CHRISTMAS STORY

THOROUGHFARE,

FOR 1867.

CHARLES DICKENS AND WILKIE COLLINS

[Continued from our last tome.]

NEW CHARACTERS ON THE SCENE. The words, "The Swiss postmark," following so soon upon the housekeeper's reference to Switzerland, wrought Mr. Wilding's agitation to such a remarkable height, tout his new partner could not decently make a pretense of letting it "Wilding," he asked hurriedly, and yet stopping short and glancing around as if for some wastble cause of his state of mind, "what is the

"My good George Vendale," returned the wine merchant, giving his hand with an appealing look, rather as if he wanted help to get over some obstacle, than as if he gave it in

or salutation - my good George Vendale, so much is the matter, that I shall never be myself agsin. It is impossible that I can ever be myself again. For, in fact, I am not mysel. The new partner, a brown-checked, handsome fellow, of about his own age, with a quick determined eye and an impulsive manner, retorted with natural astonisament, "Not your-

"Not what I supposed myself to be," said What, in the name of wonder, did you suppose yourself to be that you are not? was the rejoinder, delivered with a cheerful frankness,

inviting confidence from a more reticent man. "I may ask without impertinence, now that we nre partners. "There again!" cried Wilding, leaning back in his chair, with a lost look at the other, "Partners! I had no right to come into this business. It was never meant for me. My mother never meant it should be mine. I mean his mother meant it should be his, if I mean

anything, or ii I am anybody.' "Come, come," urged his partner, after a moment's pause, and taking possession of him with that calm confidence which inspires strong nature when it honestly desires to aid a weak one. "Whatever has gone wrong has gone wrong through no sault of yours, I am very I was not in this counting-house with you under the old regime, for three years, to noubt you, Wilding. We were not younger men than we are, together, for all that. Let me begin our parthersup by being a serviceable partner, and setting right whatever is wrong. Has that letter anything to do with it?"!

'Han!" said Walding, with his hand to his temple. "There again! My head! I was for-getting the coincidence. The swiss postmark." 'At a second glance I see that the letter is unopened, so it is not very likely to have much to go with the matter," said Vendale, with com-forting composure. "Is it for you or for us?" forting composure, 'For us," said Wilding.

"Suppose I open it and read it aloud, to get it out or our way?"

"Thank you, thank you,"

The letter is only from our champagne-making friends, the House at Neuchatel. 'Dear Sir, -We are in receipt of yours of the 28th ult., informing us that you have taken your Mr. Vendate into partnership, whereon we beg you to receive the assurance of our felicitations. Permit us to embrace the occasion of specially commending to you M. Jules Obenteizer.' Impossible!

Wilding locked up in quick apprehension, and cried, "Eh ?"

"Impossible sort of name," returned his partner, slightly-"Openreizer '-Or specially com-mending to you M. Jules Oscureizer, of soho square, London (north side), henceforth fully accredited as our agent, and who has already had the honor of making the acquaintance of your Mr. Vendale in his (said M. Obenreizer's) native country, Switzerland'-to be sure; puch, pooh! what have I been to using of! I remember, now-'when travelling with his niece.' Vendale had so slurged th With his -?" last word that Wilding had not heard it

"When travelling with his Niece. Obcurel-zer's Niece," said Vendale, in a somewhat superfluously lucid manner. "Niece of Obenteizer. (I met them in my dirst Swiss tour, travelled a hule with them, and lost them for two years; met them again, my Swiss tour before last, and have lost them ever since.) Obenreizer. Niece of Obenreizer, To be sure! Possible sort of name, after all! 'M. Obenreizer is in possession or our absolute confidence, and we do not doubt you will esteem his merits.' Duly signed by the House, 'Detreshier et Cie.' Very weil. I undertake to see M. Obenreizer presently, and clear h m out of the way. That clears the swiss postmark out of the way. So now, my dear Wilding, tell me what I can clear out of your way, and I'll had a way to clear it.

More than reasy and grateful to be thus taken charge of, the bonest wine merchant wrung his partner's hand, and, beginning his tale by pathetically declaring himself an Impostor,

"It was on this matter, no doubt, that you were sending for Bintrey when I came in?" said his partner, after reflecting.

"It was."
"He has experience and a shrewd head; shall be anxious to know his opinion. It is bold and bazardons in me to give you mine before I know his, but I am not good at holding back. Plainly, then, I do not see these circumstances as you see them. I do not see your position as you see it. As to your being an impostor, my dear Wilding, that is simply absurd, because no man can be that without being a consenting party to an imposition. Clearly you never were so. As to your enrichment by the lady who beheved you to be her son, and whom you were forced to believe, on her own snowing, to be your mother, consider whether that did not arise out of the personal relations between you. You gradually became much a tached to her; she gradually became much attached to you. It was on you, personally you, as I see the case, that she conferred these worldly advantages; it was from her, her personally, that you took

"She supposed me," objected Wilding, shaking "to have a natural claim upon her,

"I must admit that," replied his partner, "to be true. But if she made the discovery that you have made, six months before she died, do you think it would have cancelled the years ou were together, and the tenderness that each of you had conceived for the other-each on increasing knowledge of the other?"

What I think," said Wilding, simply but stoutly ho ding to the bare lact, "can no more change the truth than it can bring down the aky. The truth is that I stand possessed of what was meant for another man."

"He may be dead," said Vendale, "And if he is alive, have I not innocently, I grant you in-nocently-robbed him of enough? Have I not robbed him of all the happy time that I enjoyed in his stead? Have I not robbed him of the exdear lady," stretching his hand towards the picture, "told ne she was my mother? Have I not robbed him of all the care she lavished on me? Have I not even robbes him of all devotion and duty that I so proudly gave to her?
Therefore it is that I ask myself, George Vencome of him? "Who can tell!"

"I must try to find out who can tell. I must Institute inquiries. I must never desist from prosecuting inquiries. I will live upon the interest of my share-I ought to say his sharein this business, and will lay up the rest for When I find him, I may perhaps throw myself upon his generosity; but I will yield to him. I will, I swear. As I loved and bonned ber," said Wilding, reverently ki sing his hand towards the picture, and then covering his eyes with it-"as I loved and honored her, and have a world of reasons to be grateful to her!" And so broke down again.

His partner rose from the chair he had occupied, and stood behind him, with a hand softly laid upon his shoulder. "Waller, I knew you before to day to be an unright man, with a pure conscience and a nue heart. It is very for unate for me that I have the privilege to travel on in his so near to so trustworthy a man. I am thankul for it. Use me as your right hand, and rely how me to the death. Don't think and rely upon me to the death. Don't think the worse of me if I protest to you that my uppermost feeling at present is a confused, you may call it an nureasonable one. I feel far more pity for the lady and for you, because you did not at and in your supposed relations, than I can feel for the unknown man (if he ever became a man), because he was unconsciously displaced. You have done well in sending for Mr. Bintrey. What I think will be a partor his advice, I know is the whole of mine. Do not move a step in this serious matter precipitately. The secret must be kept among us with great strictness, for to part with it lightly would be to invite frauduent claims, to encourage a bost of knaves, to let loose a nood of persury and plotting. I have no more to say now. Walter, than to remind you that you sold me a share in your business expressly to save yourself from more work than your present health is fit for, and that I bought t expressly to do work, and mean to do it.

With these words, and a parting grip of his partner's shoulder that gave them the best em-phasis they could have had. George Vendale took himself presently to the counting-house and presently atterwards to the address of M.

As he turned into Soho Square, and directed his steps towards its north side, a deepened color shot across his sun browned face, which Wilding, if he had been a better observer, or bad been less occupied with his own trouble, might have noticed when his partner read aloud a certain passage in their Swiss corres-pondent's letter, which he had not read so distincily as the rest.

A curious colony of mountaineers has long been enclosed within that small flat London district of Soho. Swiss watchmakers, Swiss silver-chasers, Swiss jewellers, Swiss importers of Swiss musical boxes and Swiss toys of various kmds, draw close together there. Swiss fessors of music, painting, and languages; Swiss other Swiss servants chronically out of place: industrious Swiss laundresses and starchers; mysteriously existing Swiss of both reves: Swiss, creditable and Swiss discreditable Swiss to be trusted by all means, and Swiss to be trusted by no means; these diverse Swiss particles are attracted to a centre in the district of Sono. Snabby Swiss enting-houses, coffee-bouses, and lodging-houses, Swiss drinks and dishes, Swiss service for Sundays, and Swiss schools for week-days, are all to be found there. Even the pative-born English taverns grive a sort of broken English trade; announcing in their windows Swiss whets and drams, and sheltering in their bars Swiss skirmishes of and animosity on most nights in the year.

When the new partner in Wilding & Co. rang the bell of a door bearing the blunt inscription Obenreizer on a brass plate—the inner door of a substantial house, whose ground story was devoted to the sale of Swiss clocks—he pussed at once into domestic Switzerland. A whiteed stove for winter-time filled the fireplace of the room into which he was shown; the room bare floor was laid together in a neat pattern of veral ordinary woods; the room had a prevalent air of sur ace bareness and much scrubbing; and the little square of flowery carpet by the capacious clock and vases of artificial flowers, contended with that tone, as if, in bringing out the whole effect, a Parisian had adapted a dairy

to domestic purposes. Mimic water was dropping off a mill-wheel under the clock. The visitor had not stood it, following it with his eye, a minute, when M. Obenreizer, at his elbow, startled him by saying, in very good English, very slightly clipped:—"How do you do? So glad!"

I beg your pardon. I didn't hear you come Not at all! Sit, please,"

Releasing his visuor's two arms, which he had tightly pinioned at the elbows by way of embrace, M. Obenreizer also sat, remarking, with a smile:-"You are well? So glad!" and touching his elbows again.

"I don't know," said Vendale, after exchange of salutations, "whether you may yet have heard

of me from your House at Neuchatel?"

"In connection with Wilding & Co. ?" "Is it not odd that I should come to you, in London here, as one of the firm of Wilding &

Co., to pay the firm's respects?"
"Not at all! What did I always observe when we were on the mountains?" them vast; but the world is so little. So little is the world, that one cannot keep away from persons. There are so few persons in the world that they continually cross and recross. So very little is the world, that one cannot get rid of a person. Not," touching his elbows with an ingratiatory smile, "that one would desire to get 11d of you.

"I hope not, M. Obenreizer." "Please call me, in your country, Mr. I call myself so, for I love your country. If Though descended from so fine a family, you have had the condescention to come into trade? Stop, though? Wines? Is it trade, in England, or profession? Not time art?"

"Mr. Obenreizer," returned Vendale, somewhat out of countenance, "I was but a silly young fellow, just of age, when I first bad the pleasure of travelling with you, and whou you and I, and Mademoiselle your niece-who is

'Thank you. Who is well." "-Snared some slight glacier dangers to-gether. If, with a boy's vanity, I rather vaunted my family, I hope I did so as a kind of introduction of myself. It was very weak, and in very bad taste: but perhaps you know our English proverb, 'Live and learn.'

You make too much of it," returned the "And what the devil! After all, yours was a fine family."

George Venoale's laugh betrayed a little vexution, as he rejoined: "Well! I was strongly attached to my parents, and when we first travelled together, Mr. Obenreizer, I was in the first flosh of coming into what my father and mother left me. So I hope it may have been, after all, more youthful openness of speech and heart than boastfulness. "All openness of speech and heart! No boast-

fulners!" cried Obenreizer. "You tax yourself too heavily. You tax yourself, my faith! as if you was your government taxing you! Besides, it commenced with me. I remember, that even ng in the boat upon the lake, floating among the reflections of the mountains and valleys, the crags and pine woods, which were my earliest emembrance, I drew a word-picture of my sordid childhood. Of our poor hut, by the water all which my mother showed to travellere; of the cow-shed where I slept with the cow; of my idiot bals brother always sitting at the door, or imping down the pass to beg; of my ball-sister always spluning, and resting her enormous goitre on a great stone; of my being a tamished, taked little wretch of two or three years, when they were men and women with bard hands to beat me. I, the only child of my tather's second marriage-if it even was a mar-Weat more natural than for you to com pare rotes with me, and say, 'We are as one by age; at that same time I sat upon my mother's lsp in my tathet's carriage, rolling through the rich English streets, all luxury surrounding me, all squaled poverty kept from me. Such

is my earliest remembrance as of posed to Mr. Obenreizer was a black-baired young man of a datk complexion, through whose swarthy skin no red glow ever shone. When color would have come into another cheek, a hardly discernible heat would come into his, as if the machinery for bringing up the ardent blood were there, but the machinery were dry. He was robustly made, well-proportioned, and had drome features. Many would have percared that some surface charge in him would have set them more at their case with him, without heirg able to define what change. If his hos could have been made much thicker, and his neck much thinder, they would have found their seak much thinder,

found their want supplied. But the great Observeizer peculiarity was, that a cer am nameless film would come over his eyes-apparently by the action of his own will -which would impenetrably veil, not only from

those tellers of tales, but from his face at large, every expression save one of attention. It by no means followed that his attention should be There was a dismisal of the subject in her wholly given to the person with whom he sooke, or even wholly bestowed on present sounds and objects. Hather, it was a comprehensive watchfulness of everything he had in his own mind, and everything that he knew to be, or suspected to be, in the minds of other men. At this stage of the conversation Mr. Oben-

reizer's film came over him.
"The object of my present visit," said Vendale, "is, I need hardly say, to assure you of the friendliness of Wilding & Co., and of the goodness of your credit with us, and of our desire to be of service to you. We hope shortly to offer you our hospitality. Things are not quite in train with us yet, for my partner, Mr. Wilding, is reorganizing the domestic part of our establishment, and is interrupted by some private affairs. You don't know Mr. Wilding, I be-

Mr. Obenreizer did not. You must come together soon. He will be giad to have made your acquaintance, and I think I may predict that you will be glad to have node his. You have not long been esta-blished in London, I suppose, Mr. Obenraizer!" It is only now that I have undertaken this

'Mademoiselle your niece-la-not marriel?" "Not married."
George Vendale glanced about nim, as if for

any tokens of her.

"She has been in London?"
"She is in London."
"When and where might I have the honor of recalling myself to her remembrance?"
"Mr. Obent eizer, discarding his him and touching his visitor's cibows as before, said lightly, "Come up staire."

Fluttered enough by the suddenness with which the interview he had sought was coming upon him after all, George Vendate tollowed up stairs. In a room over the chamber he had just quitted-a room also Swiss-appointed-a young lady sat near one of three windows, working a an embroidery-frame; and an older lady sat with her face turned close to another white-tiled store (though it was summer, and the stove was not lighted), cleaming gloves. The young lary wore an unusual quantity of fair bright hair, very prettily braided about a rather rounder white iorebend than the average English type, and so her face might have been a shade—or say a light-rounder than the average English face, and her figure slightly rounder than the figure of the average English girl at nineteen.

A remarkable indication of freedom and grace of limb, in her quiet attitude, and a wonderful purity and freshness of color in her dimpted face and bright grey eyes, seemed fraught with mountain air. Switzerland, too, though the general fashion of her dress was English, peeped out of the sanciful bodice she wore, and surked in the curious clocked red stocking, and in its liftle silver-buckled shoe. As to the elder lady, sitting with her feet apart upon the lower brass leage of the slove, supporting a lap-tall of gloves while she cleaned one stretched on her left band, she was a true Swiss impersonation of another kind; from the breadth of her cushion-like back, and the ponderosity of her respectable legs (if the word be admissible), to black velvet band tied tightly round her throat for the repression of a rising tendency to gottre; or, higher still, to her great copper colored gold earnings; or, higher still, to her head-dress of black gauze stretched on wire.

"Miss Marguerite," said Obeureizer to the joung lady, "do you recollect this gentleman?"
"I think," she answered, rising from her seat, surprised and a little confused, "it is Mr. Ven-

"I think it is," said Obenreizer, dryly. "Permit me, Mr. Vendale. Madame Dor."

The elder lady by the stove, with the glove stretched on her left hand, like a glover's sign, half got up, balf looked over her broad shoulder, and wholly plumped down again and rubbed away.

"Madame Dor." said Obenreizer, smiling, "is so kind as to keep me free from stain or tear. Madame Dor humors my weakness for being always neat, and devotes her time to removing every one of my specks and spots.

Madame Dor, with the stretched glove in the air, and her eyes closely scrutinizing its palm. discovered a tough spot in Mr. Obenreizer at that instant, and rubbed hard at him. George Vendale took his seat by the embroidery-trans (having first taken the fair right hand that his entrance had checked), and glanced at the gold cross that dipped into the bodice, with something of the devotion of a pilgrim, who had reached his shrine at last. Obenraizer stood in the middle of the room with his thumbs in his waistcost-pockets, and became filmy.

"He was saying down stairs, Miss Obenreizer," observed Vendale, "that the world is so small a place, that people cannot escape one another. I have found it much too large for me since I saw you last." 'Have you travelled so far, then ?" she in

'Not so far, for I have only gone back to Switzerland each year; but I could have wished- and indeed I have wished very often-that the little world did not afford such opportunities for long escapes as it does. If it had been less, I might have found my fellow-travellers sooner, you

The pretty Marguerite colored, and very slightly glanced in the direction of Madame Dor "You find us at length, Mr. Vendale. Perhaps you may lose us again." "I trust not. The curious coincidence that has enabled me to find you, encourages me to

hope not." "What is that coincidence, sir, if you please?" A dainty little native touch in this turn of speech and in its tone made it perfectly captivating, thought George Vendale, when again be noticed an instantaneous glance towards Madame Dor. A caution seemed to be conveyed in it, rapid flash though it was; so he quietly took heed of Madame Dor from that time forth.

"It is that I happen to have become a partner in a house of business in London, to which Mr. Obenreizer happens this very day to be expressly recommended; and that, too, by another house of business in Switzerland, in which (as it turns out) we both have a commercial interest, He has not told you?"

"Ah!" cried Obenreizer, striking in, filmless, I had not told Miss Marguerite. The world is so small and so monotonous that a surprise is worth having in such a little jog-trot lace. It is as he tells you, Miss Marguerite He, of so fine a family, and so proudly bred, has condescended to trade. To trade! Like us poor peasants, who have risen from ditches!" A cloud crept over the fair brow, and she cast

down her eyes.

"Why, it is good for trade!" pursued Obenreizer, enthusiastically. "It enuobles trade! It
is the misfortune of trade, it is its vulgarity, that
any low people—for example, we poor peasants
—may take to it and climb by it. See you, my
dear Vendale!" He spoke with great energy.

"The father of Miss Marguerite, my eldest halfbrother, more than two times your are conbrother, more than two times your age or mine, living now, wandered without shors, almost without rags, from that wretched pass, -wan dered,-got to be fed with the mules and dogs at an lun in the main valley far away, -got to be Boy there, -got to be Ostler, -got to be Walter, -got to be Cook, -got to be Landsord. A. Landsord, be took me (could be take the idiot bergar, bis brother, or the spinning monstroatty his sister?) to put as pupil to the famous watchmaker, his neighbor and friend. His wife dies when Miss Marguerite is born. What is his will, and what are his words, to me, when he dies, she being between girl and woman? 'All for Marguerite, except so much by the year for you. You are young, but I make her your ward, for you were of the obscurest and the powerst presently, and the powerst presently, and the powerst presently. and the poorest peasantry, and so was I, and so was her mother; we were abject p-asants all and you will remember it. The thing is equally true of most of my countrymen, now in trade in this your London quarter of Soho, Peasants once; low-born drudging Swiss peasants. Then how good and great for trader" here, from having been warm, he became playfully jubilant, and touched the young wine merchant's elbow again with his light embrace: "to be exalted by

gentlemen! do not think so," said Marguerite, with a flushed check, and s look away from the visitor, that was almost deflant, "I think it is as much exalted by us reassure." "Fie, fie, Miss Margnerite," said Obenreizer,

"I speak in proud earnest," she answered,

words, which Vendale could not contend against. He only said in an carnest manner, "I most heartily agree with you, Miss Obenreizer, and I have siready said so, as Mr. Obenreizer will bear witness," which he by no means did,

Now, Vendale's eyes were quick eyes, and sharply watching Madame for by times, noted something in the broad back view of that lady, There was considerable pantomimic expression in her glove cleaning. It had been very softly done when he spoke with Margaerite, or it had attogether stopped, like the action of a listener, When Obenreizer's peasant-speech came to an end, she rubbed most vigorously, as if applauding it. And once or twice, as the glove (which she always held before her, a little above her face) turned in the air, or as this finger went down, or that went up, he even fancled that it made some telegraphic communication to Obeureizer: whose back was certainly never turned upon it, though he did not seem at all to

Vendale observed, too, that in Marguerite's dismissal of the subject twice forced upon him to his misrepresentations there was an indig pant treatment of her guardian which she tries to check, as though she would have flamed out against him, but for the influence of tear. He also observed-though this was not muchthat he never advanced within the distance of her at which he first placed himself; as though there were limits fixed between them. Neither had he ever spoken of her without the preax 'Miss." though whenever he uttered it, with the faintest trace of an air of mockery, And now it occurred to Vendale for the first time that something curious in the man which he not never before been able to define, was definable as a certain subtle essence of mockery that eluded touch or analysis. He felt con vinced that Marguerite was in some sor prisoner as to her tree will; though she held her own against those two combined, by the force of her character, which was nevertheless inadequate to her release. To feel convinced of this, was not to feel less disposed to love her than he had always been. In a word, he was desperately in love with her, and thoroughly determined to pursue the opportunity which had

For the present, he merely touched upon the pleasure that Wilding & Co. would soon have in entreating Miss Openreizer to honor their establishment with her presence—a curious old place, though a bachelor's house withal—and so aid not protract his visit beyond such a visit's ordinary length. Going down stairs, conducted by his host, he found the Obenreizer countinghouse at the back of the entrance-hall, and several shabby men in outlandish garments, haneing about, whom Obenreizer put aside that he might pass, with a few words in patois. "Countrymen," he explained, as he attended mosle to the door. "Poor compatriots.

Vendale to the door. "Poor compatrious Grateful and attached, like dogs! Good by To meet again. So glad!"
Two more light touches on his elbows dis-

missed him into the street. Sweet Marguerite at her frame, and Madame Dor's broad back at her telegraph, floated before him to Crippie Corner. On his arrival there Wilding was closeted with Bentrey. doors haptening to be open, Vendale lighted a cardle in a cleit stick, and went down for a cellarous stroil. Graceful Marguerite floated before him faithfully, but Madame Dor's broad back remained outside.

The vaults were very spacious and very old. There had been a stone crypt down there, when bygones were not bygones; some said, part of a monkish refectory; some said, of a chapel: some said, of a Pagan temple. It was all one now. Let who would make what he liked of a crumbled pillar and a broken arch or so. Old Time had made what he liked of it, and was quite indifferent to contradiction.

The close air, the musty smell, and the thunderous rumbling in the streets above, as being out of the routine of ordinary life, went well enough with the picture of pretty Marguerite bolding her own against these three. So Vendale went on until, at a turning in the vaults, saw a light like the light he carried.

"On! You are here, are you, Joey?"
"Oughtn't it rather to go—'Oh! You're here, are you, Ma ter George?" For it's my business be here; but It ain't yourn.'

"Don't gramble, Joey."
"On! I don't grumble," returned the cellar-an. "If anything grumbles, it's what I've man. took in through the pores; it an't me, Have a care as something in you don't begin a-grumb-Master George. Stop here long enough for the wapors to work, and they'll be at it, His present occupation consisted of poking his head into the bins, making measurements and mental calculations, and entering them in a rhinocerous-hide-looking notebook, like a piece

of himself. "They'll be at it," he resumed, laying the wooden rod that he measured with, acro-s two casks, entering his last calculation, and straightening his back, "trust em! And so you've regularly come into the business, Master George?"

"Regularly. I hope you don't object, Joey?"
"I don't, bless you. But wapors objects that
you're too young. You're both on you too "We shall get over that objection day by day,

"Ay, Master George; but I shall, day by day, get over the objection that I'm too old, and so I sha'n't be capable of seeing much improvement

The retort so tickled Joey Ladle that he grunted forth a laugh and delivered it again, grunting forth another laugh after the second edition of "improvement in you."

"But what's no laughting matter, Master George," he resumed, straightening his back once more, "is, that Young Master Wilding has gone and changed the luck. Mark my words. He has changed the luck, and he'll find it out. ain't been down here all my life for nothing ! know by what I notices down here, when it's a-going to rain, when it's a going to hold up, when it's a going to blow, when it's a going to be calm. I know, by what I notices down here, when the luck's changed, quite as well,"

"Has this growth on the root anything to do with your divination?" asked Vendale, holding his light towards a gloomy ragged growth of dark fungus, pendent from the arches with a very disagreeable and repellent effect. "We famous for this growth in this vault, aren't we?"

"We are, Master George" replied Joey Ladle, moving a step or two away, 'and if you'll be advised by me, you'll let it alone." Taking up the rod just now laid across the two casks, and faintly moving the languid fungus with it, Vendale asked, "Ay, indeed? Why so?"

Why, not so much because it rises from the casks of wine, and may leave you to judge what sort of stuff a Celtarman takes into hunself when he walks in the same all the days of his life, nor yet so much because at a stage of its growth it's maggets, and you'll letch 'em down upon you," returned Joey Ladie, still keeping away, "as for another reason, Master

'What other reason?" "(I wouldn't keep on touchin' it, if I was you, sir.) I'il tell you if you'll come out of the place. First, take a look at its color, Master

"I am doing so," "Done, sir. Now, come cut of the place," He moved away with his light, and Vendale followed with his. When Vendale came up with him, and they were going back together, Vendale eyeing him as they watked through the arches, said:—"Well, Josy? The color."
"Is it like clotted blood, Master George?"

"Like enough, perhaps."
"More than enough, I think," muttered Joey adle, shaking his head solemnly.
"Well, say it is like; say it is exactly like. "Master George, they do say-"

"Who?" "How should I know who?" rejoined the Cellarman, apparently much exasperated by the unreasonable nature of the question. "Them! Them as says pretty well everything, you know. How should I know who They are, if you don't?"

True. Go on." "They do say that the man that gets by any accident a piece of that dark growth right upon his breast, will, for sure and certain, die by

As Vendale laughingly storped to meet the Cellarman's eyes, which he had fast-ned on his light while dreaminely saving those words, he suddenly became conscious of being struck upon his own breast by a heavy hand. Instantly tollowing with his eyes the action of the hand that struck him—which was his companion's—be saw that it had beaten off his breast a web or clot of the fungus, even then floating to the

For a moment be turned upon the Cellarman almost as scared a look as the Cellarman turned upon him. But in another moment they had reached the daylight at the foot of the cellar-steps, and before he cheerfully sprang up them, he blew out his candle and the superstition together. [To be continued.]

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