

without their knowing it! Why, they left us here on purpose."

"I can never look 'em in the face again!" exclaimed Miss La Creevy, faintly.

"Come!" said Tim. "Let's be a comfortable couple. We shall live in the old house here, where I have been for four-and-forty year; we shall go to the old church, where I've been, every Sunday morning, all through that time; we shall have all my old friends about us—Dick, the archway, the pump, the flower-pots, and Mr. Frank's children, and Mr. Nickleby's children that we shall seem like grandfather and grandmother to. Let's be a comfortable couple, and take care of each other! And if we should get deaf, or lame, or blind, or bed-ridden, how glad we shall be that we have somebody we are fond of, always to talk to and sit with! Let's be a comfortable couple. Now, do, my dear!"

Five minutes after this honest and straightforward speech, little Miss La Creevy and Tim were talking as pleasantly as if they had been married for a score of years, and had never once quarrelled all the time; and five minutes after that, when Miss La Creevy had bustled out to see if her eyes were red and to put her hair to rights, Tim moved with a stately step towards the drawing-room, exclaiming as he went, "There an't such another woman in all London! I *know* there an't!"

By this time, the apoplectic butler was nearly in fits, in consequence of the unheard-of postponement of dinner. Nicholas, who had been engaged in a manner in which every reader may imagine for himself or herself, was hurrying downstairs in obedience to his angry summons, when he encountered a new surprise.

On his way down, he overtook in one of the passages a stranger genteelly dressed in black, who was also moving towards the dining-room. As he was rather lame and walked slowly, Nicholas lingered behind, and was following him step by step, wondering who he was, when he suddenly turned round and caught him by both hands.

"Newman Noggs!" cried Nicholas joyfully.

"Ah! Newman, your own Newman, your own old faithful Newman! My dear boy, my dear Nick, I give you joy—health, happiness, every blessing! I can't bear it—it's too much, my dear boy—it makes a child of me!"