

son, he was told by Alfonso that the contessa, being indisposed, had remained in bed, but that he should find Clara in the garden. There was something romantic in the sound of this, so he hurried to the spot indicated, impatient to have the commonplace impressions of the previous day effaced. This time his disgust was complete. He found Clara engaged in assisting the servant maid to wring and hang out some clothes they had just finished washing. She seemed not at all put out by being caught thus humbly employed; but begging him to wait a little, finished her work, ran away, dressed somewhat carefully, and returning begged he would return to the house. He followed with cheeks burning with shame: he felt the utmost contempt for himself because he had fallen in love with this little housewife, and the greatest indignation against her for having presumed, very innocently, to excite so poetical a sentiment; and, in the stupidity of his offended self-love, resolved to avenge himself by making some spiteful remark ere he escaped from a house into which he considered that he had been regularly entrapped. Accordingly, when she took the pencil in hand, he observed that probably she imagined that contact with soap-suds would improve the delicacy of her touch. Clara did not reply, but began to sketch in a manner that proved she had listened to the pedantic rules he had laid down on occasion of the previous lesson more from modesty than because she was in want of them. Then suddenly rising without attending to some cavil he thought it his duty to make, she went to the piano, and beginning to play, drew forth such ravishing notes, that Ernest, who was himself no contemptible musician, could not refrain from applauding enthusiastically. She received his compliments with a slight shrug of the shoulders, and commenced a song that enabled her to display with full effect the capabilities of her magnificent voice. The soap-suds were forgotten; and Ernest's romance was coming back upon him: he began to chide himself for his foolish prejudices; and thought that, after all, with a little training, Clara might be made quite a lady. Suddenly, however, she broke off her song, and turning toward him with an ironical smile, said: "Not bad for a housemaid, Mr. Professor—is it?"

He attempted to excuse himself, but he was evidently judged; and, what was more—not as an obscure drawing-master, but as M. Ernest Leroy. His identity was evidently no secret; and she even called him by his name. He endeavored in vain to make a fine speech to apologize for his ill-behavior; but she interrupted him keenly, though good-humoredly, and the entrance of Alfonso was fatal to a fine scene of despair he was about to enact. Clara upon this retired with a profound salute; and Alfonso spoke with more of dignity than usual in his manner, and said: "My young friend, you must excuse a little deception which has been practiced on you, or rather which you have practiced upon yourself. I am going to be very free and frank with you to-day. I am not what you take me for. I am the Count

Corsini, a Roman; and because I have not the means of keeping a man-servant, when the women of my family go to church I follow them, as you saw. This is not unusual among my countrymen. It is a foolish pride I know; but so it is. However, the matter interests you not. You saw my daughter Clara, and thought you loved her. I was willing, as on inquiry I found you to be a respectable person, to see how you could agree together; but your pride—I managed and overheard all—has destroyed your chance. My daughter will seek another husband."

There was a cold friendliness in Alfonso's tone which roused the pride of Ernest. He affected to laugh, called himself a foolish madcap, but hinted that a splendid marriage awaited him, if he chose, on his return to Paris; and went away endeavoring to look unconcerned. The following morning he was on board a vessel bound for Palermo, very sea-sick it is true, but thinking at the same time a great deal more of Clara than he could have thought possible had it been predicted.

Some few years afterward Ernest Leroy was in one of the *salons* of the Fauxbourg St. Germain. Still a bachelor, he no longer felt those sudden emotions to which he had been subject in his earlier youth. He was beginning to talk less of sentiments present and more of sentiments passed. In confidential moods he would lay his hand upon his waistcoat—curved out at its lower extremity, by the by, by a notable increase of substance—and allude to a certain divine Clara who had illuminated a moment of his existence. But he was too discreet to enter into details.

Well, being in that *salon*, as we have said, pretending to amuse himself, his attention was suddenly drawn by the announcement of Lady D—. He turned round, probably to quiz *la belle Anglaise* he expected to behold. What was his astonishment on recognizing in the superb woman who leaned on the arm of a tall, military-looking Englishman, the identical Clara Corsini of his youthful memories. He felt at first sick at heart; but, taking courage, soon went up and spoke to her. She remembered him, with some little difficulty, smiled, and holding out her alabaster hand, said gently: "Do you see any trace of the soap-suds?" She never imagined he had any feeling in him, and only knew the truth when a large, round tear fell on the diamond of her ring. "Charles," said Ernest awhile afterward to a friend, "it is stiffling hot and dreadfully stupid here. Let us go and have a game of billiards."

OUR SCHOOL.

BY CHARLES DICKENS.

WE went to look at it, only this last Midsummer, and found that the Railway had cut it up root and branch. A great trunk-line had swallowed the play-ground, sliced away the school-room, and pared off the corner of the house: which, thus curtailed of its proportions, presented itself, in a green stage of stucco, profile-wise toward the road, like a forlorn flat-iron without a handle, standing on end.

It seems as if our schools were doomed to be the sport of change. We have faint recollections of a Preparatory Day-School, which we have sought in vain, and which must have been pulled down to make a new street, ages ago. We have dim impressions, scarcely amounting to a belief, that it was over a dyer's shop. We know that you went up steps to it; that you frequently grazed your knees in doing so; that you generally got your leg over the scraper, in trying to scrape the mud off a very unsteady little shoe. The mistress of the Establishment holds no place in our memory; but, rampant on one eternal door-mat, in an eternal entry, long and narrow, is a puffy pug-dog, with a personal animosity toward us, who triumphs over Time. The bark of that baleful Pug, a certain radiating way he had of snapping at our undefended legs, the ghastly grinning of his moist black muzzle and white teeth, and the insolence of his crisp tail curled like a pastoral crook, all live and flourish. From an otherwise unaccountable association of him with a fiddle, we conclude that he was of French extraction, and his name *Fiddle*. He belonged to some female, chiefly inhabiting a back-parlor, whose life appears to us to have been consumed in sniffing, and in wearing a brown beaver bonnet. For her, he would sit up and balance cake upon his nose, and not eat it until twenty had been counted. To the best of our belief, we were once called in to witness this performance; when, unable, even in his milder moments, to endure our presence, he instantly made at us, cake and all.

Why a something in mourning, called "Miss Frost," should still connect itself with our preparatory school, we are unable to say. We retain no impression of the beauty of Miss Frost—if she were beautiful; or of the mental fascinations of Miss Frost—if she were accomplished; yet her name and her black dress hold an enduring place in our remembrance. An equally impersonal boy, whose name has long since shaped itself unalterably into "Master Mawls," is not to be dislodged from our brain. Retaining no vindictive feeling toward Mawls—no feeling whatever, indeed—we infer that neither he nor we can have loved Miss Frost. Our first impression of Death and Burial is associated with this formless pair. We all three nestled awfully in a corner one wintry day, when the wind was blowing shrill, with Miss Frost's pinafore over our heads; and Miss Frost told us in a whisper about somebody being "screwed down." It is the only distinct recollection we preserve of these impalpable creatures, except a suspicion that the manners of Master Mawls were susceptible of much improvement. Generally speaking, we may observe that whenever we see a child intently occupied with its nose, to the exclusion of all other subjects of interest, our mind reverts in a flash to Master Mawls.

But, the School that was Our School before the Railroad came and overthrew it, was quite another sort of place. We were old enough to be put into Virgil when we went there, and to get Prizes for a variety of polishing on which the rust

has long accumulated. It was a School of some celebrity in its neighborhood—nobody could have said why—and we had the honor to attain and hold the eminent position of first boy. The master was supposed among us to know nothing, and one of the ushers was supposed to know every thing. We are still inclined to think the first-named supposition perfectly correct.

We have a general idea that its subject had been in the leather trade, and had bought us—meaning our School—of another proprietor, who was immensely learned. Whether this belief had any real foundation, we are not likely ever to know now. The only branches of education with which he showed the least acquaintance, were, ruling, and corporally punishing. He was always ruling ciphering-books with a bloated mahogany ruler, or smiting the palms of offenders with the same diabolical instrument, or viciously drawing a pair of pantaloons tight with one of his large hands, and caning the wearer with the other. We have no doubt whatever that this occupation was the principal solace of his existence.

A profound respect for money pervaded Our School, which was, of course, derived from its Chief. We remember an idiotic, goggle-eyed boy, with a big head and half-crowns without end, who suddenly appeared as a parlor-boarder, and was rumored to have come by sea from some mysterious part of the earth where his parents rolled in gold. He was usually called "Mr." by the Chief, and was said to feed in the parlor on steaks and gravy; likewise to drink currant wine. And he openly stated that if rolls and coffee were ever denied him at breakfast, he would write home to that unknown part of the globe from which he had come, and cause himself to be recalled to the regions of gold. He was put into no form or class, but learnt alone, as little as he liked—and he liked very little—and there was a belief among us that this was because he was too wealthy to be "taken down." His special treatment, and our vague association of him with the sea, and with storms, and sharks, and coral reefs, occasioned the wildest legends to be circulated as his history. A tragedy in blank verse was written on the subject—if our memory does not deceive us, by the hand that now chronicles these recollections—in which his father figured as a Pirate, and was shot for a voluminous catalogue of atrocities: first imparting to his wife the secret of the cave in which his wealth was stored, and from which his only son's half-crowns now issued. Dumbledon (the boy's name) was represented as "yet unborn," when his brave father met his fate; and the despair and grief of Mrs. Dumbledon at that calamity was movingly shadowed forth as having weakened the parlor-boarder's mind. This production was received with great favor, and was twice performed with closed doors in the dining-room. But, it got wind, and was seized as libelous, and brought the unlucky poet into severe affliction. Some two years afterward, all of a sudden one day, Dumbledon vanished. It was

whispered that the Chief himself had taken him down to the Docks, and reshipped him for the Spanish Main; but nothing certain was ever known about his disappearance. At this hour, we can not thoroughly disconnect him from California.

Our School was rather famous for mysterious pupils. There was another—a heavy young man, with a large double-cased silver watch, and a fat knife, the handle of which was a perfect tool-box—who unaccountably appeared one day at a special desk of his own, erected close to that of the Chief, with whom he held familiar converse. He lived in the parlor, and went out for walks, and never took the least notice of us—even of us, the first boy—unless to give us a depreciatory kick, or grimly to take our hat off and throw it away, when he encountered us out of doors: which unpleasant ceremony he always performed as he passed—not even condescending to stop for the purpose. Some of us believed that the classical attainments of this phenomenon were terrific, but that his penmanship and arithmetic were defective, and he had come there to mend them; others, that he was going to set up a school, and had paid the Chief “twenty-five pound down,” for leave to see Our School at work. The gloomier spirits even said that he was going to buy *us*; against which contingency conspiracies were set on foot for a general defection and running away. However, he never did that. After staying for a quarter, during which period, though closely observed, he was never seen to do any thing but make pens out of quills, write small-hand in a secret portfolio, and punch the point of the sharpest blade in his knife into his desk, all over it, he, too, disappeared, and his place knew him no more.

There was another boy, a fair, meek boy, with a delicate complexion and rich curling hair, who, we found out, or thought we found out (we have no idea now, and probably had none then, on what grounds, but it was confidentially revealed from mouth to mouth), was the son of a Viscount who had deserted his lovely mother. It was understood that if he had his rights, he would be worth twenty thousand a year. And that if his mother ever met his father, she would shoot him with a silver pistol which she carried, always loaded to the muzzle, for that purpose. He was a very suggestive topic. So was a young Mulatto, who was always believed (though very amiable) to have a dagger about him somewhere. But, we think they were both outshone, upon the whole, by another boy who claimed to have been born on the twenty-ninth of February, and to have only one birthday in five years. We suspect this to have been a fiction—but he lived upon it all the time he was at Our School.

The principal currency of Our School was slate-pencil. It had some inexplicable value, that was never ascertained, never reduced to a standard. To have a great hoard of it, was somehow to be rich. We used to bestow it in charity, and confer it as a precious boon upon our chosen friends. When the holidays were coming, con-

tributions were solicited for certain boys whose relatives were in India, and who were appealed for under the generic name of “Holiday-stoppers”—appropriate marks of remembrance that should enliven and cheer them in their homeless state. Personally, we always contributed these tokens of sympathy in the form of slate-pencil, and always felt that it would be a comfort and a treasure to them.

Our School was remarkable for white mice. Red-polls, linnets, and even canaries, were kept in desks, drawers, hat-boxes, and other strange refuges for birds; but white mice were the favorite stock. The boys trained the mice, much better than the masters trained the boys. We recall one white mouse, who lived in the cover of a Latin dictionary, who ran up ladders, drew Roman chariots, shouldered muskets, turned wheels, and even made a very creditable appearance on the stage as the Dog of Montargis. He might have achieved greater things, but for having the misfortune to mistake his way in a triumphal procession to the Capitol, when he fell into a deep inkstand, and was dyed black, and drowned. The mice were the occasion of some most ingenious engineering, in the construction of their houses and instruments of performance. The famous one belonged to a Company of proprietors, some of whom have since made Railroads, Engines, and Telegraphs; the chairman has erected mills and bridges in New Zealand.

The usher at our school, who was considered to know every thing as opposed to the Chief who was considered to know nothing, was a bony, gentle-faced, clerical-looking young man in rusty black. It was whispered that he was sweet upon one of Maxby's sisters (Maxby lived close by, and was a day pupil), and further that he “favored Maxby.” As we remember, he taught Italian to Maxby's sisters on half-holidays. He once went to the play with them, and wore a white waistcoat and a rose: which was considered among us equivalent to a declaration. We were of opinion on that occasion that to the last moment he expected Maxby's father to ask him to dinner at five o'clock, and therefore neglected his own dinner at half-past one, and finally got none. We exaggerated in our imaginations the extent to which he punished Maxby's father's cold meat at supper; and we agreed to believe that he was elevated with wine and water when he came home. But, we all liked him; for he had a good knowledge of boys, and would have made it a much better school if he had had more power. He was writing-master, mathematical-master, English master, made out the bills, mended the pens, and did all sorts of things. He divided the little boys with the Latin master (they were smuggled through their rudimentary books, at odd times when there was nothing else to do), and he always called at parents' houses to inquire after sick boys, because he had gentlemanly manners. He was rather musical, and on some remote quarter-day had bought an old trombone; but a bit of it was lost, and it made the most extraordinary sounds when he sometimes tried

to play it of an evening. His holidays never began (on account of the bills) until long after ours; but in the summer-vacations he used to take pedestrian excursions with a knapsack; and at Christmas-time he went to see his father at Chipping Norton, who we all said (on no authority) was a dairy-fed-pork-butcher. Poor fellow! He was very low all day on Maxby's sister's wedding-day, and afterward was thought to favor Maxby more than ever, though he had been expected to spite him. He has been dead these twenty years. Poor fellow!

Our remembrance of Our School, presents the Latin master as a colorless, doubled-up, near-sighted man with a crutch, who was always cold, and always putting onions into his ears for deafness, and always disclosing ends of flannel under all his garments, and almost always applying a ball of pocket-handkerchief to some part of his face with a screwing action round and round. He was a very good scholar, and took great pains where he saw intelligence and a desire to learn; otherwise, perhaps not. Our memory presents him (unless teased into a passion) with as little energy as color—as having been worried and tormented into monotonous feebleness—as having had the best part of his life ground out of him in a mill of boys. We remember with terror how he fell asleep one sultry afternoon with the little smuggled class before him, and awoke not when the footstep of the Chief fell heavy on the floor; how the Chief aroused him, in the midst of a dread silence, and said, “Mr. Blinkins, are you ill, sir?” how he blushing replied, “Sir, rather so;” how the Chief retorted with severity, “Mr. Blinkins, this is no place to be ill in” (which was very, very true), and walked back, solemn as the ghost in Hamlet, until, catching a wandering eye, he caned that boy for inattention, and happily expressed his feelings toward the Latin master through the medium of a substitute.

There was a fat little dancing-master who used to come in a gig, and taught the more advanced among us hornpipes (as an accomplishment in great social demand in after-life); and there was a brisk little French master who used to come in the sunniest weather with a handleless umbrella, and to whom the Chief was always polite, because (as we believed), if the Chief offended him, he would instantly address the Chief in French, and forever confound him before the boys with his inability to understand or reply.

There was, besides, a serving man, whose name was Phil. Our retrospective glance presents Phil as a shipwrecked carpenter, cast away upon the desert island of a school, and carrying into practice an ingenious inkling of many trades. He mended whatever was broken, and made whatever was wanted. He was general glazier, among other things, and mended all the broken windows—at the prime cost (as was darkly rumored among us) of ninepence for every square charged three-and-six to parents. We had a high opinion of his mechanical genius, and gen-

erally held that the Chief “knew something bad of him,” and on pain of divulgence enforced Phil to be his bondsman. We particularly remember that Phil had a sovereign contempt for learning; which engenders in us a respect for his sagacity, as it implies his accurate observation of the relative positions of the Chief and the ushers. He was an impenetrable man, who waited at table between whiles, and, throughout “the half” kept the boxes in severe custody. He was morose, even to the Chief, and never smiled, except at breaking-up, when, in acknowledgment of the toast, “Success to Phil! Hooray!” he would slowly carve a grin out of his wooden face, where it would remain until we were all gone. Nevertheless, one time when we had the scarlet fever in the school, Phil nursed all the sick boys of his own accord, and was like a mother to them.

There was another school not far off, and of course our school could have nothing to say to that school. It is mostly the way with schools, whether of boys or men. Well! the railway has swallowed up ours, and the locomotives now run smoothly over its ashes.

So fades and languishes, grows dim and dies,
All that this world is proud of,

and is not proud of, too. It had little reason to be proud of Our School, and has done much better since in that way, and will do far better yet.

A STORY OF ORIENTAL LOVE.

POETS have complained in all countries and in all ages, that true love ever meets with obstacles and hindrances, and the highest efforts of their art have been exhausted in commemorating the sufferings or the triumphs of affection. Will the theme ever cease to interest? Will the hopes, the fears, the joys, the vows of lovers, ever be deemed matters of light moment, unworthy to be embalmed and preserved in those immortal caskets which genius knows how to frame out of words? If that dreary time be destined to come—if victory decide in favor of those mechanical philosophers who would drive sentiment out of the world—sad will be the lot of mortals; for it is better to die with a heart full of love, than live for an age without feeling one vibration of that divine passion.

I am almost ashamed to translate into this level English, the sublime rhapsody with which the worthy Sheikh Ibrahim introduced the simple story about to be repeated. The truth is, I do not remember much of what he said, and at times he left me far behind, as he soared up through the cloudy heaven of his enthusiasm. I could only occasionally discern his meaning as it flashed along; but a solemn, rapturous murmur of inarticulate sounds swept over my soul, and prepared it to receive with devout faith and respect, what else might have appeared to me a silly tale of truth and constancy and passionate devotion. I forgot the thousand mosquitoes that were whirling with threatening buzz around; the bubbling of the water-pipe grew gradually less frequent, and at length died away; and the sides of the kiosque overlooking the river, with its flitting