

into power, and on him the cocked hat, gold-laced coat, and staff, had all three descended.

"And tomorrow two months it was done!" said Mr. Bumble, with a sigh, "It seems a age."

Mr. Bumble might have meant that he had concentrated a whole existence of happiness into the short space of eight weeks; but the sigh—there was a vast deal of meaning in the sigh.

"I sold myself," said Mr. Bumble, pursuing the same train of reflection, "for six tea-spoons, a pair of sugar-tongs, and a milk-pot, with a small quantity of secondhand furniter, and twenty pound in money. I went very reasonable—cheap, dirt cheap."

"Cheap!" cried a shrill voice in Mr. Bumble's ear: "You would have been dear at any price; and dear enough I paid for you, Lord above knows that."

Mr. Bumble turned and encountered the face of his interesting companion, who, imperfectly comprehending the few words she had overheard of his complaint, had hazarded the foregoing remark at a venture.

"Mrs. Bumble, ma'am!" said Mr. Bumble, with sentimental sternness.

"Well," cried the lady.

"Have the goodness to look at me," said Mr. Bumble, fixing his eyes upon her. "If she stands such a eye as that," said Mr. Bumble to himself, "she can stand any thing. It is a eye I never knew to fail with paupers, and if it fails with her my power is gone."

Whether an exceedingly small expansion of eye is sufficient to quell paupers, who, being lightly fed, are in no very high condition, or whether the late Mrs. Corney was particularly proof against eagle glances, are matters of opinion. The matter of fact is, that the matron was in no way overpowered by Mr. Bumble's scowl, but, on the contrary, treated it with great disdain, and even raised a laugh thereat, which sounded as though it were genuine. On hearing this most unexpected sound, Mr. Bumble looked first incredulous, and afterwards amazed.

He then relapsed into his former state; nor did he rouse himself until his attention was again awakened by the voice of his partner.

"Are you agoing to sit snoring there all day?" inquired Mrs. Bumble.

"I am going to sit here as long as I think proper, ma'am," rejoined Mr. Bumble; "and although I was not snoring, I shall snore, gape, sneeze, laugh, or cry, as the humour strikes me, such being my prerogative."

"Your prerogative!" sneered Mrs. Bumble, with ineffable contempt.

"I said the word, ma'am," observed Mr. Bumble. The prerogative of a man is to command."

"And what's the prerogative of a woman, in the name of goodness?" cried the relist of Mr. Corney deceased.

"To obey, ma'am," thundered Mr. Bumble.

"Your late unfort'nate husband should have taught it you, and then, perhaps, he might have been alive now. I wish he was, poor man!"

Mrs. Bumble, seeing at a glance that the decisive moment had now arrived, and that a blow struck for the mastership on one side or other must necessarily be final and conclusive, no sooner heard this allusion to the dead and gone, than she dropped into a chair, and, with a loud scream that Mr. Bumble was a hard-hearted brute, fell into a paroxysm of tears.

But tears were not the things to find their way to Mr. Bumble's soul; his heart was water-proof.

Like washable beaver hats, that improve with rain, his nerves were rendered stouter and more vigorous by showers of tears, which, being tokens of weakness and so far tacit admissions of his own power, pleased and exalted him. He eyed his good lady with looks of great satisfaction, and begged in an encouraging manner that she would cry her hardest, the exercise being looked upon by the faculty as strongly conducive to health.

"It opens the lungs, washes the countenance, exercises the eyes, and softens down the temper," said Mr. Bumble; "so cry away."

As he discharged himself of this pleasantry, Mr. Bumble took his hat from a peg, and putting it on rather rakishly on one side, as a man might do who felt he had asserted his superiority in a becoming manner, thrust his hands into his pockets, and sauntered towards the door with much ease and waggishness depicted in his whole appearance.

Now Mrs. Corney that was, had tried the tears, because they were less troublesome than a manual assault; but she was quite prepared to make a trial of the latter mode of proceeding, as Mr. Bumble was not long in discovering.

The first proof he experienced of the fact was conveyed in a hollow sound, immediately succeeded by the sudden flying off of his hat to the opposite end of the room. This preliminary proceeding laying bare his head, the expert lady, clasping him tight round the throat with one hand, inflicted a shower of blows (dealt with singular vigour and dexterity) upon it with the other. This done, she created a little variety by scratching his face and tearing his hair off, and having by this time inflicted as much punishment as she deemed necessary for the offence, she pushed him over a chair, which was luckily well situated for the purpose, and desired him to talk about his prerogative again if he dared.

"Get up," said Mrs. Bumble, in a voice of command, "and take yourself away from here, unless you want me to do something desperate."

Mr. Bumble rose with a very rueful countenance, wondering much what something desperate might be, and picking up his hat, looked towards the door,

"Are you going?" demanded Mrs. Bumble.

"Certainly, my dear, certainly," rejoined Mr.