

‘That’s your account,’ said Joe,’ and I wouldn’t give another sixpence, if I was to be boiled for not doing it. Who’s next.’

Mrs Dilber was next. Sheets and towels, a little wearing apparel, two old-fashioned silver teaspoons, a pair of sugar-tongs, and a few boots. Her account was stated on the wall in the same manner.

‘I always give too much to ladies. It’s a weakness of mine, and that’s the way I ruin myself,’ said old Joe. ‘That’s your account. If you asked me for another penny, and made it an open question, I’d repent of being so liberal and knock off half-a-crown.’

‘And now undo my bundle, Joe,’ said the first woman.

Joe went down on his knees for the greater convenience of opening it, and having unfastened a great many knots, dragged out a large and heavy roll of some dark stuff.

‘What do you call this.’ said Joe. ‘Bed-curtains.’

‘Ah.’ returned the woman, laughing and leaning forward on her crossed arms. ‘Bed-curtains.’

‘You don’t mean to say you took them down, rings and all, with him lying there.’ said Joe.

‘Yes I do,’ replied the woman. ‘Why not.’

‘You were born to make your fortune,’ said Joe,’ and you’ll certainly do it.’

‘I certainly shan’t hold my hand, when I can get anything in it by reaching it out, for the sake of such a man as he was, I promise you, Joe,’ returned the woman coolly. ‘Don’t drop that oil upon the blankets, now.’

‘His blankets.’ asked Joe.

‘Whose else’s do you think.’ replied the woman. ‘He isn’t likely to take cold without them, I dare say.’

‘I hope he didn’t die of any thing catching. Eh.’ said old Joe, stopping in his work, and looking up.

‘Don’t you be afraid of that,’ returned the woman. ‘I an’t so fond of his company that I’d loiter about him for such things, if he did. Ah. you may look through that shirt till your eyes ache; but you won’t find a hole in it, nor a threadbare place. It’s the best he had, and a fine one too. They’d have wasted it, if it hadn’t been for me.’

‘What do you call wasting of it.’ asked old Joe.

‘Putting it on him to be buried in, to be sure,’ replied the woman with a laugh. ‘Somebody was fool enough to do it, but I took it off again. If calico an’t good enough for such a purpose, it isn’t good enough for anything. It’s quite as becoming to the body. He can’t look uglier than he did in that one.’