

a new sense of repulsion and home-sickness; but the room they reached at last was clean and homelike, with a cheerful little fire burning in the grate.

So began Lavinia Kerrens's residence in No. 12 Roscommon street. At first she stayed on day by day with Mrs. Tomes, as her lodger, borne up by the belief that her stay there would cease as soon as she was able to bear the journey in search of Jabez. On journeying to Duke street, Highbury, and finding strangers at No. 127, her confidence received a severe shock. The first pangs of more than one great fear seized her, too. All the money she had in the world, or could hope to have, she had with her. What would happen if it should all be used before she found Jabez? The thought was so terrifying she put it from her, but the realization of her fears was nearer than she imagined.

About this time the occupants of the attic story left unexpectedly, and, after some thought, Lavinia offered herself as tenant. The rent asked somewhat shocked her, and the state of the room after the other tenants left it was revolting to her country-trained senses. Before she could live in it she had it thoroughly cleaned and papered, spending far more on it than she had ever contemplated. She had paid Mrs. Tomes, too, for her accommodation, over-paid her, in fact; but having talked a great deal about her wealthy son, she felt that much was expected of her, and through those first weeks her mind had been easy enough. All day long she was out searching the streets and scanning the names over the shops and offices.

Her first idea had been to search through London in this way, but before she had gone through her own district her spirit forsook her. The streets were so endless, she lost herself so continually, that at last her nerve was gone. For weeks, too, during the hot weather she was so weak and poorly she could scarcely walk at all. Soon after that a real fear gripped her as to her money lasting, and with winter and the near approach of Christmas her fears became a certainty. Unless she found Jabez very soon she must find work to do or go to the workhouse.

When first she grasped to the full the hopelessness of her situation, the thought of it never left her. Something must be done, and she herself must do it; but she felt so utterly forlorn and helpless in that great, uncaring city.

She stood alone in her cold room, very cold it was, for fires were a rare luxury for her now, and gazed hopelessly up through the skylight. Nothing met her anxious eyes but greyness; a thick fog was shutting out the sky and enveloping everything, it crept up the stairs and through her window, it seemed to creep into her bones, too, and about her heart, and the smell of it made her feel ill. Despair was filling her heart, and she was incapable of any effort to throw it off. She owed four weeks' rent, and she knew that unless it was paid she would be turned out—turned into the street at Christmas, or into the workhouse. She thought of past Christmases, spent in ease and comfort, and of her gifts of tea to the old pauper women in the workhouse—she could realize better now the position and feelings of those recipients of her charity. It was difficult for her to believe that Christmas was close at hand; to the residents in her neighborhood it seemed to make no difference, and no one seemed to be interested in trying to make any for them. Everything in this new life of hers was so changed, she felt herself a stranger



YOU DON'T KEEP YOUR PLACE VERY COMFORTABLE.

to her old self. 'It could not be,' she cried, awaking suddenly to the truth, 'it cannot be that I, I, Jabez's mother, will be turned out—sold up!' Her cheeks flushed at the thought. She would make one more effort to get work, one more attempt to find Jabez. With a wealthy son in the same city, she could not be sold up, it was impossible. The owner of the house was a hard man, at least, so the agent and all his tenants said; but he would never so insult the mother of rich Jabez Kerrens.

On her way downstairs she looked in at Mrs. Tomes's door. Mrs. Tomes was washing, and washing was to her a tax on her time and temper. The room, though steamy and heavy with the smell of soap and dirty suds, was warm, and to Mrs. Kerrens's shivering body, comfortable.

'I'm going out,' she said, trying to speak cheerfully. 'I'm going to find Jabez, something tells me I shall. It does seem ridiculous that with him and me in the same town I should be put to such inconvenience and worried up so. 'Tisn't fair to him, either; he wouldn't like to think of his mother being so awkwardly placed. Surely rich men in London ain't so plentiful that they can be lost sight of.'

'They can manage it when they wants to,' said Mrs. Tomes, wisely. 'I have a darter married to a man ever so rich, and they're living in London somewhere, but for the life of me I can't tell where. I never knew nothing about it till somebody told me Polly was married and had a big house and servants, and I thought for certain she'd allow me something, and when she didn't, and never so much as let me know she was married, I made up my mind I'd let her know I knew, and she should pay me to keep away if she didn't pay me nothing else; but I've never been able to find her yet.'

The winter afternoon had closed in, the

lamps were lighted in the streets, the brilliantly-lit shops looked gay and cheerful, and gave her her first glimpse of Christmas preparations. She was quite sorry to turn out of the busy streets into the gloom of Roscommon street. She was tired, too, by that time, and her depression returned as she dragged herself slowly up the dark, dirty stairs. As she neared the top a smell of tobacco smoke greeted her. 'Mrs. Tomes's daughter and her husband must have come at last,' she thought, and she went on her way, feeling more than ever lonely.

When first she opened her own door a wild joy shot through her—Jabez had come! Fire-light, lamp-light, and tobacco smoke greeted her across the threshold, and a man sat by the hearth. But the creature who turned in his seat by the fire to look at her was certainly not Jabez.

'What do you want?' she cried, half angry, half frightened. 'How dare you intrude in this way?'

The man looked at her with ugly eyes a moment, then his jaw settled obstinately. 'Rent!' he answered curtly, 'and be quick!'

Then it had come, she thought; this was the man in possession. She tottered into the room and leaned against the table for support; the man occupied her only chair and he did not offer it to her.

'You don't keep your place very comfortable,' he said, gruffly, kicking the fire together with his boot. 'I had to send to buy coal to keep life in me.'

'Who has sent you?' she asked in a stifled voice.

'Your landlord, of course,' he answered.

'What—what does he mean to—do?'

'Nothing, if you stumps up the money; if you don't, why, he'll be forced to sell.'

(To be Continued.)