

NICHOLAS TOP

water-side widows is got a wonderful judgment for looks!"

By this I was flattered.

"Now, look you!" says he, being now in his cups and darkly confidential with me, "I'm havin', as I says, no dealin' with a glass. An' why? Accordin' t' the water-side widows 'tis not ill-favor o' face. Then why? I'm tellin' you: 'Tis just because," says he, tapping the table with his forefinger, "Nick Top isn't able t' look hisself in the eye. . . . Pass the bottle. Thank 'e, lad. . . . There you haves it!" says he, with a pitiful little catch of the breath. "Nicholas Top haves a wonderful bad eye!"

I must nod my assent and commiseration.

"In p'int o' beauty," says my uncle, "Nicholas Top is perfectly content with the judgment o' water-side widows, which can't be beat; but for these five year, Lord help un! he've had no love for the eye in his very own head."

'Twas said in such chagrin and depth of sadness that I was moved to melancholy.

"His own eye, lad," he would repeat, "in his very own head!"

My uncle, I confess, had indeed a hint too much of the cunning and furtive about both gait and glance to escape remark in strange places. 'Twas a pity—and a mystery. That he should hang his head who might have held it high! At Twist Tickle, to be sure, he would hop hither and yon in a fashion surprisingly light (and right cheerful); but abroad 'twas either