

The light flows round them with a happy tune,
While the uniting charm is made complete
With hands thrice waved towards the setting moon,
And the buds open to give us flowers sweet.

HUNTED DOWN.

BY CHARLES DICKENS.

IN TWO PORTIONS. PORTION THE SECOND.

IV.

FOR six or seven months, I saw no more of Mr. Slinkton. He called once at my house, but I was not at home; and he once asked me to dine with him in the Temple, but I was engaged. His friend's Assurance was effected in March. Late in September or early in October, I was down at Scarborough for a breath of sea air, where I met him on the beach. It was a hot evening; he came towards me with his hat in his hand; and there was the walk I had felt so strongly disinclined to take, in perfect order again, exactly in front of the bridge of my nose.

He was not alone; he had a young lady on his arm. She was dressed in mourning, and I looked at her with great interest. She had the appearance of being extremely delicate, and her face was remarkably pale and melancholy; but she was very pretty. He introduced her, as his niece, Miss Niner.

"Are you strolling, Mr. Sampson? Is it possible you can be idle?"

It was possible, and I was strolling.

"Shall we stroll together?"

"With pleasure."

The young lady walked between us, and we walked on the cool sea sand in the direction of Filey.

"There have been wheels here," said Mr. Slinkton. "And now I look again, the wheels of a hand-carriage! Margaret, my love, your shadow, without doubt!"

"Miss Niner's shadow?" I repeated, looking down at it on the sand.

"Not that one," Mr. Slinkton returned, laughing. "Margaret, my dear, tell Mr. Sampson."

"Indeed," said the young lady, turning to me, "there is nothing to tell—except that I constantly see the same invalid old gentleman, at all times, wherever I go. I have mentioned it to my uncle, and he calls the gentleman my shadow."

"Does he live in Scarborough?" I asked.

"He is staying here."

"Do you live in Scarborough?"

"No, I am staying here. My uncle has placed me with a family here, for my health."

"And your shadow?" said I, smiling.

"My shadow," she answered, smiling too, "is—like myself—not very robust, I fear; for, I lose my shadow sometimes, as my shadow loses me at other times. We both seem liable to confinement to the house. I have not seen my shadow for days and days; but it does oddly happen, occasionally, that wherever I go, for many days together, this gentleman goes. We

have come together in the most unfrequented nooks on this shore."

"Is this he?" said I, pointing before us.

The wheels had swept down to the water's edge, and described a great loop on the sand—turning. Bringing the loop back towards us, and spinning it out as it came, was a hand-carriage drawn by a man.

"Yes," said Miss Niner, "this really is my shadow, uncle!"

As the carriage approached us and we approached the carriage, I saw within it an old man, whose head was sunk on his breast, and who was enveloped in a variety of wampers. He was drawn by a very quiet but very lame-looking man, with iron-grey hair, who was slightly lame. They had passed us, when the carriage stopped, and the old gentleman, putting out his arm, called to me by my name. I went back, and was absent from Mr. Slinkton and his niece for about five minutes.

When I rejoined them, Mr. Slinkton was the first to speak. Indeed, he said to me in a low voice before I came up with him: "It is very possible you have not been longer, or my niece may have died of curiosity to know who her shadow is, Mr. Sampson."

"An old East India Director," said I. "An intimate friend of our friend's at whose house I first had the pleasure of meeting you. A certain Major Banks. You have heard of him?"

"Never."

"Very rich, Miss Niner; but very old, and very crippled. An amiable man—sensible—most interested in you. He has just been expatiating on the affection that he has observed to exist between you and your uncle."

Mr. Slinkton was holding his hat again, as he passed his hand up the straight walk, as if himself went up it serenely, after me.

"Mr. Sampson," he said, tenderly pressing his niece's arm in his, "our affection was always a strong one, for we have had but few near ties. We have still fewer now. We have associations to bring us together, that are not of this world, Margaret."

"Dear uncle!" murmured the young lady, and turned her face aside to hide her tears.

"My niece and I have such remembrances and regrets in common, Mr. Sampson," she feelingly pursued, "that it would be strange indeed if the relations between us were cold or indifferent. If you remember a conversation you and I once had together, you will understand the reference I make. Cheer up, dear Margaret, Don't droop, don't droop. My Margaret! I cannot bear to see you droop!"

The poor young lady was very much affected, but controlled herself. His feelings, too, were very acute. In a word, he found himself under such great need of a restorative, that he presently went away, to take a bath of sea water; leaving the young lady and me sitting on a point of rock, and probably presuming—but that, you will say, was a pardonable indulgence in a luxury—that she would praise him with all her heart.

She did, poor thing. With all her confiding heart, she praised him to me, for his care of her dead sister, and for his untiring devotion in her last illness. The sister had wasted away very slowly, and wild and terrible fantasies had come over her towards the end; but he had never been impatient with her, or at a loss; had always been gentle, watchful, and self-possessed. The sister had known him, and she knew him, to be the best of men, the kindest of men, and yet a man of such admirable strength of character, as to be a very tower for the support of their weak natures while their poor lives endured.

"I shall leave him, Mr. Sampson, very soon," said the young lady; "I know my life is drawing to an end; and when I am gone, I hope he will marry and be happy. I am sure he has lived single so long, only for my sake, and for my poor poor sister's."

The little hand-carriage had made another great loop on the damp sand, and was coming back again, gradually spinning out a slim figure of eight, half a mile long.

"Young lady," said I, looking around, laying my hand upon her arm, and speaking in a low voice; "time presses. You hear the gentle murmur of that sea?"

She looked at me with the utmost wonder and alarm, saying, "Yes!"

"And you know what a voice is in it when the storm comes?"

"Yes!"

"You see how quiet and peaceful it lies before us, and you know what an awful sight of power without pity it might be, this very night?"

"Yes!"

"But if you had never heard or seen it, or heard of it, in its cruelty, could you believe that it beats every inanimate thing in its way to pieces, without mercy, and destroys life without remorse?"

"You terrify me, sir, by these questions!"

"To save you, young lady, to save you! For God's sake, collect your strength and collect your firmness! If you were here alone, and hemmed in by the rising tide on the flow to fifty feet above your head, you could not be in greater danger than the danger you are now to be saved from."

The figure on the sand was spun out, and straggled off into a crooked little jerk that ended at the cliff very near us.

"As I am, before Heaven and the Judge of all mankind, your friend, and your dead sister's friend, I solemnly entreat you, Miss Niner, without one moment's loss of time, to come to this gentleman with me!"

If the little carriage had been less near to us, I doubt if I could have got her away; but, it was so near, that we were there, before she had recovered the hurry of being urged from the rock. I did not remain there with her, two minutes. Certainly within five, I had the inexpressible satisfaction of seeing her—from the point we had sat on, and to which I had returned—half supported and half carried up

some rude steps notched in the cliff, by the figure of an active man. With that figure beside her, I knew she was safe anywhere.

I sat alone on the rock, awaiting Mr. Slinkton's return. The twilight was deepening and the shadows were heavy, when he came round the point, with his hat banging at his button-hole, smoothing his wet hair with one of his hands, and picking out the old path with the other and a pocket-comb.

"My niece not here, Mr. Sampson?" he said, looking about.

"Miss Niner seemed to feel a chill in the air after the sun was down, and has gone home."

He looked surprised, as though she were not accustomed to do anything without him: even to originate so slight a proceeding. "I persuaded Miss Niner," I explained.

"Ah!" said he. "She is easily persuaded—for her good. Thank you, Mr. Sampson; she is better within doors. The bathing-place was further than I thought, to say the truth."

"Miss Niner is very delicate," I observed.

He shook his head and drew a deep sigh.

"Very, very, very. You may recollect my saying so? The time that has since intervened, has not strengthened her. The gloomy shadow that fell upon her sister so early in life, seems, in my anxious eyes, to gather over her too, ever darker, ever darker. Dear Margaret, dear Margaret! But we must hope."

The hand-carriage was spinning away before us, at a most indecorous pace for an invalid vehicle, and was making most irregular curves upon the sand. Mr. Slinkton, noticing it after he had put his handkerchief to his eyes, said:

"If I may judge from appearances, your friend will be upset, Mr. Sampson."

"It looks probable, certainly," said I.

"The servant must be drunk."

"The servants of old gentlemen will get drunk sometimes," said I.

"The major draws very light, Mr. Sampson."

"The major does draw light," said I.

By this time, the carriage, much to my relief, was lost in the darkness. We walked on for a little, side by side over the sand, in silence. After a short while he said, in a voice still affected by the emotion that his niece's state of health had awakened in him:

"Do you stay here long, Mr. Sampson?"

"Why, no. I am going away to-night."

"So soon? But, business always holds you in request. Men like Mr. Sampson are too important to others, to be spared to their own need of relaxation and enjoyment."

"I don't know about that," said I. "However, I am going back."

"To London?"

"To London."

"I shall be there too, soon after you."

I knew that, as well as he did. But, I did not tell him so. Any more than I told him what defensive weapon my right hand rested on in my pocket, as I walked by his side. Any more than I told him why I did not walk on the sea-side of him, with the night closing in.

We left the beach, and our ways diverged. We exchanged Good night, and had parted indeed, when he said, returning:

"Mr. Sampson, *may* I ask? Poor Meltham, whom we spoke of.—Dead yet?"

"Not when I last heard of him; but too broken a man to live long, and hopelessly lost to his old calling."

"Dear, dear, dear!" said he, with great feeling. "Sad, sad, sad! The world is a grave!" And so went his way.

It was not his fault if the world were not a grave; but, I did not call that observation after him, any more than I had mentioned those other things just now enumerated. He went his way, and I went mine with all expedition. This happened, as I have said, either at the end of September or beginning of October. The next time I saw him, and the last time, was late in November.

v.

I HAD a very particular engagement, to breakfast in the Temple. It was a bitter north-easterly morning, and the sleet and slush lay inches deep in the streets. I could get no conveyance, and was soon wet to the knees; but I should have been true to that appointment though I had had to wade to it, up to my neck in the same impediments.

The appointment took me to some chambers in the Temple. They were at the top of a lonely corner house overlooking the river. The name MR. ALFRED BECKWITH was painted on the outer door. On the door opposite, on the same landing, the name MR. JULIUS SLINKTON. The doors of both sets of chambers stood open, so that anything said aloud in one set, could be heard in the other.

I had never been in those chambers before. They were dismal, close, unwholesome, and oppressive; the furniture, originally good, and not yet old, was faded and dirty; the rooms were in great disorder; there was a strong pervading smell of opium, brandy, and tobacco; the grate and fire-irons were splashed all over, with unsightly blotches of rust; and on a sofa by the fire, in the room where breakfast had been prepared, lay the host, Mr. Beckwith: a man with all the appearances upon him of the worst kind of drunkard, very far advanced upon his shameful way to death.

"Slinkton is not come yet," said this creature, staggering up when I went in; "I'll call him. Halloo! Julius Cæsar! Come and drink!" As he hoarsely roared this out, he beat the poker and tongs together in a mad way, as if that were his usual manner of summoning his associate.

The voice of Mr. Slinkton was heard through the clatter, from the opposite side of the staircase, and he came in. He had not expected the pleasure of meeting me. I have seen several artful men brought to a stand, but I never saw a man so agitated as he was when his eyes rested on mine.

"Julius Cæsar," cried Beckwith, staggering between us, "Mist' Sampson! Mist' Sampson,

Julius Cæsar! Julius, Mist' Sampson, is the friend of my soul. Julius keeps me plied with liquor, morning, noon, and night. Julius is real benefactor. Julius threw the tea and coffee out of window when I used to have it. Julius empties all the water jugs of their contents, and fills 'em with spirits. Julius washes me up and keeps me going. Boil the brandy, Julius!"

There was a rusty and furred saucepan in the ashes—the ashes looked like the accumulation of weeks—and Beckwith, rolling and staggering between us as if he were going to plunge headlong into the fire, got the saucepan out, and tried to force it into Slinkton's hand.

"Boil the brandy, Julius Cæsar! Come! Do your usual office. Boil the brandy!"

He became so fierce in his gesticulations with the saucepan, that I expected to see him lay on Slinkton's head with it. I therefore put out my hand to check him. He reeled back to the wall, and sat there, panting, shaking, and red-eyed, in his rags of dressing-gown, looking at us both. I noticed then, that there was nothing to drink on the table but brandy, and nothing to eat but salted herrings, and a hot, sickly, highly-peppery stew.

"At all events, Mr. Sampson," said Slinkton, offering me the smooth gravel path for the last time, "I thank you for interfering between me and this unfortunate man's violence. However you came here, Mr. Sampson, or with whatever motive you came here, at least I thank you for that."

"Boil the brandy!" muttered Beckwith.

Without gratifying his desire to know how I came there, I said, quietly, "How is your mistress, Mr. Slinkton?"

He looked hard at me, and I looked hard at him.

"I am sorry to say, Mr. Sampson, that my niece has proved treacherous and ungrateful to her best friend. She left me, without a word of notice or explanation. She was misled, no doubt, by some designing rascal. Perhaps you may have heard of it?"

"I did hear that she was misled by a designing rascal. In fact, I have proof of it."

"Are you sure of it?" said he.

"Quite."

"Boil the brandy!" muttered Beckwith. "Company to breakfast, Julius Cæsar! Do your usual office—provide the usual breakfast, dinner, tea, and supper—boil the brandy!"

The eyes of Slinkton looked from him to me, and he said, after a moment's consideration:

"Mr. Sampson, you are a man of the world, and so am I. I will be plain with you."

"Oh, no, you won't," said I, shaking my head.

"I tell you, sir, I will be plain with you."

"And I tell you, you will not," said I. "I know all about you. You plain with any one? Nonsense, nonsense!"

"I plainly tell you, Mr. Sampson," he went on, with a manner almost composed, "that I understand your object. You want to save your

funds, and escape from your liabilities; these are old tricks of trade with you Office-gentlemen. But you will not do it, sir: you will not succeed. You have not an easy adversary to play against, when you play against me. We shall have to inquire, in due time, when and how Mr. Beckwith fell into his present habits. With that remark, sir, I put this poor creature and his incoherent wanderings of speech, aside, and wish you a good morning and a better case next time."

While he was saying this, Beckwith had filled a half-pint glass with brandy. At this moment, he threw the brandy at his face, and threw the glass after it. Slinkton put his hands up, half-blinded with the spirit, and cut with the glass across the forehead. At the sound of the breakage, a fourth person came into the room, closed the door, and stood at it. He was a very quiet but very keen looking man, with iron-grey hair, and slightly lame.

Slinkton pulled out his handkerchief, assuaged the pain in his smarting eyes, and dabbed the blood on his forehead. He was a long time about it, and I saw that, in the doing of it, a tremendous change came over him, occasioned by the change in Beckwith—who ceased to pant and tremble, sat upright, and never took his eyes off him. I never in my life saw a face in which abhorrence and determination were so forcibly painted, as in Beckwith's then.

"Look at me, you villain," said Beckwith, "and see me as I really am. I took these rooms, to make them a trap for you. I came into them as a drunkard, to bait the trap for you. You fell into the trap, and you will never leave it alive. On the morning when you last went to Mr. Sampson's office, I had seen him first. Your plot has been known to both of us, all along, and you have been counterplotted all along. What? Having been cajoled into putting that prize of two thousand pounds in your power, I was to be done to death with brandy, and, brandy not proving quick enough, with something quicker? Have I never seen you, when you thought my senses gone, pouring from your little bottle into my glass? Why, you Murderer and Forger, alone here with you in the dead of the night, as I have so often been, I have had my hand upon the trigger of a pistol, twenty times, to blow your brains out!"

This sudden starting up of the thing that he had supposed to be his imbecile victim, into a determined man, with a settled resolution to hunt him down and be the death of him mercilessly expressed from head to foot, was, in the first shock, too much for him. Without any figure of speech, he staggered under it. But, there is no greater mistake than to suppose, that a man who is a calculating criminal, is, in any phase of his guilt, otherwise than true to himself and perfectly consistent with his whole character. Such a man commits murder, and murder is the natural culmination of his course; such a man has to outface murder, and he will do it with hardness and effrontery. It is a sort of fashion to express surprise that any notorious

criminal, having such crime upon his conscience, can so brave it out. Do you think that if he had it on his conscience, or had a conscience to have it upon, he would ever have committed the crime?

Perfectly consistent with himself, as I believe all such monsters to be, this Slinkton recovered himself, and showed a defiance that was sufficiently cold and quiet. He was white, he was haggard, he was changed; but, only as a sharper who had played for a great stake, and had been outwitted and had lost the game.

"Listen to me, you villain," said Beckwith, "and let every word you hear me say, be a stab in your wicked heart. When I took these rooms, to throw myself in your way and lead you on to the scheme which I knew my appearance and supposed character and habits would suggest to such a devil, how did I know that? Because you were no stranger to me. I knew you well. And I knew you to be the cruel wretch who, for so much money, had killed one innocent girl while she trusted him implicitly, and who was, by inches, killing another."

Slinkton took out a snuff-box, took a pinch of snuff, and laughed.

"But, see here," said Beckwith, never looking away, never raising his voice, never relaxing his face, never unclenching his hand. "See what a dull wolf you have been, after all! The infatuated drunkard who never drank a fiftieth part of the liquor you plied him with, but poured it away, here, there, everywhere, almost before your eyes—who bought over the fellow you set to watch him and to ply him, by outbidding you in his bribe, before he had been at his work three days—with whom you have observed no caution, yet who was so bent on ridding the earth of you as a wild beast, that he would have defeated you if you had been ever so prudent—that drunkard whom you have many a time left on the floor of this room, and who has even let you go out of it, alive and undeceived, when you have turned him over with your foot—has, almost as often, on the same night, within an hour, within a few minutes, watched you awake, had his hand at your pillow when you were asleep, turned over your papers, taken samples from your bottles and packets of powder, changed their contents, rifled every secret of your life!"

He had had another pinch of snuff in his hand, but had gradually let it drop from between his fingers to the floor, where he now smoothed it out with his foot, looking down at it the while.

"That drunkard," said Beckwith, "who had free access to your rooms at all times, that he might drink the strong drinks you left in his way and be the sooner ended, holding no more terms with you than he would hold with a tiger, has had his master-key for all your locks, his test for all your poisons, his clue to your cipher writing. He can tell you, as well as you can tell him, how long it took to complete that deed, what doses there were, what intervals, what signs of gradual decay upon mind and body, what distempered fancies were produced, what observable changes, what physical pain.

He can tell you, as well as you can tell him, that all this was recorded day by day, as a lesson of experience for future service. He can tell you, better than you can tell him, where that journal is at this moment."

Slinkton stopped the action of his foot, and looked at Beckwith.

"No," said the latter, as if answering a question from him. "Not in the drawer of the writing-desk that opens with the spring; it is not there, and it never will be there again."

"Then you are a thief!" said Slinkton.

Without any change whatever in the inflexible purpose which it was quite terrific even to me to contemplate, and from the power of which I had all along felt convinced it was impossible for this wretch to escape, Beckwith returned:

"And I am your niece's shadow, too."

With an imprecation, Slinkton put his hand to his head, tore out some hair, and flung it on the ground. It was the end of the smooth walk; he destroyed it in the action, and it will soon be seen that his use for it was past.

Beckwith went on: "Whenever you left here, I left here. Although I understood that you found it necessary to pause in the completion of that purpose, to avert suspicion, still I watched you close, with the poor confiding girl. When I had your diary, and could read it word by word—it was only about the night before your last visit to Scarborough—you remember the night? you slept with a small flat phial tied to your wrist—I sent to Mr. Sampson, who was kept out of view. This is Mr. Sampson's trusty servant standing by the door. We three saved your niece among us."

Slinkton looked at us all, took an uncertain step or two from the place where he had stood, returned to it, and glanced about him in a very curious way—as one of the meaner reptiles might, when looking for a hole to hide in. I noticed at the same time, that a singular change took place in the figure of the man—as if it collapsed within his clothes, and they consequently became ill-shaped and ill-fitting.

"You shall know," said Beckwith, "for I hope the knowledge will be bitter and terrible to you, why you have been pursued by one man, and why, when the whole interest that Mr. Sampson represents, would have expended any money in hunting you down, you have been tracked to death at a single individual's charge. I hear you have had the name of Meltham on your lips sometimes?"

I saw, in addition to those other changes, a sudden stoppage come upon his breathing.

"When you sent the sweet girl whom you murdered (you know with what artfully-made-out surroundings and probabilities you sent her), to Meltham's office before taking her abroad, to originate the transaction that doomed her to the grave, it fell to Meltham's lot to see her and to speak with her. It did not fall to his lot to save her, though I know he would freely give his own life to have done it. He admired her;—I would say, he loved her deeply, if I thought it possible that you could understand the word. When she

was sacrificed, he was thoroughly assured of your guilt. Having lost her, he had but one object left in life, and that was, to avenge and destroy you."

I saw the villain's nostrils rise and fall convulsively; but, I saw no moving at his mouth.

"That man, Meltham," Beckwith steadily pursued, "was as absolutely certain that you could never elude him in this world, if he devoted himself to your destruction with his utmost fidelity and earnestness, and if he directed the sacred duty with no other duty in life, as he was certain that in achieving it he would be a poor instrument in the hands of Providence, and would do well before Heaven in striking you out from among living men. I am that man, and I thank God that I have done my work!"

If Slinkton had been running for his life from swift-footed savages, a dozen miles, he could not have shown more emphatic signs of being oppressed at heart and labouring for breath, than he showed now, when he looked at the person who had so relentlessly hunted him down.

"You never saw me under my right name before; you see me under my right name, now. You shall see me once again, in the body, when you are tried for your life. You shall see me once again, in the spirit, when the cord is round your neck, and the crowd are crying against you!"

When Meltham had spoken these last words that miscreant suddenly turned away his face and seemed to strike his mouth with his own hand. At the same instant, the room was filled with a new and powerful odour, and, almost at the same instant, he broke into a crooked leap, start—I have no name for the spasm—he fell, with a dull weight that shook the heavy doors and windows in their frames.

That was the fitting end of him.

When we saw that he was dead, we drew away from the room, and Meltham, giving up his hand, said with a weary air:

"I have no more work on earth, my friends. But, I shall see her again, elsewhere."

It was in vain that I tried to rally him. He might have saved her, he said; he had not saved her, and he reproached himself; he had lost her, and he was broken-hearted.

"The purpose that sustained me is over, Sampson, and there is nothing now to hold me to life. I am not fit for life; I am weak and spiritless; I have no hope and no object; my day is done."

In truth, I could hardly have believed that the broken man who then spoke to me, was the man who had so strongly and so differently impressed me when his purpose was yet before him. I said such entreaties with him, as I could; but, he still said, and always said, in a patient and demonstrative way—nothing could avail him—he was broken-hearted.

He died early in the next spring. He was buried by the side of the poor young lady for whom he had cherished those tender and unhappy regrets, and he left all he had to her

sister. She lived to be a happy wife and mother; she married my sister's son, who succeeded poor Meltham; she is living now; and her children ride about the garden on my walking-stick, when I go to see her.

NEEDLEWOMAN'S HALL.

OF the grown-up unmarried women in this country, three out of four; of the widows, two in three; of the wives, a seventh part, earn their bread by their labour. Of these working women, nearly half a million live by the needle, and one-half of that number can only live at all by working twelve or sixteen hours a day.

The wretched earnings of the needle are, of course, to be ascribed to the excessive supply of workers, and the helplessness that urges thousands of them to work for any payment that will keep body and soul together. But the low payment of piece-work compels hasty production, and the good needlework in which a well-trained housewife takes delight, cannot be executed by the fingers urged by the fear that sixteen hours of work may fail to get over eighteenpenny-worth of pay.

We speak of skill in the mere act of sewing, quite apart from the sublime science of millinery. Few needlewomen can afford themselves the time to cultivate such skill, yet very many happy wives who are themselves able to sew with deliberation, and delight, in the perfection of their own work, can appreciate its value. Thousands of ladies are desiring in vain to know where they can find women who might come to the house of an employer, or take work to their own rooms and put into it stitchery that is all ornament and strength. Ladies are not, we think, unwilling to understand that skilled work is entitled to a price high in proportion to its rarity. But where is it to be found? Where is the careful housewife to look, in such a great bottle of hay as London, for example, when she wants to find the needle that will serve her turn? Wanted, a Needlewoman's Hall.

A great and, for the present, necessary burden under which the needlewoman lies, is the necessity of taking shopwork from the hands of agents or sub-agents, and paying them a serious percentage of risk money from their wretched earnings. The tradesman requires security for the material he sends out to be made; the needlewoman herself has none but her character to offer. Therefore, a more substantial middleman steps in to take from the tradesman his material and make himself responsible for its return cut and stitched into a certain number of garments, at a stipulated price for each. This man employs the needlewomen, or perhaps sublets part of his contract to others who employ them, and, for the risk of the guarantee, as well as for the profits of the occupation he has taken on himself, the price paid to the needlewoman for her work is made very decidedly to differ from the price paid for it by the person who first gave it out. The deduction is most serious to a class that is obliged to know how—and does know how—to

do more with an odd sixpence a week than perhaps any other class of beings upon earth. The tradesman cannot be expected to make weekly distribution of material upon a large scale, to a crowd of poor and suffering women whom he does not know, depending upon nothing but the principles of human nature for his surety. The agency is unavoidable at present; although its abolition, if it could be got rid of, would close a paltry way of money-making, with which men could very well dispense. Wanted, a Needlewoman's Hall.

The want is, of a point of immediate contact between the whole body of the honest needlewomen in a town, and the whole body of the public. We cannot alter the main principles of trade, to raise the needlewoman's profits, but we can study those accidents of her condition which deprive her of the whole advantage to be had of patient industry. If only a little money given by the rich, will set up a machinery that shall secure permanently for some of the hardest and the worst rewarded workers in the land, most of them helpless single women, a condition permanently raised above its present level, let the fact be shown, and the help may be looked for, confidently.

A small beginning has been established this year in London: it is the Institution for the Employment of Needlewomen, Number Twenty-six, Lamb's Conduit-street. This institution may be taken as the germ of Needlewoman's Hall. It is quite modest in its pretension, but quite capable of developing its mustard-seed into a mustard-tree, if benignant showers shall prosper it. The founder of it, is a lady who had been drawn from one spectacle of sorrow to another, into a genuine examination of the state of the different classes of Our Homeless Poor, and who, under that title, told what she had seen of the condition of poor women in London, in a little book published by Messrs. Nisbet, of Berners-street. For example, a poor widow came with her two little boys in the "slack season" of needlework, to the Refuge at Field-lane. Eager to return to honest independence, she was started on her own account in a bare room, and obtained the loan of a chaff bed and bolster. What sum would suffice to furnish her with necessaries? Half-a-crown was all she borrowed for the purpose. She hunted up a chair with three legs and no back, which she could have for threepence, and she knew a carpenter who had a spare leg of a chair. In the same spirit she made successful search for all her other furniture; found a table, a cup, a saucer, a plate, a kettle and so forth; leaving fivepence of surplus when her furniture had all been bought. The fivepence she, with all simplicity of heart, carried back to her benefactor.

At Number Twenty-six, Lamb's Conduit-street, the upper part of a house has been taken; one or two sensible and active ladies manage the affairs; but there is an ornamental committee, and there is a sufficiency of episcopal and noble patrons to attract that part of the public which