

haps, predominated a delicate consideration, totally unnecessary, I now believe, for both lovers were so entirely engrossed in each other and their own affairs that they regarded my presence not at all, or looked upon me as a member of the family. However, I withdrew, which was perhaps the best thing for a lone bachelor to do under the circumstances, if he wishes to avoid personal embarrassment; I withdrew, but in my haste I ran trustingly into what I took to be my own shadow. It was not; it was Mrs. Biggles in the act of arriving within the charmed circle of firelight. We sat down opposite each other: I, silent and reserved, my presence of mind missing, while Mrs. Biggles was raising a blood-curdling lament which almost persuaded even me that poor Mr. Merry-well was no more. She declared afterward, she 'adn't no time to think, but she knowed somethink or someone was burned up, and she supposes she took me for my ghost. But whatever she meant, her cry hastened the approach of Aunt Anne and Olivia, who were not far behind, and I had some difficulty in convincing them that I was alive and whole.