

Character Sketch of Mrs. Sparsit

The destitute widow of once wealthy drunkard Powler; the housekeeper of Bounderby

Mrs. Sparsit, a pathetic, but scheming old lady, earns her living by pouring tea and attending to the other housekeeping duties for Mr. Josiah Bounderby, whom she despises. Sparing with words, she is literally a "sitter," first in Bounderby's home and later in his bank. She lends her respectability and culture to his crude, uneducated environment. Resentful of Bounderby and others who do not have the background that she has, she seemingly accepts Bounderby's philosophy of life. In direct discourse with him, she simpers and hedges; when he is not present, she scorns him by calling him a "noodle" and spits on his picture.

Throughout the novel, Mrs. Sparsit connives and plans for her own advantage. She pretends to be faithful to Mr. Bounderby but actually delightfully waits for the coming misfortune in the shape of Louisa. Jealous at being driven out by Louisa, she watches with glee as the inappropriate friendship between Louisa and James Harthouse progresses. In her imagination she has built a grand staircase and sees Mrs. Bounderby descending step by step towards the pit at the bottom. She closely observes each and every movement of Louisa like a hawk. However, just at the moment of her greatest triumph (when she thinks that Louisa has ruined herself by running off with Mr. Harthouse), Mrs. Sparsit is foiled when Louisa

Dickens says, "She was the most wonderful women for prowling about the house" She imagines herself as the "Bank Fairy" though the people outside look upon her as the "Bank Dragon" keeping a watch over her employer's treasure.

turns to her father instead of eloping. She furthermore earns Mr. Bounderby's unceasing enmity when she accidentally reveals to Mr. Bounderby's mother to be alive, well, and a very good mother and that he had not, therefore, built himself up from poverty.

Her role in the first book is one of waiting and watching; in the second book, she continues this role and enlists the aid of Bitzer, an aspirant to the middle class, to bring revenge upon Bounderby; in the last book, she serves as informer and is rewarded by losing her position because of revealing Mr. Bounderby's secret and by being compelled to live with a hated relative, Lady Scadgers. This time she finds no reason any longer to keep her hatred for Mr. Bounderby a secret. At this time, she makes fun of him and says that everyone knows how wrong his judgment is, and now it has become the central point of discussion in the town. Just before leaving, Mrs. Sparsit, "with her Roman features like a medal stuck to common orate her scorn of Mr. Bounderby" examines him fixedly from top to toe and says she has the habit of addressing his portrait as a "noodle". Mr. Bounderby finds nothing to answer her.