

OUR MUTUAL
FRIEND BY
CHARLES
DICKENS

EVERY
MAN
I WILL
GO
WITH
THEE
BE THY
GUIDE



IN THY
MOST
NEED
TO GO
BY
THY
SIDE

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INTRODUCTION

"OUR MUTUAL FRIEND" marks a happy return to the earlier manner of Dickens, late in Dickens's life. One might call it a sort of Indian summer of his farce. Those who most truly love Dickens love the earlier Dickens; and any return to his farce must be welcomed, like a young man come back from the dead. In this book indeed he does not merely return to his farce; he returns in a manner to his vulgarity. It is the old democratic and even uneducated Dickens who is writing here. The very title is illiterate. Any priggish pupil teacher could tell Dickens that there is no such phrase in English as "our mutual friend." Anyone could tell Dickens that "our mutual friend" means "our reciprocal friend," and that "our reciprocal friend" means nothing. If he had only had all the solemn advantages of academic learning (the absence of which in him was lamented by the "Quarterly Review"), he would have known better. He would have known that the correct phrase for a man known to two people is "our common friend." But if one calls one's friend a common friend, even that phrase is open to misunderstanding.

I dwell with a gloomy pleasure on this mistake in the very title of the book, because I, for one, am not pleased to see Dickens gradually absorbed by modern culture and good manners. Dickens, by class and genius, belonged to the kind of people who do talk about a "mutual friend"; and for that class there is a very great deal to be said. These two things can at least be said—that this class does understand the meaning of the word "friend" and the meaning of the word "mutual." I know that for some long time before he had been slowly and subtly sucked in to the whirlpool of the fashionable views of later England. I know that in "Bleak House" he treats the aristocracy far more tenderly than he treats them in "David Copperfield." I know that in "The Tale of Two Cities," having come under the influence of Carlyle, he treats revolution as strange and weird, whereas under the influence of Cobbett he would have treated it as obvious and reasonable. I know that in "The Mystery of Edwin Drood" he not only praised the Minor Canon of Cloisterham at the expense of the dissenting demagogue, Honeythunder; I know that he even took the last and most disastrous step in

the modern English reaction; while blaming the old Cloisterham monks (who were democratic), he praised the old-world peace that they had left behind them—an old-world peace which is simply one of the last amusements of aristocracy. The modern rich feel quite at home with the dead monks. They would have felt anything but comfortable with the live ones. I know, in short, how the simple democracy of Dickens was gradually dimmed by the decay and reaction of the middle of the nineteenth century. I know that he fell into some of the bad habits of aristocratic sentimentalism. I know that he used the word "gentleman" as meaning good man. But all this only adds to the unholy joy with which I realise that the very title of one of his best books was a vulgarity. It is pleasant to contemplate this last unconscious knock in the eye for the gentility with which Dickens was half impressed. Dickens is the old self-made man; you may take him or leave him. He has its disadvantages, and its merits. No university man would have written the title; no university man could have written the book.

If it were a mere matter of the accident of a name it would not be worth while thus to dwell on it, even as a preface. But the title is in this respect typical of the tale. The novel called "Our Mutual Friend" is in many ways a real reaction towards the earlier Dickens manner. I have remarked that "Little Dorrit" was a reversion to the form of the first books, but not to their spirit; "Our Mutual Friend" is a reversion to the spirit as well as the form. Compare, for instance, the public figures that make a background in each book. Mr. Merdle is a commercial man having no great connection with the plot; similarly Mr. Podsnap is a commercial man having no great connection with the plot. This is altogether in the spirit of the earlier books; the whole point of an early Dickens novel was to have as many people as possible entirely unconnected with the plot. But exactly because both studies are irrelevant, the contrast between them can be more clearly perceived. Dickens goes out of his way to describe Merdle; and it is a gloomy description. But Dickens goes out of his way to describe Podsnap, and it is a happy and hilarious description. It recalls the days when he hunted great game; when he went out of his way to entrap such adorable monsters as Mr. Pecksniff or Mr. Vincent Crummles. With these wild beings we never bother about the cause of their coming. Such guests in a story may be uninvited, but they are never *de trop*. They earn their night's lodging in any tale by being

so uproariously amusing; like little Tommy Tucker in the legend, they sing for their supper. This is really the marked truth about "Our Mutual Friend," as a stage in the singular latter career of Dickens. It is like the leaping up and flaming of a slowly dying fire. The best things in the book are in the old best manner of the author. They have that great Dickens quality of being something which is pure farce and yet which is not superficial; an unfathomable farce—a farce that goes down to the roots of the universe. The highest compliment that can ever be paid to the humour of Dickens is paid when some lady says, with the sudden sincerity of her sex, that it is "too silly." The phrase is really a perfectly sound and acute criticism. Humour does consist in being too silly, in passing the border land, in breaking through the floor of sense and falling into some starry abyss of nonsense far below our ordinary human life. This "too silly" quality is really present in "Our Mutual Friend." It is present in "Our Mutual Friend" just as it is present in "Pickwick," or "Martin Chuzzlewit"; just as it is not present in "Little Dorrit" or in "Hard Times." Many tests might be employed. One is the pleasure in purely physical jokes—jokes about the body. The general dislike which everyone felt for Mr. Stiggins's nose is of the same kind as the ardent desire which Mr. Lammle felt for Mr. Fledgeby's nose. "Give me your nose, Sir," said Mr. Lammle. That sentence alone would be enough to show that the young Dickens had never died.

The opening of a book goes for a great deal. The opening of "Our Mutual Friend" is much more instinctively energetic and light-hearted than that of any of the other novels of his concluding period. Dickens had always enough optimism to make his stories end well. He had not, in his later years, always enough optimism to make them begin well. Even "Great Expectations," the saddest of his later books, ends well; it ends well in spite of himself, who had intended it to end badly. But if we leave the evident case of good endings and take the case of good beginnings, we see how much "Our Mutual Friend" stands out from among the other novels of the evening or the end of Dickens. The tale of "Little Dorrit" begins in a prison. One of the prisoners is a villain, and his villainy is as dreary as the prison; that might matter nothing. But the other prisoner is vivacious, and even his vivacity is dreary. The first note struck is sad. In the tale of "Edwin Drood" the first scene is in an opium-den, suffocated with every sort of phantasy and falsehood. Nor is it

true that these openings are merely accidental; they really cast their shadow over the tales. The people of "Little Dorrit" begin in prison, and it is the whole point of the book that people never get out of prison. The story of "Edwin Drood" begins amid the fumes of opium, and it never gets out of the fumes of opium. The darkness of that strange and horrible smoke is deliberately rolled over the whole story. Dickens, in his later years, permitted more and more his story to take the cue from its inception. All the more remarkable, therefore, is the real jerk and spurt of good spirits with which he opens "Our Mutual Friend." It begins with a good piece of rowdy satire, wildly exaggerated and extremely true. It belongs to the same class as the first chapter of "Martin Chuzzlewit," with its preposterous pedigree of the Chuzzlewit family, or even the first chapter of "Pickwick," with its immortal imbecilities about the Theory of Tittlebats and Mr. Blotton of Aldgate. Doubtless the early satiric chapter in "Our Mutual Friend" is of a more strategic and ingenious kind of satire than can be found in these early and explosive parodies. Still, there is a quality common to both, and that quality is the whole of Dickens. It is a quality difficult to define—hence the whole difficulty of criticising Dickens. Perhaps it can be best stated in two separate statements or as two separate symptoms. The first is the mere fact that the reader rushes to read it. The second is the mere fact that the writer rushed to write it.

This beginning, which is like a burst of the old exuberant Dickens, is, of course, the Veneering dinner-party. In its own way it is as good as anything that Dickens ever did. There is the old faculty of managing a crowd, of making character clash with character, that had made Dickens not only the democrat but even the demagogue of fiction. For if it is hard to manage a mob, it is hardest of all to manage a swell mob. The particular kind of chaos that is created by the hospitality of a rich upstart has perhaps never been so accurately and outrageously described. Every touch about the thing is true; to this day anyone can test it if he goes to a dinner of this particular kind. How admirable, for instance, is the description of the way in which all the guests ignored the host; how the host and hostess peered and gaped for some stray attention as if they had been a pair of poor relations. Again, how well, as a matter of social colour, the distinctions between the type and tone of the guests is made even in the matter of this unguestlike insolence. How well Dickens distinguishes the

ill-bred indifference of Podsnap from the well-bred indifference of Mortimer Lightwood and Eugene Wrayburn. How well he distinguishes the bad manners of the merchant from the equally obvious bad manners of the gentleman. Above all, how well he catches the character of the creature who is really the master of all these; the impenetrable male servant. Nowhere in literature is the truth about servants better told. For that truth is simply this; that the secret of aristocracy is hidden even from aristocrats. Servants, butlers, footmen, are the high priests who have the real dispensation; and even gentlemen are afraid of them. Dickens was never more right than when he made the new people, the Veneerings, employ a butler who despised not only them but all their guests and acquaintances. The admirable person called the Analytical Chemist shows his perfection particularly in the fact that he regards all the sham gentlemen and all the real gentlemen with the same gloomy and incurable contempt. He offers wine to the offensive Podsnap or the shrieking Tippins with a melancholy sincerity and silence; but he offers his letter to the aristocratic and unconscious Mortimer with the same sincerity and with the same silence. It is a great pity that the Analytical Chemist only occurs in two or three scenes of this excellent story. As far as I know, he never really says a word from one end of the book to the other; but he is one of the best characters in Dickens.

Round the Veneering dinner-table are collected not indeed the best characters in Dickens, but certainly the best characters in "Our Mutual Friend." Certainly one exception must be made. Fledgeby is unaccountably absent. There was really no reason why he should not have been present at a dinner-party given by the Veneerings and including the Lammles. His money was at least more genuine than theirs. If he had been present the party would really have included all that is important in "Our Mutual Friend." For indeed, outside Mr. Fledgeby and the people at the dinner-party, there is something a little heavy and careless about the story. Mr. Silas Wegg is really funny; and he serves the purpose of a necessary villain in the plot. But his humour and his villainy seem to have no particular connection with each other; when he is not scheming he seems the last man likely to scheme; he is rather like one of Dickens's agreeable Bohemians, a pleasant companion, a quoter of fine verses. His villainy seems an artificial thing attached to him, like his wooden leg. For while his villainy is supposed to be of a dull, mean and

bitter sort (quite unlike, for instance, the uproarious villainy of Quilp), his humour is of the sincere flowing and lyric character, like that of Dick Swiveller or Mr. Micawber. He tells Mr. Boffin that he will drop into poetry in a friendly way. He does drop into it in a friendly way; in much too really a friendly way to make him convincing as a mere calculating knave. He and Mr. Venus are such natural and genuine companions that one does not feel why if Venus repents Wegg should not repent too. In short, Wegg is a convenience for a plot, and not a very good plot at that. But if he is one of the blots on the business, he is not the principal one. If the real degradation of Wegg is not very convincing, it is at least immeasurably more convincing than the pretended degradation of Boffin. The passage in which Boffin appears as a sort of miser, and then afterwards explains that he only assumed the character for reasons of his own, has something about it exceedingly unsatisfactory. The truth of the whole matter I think, almost certainly, is that Dickens did not originally mean Boffin's lapse to be fictitious. He originally meant Boffin really to be corrupted by wealth, to slowly degenerate and as slowly to repent. But the story went too quickly for this long, double and difficult process; therefore Dickens at the last moment made a sudden recovery possible by representing that the whole business had been a trick. Consequently, this episode is not an error merely in the sense that we may find many errors in a great writer like Dickens; it is a mistake patched up with another mistake. It is a case of that ossification which occurs round the healing of an actual fracture; the story had broken down and been mended.

If Dickens had fulfilled what was probably his original design, and described the slow freezing of Boffin's soul in prosperity, I do not say that he would have done the thing well. He was not good at describing change in anybody, especially not good at describing a change for the worse. The tendency of all his characters is upwards, like bubbles, never downwards, like stones. But at least it would probably have been more credible than the story as it stands; for the story as it stands is actually less credible than any conceivable kind of moral ruin for Boffin. Such a character as his—rough, simple, and lumberingly unconscious—might be more easily conceived as really sinking in self-respect and honour than as keeping up, month after month, so strained and inhuman a theatrical performance. To a good man (of that particular type) it would be easier to be bad than to pretend to be bad. It might have

taken years to turn Noddy Boffin into a miser; but it would have taken centuries to turn him into an actor. This unreality in the later Boffin scenes makes the end of the story of John Harmon somewhat more unimpressive perhaps than it might otherwise have been. Upon no hypothesis, however, can he be made one of the more impressive figures of Dickens. It is true that it is an unfair criticism to object, as some have done, that Dickens does not succeed in disguising the identity of John Harmon with John Rokesmith. Dickens never intended to disguise it; the whole story would be mainly unintelligible and largely uninteresting if it had been successfully disguised. But though John Harmon or Rokesmith was never intended to be merely a man of mystery, it is not quite so easy to say what he was intended to be. Bella is a possible and pretty sketch. Mrs Wilfer, her mother, is an entirely impossible and entirely delightful one. Miss Podsnap is not only excellent, she is to a healthy taste positively attractive; there is a real suggestion in her of the fact that humility is akin to truth even when humility takes its more comic form of shyness. There is not in all literature a more human *cri de cœur* than that with which Georgina Podsnap receives the information that a young man has professed himself to be attracted by her—"Oh what a Fool he must be!"

Two other figures require praise, though they are in the more tragic manner which Dickens touched from time to time in his later period. Bradley Headstone is really a successful villain; so successful that he almost captures our sympathies. Also there is something original in the very conception. It was a new notion to add to the villains of fiction, whose thoughts go quickly, this villain whose thoughts go slow but sure; and it was a new notion to combine a deadly black-guardism not with high life or the slums (the usual haunts for villains), but with the laborious respectability of the lower middle classes. The other good conception is the boy, Bradley Headstone's pupil, with his dull, inexhaustible egoism, his pert, unconscious cruelty, and the strict decorum and incredible baseness of his views of life. It is singular that Dickens, who was not only a radical and a social reformer, but one who would have been particularly concerned to maintain the principle of modern popular education, should nevertheless have seen so clearly this potential evil in the mere educationalism of our time—the fact that merely educating the democracy might easily mean setting to work to despoil it of all the democratic virtues. It is better to be Lizzie Hexam

and not know how to read and write than to be Charlie Hexam and not know how to appreciate Lizzie Hexam. It is not only necessary that the democracy should be taught; it is also necessary that the democracy should be taught democracy, otherwise it will certainly fall a victim to that snobbishness and system of worldly standards which is the most natural and easy of all the forms of human corruption. This is one of the many dangers which Dickens saw before it existed. Dickens was really a prophet; far more of a prophet than Carlyle.

December, 1907.

G. K. CHESTERTON.

The following is a list of the works of Charles Dickens:—

Sketches by Boz, 1835, 2nd series, 1836 (from "Monthly Magazine," "Morning Chronicle," "Evening Chronicle," "Bell's Life in London," and "The Library of Fiction"); Sunday under Three Heads, etc., 1836; The Strange Gentleman, comic burletta, 1837; The Village Coquettes, comic opera, 1836; Is she his wife? or Something Singular? comic burletta, acted 1837; Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club, monthly numbers, 1836-7; Mudfog Papers (Bentley's "Miscellany"), 1837-9; Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi, edited by Boz, 1838; Oliver Twist, or the Parish Boy's Progress, 1838 (from Bentley's "Miscellany"); Sketches of Young Gentlemen, 1838; Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby, monthly numbers, 1838-9; Sketches of Young Couples, etc., 1840; Master Humphrey's Clock, weekly numbers, 1840-1; volume form, 1840, 1841 (Old Curiosity Shop, Barnaby Rudge); The Pic-nic Papers (preface and first story), 1841; American notes for general circulation, 1842; A Christmas Carol in Prose, 1843; The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit, monthly numbers, 1843-4; The Chimes: a Goblin Story of some Bells, etc., 1844; The Cricket on the Hearth: a Fairy Tale of Home, 1845; Pictures from Italy, 1846 (from "Daily News"); The Battle of Life: a Love Story, 1846; Dealings with the Firm of Dombey and Son, etc., monthly numbers, 1846-8; The Haunted Man, and the Ghost's Bargain, 1848; The Personal History of David Copperfield, monthly numbers, 1849-50; Christmas Stories in "Household Words" and "All the Year Round," 1850-67; Bleak House, monthly numbers, 1852-3; A Child's History of England, 1854 (from "Household Words"); Hard Times for these Times, 1854 (from "Household Words"); Little Dorrit, monthly numbers, 1855-7; A Tale of Two Cities, 1859 (from "All the Year Round"); Great Expectations, 1861 (from "All the Year Round"); Our Mutual Friend, monthly numbers, 1864-5; Religious Opinions of the late Rev. Chauncey Hare Townhend, ed. C. D., 1869; "Landor's Life," last contribution to "All the Year Round"; The Mystery of Edwin Drood (unfinished), in monthly numbers, April to September, 1870.

Other papers were contributed to "Household Words" and "All the Year Round."

First Collective Ed., 1847-74; Library Ed., 1857, etc.; "Charles Dickens" Ed., 1868-70; Letters, ed. Miss Hogarth and Miss Dickens, 1886; Life, by Forster, 1872-74; "Men of Letters" Series, 1882; "Great Writers" Series, 1887.

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OUR MUTUAL FRIEND

IN FOUR BOOKS

BOOK THE FIRST

THE CUP AND THE LIP

CHAPTER I

ON THE LOOK-OUT

IN these times of ours, though concerning the exact year there is no need to be precise, a boat of dirty and disreputable appearance, with two figures in it, floated on the Thames, between Southwark Bridge which is of iron, and London Bridge which is of stone, as an autumn evening was closing in.

The figures in this boat were those of a strong man with ragged grizzled hair and a sun-browned face, and a dark girl of nineteen or twenty, sufficiently like him to be recognisable as his daughter. The girl rowed, pulling a pair of sculls very easily; the man, with the rudder-lines slack in his hands, and his hands loose in his waistband, kept an eager look-out. He had no net, hook, or line, and he could not be a fisherman; his boat had no cushion for a sitter, no paint, no inscription, no appliance beyond a rusty boat-hook and a coil of rope, and he could not be a waterman; his boat was too crazy and too small to take in a cargo for delivery, and he could not be a lighterman or river-carrier; there was no clue to what he looked for, but he looked for something, with a most intent and searching gaze. The tide, which had turned an hour before, was running down, and his eyes watched every little race and eddy in its broad sweep, as the boat made slight headway against it, or drove stern foremost before it, according as he directed his daughter by a movement of his head. She watched his face as earnestly as he watched the river. But, in the intensity of her look there was a touch of dread or horror.

Allied to the bottom of the river rather than the surface, by

reason of the slime and ooze with which it was covered, and its sodden state, this boat and the two figures in it obviously were doing something that they often did, and were seeking what they often sought. Half savage as the man showed, with no covering on his matted head, with his brown arms bare to between the elbow and the shoulder, with the loose knot of a looser kerchief lying low on his bare breast in a wilderness of beard and whisker, with such dress as he wore seeming to be made out of the mud that begrimed his boat, still there was business-like usage in his steady gaze. So with every lithe action of the girl, with every turn of her wrist, perhaps most of all with her look of dread or horror; they were things of usage.

"Keep her out, Lizzie. Tide runs strong here. Keep her well afore the sweep of it."

Trusting to the girl's skill and making no use of the rudder, he eyed the coming tide with an absorbed attention. So the girl eyed him. But, it happened now, that a slant of light from the setting sun glanced into the bottom of the boat, and, touching a rotten stain there which bore some resemblance to the outline of a muffled human form, coloured it as though with diluted blood. This caught the girl's eye, and she shivered.

"What ails you?" said the man, immediately aware of it, though so intent on the advancing waters; "I see nothing afloat."

The red light was gone, the shudder was gone, and his gaze, which had come back to the boat for a moment, travelled away again. Wheresoever the strong tide met with an impediment, his gaze paused for an instant. At every mooring chain and rope, at every stationary boat or barge that split the current into a broad-arrow-head, at the offsets from the piers of Southwark Bridge, at the paddles of the river steamboats as they beat the filthy water, at the floating logs of timber lashed together lying off certain wharves, his shining eyes darted a hungry look. After a darkening hour or so, suddenly the rudder-lines tightened in his hold, and he steered hard towards the Surrey shore.

Always watching his face, the girl instantly answered to the action in her sculling; presently the boat swung round, quivered as from a sudden jerk, and the upper half of the man was stretched out over the stern.

The girl pulled the hood of a cloak she wore, over her head and over her face, and, looking backward so that the front folds of this hood were turned down the river, kept the boat in that direction going before the tide. Until now, the boat had barely

held her own, and had hovered about one spot; but now, the banks changed swiftly, and the deepening shadows and the kindling lights of London Bridge were passed, and the tiers of shipping lay on either hand.

It was not until now that the upper half of the man came back into the boat. His arms were wet and dirty, and he washed them over the side. In his right hand he held something, and he washed that in the river too. It was money. He chinked it once, and he blew upon it once, and he spat upon it once,—“for luck,” he hoarsely said—before he put it in his pocket.

“Lizzie!”

The girl turned her face towards him with a start, and rowed in silence. Her face was very pale. He was a hook-nosed man, and with that and his bright eyes and his ruffled head, bore a certain likeness to a roused bird of prey.

“Take that thing off your face.”

She put it back.

“Here! and give me hold of the sculls. I’ll take the rest of the spell.”

“No, no, father! No! I can’t indeed. Father!—I cannot sit so near it!”

He was moving towards her to change places, but her terrified expostulation stopped him and he resumed his seat.

“What hurt can it do you?”

“None, none. But I cannot bear it.”

“It’s my belief you hate the sight of the very river.”

“I—I do not like it, father.”

“As if it wasn’t your living! As if it wasn’t meat and drink to you!”

At these latter words the girl shivered again, and for a moment paused in her rowing, seeming to turn deadly faint. It escaped his attention, for he was glancing over the stern at something the boat had in tow.

“How can you be so thankless to your best friend, Lizzie? The very fire that warmed you when you were a baby, was picked out of the river alongside the coal barges. The very basket that you slept in, the tide washed ashore. The very rockers that I put it upon to make a cradle of it, I cut out of a piece of wood that drifted from some ship or another.”

Lizzie took her right hand from the scull it held, and touched her lips with it, and for a moment held it out lovingly towards him; then, without speaking, she resumed her rowing, as another boat of similar appearance, though in rather better

trim, came out from a dark place and dropped softly alongside.

"In luck again, Gaffer?" said a man with a squinting leer, who sculled her, and who was alone. "I know'd you was in luck again, by your wake as you come down."

"Ah!" replied the other, drily. "So you're out, are you?"

"Yes, pardner."

There was now a tender yellow moonlight on the river, and the new comer, keeping half his boat's length astern of the other boat, looked hard at its track.

"I s̄ays to myself," he went on, "directly you hove in view, Yonder's Gaffer, and in luck again, by George if he ain't! Scull it is, pardner—don't fret yourself—I didn't touch him." This was in answer to a quick impatient movement on the part of Gaffer: the speaker at the same time unshipping his scull on that side, and laying his hand on the gunwale of Gaffer's boat and holding to it.

"He's had touches enough not to want no more, as well as I make him out, Gaffer! Been a knocking about with a pretty many tides, ain't he, pardner? Such is my out-of-luck ways, you see! He must have passed me when he went up last time, for I was on the look-out below bridge here. I a'most think you're like the vultures, pardner, and scent 'em out."

He spoke in a dropped voice, and with more than one glance at Lizzie, who had pulled on her hood again. Both men then looked with a weird unholy interest at the wake of Gaffer's boat.

"Easy does it, betwixt us. Shall I take him aboard, pardner?"

"No," said the other. In so surly a tone that the man, after a blank stare, acknowledged it with the retort:

"—Arn't been eating nothing as has disagreed with you, have you, pardner?"

"Why, yes, I have," said Gaffer. "I have been swallowing too much of that word, Pardner. I am no pardner of yours."

"Since when was you no pardner of mine, Gaffer Hexam, Esquire?"

"Since you was accused of robbing a man. Accused of robbing a live man!" said Gaffer, with great indignation.

"And what if I had been accused of robbing a dead man, Gaffer?"

"You COULDN'T do it."

"Couldn't you, Gaffer?"

"No. Has a dead man any use for money? Is it possible for a dead man to have money? What world does a dead man

belong to? T'other world. What world does money belong to? This world. How can money be a corpse's? Can a corpse own it, want it, spend it, claim it, miss it? Don't try to go confounding the rights and wrongs of things in that way. But it's worthy of the sneaking spirit that robs a live man."

"I'll tell you what it is——"

"No you won't. I'll tell you what it is. You've got off with a short time of it for putting your hand in the pocket of a sailor, a live sailor. Make the most of it and think yourself lucky, but don't think after that to come over *me* with your pardners. We have worked together in time past, but we work together no more in time present nor yet future. Let go. Cast off!"

"Gaffer! If you think to get rid of me this way——"

"If I don't get rid of you this way, I'll try another, and chop you over the fingers with the stretcher, or take a pick at your head with the boat-hook. Cast off! Pull you, Lizzie. Pull home, since you won't let your father pull."

Lizzie shot ahead, and the other boat fell astern. Lizzie's father, composing himself into the easy attitude of one who had asserted the high moralities and taken an unassailable position, slowly lighted a pipe, and smoked, and took a survey of what he had in tow. What he had in tow, lunged itself at him sometimes in an awful manner when the boat was checked, and sometimes seemed to try to wrench itself away, though for the most part it followed submissively. A neophyte might have fancied that the ripples passing over it were dreadfully like faint changes of expression on a sightless face; but Gaffer was no neophyte and had no fancies.

CHAPTER II

THE MAN FROM SOMEWHERE

MR. and Mrs. Veneering were bran-new people in a bran-new house in a bran-new quarter of London. Everything about the Veneerings was spick and span new. All their furniture was new, all their friends were new, all their servants were new, their plate was new, their carriage was new, their harness was new, their horses were new, their pictures were new, they themselves were new, they were as newly married as was lawfully compatible with their having a bran-new baby, and if they had set up a great-grandfather, he would have come home in matting from the