

MRS. GAMP'S COMPLAINT AGAINST CHARLES DICKENS.

Being thus confided to the guidance of Mrs. Sairey Gamp, I proceeded, after complimenting the old lady on the wonderful vivacity she exhibited in spite of her years, and the effects of a certain freedom of living in which she had evidently indulged, to explain what had brought me down on a visit to a country in which I began to feel an intense desire to linger as long as it might be found possible that I should be permitted to stay. Finding that I had lately been in London, and was acquainted with many people who either lived, or were often to be found there, Mrs. Gamp suddenly broke in with—"Perhaps, sir, you may know a party which his name is Dickens, and his christening name is Charles?" "I have not," I said, "the honour of knowing Mr Dickens personally; but, through his works, he is known intimately to me, and to all the world besides." "Works!" said Mrs. Gamp; "yes, and you may say works, if it's books as you mean; and pretty works he makes with people as has a character to lose! Hoity-toity! I'd work him, if I ketch'd him here; and so would Betsy Prig. You may have heard, sir, how he have becalmed me and my frequent pardner Betsy, and made such an upset about a bit of a to-do we had about Mrs. Harris; which Betsy certainly did behave spiteful about that angel of a ooman, which a angel, barring pimples, she were. But I putt it to you, sir. Were it right and gentlemanny of Mr. Dickens to putt that there in a book, which we've heard for certain as he did; and becall us for a couple of dram-drinking old sluts? which I've no doubt was his Bible words, though I never seed 'em myself in print. Yes, sir, he've behaved shameful; for he've got me and Betsy a name which is well bekown throughout the whole country. And more than that, sir," continued Mrs. Gamp, her voice sinking down through the huskiness caused by her excitement to a sort of awful whisper—"more than that, sir, he've a-spiled the nussing trade out and out—quite entirely spiled it. They've got, they tell me now, sir, up yonder, a parcel of people as is regular respectable—as good as ladies; and one Miss Nightingal—who but she, indeed!—as attends sick people, and monthly too, for what I know, and takes the bread out of proper people's mouths as is deserving of it. And that's not all. When such as we do have a job—you won't believe it, in course—but we gets allowedanced—in our drop of sperrits, I mean. Yes, sir, allowedanced; when its well bekown it's a thing we can't bear, and always likes to have the bottle putt on the chimney-piece that we may help ourselves when we are so dispoqed. He've spiled the nussing trade, have that Dickens; and that you may depend." "Well, but, my good Mrs. Gamp," I argued, "I cannot but think that you have been trying the new system down here, and have found it answer well into the bargain. Why, you are as vigorous and as strong as you were thirty or forty years ago, when I first heard of you through Mr. Dickens's book. It must have been the allowancing system, surely, that has agreed with you so well." "Well, as to that," replied Mrs. Gamp, "I'll not deny that I've never been bodilly ill, and that I keep up my sperrits, and am as tough and hearty as I ever were; but for all that, I say, sir, that nussin is nussin, and that he have spiled the trade. And moreover, ourn is not the only trade he've a spiled. You may have heard, sir, of a lady, which her name is Squeers?" "Certainly," I said, "the wife of Mr. Whackford Squeers, the schoolmaster of Dotheboys Hall, near Greta-bridge." "The same, sir, I met that good lady only yesterday was a week, and she told me it was all along of Mr. Dickens and his books as her husband was sold up, and likewise two or three more schools down Yorkshire way. I say, sir, 'tis scandalous; and that there Mr. Dickens and his books, you may depend, is at the bottom of it all."—From "Kennaquhair: A Narrative of Utopian Travel." By Theophilus M'Crab, B.A.

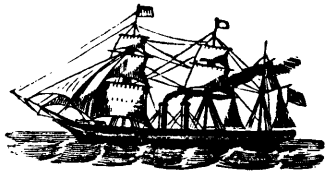
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J. S. HUNTER,

Secretary.

Montreal, 19th February, 1872. 5-8 h

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