

It so happened that, owing to a sudden need for extra beds at the Infirmary—one of the frequent consequences of the all-too-often recurring accidents at the works—Tom ultimately was sent home a day or two earlier than had originally been expected or intended. Hence it was somewhat to Mrs. Jaxon's astonishment, and perhaps alarm, that one Friday evening, as she was passing down Young Street, at the back of the school buildings, a tall young fellow rushed out of "The Jolly Grinders," and stopped her by calling her name. In a moment, however, she was reassured by recognising Charlie Furniss.

"Tom's oop yon," he said, pointing with his thumb over his shoulder. "Ef yow'd coom in and see 'im he'd be main and pleased."

She had not the heart to refuse the lad's invitation.

"You'll take care of me, then?" she said, and walked in by Charlie's side.

There was a hush in the noisy talk going on around the small and dirty counter, as she passed through the bar. Certainly no one seemed at all inclined to utter a word, good or bad. Even the most sodden drunkard stared and held his glass from his lips until the further door had closed behind her. But Furniss saw that she gave a little shiver of disgust and relief when the scene was shut out.

The small, upstairs room in which Mary, in another second, found herself, certainly showed no traces of the horrors that were working havoc below. But for the sound of loud bursts of laughter and the odours of beer and tobacco which together came up through the floor it might have been the home of any labourer or mechanic. She noticed that one or two of the parochial library books were lying upon a box, and that Furniss had adorned the walls with sketches from his own pencil—sketches of which two or three had previously been brought to the school for her inspec-

tion and criticism. The lad had a decided gift for drawing.

Beresford put his thin white fingers into the hand she held out. Mrs. Jaxon always treated her scholars as gentlemen, which perhaps may have been the reason that she invariably received the attention due to a lady.

"How glad I am to see you!" she said. "What have you all been doing up here, may I ask?"

"Dominoes and talk," answered Stacey for the rest. "Oos minded, arl on oos, wot yow said aboot gambling, but oos thowt theer warn't no 'arm in dominoes ef oos didn't play for money. 'Ere's a chair for 'er, Charlie."

She nodded brightly, and laughed, as she accepted the seat.

"You must really teach me the game some day, as you play it. I cannot imagine how you make it interesting. And now, Beresford, how are you? And have the rest told you all the news of the place?"

She stayed and chatted for ten minutes, and then rose to leave.

"It's getting quite too dark to stop any longer—unless there was anything particular you wanted to say," observing rather a disappointed expression come over the happy faces. "You tell me, Furniss."

But Furniss looked on the ground, and began to swing backwards and forwards a clogged foot, watching the metal-capped toe with the most intense absorption. Clearly no one was quite ready to explain, and Mary resumed her chair.

"I expect it is about Baptism," she said, comprehending well that only an approach to religious subjects would induce this unwonted shyness. "What have you all decided?"

"Oos 'ud loike to be done," from Stacey; "on'y can I coom? I ain't no clo'es but these." For he was poor, his wages as a grinder being much less than those of Furniss and Beresford.

"It isn't the clothes that matter," Mrs. Jaxon assured him quietly, though her heart was filled with