laying a small tray, which she placed upon the little round table by her son, saying—

"I hope your dinner will be to your liking, Fred. I would have got something better, but I've been so busy with Mr. Thompson's things, mending 'em up ready for him to start by the five o'clock train, that I hadn't a minute's time to cook anything particular; and as I knew you used to be fond of a fresh pork sausage, I thought you'd manage to make shift."

"No time to cook—make shift!" Here was a change. Frederick almost laid down his knife and fork in dismay; but a second glance at the dish, which, piled with his favourite luxury, was now placed hissing before him, made him postpone the expression of his displeasure until after dinner; and he simply inquired,

"Mr. Thompson! who's Mr. Thompson?"

"Our lodger—a very nice young man, who is clerk to Mr. Ludlow, the lawyer; he and his sister have been with us near upon two months."

"A lodger! well, we are come down. And do you wait on them?"

"Yes."

"Well," said the gent, with a groan, "things are come to a pretty pass. Emma gone to service, and you and father taking lodgers."

"Ah, and glad to get 'em, boy," cried Mr.

Sibley, looking up from his occupation. "When one's pocket's well nigh empty, all going out, and nothing coming in, it makes one thankful for anything. That last ten pound as I sent you was a sharp pull."

"Yes," continued his wife, sighing, "it's a great change; but it's to be hoped you'll get a situation, Fred, and then things will come right a bit. I miss Emma, dreadful."

"Aye, she was a rare good girl," said the father, warmly; "she was a blessing to us, and please God she'll be a treasure to them as has got her now. She'll be the honest, trusty maid, I know."

"Where is she?" asked Frederick, upon whose ear this degrading praise fell annoyingly.

"At Mr. Morton's, the draper's. She's gone maid to the children. We don't see her often, and that's the only drawback to the place. She's well used, and well prized, and the children are mighty fond of her, which is a great thing for Mrs. Morton."

"What! is she nursemaid, then?" cried Frederick, in a kind of horror.

"No, not exactly—young ladies' maid, they call her; but it's only a fine name for the same thing. Nurse I call her, though certainly the youngest girl is six years' old, and don't want much nursing."

"What matters what she's called? it's a good place, and that's the main; I wish you'd one as good, lad. And, now I think of it, may-be Emma might speak a word for you to her master. In a great shop like his I should think there'd often be changes. You'd better walk up there to-night, Fred, and ask her."

Poor dandy! weak and idle as he was, his feelings at this moment were really pitiable. To be patronized by his sister—her whom he had contemplated discarding for ever from his affections, as a punishment for having disgraced him by accepting menial service, was really too much—more than he could bear; and, muttering some indignant reply, he rose and looked out of the window.

For some time no one spoke. Then Mr. Sibley said, glancing to the clock,

"Anne, if those things are ready, I'll take Mr. Thompson's portmanteau down now. It's nearly time, and I've finished these papers.