

her steadily, like an ox of the fields, and consumed it, and then holding his plate out, in a remorseless way, said, "You make 'em so good, marm."

Mrs. Sumfit, fretted as she was, was not impervious to the sound sense of the remark, as well as to the compliment.

"I don't want to hurry you, Mas' Gammon," she said; "Lord knows, I like to see you and everybody eat his full and be thankful; but, all about my Dahly waitin', — I feel pricked wi' a pin all over, I do; and there 's my blessed in London," she answered, "and we knowin' nothin' of her, and one close by to tell me! I never did feel what slow things dumplin's was, afore now!"

The kettle simmered gently on the hob. Every other knife and fork was silent; so was every tongue. Master Gammon ate and the kettle hummed. Twice Mrs. Sumfit sounded a despairing, "Oh, deary me!" but it was useless. No human power had ever yet driven Master Gammon to a demonstration of haste or to any acceleration of the pace he had chosen for himself. At last, she was not to be restrained from crying out, almost tearfully, —

"When *do* you think you 'll have done, Mas' Gammon?"

Thus pointedly addressed, Master Gammon laid down his knife and fork. He half raised his ponderous, curtaining eyelids, and replied, —

"When I feels my buttons, marm."

After which he deliberately fell to work again.

Mrs. Sumfit dropped back in her chair as from a blow.

But even dumplings, though they resist so doggedly for a space, do ultimately submit to the majestic march of Time, and move. Master Gammon cleared his plate. There stood in the dish still half a dumpling. The farmer and Rhoda, deeming that there had been a show of inhospitality, pressed him to make away with this forlorn remainder.

The vindictive old man, who was as tight as dumpling and buttons could make him, refused it in a drooping tone, and went forth, looking at none. Mrs. Sumfit turned to all parties, and begged them to say what more, to please Master Gammon, she could have done? When Anthony was ready to speak of her Dahlia, she obtruded this question in utter dolefulness. Robert was kindly asked by the farmer to take a pipe among them. Rhoda put a chair for him, but