

# A L A S !

---

## P A R T I.

*Amelia.*

---

### CHAPTER I.

"IF you will allow me, I shall have the pleasure of reading aloud to you some passages from 'Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings,' by Charles Dickens. I do not know much about the book myself, as I have never read it. I dare say that you know more about it than I do ; but I am given to understand" (with a glance at the page before him) "that Mrs. Lirriper was a lodging-house-keeper, that she kept lodgings in London. She was a very good sort of woman, I believe" (another hasty glance), "but she sometimes had trouble with her servants. I am told that servants are troublesome sometimes" (a slight nervous laugh, the more nervous because it does not seem to be followed by any echo from the audience). "If you will allow me then, as I say, and if you think it will amuse you, I will read you a little of what she says about these troubles."

The foregoing remarks are uttered in a loud, shy, dogged voice by James Burgoyne to the "Oxford Women's Provident Association." His voice is loud because, being quite