

of Fen Court, the wife of Colonel Mordaunt, of—

"In course, the colonel's lady; and she makes a deal of him, too, so they say. But still, if he's yourn, sir, you're the proper person to look after him, and I sha'n't call it justice if you don't."

"Stratford, you know the box of toys we went after to-day?"

"That you kicked up such a shindy about. Yes."

"It is for that child that I brought them home."

"Did you know of this then?"

"Not a word; but I have stayed with the Mordaunts, and seen him. And to think he should be my own. How extraordinary!"

"Deuced inconvenient, I should say. What do you mean to do next?"

"Go down to Priestley at the earliest opportunity.—You'll come with me, Hal?"

"Better take Moxon, he may be of use. I'm none."

Then Moxon agrees to go; and they talk excitedly together for a few minutes, and almost forget poor Joel, who is anxiously awaiting the upshot of it all.

"Well, are you satisfied, or do you still wish to fight me?" says Muiraven to him presently.

"I suppose I've no call to fight you, sir, if you really married her; but I must say I should like to see the lines."

"You shall see them, Cray, for her sake as well as mine. And, meanwhile, what can I do for you?"

"I want nothing now, sir, but to go home again and look after mother and the little 'uns."

"I cannot talk more to you at present, but you may be sure I shall see that none of her relations want. Here is my address"—giving him a card—"any one will tell you where it is. Come to me there to-morrow evening, and we will consult what I can do to best prove my friendship to you." Upon which Muiraven puts out his hand and grasps Joel's rough palm, and the poor, honest, blundering soul, feeling any thing but victorious, and yet with a load lifted off his bosom, turns to grope his way down-stairs.

"Don't you lose that card," says Stratford, who steps outside the door to show him where to go; "for I am sure his lordship will prove a good friend to you, if you will let him be so."

"His lordship!" repeats Joel, wonderingly; "which be a lord—the little 'un?"

"No, no, the gentleman whom you call Hamil-

ton. His real name is Lord Muiraven; you must not forget that."

"A lord—a real lord—and he was married to my poor lass! No wonder it killed her! And that child, Tommy, a lord's son. Darn it, how little difference there is between 'em when they're covered with dirt!" And the first chuckle that has left Joel's lips for many a long month, breaks from them as he steps carefully down the steep staircase, and ponders on the wonderful truth he has been told. "A lord's son," he repeats, as he gains the street, and proceeds to shuffle back to the Docks again. "That brat a lord's son! Now, I wonder if my poor lass knew it all along; or, if not, if it makes her feel a bit easier to know it now?"

Muiraven and Moxon have a long conversation together as they travel down to Glottonbury.

"I conclude this early marriage of yours was what people call a love-match, eh?" remarks the latter inquisitively.

Muiraven colors.

"Well, yes, I suppose so; but love appears to us in such a different light, you know, when we come to a maturer age."

"Never having had any experience in that respect, can't say I do know."

"You are lucky," with a sigh. "What I mean to say is, that at the time I certainly *thought* I loved her. She was just the style of woman to inflame a boy's first passion—pretty features, perfect shape, and a certain air of *abandon* about her. And then she was several years older than myself!"

"Ah! I understand."

"I was not 'hooked,' if you mean that," says Muiraven, quickly.

"I never knew a fellow yet, my dear boy, who acknowledged that he had been. But when a gentleman, under age—"

"I was two-and-twenty."

"Never mind. You were as green as a school-boy. When a man, in your station of life, I repeat, is drawn into marriage with a woman from a class inferior to his own, and older than himself, *you* may call it what you choose, but the world in general will call it 'hooking.'"

"Well, don't let us talk of it at all, then," says Muiraven.

"All right; we'll change the subject. How beastly cold it is!"

Yet, do what they will, the conversation keeps veering round to the forbidden topic till Muiraven has made a clean breast of it to his friend. And