

a most delicate and trying one, and was trembling on the arm of Nicholas, when Mr. Charles took her in his, and led her to another part of the room.

"Have you seen Madeline, my dear," he said, "since she left your house?"

"No, sir!" replied Kate. "Not once."

"And not heard from her, eh? Not heard from her?"

"I have only had one letter," rejoined Kate, gently. "I thought she would not have forgotten me, quite so soon."

"Ah!" said the old man, patting her on the head, and speaking as affectionately as if she had been his favourite child. "Poor dear! what do you think of this, brother Ned? Madeline has only written to her once, only once, Ned, and she didn't think she would have forgotten her quite so soon, Ned."

"Oh! sad, sad; very sad!" said Ned.

The Brothers interchanged a glance, and looking at Kate for a little time without speaking, shook hands, and nodded as if they were congratulating each other on something very delightful.

"Well, well," said brother Charles, "go into that room, my dear—that door yonder—and see if there's not a letter for you from her. I think there's one upon the table. You needn't hurry back, my love, if there is, for we don't dine just yet, and there's plenty of time. Plenty of time."

Kate retired as she was directed. Brother Charles, having followed her graceful figure with his eyes, turned to Mrs. Nickleby, and said:

"We took the liberty of naming one hour before the real dinner-time, ma'am, because we had a little business to speak about, which would occupy the interval. Ned, my dear fellow, will you mention what we agreed upon? Mr. Nickleby, sir, have the goodness to follow me."

Without any further explanation, Mrs. Nickleby, Miss La Creevy, and brother Ned, were left alone together, and Nicholas followed brother Charles into his private room; where, to his great astonishment, he encountered Frank, whom he supposed to be abroad.

"Young men," said Mr. Cheeryble, "shake hands!"

"I need no bidding to do that," said Nicholas, extending his.

"Nor I," rejoined Frank, as he clasped it heartily.