

COLUMBIA PHOENIX.

Daily Paper \$1 a Month.
Payable in Advance.

"Let our just censure
Attend the true event."—Shakspeare.

Tri-Weekly 65c. a Month.
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By J. A. SELBY.

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BY JULIAN A. SELBY.

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"Births. Mrs. Meek, of a Son."

BY CHARLES DICKENS.

My name is Meek. I am, in fact, Mr. Meek. That son is mine and Mrs. Meek's. When I saw the announcement in the *Times* I dropped the paper. I had put it in myself, and paid for it, but it looked so noble that it overpowered me.

As soon as I could compose my feelings I took the paper up to Mrs. Meek's bedside. 'Maria Jane,' said I, (I allude to Mrs. Meek), 'you are now a public character.' We read the review of our child several times, with feelings of the strongest emotion; and I sent the boy who cleans the boots and shoes to the office for fifteen copies. No reduction was made on taking that quantity.

It is scarcely necessary for me to say that our child had been expected. In fact; it had been expected, with comparative confidence, for some months. Mrs. Meek's mother, who resides with us—of the name of Bigby—had made every preparation for its admission to our circle.

I hope and believe I am a quiet man. I will go farther. I know I am a quiet man. My constitution is tremulous, my voice was never loud, and, in point of stature, I have been from infancy, small. I have the greatest respect for Maria Jane's mamma. She is a most remarkable woman. I honor Maria Jane's mamma. In my opinion, she would storm a town, single-handed, with a hearth-broom, and carry it. I have never known her to yield any point whatever to mortal man. She is calculated to terrify the stoutest heart.

Still—but I will not anticipate.

The first intimation I had of any preparations being in progress, on the part of Maria Jane's mamma, was one afternoon several months ago. I came home earlier than usual from the office, and proceeding into the dining-room, found an obstruction behind the door, which prevented it from opening freely. It was an obstruction of a soft nature. On looking in, I found it to be a female.

The female in question stood in the

corner behind the door, consuming sherry wine. From the nutty smell of that beverage pervading the apartment, I have no doubt she was consuming a second glassful. She wore a black bonnet of large dimensions, and was copious in figure. The expression of her countenance was severe and discontented. The words to which she gave utterance on seeing me were these, 'Oh! git along with you, sir, if you please; me and Mrs. Bigby don't want no male parties here!'

That female was Mrs. Prodigit.

I immediately withdrew, of course. I was rather hurt, but I made no remark. Whether it was that I showed a slowness of spirits after dinner, in consequence of feeling that I seemed to intrude, I cannot say. But Maria Jane's mamma said to me, on her retiring for the night, in a low distinct voice, and with a look of reproach that completely subdued me, 'George Meek, Mrs. Prodigit is your wife's nurse!'

I bear no ill-will towards Mrs. Prodigit. Is it likely that I, writing this with tears in my eyes, should be capable of deliberate animosity towards a female so essential to the welfare of Maria Jane? I am willing to admit that Fate may have been to blame, and not Mrs. Prodigit; but it is undeniably true that the latter female brought desolation and devastation into my lowly dwelling.

We were happy after her first appearance; we were sometimes exceedingly so. But, whenever the parlor door was opened, and 'Mrs. Prodigit' announced (and she was very often announced,) misery ensued. I could not bear Mrs. Prodigit's look. I felt that I was far from wanted, and had no business to exist in Mrs. Prodigit's presence. Between Maria Jane's mamma and Mrs. Prodigit there was a dreadful, secret understanding—a dark mystery and conspiracy, pointing me out as a being to be shunned. I appeared to have done something that was evil. Whenever Mrs. Prodigit called, after dinner, I retired to my dressing room—where the temperature is very low, indeed, in the wintry time of the year—and sat looking at my frosty breath as it rose before me, and at my rack of boots, a serviceable article of furniture, but never, in my opinion, an exhilarating object. The length of the councils that were held with Mrs. Prodigit under these circumstances, I will not attempt to describe. I will merely remark that Mrs. Prodigit always consumed sherry wine while the deliberations were in progress; that they always ended in Maria Jane's

being in wretched spirits on the sofa; and that Maria Jane's mamma always received me, when I was recalled, with a look of desolate triumph that too palpably said, 'Now, George Meek! You see my child, Maria Jane, a ruin, and I hope you are satisfied!'

I pass, generally, over the period that intervened between the day when Mrs. Prodigit entered her protest against male parties, and the ever-memorable midnight when I brought her to my unobtrusive home in a cab, with an extremely large box on the roof, and a bundle, a handbox, and a basket, between the driver's legs. I have no objection to Mrs. Prodigit (aided and abetted by Mrs. Bigby, who I never can forget is the parent of Maria Jane,) taking entire possession of my unassuming establishment. In the recesses of my own breast, the thought may linger that a man in possession cannot be so dreadful as a woman, and that woman Mrs. Prodigit; but I ought to bear a good deal, and I hope I can, and do. Huffing and snubbing prey upon my feelings; but I can bear them without complaint. They may tell in the long run; I may be hustled about, from post to pillar, beyond my strength; nevertheless, I wish to avoid giving rise to words in the family.

The voice of Nature, however, cries aloud in behalf of Augustus George, my infant son. It is for him that I wish to utter a few plaintive household words. I am not at all angry; I am mild—but miserable.

I wish to know why, when my child, Augustus George, was expected in our circle, a provision of pins was made, as if the little stranger were a criminal who was to be put to the torture immediately on his arrival, instead of a holy babe? I wish to know why haste was made to stick those pins all over his innocent form, in every direction? I wish to be informed why light and air are excluded from Augustus George, like poisons? Why, I ask, is my unoffending infant so hedged into a basket-bedstead, with dimity and calico, with miniature sheets and blankets, that I can only hear him snuffle (and no wonder!) deep down under the pink hood of a little bathing machine; can never peruse even so much of his lineaments as his nose.

Was I expected to be the father of a French roll, that the brushes of all nations were laid in; to rasp Augustus George? Am I to be told that his sensitive skin was over-intended by nature to have rashes?

[Concluded on Fourth Page.]