

Slimming or Slumming? Dickens and the Shift from Monthly to Weekly Serialization

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Secondary citations

Q1. *All the Year Round* was in many ways the epitome of the furnace-like conditions in which much of the best Victorian fiction was created. It raised to the highest pitch what Thackeray called the “Life & Death” struggle with the unwritten number. At the same time it was, when handled properly, a superb instrument for fiction. No writer in *All the Year Round* could forget for a moment the mechanics of publication. The pace, narrowness and need for ‘incessant condensation’ cut away all fat; the responsiveness of the sales to any slackening tension kept the novelist nervous and alert. Weekly intervals meant that a reader came to every instalment primed, which was not the case with monthly serialisation where the plot had that much longer to fade in the memory.

(Sutherland, 172-3)

Q2. The method of publishing an important work of fiction in monthly instalments was considered a hazardous experiment, which could not fail to set its mark upon the novel as a whole. Mr. Dickens led the way in making the experiment, and his enterprise was crowned with such success that most of the good novels now find their way to the public in the form of a monthly dole. . . .

But what are we to say to the new experiment which is now being tried of publishing good novels week by week? Hitherto the weekly issue of fiction has been connected with publication of the lowest class - small penny and halfpenny serials that found in the multitude some compensation for the degradation of their readers. . . . Lust was the *alpha* and murder the *omega* of these tales. . . .

Mr. Dickens has tried another experiment. The periodical which he conducts is addressed to a much higher class of readers than any which the penny journals would reach, and he has spread before them novel after novel specially adapted to their tastes. . . . If Mr. Dickens, however, chose to keep the common herd of readers together by the marvels of an improbable story, he attracted the better class of readers by his fancy, his fun, and his sentiment. Altogether, his success was so great as to warrant the conclusion. . . . that the weekly form of publication is not incompatible with a very high order of fiction.

(E.S. Dallas, *The Times*, 17 Oct. 1861, 6)

Q3. Perhaps one of the most striking features of the periodical literature of the day is the general levelling of all distinctions grounded upon mere price. The eminent author may now descend from the six shilling Quarterly even to the penny weekly without the slightest fear of losing caste; and Cobbett’s well-known defiance of the prejudice of his time by calling one of his own publications “Two-penny Trash” would have been unintelligible to the present generation. . . . Have we not had Mr. Dickens, Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, Mr Wilkie Collins, and Mrs Gaskell addressing us through the popular twopenny numbers of “Household Words” and “All the Year Round” . . .

(*Publishers’ Circular*, 31 Dec 1861, 694)

Q4. Although the novels of Anthony Trollope and Wilkie Collins were sold to republication syndicates for reprinting in newspaper columns as filler, such transactions did not shape or constitute original serial fiction. Dickens’s monthly and weekly parts democratized literature, putting new work into the hands and homes of every economic and social class . . .

(Robert Patten, ‘Serial Literature’, in *Oxford Reader’s Companion to Dickens*, 514-9)

Q5. The violent stimulant of serial publication -- of weekly publication, with its necessity for frequent and rapid recurrence of piquant situation and startling incident -- is the thing of all others most likely to develop the germ, and bring it to fuller and darker bearing. What Mr. Wilkie Collins has done with delicate care and laborious reticence, his followers will attempt without any such discretion.

(Oliphant, 568).

“An almost compulsive pattern of repetition”

- A) A sudden decision to transform the scale & form of a narrative already at least at the planning stage;
- B) Prompted by an urgent need to protect an investment in a new weekly paper threatened by an inadequate level of circulation;
- C) Accompanied by the mechanical issuing of the same narrative in parallel monthly portions, as an insurance against the alienation of an existing conservative readership;
- D) Leading to a growing frustration with the frequency & brevity of composition in weekly numbers; &
- E) Resulting in a degree of nervous exhaustion or physical collapse noticeably more acute than that on completing the typical monthly serial.

1) The Moment of *Master Humphrey's Clock* (1840-1)

A. Instead of being published in monthly parts at a shilling each, only, it will be published in weekly parts at three pence and monthly parts at a shilling--my object being to baffle the imitators and make it as novel as possible. The plan is a new one--I mean the plan of the fiction--and it will comprehend a great variety of tales.

(To George Cattermole, 13 Jan 1840, Pilgrim 2:7)

B. He had not written more than two or three chapters [of the Little Nell story], when the capability of the subject for more extended treatment than he had at first proposed to give to it pressed itself upon him, and he resolved to throw everything else aside, devoting himself to the one story only. There were other strong reasons for this. Of the first number of the *Clock* nearly seventy thousand were sold; but with the discovery that there was no continuous tale the orders at once diminished, and a change must have been made even if the material and means for it had not been ready.

(Forster 1:179)

C. His difficulties were the quickly recurring times of publication, the confined space in each number that yet had to contribute its individual effect, and (from the suddenness with which he had begun) the impossibility of getting in advance. "I was obliged to cramp most dreadfully what I thought a pretty idea in the last chapter. I hadn't room to turn:" to this or a similar effect his complaints are frequent, and of the vexations named it was by far the worst. But he steadily bore up against all . . .

(Forster 1:180-1)

2) The Moment of *Household Words* (1854)

A. Resolved [by the five partners] That Mr. Charles Dickens is hereby engaged to write, at his earliest convenience, a story . . . equal in length to five single monthly numbers of Bleak House . . . to be published in Household Words in continuous weekly portions . . . with a view to the enlargement of the circulation of Household Words and the consequent enhancement of the value of their several shares.

(28 Dec 1853, Pilgrim 7:911)

B. "The difficulty of the space," he wrote after a few weeks' trial, "is CRUSHING. Nobody can have an idea of it who has not had experience of patient fiction-writing with some elbow-room always, and open places in perspective. In this form, with any kind of regard to the current number, there is absolutely no such thing."

(Forster 3:45)

C. Why I found myself so "used up", after *Hard Times*, I scarcely know. Perhaps because . . . the compression and close condensation necessary for that disjointed form of publication, gave me perpetual trouble. But I really was--tired!--which is a result so very incomprehensible that I can't forget it.

(To The Hon. Mrs. Richard Watson, 1 Nov 1854, Pilgrim 7:453)

3) The Moment of *All the Year Round* (1859-61)

A. "I have struck out a rather original and bold idea. That is, at the end of each month to publish the monthly part in the green cover, with the two illustrations, at the old shilling. This will give *All the Year Round* always the interest and precedence of a fresh weekly portion during the month; and will give me my old standing with my old public, and the advantage (very necessary in this story [*A Tale of Two Cities*]) of having numbers of people who read it in no portions smaller than a monthly part."

(Forster 3:322)

B. "The sacrifice of *Great Expectations* is really and truly made for myself. The property of *All the Year Round* is far too valuable, in every way, to be much endangered. Our fall is not large, but we have a considerable advance in hand of the story we are now publishing, and there is no vitality in it . . . Now, if I went into a twenty-number serial, I should cut off my power of doing anything serial here for two good years--and that would be a most perilous thing."

(Forster 3:328-9)

C. I have just finished my book of *Great Expectations*, and am the worse for wear. Neuralgic pains in the face have troubled me a good deal, and the work has been pretty close. But I hope that the book is a good book, and I have no doubt of very soon throwing off the little damage it has done me.

(To W.C. Macready, 11 Jun 1861, Pilgrim 9:424)

Length of Monthly/Weekly Instalments in Serials by Dickens and Collins

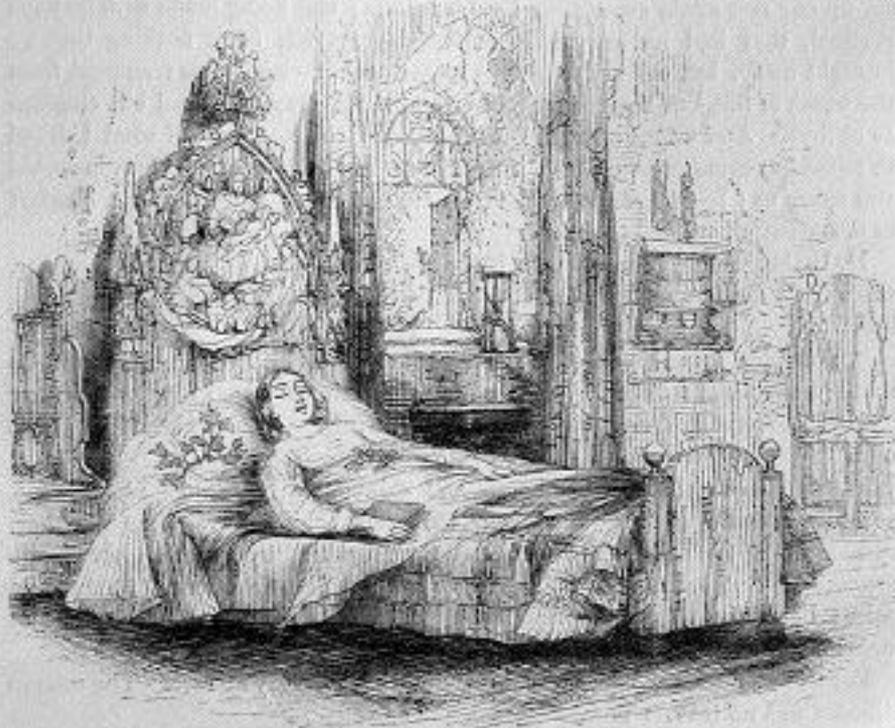
Novel (Serial Publication)	Total Word Count	Monthly Parts		Weekly Parts	
		No .	Average Word Count	No .	Average Word Count
<i>Pickwick Papers</i> (1836-7) in monthly fascicles	c.300 000	20	c.15 000	-	-
<i>The Old Curiosity Shop</i> (1840-1) in <i>Master Humphrey's Clock</i>	c.220,000	-	-	40	c.5500
<i>A Tale of Two Cities</i> (1859) in monthly fascicles/ <i>All the Year Round</i>	c.135,000	7	c.19 000	31	c.4500
<i>Our Mutual Friend</i> (1864-5) in monthly fascicles	c.330 000	20	c.16 500	-	-
<i>No Name</i> (1862-3) in <i>All the Year Round</i>	c.270 000	-	-	45	c.6000
<i>Armadale</i> (1864-6) in <i>Cornhill</i>	c.300 000	20	c.15 000	-	-
<i>Heart and Science</i> (1882-3) in <i>Belgravia</i> / e.g. <i>Liverpool Weekly Post</i>	c.130 000	11	c.12 000	28	c.4000
<i>The Legacy of Cain</i> (1888) in e.g. <i>Sheffield WeeklyIndependent</i>	c.120 000	-	-	21	c.5500

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gone. Sorrow was dead indeed in her, but peace and perfect happiness were born; imaged in her tranquil beauty and profound repose.

And still her former self lay there, unaltered in this change. Yes. The old fireside had smiled upon that same sweet face; it had passed like a dream through haunts of misery and care; at the door of the poor schoolmaster on the summer evening, before the furnace fire upon the cold wet night, at the still bedside of the dying boy, there had been the same mild lovely look. So shall we know the angels in their majesty, after death.



The old man held one languid arm in his, and had the small hand tight folded to his breast, for warmth. It was the hand she had stretched out to him with her last smile—the hand that had led him on through all their wanderings. Ever and anon he pressed it to his lips; then hugged it to his breast again, murmuring that it was warmer now; and as he said it he looked, in agony, to those who stood around, as if imploring them to help her.

She was dead, and past all help, or need of it. The ancient rooms she had seemed to fill with life, even while her own was waning fast—the garden she had tended—the eyes she had gladdened—the noiseless haunts of many a thoughtful hour—the paths she had trodden as it were but yesterday—could know her no more.

“It is not,” said the schoolmaster, as he bent down to kiss her on the

"Familiar in their Mouths as HOUSEHOLD WORDS."—SHAKESPEARE.

HOUSEHOLD WORDS.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL.

CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

N^o. 1.]

SATURDAY, MARCH 30, 1850.

[PRICE 2d.

A PRELIMINARY WORD.

THE name that we have chosen for this publication expresses, generally, the desire we have at heart in originating it.

We aspire to live in the Household affections, and to be numbered among the Household thoughts, of our readers. We hope to be the comrade and friend of many thousands of people, of both sexes, and of all ages and conditions, on whose faces we may never look. We seek to bring into innumerable homes, from the stirring world around us, the knowledge of many social wonders, good and evil, that are not calculated to render any of us less ardently persevering in ourselves, less tolerant of one another, less faithful in the progress of mankind, less thankful for the privilege of living in this summer-dawn of time.

No mere utilitarian spirit, no iron binding of the mind to grim realities, will give a harsh tone to our Household Words. In the bosoms of the young and old, of the well-to-do and of the poor, we would tenderly cherish that light of Fancy which is inherent in the human breast; which, according to its nurture, burns with an inspiring flame, or sinks into a sullen glare, but which (or woe betide that day!) can never be extinguished. To show to all, that in all familiar things, even in those which are repellant on the surface, there is Romance enough, if we will find it out:—to teach the hardest workers at this whirling wheel of toil, that their lot is not necessarily a moody, brutal fact, excluded from the sympathies and graces of imagination; to bring the greater and the lesser in degree, together, upon that wide field, and mutually dispose them to a better acquaintance and a kinder understanding—is one main object of our Household Words.

The mightier inventions of this age are not, to our thinking, all material, but have a kind of souls in their stupendous bodies which may find expression in Household Words. The traveller whom we accompany on his railroad or his steamboat journey, may gain, we hope, some compensation for incidents which these later generations have outlived, in new asso-

ciations with the Power that bears him onward; with the habitations and the ways of life of crowds of his fellow creatures among whom he passes like the wind; even with the towering chimneys he may see, spirting out fire and smoke upon the prospect. The swart giants, Slaves of the Lamp of Knowledge, have their thousand and one tales, no less than the Genii of the East; and these, in all their wild, grotesque, and fanciful aspects, in all their many phases of endurance, in all their many moving lessons of compassion and consideration, we design to tell.

Our Household Words will not be echoes of the present time alone, but of the past too. Neither will they treat of the hopes, the enterprises, triumphs, joys, and sorrows, of this country only, but, in some degree, of those of every nation upon earth. For nothing can be a source of real interest in one of them, without concerning all the rest.

We have considered what an ambition it is to be admitted into many homes with affection and confidence; to be regarded as a friend by children and old people; to be thought of in affliction and in happiness; to people the sick room with airy shapes 'that give delight and hurt not,' and to be associated with the harmless laughter and the gentle tears of many hearths. We know the great responsibility of such a privilege; its vast reward; the pictures that it conjures up, in hours of solitary labour, of a multitude moved by one sympathy; the solemn hopes which it awakens in the labourer's breast, that he may be free from self-reproach in looking back at last upon his work, and that his name may be remembered in his race in time to come, and borne by the dear objects of his love with pride. The hand that writes these faltering lines, happily associated with *some* Household Words before to-day, has known enough of such experiences to enter in an earnest spirit upon this new task, and with an awakened sense of all that it involves.

Some tillers of the field into which we now

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL.

CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED HOUSEHOLD WORDS.

N^o. 201.]

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1863.

[PRICE 2d.]

A DARK NIGHT'S WORK.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF "MARY BARTON."

CHAPTER IX.

RALPH CORBET found it a very difficult thing to keep down his curiosity during the next few days. It was a miserable thing to have Ellinor's unspoken secret severing them like a phantom. But he had given her his word that he would make no further inquiries from her. Indeed, he thought he could well enough make out the outline of past events; still, there was too much left to conjecture for his mind not to be always busy on the subject. He felt inclined to probe Mr. Wilkins, in their after-dinner conversation, in which his host was frank and lax enough on many subjects. But once touch on the name of Dunster, and Mr. Wilkins sank into a kind of suspicious depression of spirits; talking little, and with evident caution; and from time to time shooting furtive glances at his interlocutor's face. Ellinor was resolutely impervious to any attempts of his to bring his conversations with her back to the subject which more and more engrossed Ralph Corbet's mind. She had done her duty, as she understood it; and had received assurances which she was only too glad to believe fondly with all the tender faith of her heart. Whatever came to pass, Ralph's love would still be hers; nor was he unwarned of what might come to pass in some dread future day. So she shut her eyes to what might be in store for her (and, after all, the chances were immeasurably in her favour); and she bent herself with her whole strength into enjoying the present. Day by day, Mr. Corbet's spirits flagged. He was, however, so generally uniform in the tenor of his talk—never very merry, and always avoiding any subject that might call out deep feeling either on his own, or any one else's part, that few people were aware of his changes of mood. Ellinor felt them, though she would not acknowledge them; it was bringing her too much face to face with the great terror of her life.

One morning he announced the fact of his brother's approaching marriage; the wedding was hastened on account of some impending event in the duke's family; and the home letter he had received that day, was to bid his presence at Stokely Castle, and also to desire him to be at

home by a certain time, not very distant, in order to look over the requisite legal papers, and to give his assent to some of them. He gave many reasons why this unlooked-for departure of his was absolutely necessary; but no one doubted it. He need not have alleged such reiterated excuses. The truth was, he was restrained and uncomfortable at Ford Bank ever since Ellinor's confidence. He could not rightly calculate on the most desirable course for his own interests, while his love for her was constantly being renewed by her sweet presence. Away from her, he could judge more wisely. Nor did he allege any false reasons for his departure; but the sense of relief to himself was so great at his recal home, that he was afraid of having it perceived by others; and so took the very way which, if others had been as penetrating as himself, would have betrayed him.

Mr. Wilkins, too, had begun to feel the restraint of Ralph's grave watchful presence. Ellinor was not strong enough to be married; nor was the promised money forthcoming if she had been. And to have a fellow dawdling about the house all day, sauntering into the flower-garden, peering about everywhere, and having a kind of right to put all manner of unexpected questions, was anything but agreeable. It was only Ellinor that clung to his presence; clung as though some shadow of what might happen before they met again had fallen on her spirit. As soon as he had left the house she flew up to a spare bedroom window, to watch for the last glimpse of the fly which was taking him into the town. And then she kissed the part of the pane on which his figure, waving an arm out of the carriage window, had last appeared; and went down slowly to gather together all the things he had last touched—the pen he had mended, the flower he had played with, and to lock them up in the little quaint cabinet that had held her treasures since she was a tiny child.

Miss Monro was, perhaps, very wise in proposing the translation of a difficult part of Dante for a distraction to Ellinor. The girl went meekly, if reluctantly, to the task set her by her good governess, and by-and-by her mind became braced by the exertion.

Ralph's people were not very slow in discovering that something had not gone on quite smoothly with him at Ford Bank. They knew his ways

THE LEGACY OF GAIN.

BY WILKIE COLLINS. Author of "THE WOMAN IN WHITE," "THE EVER AFTER," &c., &c.

[The Night of Transference is Reserved.] FIRST PART: 1860-1861. EVENTS IN THE PRISON, RELATIVES WITH DOUBTS.

CHAPTER I.



The request of a woman who has claims on me that I must not dream, I cannot in look back through an long interval of years, and to describe events which took place within the walls of an English prison during the earlier period of my captivity.

Thinking my task by the light which later experience casts on it, I think I shall not shrink from recording some incidents near the fountain of my grief.

I propose to pass over in silence the name of the town in which it situated the prison now confined to my care. I shall observe a whole generation in passing to individuals—some dead, some living, of the present time.

Being obliged to write of a woman who frequently suffered the extreme penalty of the law, I think she will be sufficiently identified if I call her The Prisoner. Of her first process granted on the evening before her execution, there may be distinguished one from the other by allusions to their condition in life. I have introduced them as The Chaplain, The Minister, and The Doctor. The fourth was a young woman. She has no claim on my consideration, and, when she is mentioned, her name may appear. There remains another prisoner, I believe forgotten, that they influence in no way whatever the sense of responsibility which remains as honest men to repeat the truth.

CHAPTER II.

The first of the events which I must now relate was the acquisition of The Prisoner by the master of the workhouse.

They had lived together in matrimony for little more than a year. The husband, a gentleman by birth and education, had naturally attended his duties by marriage to a woman in an inferior rank of life. He was fast declining into a state of poverty, through his own mistaken extravagance at the time when he met with his death at his wife's hand.

Without attempting to excuse him, he desired, in my mind, some tribute of respect. It is not to be denied that he was prodigal in his habits and violent in his temper. But it is equally true that he was affectionate in the domestic circle, and, when moved by unobscured remembrance, sincerely pained for the misdeeds which he committed, that accompanied him. If his wife had killed him in a fit of jealous rage, or in a fit of passion, he would have been convicted of manslaughter, and might have received a light sentence. But the evidence so undeniably revealed delirium and morbid premeditation, that the only defence attempted by her counsel was madness, and the only witness called to be a physician, who was a resident who condemned the woman to die. Three witnesses, members of the community, who, though they were not present at the trial, were brought before the dead body, and, although they were not of high rank, and consequently were not to be considered in the proceedings, but the judge held them, and the Court Secretary held them. They were solemnly sworn, and the judge was accordingly sworn.

The Chaplain intervened as to the consideration of the evidence, and the evidence was read to the jury, and the jury was sworn.

On the evening before the execution, the PRISONER had written to her mother, and she had written to her mother, and she had written to her mother.

On the evening before the execution, the PRISONER had written to her mother, and she had written to her mother, and she had written to her mother.

not easily reached in my later experience, and not able to say. This only I know; my heart broke for the child, which she was laughing and laughing, and something fell from me on the breast which I don't deny might have been a tear. A few of the boys, nearly broken men, which my two children used to play with were still in my possession—my little boy, my poor wife's favourite, the old woman's favourite, etc. These I took from their repository when the attraction of my watch showed signs of falling. The child pressed on them with her chubby hands, and screamed with pleasure. And the boy was watching for her laughter, and, every hour still, she mother desired it.

My duty required me to let the prisoner know that her little daughter had arrived. Did that heart of iron melt at last? It might have been so, or it might not—she never said a word, but she never said a word.

The Minister had consented to help me. I received him in another room. Having introduced his companion to me, the Chaplain immediately withdrew. I had only to look at the Minister's face—pale, thin, and agitated—to see that he was a sensitive man, and always able to control his nerves on occasions which would have proved average. A kind, I might almost say a noble face, and a voice sweetly persuasive, at once impressed me in the lowest. The words of welcome that I spoke were intended to comfort him. They failed to produce the impression on which I had counted.

"My experience," he said, "has included many melancholy duties, and has tried my conscience in many terrible moments; but I have never yet found myself in the presence of an unrepentant criminal, sentenced to death, and that without a woman and a mother. I was, at that time, shaken by the prospect before me."

I suggested that he should wait awhile, in the hope that time and quiet might help him. He thanked me, and refused.

"If I have any knowledge of myself," he said, "errors of anticipation have their hold when I am free to talk with a woman and on me. The longer I remain here, the less likely I shall appear to the world that has been placed in me—the trust which I have placed in me to deserve."

My own observations of human nature told me that this was wisely said. I let the way at once to the cell.

CHAPTER IV.

The Prisoner was seated on her bed quietly talking with the women associated to watch her. When she rose to answer to the Minister's call. The Minister looked at her, and he had not happened to see it within the walls of a prison.

Reflexes to the picture gallery of their growing away of Holy Family in golden succession, where that the line of the Madonna, among the rank and file of Italian painters, he limited to one changeable and familiar type. I was hardly able to be believed when I say that the personal appearance of the prisoner recalled that type. She presented the delicate light hair, the quick eye, her finely shaped lower features, and the naturally oval form of face, repeated in hundreds on hundreds of the conventional works of art to which I have referred to allude. To those who doubt me, I can only declare that what I have written is unadorned and absolute truth. Let me add that daily observation of all classes of criminals, extending over many years, has considerably strengthened my faith in physiology as a safe guide to the discovery of character. Nervous trepidation looks like guilt. Guilt, firmly retained by internalized, looks like innocence. One of the most striking features placed under my charge was the sympathy which he was willing for the trial of every person who saw him, including even the persons employed in the prison. Only the other day, ladies and gentlemen coming to visit on, passed a body of men at work on the road. Judges of physiology among them were kindled at the spectacle, and they stopped to inspect every line that they noticed. They conversed with me on the near neighbourhood of an early inmate of the workhouse, and saw a group of honest laborers whose only crime was poverty, employed by the parish.

Having introduced the female master to leave the responsibility to take care that she walked within walls, I looked again at the Minister.

Controlled by the serious responsibility that he had undertaken, he justified what he had said to me. His gaze still directed, he was now unobscured master of himself. I turned to the door to leave him alone with the Prisoner. She called me back.

"Before this gentleman tries to convert me," she said, "I want you to walk here and as a witness."

Finding that we were both willing to comply with this request, she addressed herself directly to the Minister. "I suggest I promise to listen to your explanation," she began. "What do you promise to do for me in return?"

The voice in which she spoke to him was steady and clear, a marked contrast to the tremulous uncertainty with which he answered her.

"I promise to urge you to repentance and the confession of your crime. I promise to improve the situation of your mind in the which to save your own guilty

Let me promise a weakness, however, perhaps, of my office. I was so sorry for the child—I hesitated. My silence, perhaps, the Minister. She attracted to the Minister with the sleeping child in her arms.

"I have, say you have sometimes thought of adopting a child?" she said. "Perhaps you see some new child in my mind when I speak of your great content by a sacrifice. Will you take this unrepentant criminal little creature home with you?" The last her self-possessed voice said. "A maintenance creature however," she burst out. "Think of that."

God knows how I still shrank from it. But there was no alternative now. I was bound to remember my duty to the smallest man, whose official position at that moment was, in some degree at least, due to my hesitation in accepting my authority. Could I allow the prisoner to pressure on his compassionate nature, and to leave him into a decision, which, in his release respect, he might feel, reason to regret? I spoke to her. Does the man live who has to say what I had to say—could have spoken to the doomed mother?

"I am sorry I have allowed this to go on," I said. "It is justice to yourself, sir, don't answer."

She turned to me with a look of fury. "He shall answer," she said.

I saw, or thought I saw, signs of yielding in his face. "Take time," I persisted, "take time to consider before you decide."

"Take time," she repeated. "Are you impatient enough to talk of time, in my presence?"

She laid the sleeping child on her bed, and fell on her knees before the Minister. "I promise to bear



your subscription—I promise to do all a woman can do to believe and respect. Oh, I know myself. My heart, once hardened, is a heart that no human creature can touch. The one way to my better nature—I have a better nature—is through that poor babe. Save her from the workhouse. Don't let them make a wiper of her." She said prostrate at his feet, and laid her hands in frenzy on the floor. "You want to save my guilty soul," she concluded him furiously. "There's but one way of doing it. Save my child."

He raised her. Her fierce, landless eyes questioned his face in a mute repetition dreadful to see. He felt, a foreboding of death—the death that was so near—struck her with a shivering fit; her head dropped on the minister's shoulder. Other men might have shrunk from the contact of it. That true Christian let it rest.

Under the maddening vision of suspense, her sinking nature revived for an instant, in a whisper, she was fast to put the extreme question to him. "Yes or No?"

"Yes," he answered. "Yes." A brief breath of relief, just visible in the silence, took me that she had heard him. It was her last effort. He had her, insensibly, on the bed by the side of her sleeping child. "Look at them," was all he said to me. "How could I refuse?"

CHAPTER V.

The services of my medical officers were required, in order to hasten the recovery of the prisoner's senses. When the doctor and I left the cell together, she was composed, and ready for the performance of her promise to listen to the explanation of the Minister. The sleeping child was left with them. As we stepped into the corridor, I gave the female warden her instructions to remain on the watch, and to return to her post when she saw the Minister come out.

In the meantime my companion had walked on a little way.

"I suggest of a city and experience within the walls of his profession," he was in other respects a man with a prodigious mind; held to the verge of enthusiasm in the expression of his opinion, and possessed of a command of language, that carried everything before it. Let me add that he was just and merciful in his intercourse with others, and that he had been a man of high rank.

instinct of judging the extent of her feelings, she looked at the woman, which she saw. The Prisoner had shown her words her. I thought the Chaplain's advice to let me go, and give the servant the necessary instructions. When she entered the room, I looked at the woman attentively for the first time.

There was a fine complexion, a well-set figure, and a natural grace of movement—these were her personal attributes, so far as I could see. Her delicate nose, in my mind, especially noticeable. Under a heavy forehead, her piercing eyes looked out at persons and things with an expression which was not to my taste. Her large mouth—another defect, in my opinion—would have been recommended to nature, in the education of many men, by her magnificent teeth, which, well-shaped, evenly regular, glittered in playing—your night perhaps, have seen the beauty of an absolute nature in the brightly lustrous of her skin. While I was saying to describe her, let me not forget her dress. A woman's dress is the mirror in which we may see the reflection of a woman's nature. Bearing in mind the occasionally sad and impressive circumstances under which she had brought the child in the prison—the poverty of nature in her gown, and her honest implied rather a total want of feeling, or a total want of tact. As to her position in life, let me confess that I felt, after a close examination, at a loss to determine if she was certainly not a help. The prisoner had spoken of her as if she were a domestic servant who had forfeited her right to consideration and respect. And she had entered the prison, as a nurse might have entered it, in charge of a child. I did not see what we were not clever enough to find the answer to a riddle—I gave it up.

"What can I do for you?" I asked.

"Perhaps you can tell me," she answered, "how much longer I am to be kept waiting in this prison."

"The decision," I reminded her, "doesn't depend on me."

"Then who does it depend on?"

The Minister had undoubtedly acquired the sole right of deciding. It was for him to say whether the woman should, or should not, remain in attendance on the child whom he had adopted. In the meanwhile, the feeling of distrust which was gaining on my mind warned me to remember the value of reserve in holding intercourse with a stranger.

"She seemed to be fretted at my silence. "If the decision doesn't rest with you, sir," she said, "why did you tell me to stay in the waiting room?"

"I've brought the little girl into the prison," I said. "Was it not natural to suppose that your mistress might want you?"

"Stay, sir?"

I had evidently given offence. I stopped directly.

"No person on the face of the earth," she declared loudly, "has ever had the right to look herself my mistress. Of my own free will, sir, I took charge of the child."

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