

A ROMANCE OF BILLY-GOAT HILL

storm until a sharp rap at the door brought the red-headed bear from under the table to answer the summons.

"Well, if it ain't Mis' Squeerington!" cried Phineas Flathers effusively. "Out in all this storm! But I ain't surprised. Did n't I tell you, Maria, that I knowed she 'd bring the baby a birthday present? Come up to the fire, mam. Maria git her a rocker."

"No, no!" cried Miss Lady breathlessly. "I can't stay. I must get to town. My horse broke down in the bridge, and I'm on my way to the Junction to see if I can't get on the next train when it stops for water. I want you to go over and help me on."

"Next train don't stop. It's a express. The local ain't due fer a hour an' a half. You ain't fit to go on yit, mam, nohow. I never seen you all in like this before! Maria, can't you fix her up a cup of coffee or somethin'?"

Miss Lady shook her head, and leaned wearily against the mantel.

"I'll be all right. Are you sure about the trains?"

"Sure az the taxes. You're in fer a wait, an' we'll git a nice little visit out of you. Guess you are 'sprised to see me home this time of day?"

"I had n't thought about it."