

"Werry true, mother, werry true," replied George, "'handsome is as handsome does!'" Aint mother right, dad?" inquired the youth, turning towards his father.

"Quite right, my boy; quite right, 'handsome is as handsome does.'"

"And," continued Mrs. Crummy, who supposed that her husband, in admitting her first position, would also subscribe to her second, said, "that the good looks of that there girl, Mary Hayworth or Strayworth, or whatever her name was, should not make us forget that she was no better than she ought to be."

The observation did not produce a controversy; it elicited a sigh from Mr. Crummy, who remarked, "that, the howdacious robbers who plunder Church-yards must, in his opinion, be Jacobins, and nothin' else."

"Now, Oily, dear," interrupted Mrs. Crummy, "don't be a talking about graves, and dead folks of a Christmas eve; I declare it quite makes me creep and crawl all over," continued Mrs. Crummy while she gave herself an alarming shaking, by way of combatting the army of blue devils, which was approaching her in formidable array. "Don't be a talking of church-yards, or the children will choke over their snap-dragons."

"And I can't think," George added, "what makse father trouble his 'ead about a hunbeknown pauper as is dead, and buried, and, I'm bound, forgotten by every body else."

"Vell, boy, vot you say is werry true, but that unfortunate girl does interest me notwithstanding for she vere not a common wagrant. No, don't tell me that; for I know too vell the breed of paupers as is common in vurkuses, and I know she vasn't vun of them. I can't make her out, neither can the Rector; she's beyond us."

"And I suspect, Crum," rejoined his wife, "if you brews and stews three times as long as you've been doing already, you von't be moore the viser, and may be a good deal the vurse."

"Vell, sweetheart," our Beadle affectionately replied, "you know I aint given to moping, but visitations vill overtake us sometimes; natur vill have her ray; but howsomer I vill try and pluck up my spirits."

"That's right," exclaimed his son George, "that's right, father; there's trouble enough abroad, let us be jolly at home."

"Surely, surely," added Mrs. Crummy. "Its proper to be cheerful of a Christmas eve. All the vorld is so, and a Parochial Officer oughtn't to be otherwise."

#### CHAPTER IX.

AND the Beadle's family did give the rein to enjoyment. In the pleasures of the hour, all the past was forgotten; ingenuity was taxed to discover some new form in which mirth might express itself. But, lest weariness should incapacitate the household from the performance of the morrow's duties, the amusements of the evening were brought to an early termination, and the diminishing flame of the snap-dragon admonished them that the hour of retirement had arrived.

With a strong predisposition to slumber, every member of the household repaired to his bed, and a long period had not elapsed before the sleepy god had his rights fully conceded to him, for the inmates of every apartment, save one, were reposing in the arms of Morpheus.

The exception referred to, was the chamber which contained the master and mistress of the work-house. At the date of our annals, the new Poor Law Act had not been conceived, and the forcible separation of man and wife was not enacted by statute, as the penalty attached to poverty. To be poor was, indeed, esteemed a misfortune, whose poignancy it was the duty of the State to mitigate, but it was not regarded as a crime which subjected its victim to the vengeance of the Law. Our fore-fathers, simple people that they were, did not conceive it to be their duty to arrest the purposes of marriage, by preventing the perpetuation of the human family, because the parents may have been poor. They were simple enough to suppose that wives might lie in the embrace of their husbands, and that the State and the Law had no right to put asunder those whom God and the church had joined together. They thought, doubtless, that it was wrong to make men perjure themselves, by doing violence to the vow which they made at their espousals, and separate from those whom they had promised to love and to cherish until death did them part; and so, as there was no law to the contrary, our Beadle and his wife not only occupied the same apartment, but what would have seemed still more alarming to the new Poor Law Commissioners, had they lived at that day, they also slept in the same bed, thus evincing by their example that the beneficent purpose of the state, when legislating upon a question so delicate, was not decided in conformity with the views and tastes of parochial officials, however well it might be applied to those who were accused of the crime of being poor.

Now, the old fashioned practice of a man sleeping with his wife is, we are inclined to suspect, attended with a good deal of comfort. We have