

## A NOBLE REVENGE.\*

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

BY JOHN COLWELL.

## I.—A CHRISTMAS BOX.

"Thou art born wealthy, but who knows whether thou wilt live worthy."  
—OLD AUTHOR.

"A FINE mornin', Master Catchpole."

"Yes, but bein' as I didn't say it, were *not* a fine mornin', an' as furdurmore everybody can see as it *is* a fine mornin', that obserwation is a *leetle* out o' place, Master Timothy."

"Well, well," replied friend Timothy, "never mind the obserwation, 'e don't matter much any way; the mornin's right, Master Catchpole, an' so will you be ef you'll just take a pinch o' my new mixture."

"Now, thur you be agen, Master Timothy, allus pullin' out that snuff-box an' thinkin' as *that* 'll cure all the ills as flesh is 'eir to, as wise old Solomon do put it in one o' his proverbs. What do make folk take to snuffin' *I* can't think. I'd snuff 'em out, *that* I would."

But Master Timothy waited, well knowing that, notwithstanding his talk, old Master Catchpole was quite as fond of a "good mixture" as he was of the use of italics or of the Proverbs of Solomon.

"Well, just to oblige *you*," Catchpole said at length, "I'll take *one* pinch," at the same time helping himself to nearly all that the little box contained. This, however, sufficed to put him into tolerable humour, and he forthwith proceeded to be agreeable.

"What *I* do allus say," he remarked, "is that *men* should be good tempered. Ef they can't be, let 'em bide at home, an' not go pokin' their ill ways upon *other* folk. *Women*—well, o' course you can't expect much good temper from them; they be fearfully and wonderfully made, as Solomon said, an' by *all* account 'e knowd a good deal about 'em, yes 'e did."

"Talkin' o' women," broke in Master Timothy, "the Squire's wife 'll be in a fine state o' pleasure this mornin', an' this bein' Christmas mornin', too, of all others."

"An' *why* should the Squire's wife be specially 'appy o' *this* mornin'?" inquired Master Catchpole.

"Ain't you 'eard the news, then?" was the astonished reply.

"Now, Master Timothy, you *do* vex me. If you'd read the Proverbs, oh, if you only would, you'd have more *sense*. Don't it say thur plain enough, 'never beat about the bush?' If you got any news why don't you *tell* 'em?"