

And if the poor gal can hear them too, I believe heaven looks the brighter to her. You're very good, sir. I asks your pardon, humbly, for all my bad thoughts toward you, and I hope as you'll get a good wife and a true wife yet. That'll be neither shame nor blame to you."

"Thank you, Cray. I hope before long you'll do the same, and teach your children that gentlemen have hearts sometimes as well as poorer men. I shall always take an interest in you and your doings, and my friend here will see that the money I spoke of is handed over to you as soon as you are ready to receive it."

"I don't know about the marrying, my lord," says Joel, sheepishly, "for it seems a troublesome business at the best to me; but there'll be plenty of prayers going up for you from Priestley, and the worst I wishes for you is that they may bring you all the luck you deserve."

"And to think," he continues to himself as he returns to his own home, "that that there's the chap I swore by my poor gal's grave to bring to judgment for her wrongs!"

The eleven-o'clock train next day takes Muir-aven down to the nearest town to Cocklebury. All by himself: he has positively refused to travel any more in Moxon's company. Two hours bring him to the place, but there is no hotel there, only an old-fashioned inn, with rafted ceilings and diamond-shaped windows, called "The Coach and Horses," where our hero is compelled to put up and dine, while he sends a messenger over to Cocklebury. He has not come down-stairs, for he sat up late last night, writing a long detailed account to Mrs. Mordaunt of his early marriage and his wife's identity, so that the worst may be over before he and Irene meet again. And this letter, which winds up with an entreaty that he may go over at once to Cocklebury to see and claim his child, he dispatches as soon as possible to Irene's residence, striving meanwhile to beguile his impatience by an attempt to masticate the freshly-killed beef which the landlady of the "Coach and Horses" places before him, and which only results in his emptying the flask of cognac he has brought with him, and walking up and down the cold, musty-smelling, unused town, until he has nearly worked himself into a fever with impatience and suspense. How he pictures her feelings on opening that important packet! She will shed a few tears, perhaps, at first, poor darling, to learn he has ever stood in so close a relationship to any other woman; but they will soon dry up beneath the feverish delight with

which she will recognize the truth that he is once more free—that they are both free, at last, to love and comfort one another. Ah! that he could but be on the spot to comfort her now! What is this fool of a messenger about, not to return? It is not half a mile to Cocklebury! Why did he not go himself?

Peace! patience! He knows that he has done what is most right and proper in sending an *avant-courrier* to apprise her of his coming; and it will not—it cannot be long before he holds her in his arms again.

*In his arms!* God of heaven! how they tremble at the thought—in his arms!—that have seemed so many times to fold her sweet self against his heart, and closed upon the empty air instead! In his arms! *His darling—his Irene*—the one love of his life! He will kiss away her tears; he will pour his protestations of fidelity in her ear—he will have the right now to explain every thing—to atone for every thing—to offer her the rest of his existence as reparation for the past! And she—his injured angel—his dear, suffering martyr—what a vista of happiness will open out before her!—what a—Hark! what was that? A tap at the door.

"Come in! come in!"

His messenger has returned: the landlady appears before him holding forth an envelope.

"Give it me—at once!" He tears it from her hand, impetuously, and she says afterward, with some degree of umbrage, that the gentleman looked more like a hungry wolf at her, than a man who had had his dinner at the "Coach and Horses."

The room is dark and gloomy. He takes the precious letter to the window; his hand shakes, so that he can scarcely open it. At last! yes, it is her dear writing. Before he reads it he presses kisses on the senseless paper.

"MY DEAR LORD MUIRAVEN:

"I HAVE received your letter. I need not tell you that its contents were a great surprise to me. I was aware, from certain papers belonging to his mother, and confided to me after her death, that my adopted child was your son; but I was little prepared to hear that he had been born in wedlock. For his sake, I sincerely rejoice that it should be so. I can fully enter into your natural anxiety to claim and acknowledge him, and I will send him to you with as little delay as possible. But you must forgive me for declining your kind offer to visit me here, for I have literally seen no one since my dear husband's death, and feel quite unequal to the task of receiving visitors. If you