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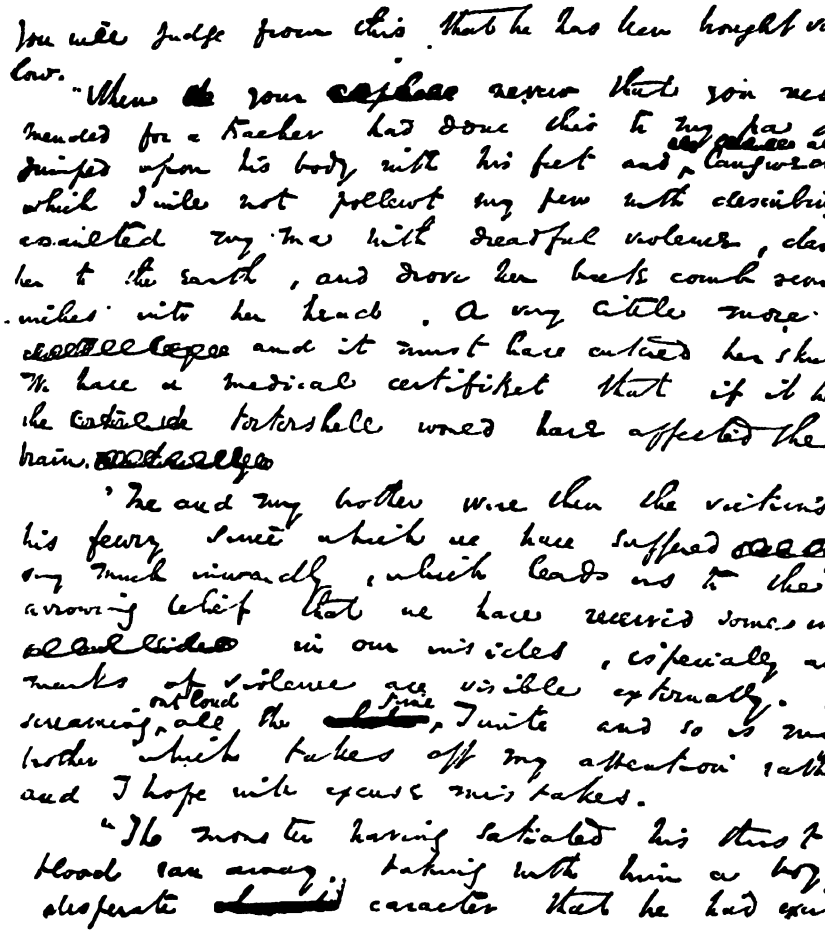
CHARACTER SKETCHES FROM DICKENS



REDUCED FACSIMILE OF A PORTION OF THE MANUSCRIPT OF 'NICHOLAS NICKLEBY.'

CHARACTER SKETCHES
FROM
DICKENS

COMPILED WITH FOREWORD BY

B. W. MATZ

EDITOR OF "THE DICKENSIAN"

WITH INTRODUCTION BY

KATE PERUGINI

(CHARLES DICKENS'S DAUGHTER)

ILLUSTRATED BY

HAROLD COPPING

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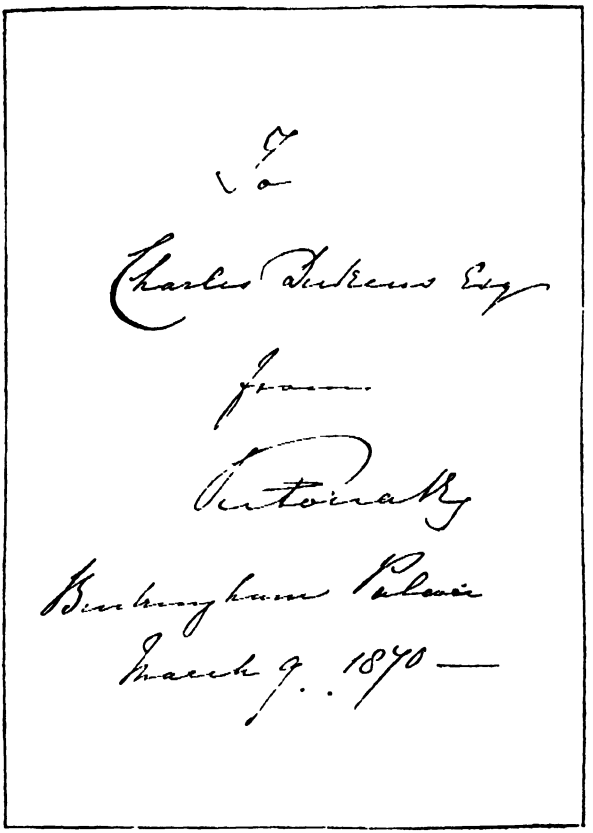

FACSIMILE OF AUTOGRAPH INSCRIPTION IN THE COPY OF QUEEN VICTORIA'S BOOK ON THE HIGHLANDS WHICH SHE PRESENTED TO DICKENS.

This book was first published in 1924

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INTRODUCTION

By KATE PERUGINI

In writing an introduction to this volume compiled by Mr. B. W. Matz and illustrated by Mr. Harold Copping, I am uncertain if I should attempt a criticism of Mr. Copping's clever work, which is far too well known to need an introduction, or whether I should allude in any way to the manner the book is presented to the artistic and literary world; nothing has been said to me on the subject, and I am generously left to my own devices and may write as I will.

Taking advantage, therefore, of my freedom in this respect, and taking also into consideration how the drawings and the book itself appeal to my sense of what is fitting and beautiful, I trust I may not be wrong in omitting all criticism, and in expressing merely a few words of sincere appreciation concerning what must surely give delight to thousands of my father's readers.

It is true that most of us have very definite views with regard to the appearance and bearing of every character to whom we are introduced in my father's novels, and it may happen sometimes these views (which are, of course, invariably the right ones) will vary ever so slightly from those held by Mr. Copping, on which rare occasions it were well if we agreed to differ, as Mr. Copping's ideas are always happy, and very often breathe the very spirit of the familiar figures and well remembered scenes they represent. As to the charming way his illustrations are reproduced and given to the public, the book speaks for itself and requires no interpreter.

It may not be out of place if I mention here that, in answer to a request lately made, I have just heard from Mr. B. W. Matz, the well-known Editor of *The Dickensian*, who is more learned, I believe, in artistic and literary matters connected with my father than anyone else I know. He tells me no fewer than sixty artists resident in England and sixteen American artists have illustrated his works, and probably the number is still increasing, so tempting are his subjects to publisher and artist alike.

From *The Pickwick Papers* to *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* is a long journey. From the light-hearted though thrilling adventures of Mr. Pickwick and his followers to the mysterious gloom and evil doings of Jasper in the dear and dull old city of Cloisterham are many milestones, pointing to the names of *Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby, The Old Curiosity Shop, Barnaby Rudge, Martin Chuzzlewit, Dombey and Son, David Copperfield, Bleak House, Hard Times, Little Dorrit, A Tale of Two Cities, Great Expectations*, and *Our Mutual Friend*, besides those half-mile or quarter-mile stones, as they might be called, on which are engraved *A Christmas Carol, The Chimes, The Cricket on the Hearth, The Battle of Life, The Haunted Man*, and a host of articles, papers and shorter stories which appeared in " Household Words " and " All the Year Round."

All these have been carefully noted and studied by Mr. Copping, and as we linger over some of the results of his meditations, our minds turn, as they have often turned before, to the man whose years were marked by such landmarks, which, like those on the Dover road, are self-evident, standing as they do in this case as the memorials of a busy life indeed ; for my father was most certainly the " strenuous worker " he has been constantly described by those authors who have made him the subject of their memoirs.

Yet there was nothing aggressively industrious in his manner of working, or in the quiet way he seemed to achieve more than many who made a greater parade of what they did. He was not " faddy " nor over particular in his choice of a study ; indeed, during the years he lived at Gad's Hill he changed his writing room three times.

He seldom, if ever, volunteered any statement or information regarding his work unless directly called upon to do so, and I have known him leave it in the middle of a sentence, and without protest, if a slight domestic difficulty of any kind hurried him into acting as judge or adviser. Writing appeared as natural to him as breathing, and was so much the expression of his being and so satisfying to the intense restlessness of his nature, which for ever craved expression, as to make it doubtful whether, had that excitement been withdrawn, he could possibly have attained the comparatively early age at which he died. No one, however, enjoyed a holiday more than he, and no one could " laze " with more satisfaction to himself and others, but only for a short time. His real happiness throughout life consisted, I am convinced, in following the destinies of those imaginary people, who were scarcely imaginary to him, in the same way as he has caused them to seem living to his readers, through the light of his sympathy and understanding. To those of us who looked in upon him sometimes as he sat at his desk, with an eager expression of interest and enjoyment on his sensitive face, the swift conviction would come that here, if anywhere, was the right man in the right place, doing what was his, by right of an enormous capacity for the work before him.

This does not mean there were not hours, sombre hours, when he strove and nothing came of all his labour—hours when he called upon the invisible friends of his enchanted life and not one, perhaps, would answer to his call ; sad hours of dulness, when he grew miserably depressed because he could not cover even one of the little blue " slips " on which he wrote and pondered ; his poor tired brain refusing absolutely the work that lay before it.

My father's habit was to retire to his study after breakfast, and there remain until one-thirty, hard at work, or, if he had a bad day, waiting as cheerfully as he could for something to " turn up," in the true Micawber spirit : one of the chief and most significant unlikenesses between himself and the real Micawber being that something usually did turn up for the son, though never for the father.

On more fortunate mornings he enjoyed what in romantic Victorian days would have been called by elderly ladies " a flow of inspiration," an expression which did not in the least tally with my father's rather severe teaching that constant application and an honest determination bent on improving any small talent inherent in the individual were the only secrets of success, and without those plodding virtues, the much envied, often discussed, mysterious fairy-like gift men call " genius " would remain always but a beautiful wasted thing, incapable of doing any permanent good in the world, and as fleeting and unsubstantial as the pretty white butterflies hovering over the flower beds in the garden.

My father's vivid imagination, fancy and love of romance and mystery were curiously at variance with - if they may not be called the compensating qualities of—his strong practical common-sense, the healthy sanity and vigour of his mind and his orderly precision and desire of accounting for whatever struck him as strange in himself or others. In early life, and warned by certain faults in the character of the father he dearly loved, he laid down a few wise rules for the guidance of his own conduct, which for many, many years of his life, I believe, he never departed from. He was hard upon himself in his self-training, although I have every reason for supposing this hardness was not extended to those friends who failed where he succeeded. He has often been called a self-made man, and perhaps was so in more ways than one, for in striving after qualities he felt he lacked in his neglected youth, he became possessed of some not originally his, and moulding these to his compelling will, they became as much part of himself as those more engaging and lovable characteristics born with him, for which he was loved and honoured.

" No gift of the mind, however great, however promising," he would say, " can ever compensate for the want of energy and patient attention in every-day work, and if these are present then everything is possible." This theory, advanced for the encouragement of his children, no doubt, has its weak side, for I fear not all the patient attention or energy the world holds can give the eye that

sees or the brain that understands; possibly some such doubt passed through the minds of his young people as they listened to his exhortations, although they never breathed to one another any revolutionary sentiment on the subject, or allowed themselves to doubt for one moment that from the height of his own standards and the knowledge he possessed of things and human nature he was not absolutely right. Perhaps, in the curiously receptive, silent way children have of learning what they have not been taught, they realized completely the difference between their own thoughts and the imaginings of their father as shown in his stories, and knew that not to them, and maybe to none other for many years to come, would be given that which they recognized as beautiful and rare, even though they seldom heard it called in their own home by the high-sounding title of " genius " ; the word seemed to them of small account, however, for the substance of it lay in the books they loved and devoured.

And what delights are to be found in those books, apart from the characterization and interest of the stories. What delights and constant change from town to country for the reader who can forget, if he wishes, dingy houses and crowded streets, and, wandering away with a little girl and her grandfather, will come presently upon a kindly schoolmaster living in a green, secluded village; or, tired of rough winds blowing upon him from the Yarmouth sea, can take shelter with Bob Cratchit and his family in a London home, and share their Christmas dinner.

Much have been said and written on the subject of my father's pathos, and some have praised and others blamed it; but of the greater gift of humour which was his above all other gifts, and which in his case included so much that was pathetic and even tragic, who shall say enough of what it has done for those who have studied his works and turned to them for comfort in moments of depression and weariness? In *Pickwick*, the most frankly humorous of his books, his own youthful high spirits did not allow of his dwelling for long on sorrow of any kind, though here, in old

Mr. Weller's description of the death of his wife which he gives to his son Sam, is a curious foreshadowing of my father's combined humour and pathos which is very beautiful indeed, and which to many of us strikes a truer note than is to be found in his more hackneyed scenes of sentiment and long drawn-out distress. And this radiant gift of humour never deserted him, but remained spontaneously fresh and refreshing until his death, vindicating by its immortal presence the word he was so chary of using.

Kate Perugini

CHARLES DICKENS.

ÆT 27.

From an Engraving by R. GRAVES, A.R.A.

From a Painting by D. MACLISE, R.A.

FOREWORD

By B. W. MATZ

(Editor of "The Dickensian")

In compiling the selection of incidents and stories from the works of Dickens comprised in this volume, my choice has been restricted by the series of pictures from the clever brush of Mr. Harold Copping which adorns its pages. My aim has been to make each excerpt a complete story or cameo in itself, and to allow the story to be told exclusively in Dickens's own words.

Dickens's books are so popular, so well read and known, that it is quite unnecessary to give the details of the story or of the characters which lead up to the incident. Even were this not so, it is believed that the excerpts here given will be found complete enough to follow for those who have never read the book from which they have been extracted; whilst those who know them well will welcome an opportunity of reading them once again, with Mr. Copping's realistic pictures to refresh their visualization of the characters.

Dickens's characters are not mere puppets ticketed with a name. They are real flesh and blood, human beings, who, under the magic spell of his genius, became imbued with a vitality which will outlive the fame of many historic personages.

No English novelist has peopled the world of imaginative literature with such a concourse of real persons as Dickens has,

each of whom differs and stands apart from the others, possessing a separate and distinct individuality of his or her own—characters we have come to know so well as to claim them as our own personal friends. Indeed, it may be said with truth that we know the people of Dickens's books more intimately than we do our own friends. Most persons are acquainted with them and their idiosyncracies in a greater or lesser degree, from the inimitable Pickwickians of his first book, through the whole list of the others, to the angular Mr. Grewgious in the last: their characteristics and sayings are familiar to all classes. Those who represent types have their names used as synonyms for the type they stand for, and have become part of the stock of the world's common knowledge, the mere mention of which conveys a whole philosophy in a word.

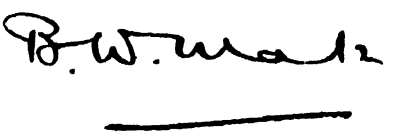
This is a wonderful tribute to Dickens's genius. It is a tribute that Dickens would have valued more than any other. Indeed, an incident occurred to him on one occasion which indicated this to be the case. On one of his reading tours he was stopped in the street by a lady who had heard him read, and who accosted him with the appeal, "Mr. Dickens, will you let me touch the hand that has filled my house with many friends?" He was greatly touched by this personal greeting, and in a letter to his biographer, telling him of it, assured him that the unknown lady's expression brought him near what he sometimes dreamed might be his fame.

His dream was fulfilled, and to-day his fame rests a good deal on his genius for creating real living characters, personages as familiar to all races of the world as are the most notable names in history, and in many cases even more familiar. They have indeed become a part of history, and are believed in more sincerely than many a warrior or statesman whose name looms large in our annals. So that if Dickens's fame rested upon nothing else than this happy circumstance of having filled many homes with many friends, it would be such a fame as he himself most desired, and would have been sufficient to place him in the forefront as England's national and most popular novelist.

But Dickens's books have other and equally sound and solid foundations upon which they were reared. They are human ; they reveal the truth of nature, and appeal to every phase of humanity by a common bond.

Written decades ago, when fashions, foibles, superstitions, politics, were different from those of our days, they are still admired and revered, not on account of antiquity, but in spite of it.

In the following pages will be found stories and scenes exhibiting all phases of Dickens's power, and introducing characters as divergent as the poles, symbolizing all the virtues and some of the vices to which human nature is heir. No modern artist is known to us who is so well equipped with knowledge, sympathy, and perfect understanding of these characters as Mr. Harold Copping for the task of pictorially embellishing these pages.



THE PICKWICK PAPERS

The Pickwick Papers was first published in monthly parts in 1836, and projected Dickens to the top rung of the ladder of fame, from which he never descended. His main object in writing it, he has told us, was " to place before the reader a constant succession of characters and incidents ; to paint them in as vivid colours as he could command, and to render them, at the same time, life-like and amusing " All this he succeeded to do with amazing success, and the book remains to-day one of the most popular in the language, and retains that position by its exuberant humour.

The four extracts from its pages amply testify to this. They will be familiar to all readers, but, unlike most humorous stories, they can be read and read again with pure delight.

A PICKWICKIAN DEBATE

To those who knew that the gigantic brain of Pickwick was working beneath that forehead, and that the beaming eyes of Pickwick were twinkling behind those glasses, the sight was indeed an interesting one. There sat the man who had traced to their source the mighty ponds of Hampstead, and agitated the scientific world with his Theory of Tittlebats, as calm and unmoved as the deep waters of the one on a frosty day, or as a solitary specimen of the other in the inmost recesses of an earthen jar. And how much more interesting did the spectacle become, when, starting into full life and animation, as a simultaneous call for " Pickwick " burst from his followers, that illustrious man slowly mounted into the Windsor chair, on which he had been previously seated, and addressed the club himself had founded. What a study for an artist did that exciting scene present ! The eloquent Pickwick, with one hand gracefully concealed behind his coat tails, and the other waving in air, to assist his glowing declamation ; his elevated position revealing those tights and gaiters, which, had they clothed an ordinary man, might have passed without observation, but which, when Pickwick clothed them—if we may use the expression—inspired voluntary awe and respect ; surrounded by the men who had volunteered to share the perils of his travels, and who were destined to participate in the glories of his discoveries. On his right hand sat Mr. Tracy Tupman—the too susceptible Tupman, who to the wisdom and experience of maturer years superadded the enthusiasm and ardour of a boy, in the most interesting and pardonable of human weaknesses—love. Time and feeding had expanded that once romantic form ; the black silk waistcoat had become more and more developed ; inch by inch had the gold watch-chain beneath it disappeared from within the range of Tupman's vision ; and gradually had the capacious chin encroached

upon the borders of the white cravat : but the soul of Tupman had known no change—admiration of the fair sex was still its ruling passion. On the left of his great leader sat the poetic Snodgrass, and near him again the sporting Winkle, the former poetically enveloped in a mysterious blue coat with a canine-skin collar, and the latter communicating additional lustre to a new green shooting coat, plaid neckerchief, and closely-fitted drabs.

Mr. Pickwick's oration upon this occasion, together with the debate thereon, is entered on the Transactions of the Club. Both bear a strong affinity to the discussions of other celebrated bodies ; and, as it is always interesting to trace a resemblance between the proceedings of great men, we transfer the entry to these pages.

" Mr. Pickwick observed (says the Secretary) that fame was dear to the heart of every man. Poetic fame was dear to the heart of his friend Snodgrass ; the fame of conquest was equally dear to his friend Tupman ; and the desire of earning fame in the sports of the field, the air, and the water, was uppermost in the breast of his friend Winkle. He (Mr. Pickwick) would not deny that he was influenced by human passions, and human feelings (cheers)—possibly by human weaknesses—(loud cries of ' No ') ; but this he would say, that if ever the fire of self-importance broke out in his bosom, the desire to benefit the human race in preference effectually quenched it. The praise of mankind was his Swing ; philanthropy was his insurance office. (Vehement cheering.) He had felt some pride—he acknowledged it freely, and let his enemies make the most of it—he had felt some pride when he presented his Tittlebatian Theory to the world ; it might be celebrated or it might not. (A cry of ' It is,' and great cheering.) He would take the assertion of that honourable Pickwickian whose voice he had just heard—it was celebrated ; but if the fame of that treatise were to extend to the furthest confines of the known world, the pride with which he should reflect on the authorship of that production would be as nothing compared with the pride with which he looked around him, on this, the proudest moment of his existence. (Cheers.) He was a humble

individual. (No, no.) Still, he could not but feel that they had selected him for a service of great honour, and of some danger. Travelling was in a troubled state, and the minds of coachmen were unsettled. Let them look abroad and contemplate the scenes which were enacting around them. Stage coaches were upsetting in all directions, horses were bolting, boats were overturning, and boilers were bursting. (Cheers - a voice 'No.') No! (Cheers.) Let that honourable Pickwickian who cried 'No' so loudly come forward and deny it, if he could. (Cheers.) Who was it that cried 'No'? (Enthusiastic cheering.) Was it some vain and disappointed man—he would not say haberdasher (loud cheers) -who, jealous of the praise which had been -perhaps undeservedly bestowed on his (Mr. Pickwick's) researches, and smarting under the censure which had been heaped upon his own feeble attempts at rivalry, now took this vile and calumnious mode of

"Mr. BLOTTON (of Aldgate) rose to order. Did the honourable Pickwickian allude to him? (Cries of 'Order,' 'Chair,' 'Yes,' 'No,' 'Go on,' 'Leave off,' etc.)

"Mr. PICKWICK would not put up to be put down by clamour. He *had* alluded to the honourable gentleman. (Great excitement.)

"Mr. BLOTTON would only say then, that he repelled that hon. gent's false and scurrilous accusation, with profound contempt. (Great cheering.) The hon. gent. was a humbug. (Immense confusion, and loud cries of 'Chair,' and 'Order.')

"Mr. A. SNODGRASS rose to order. He threw himself upon the chair. (Hear.) He wished to know whether this disgraceful contest between two members of that club should be allowed to continue. (Hear, hear.)

"The Chairman was quite sure the hon. Pickwickian would withdraw the expression he had just made use of.

"Mr. BLOTTON, with all possible respect for the chair, was quite sure he would not.

"The CHAIRMAN felt it his imperative duty to demand of the

honourable gentleman, whether he had used the expression which had just escaped him in a common sense.

" Mr. BLOTTON had no hesitation in saying that he had not—he had used the word in its Pickwickian sense. (Hear, hear.) He was bound to acknowledge that, personally, he entertained the highest regard and esteem for the honourable gentleman ; he had merely considered him a humbug in a Pickwickian point of view. (Hear, hear.)

" Mr. PICKWICK felt much gratified by the fair, candid, and full explanation of his honourable friend. He begged it to be at once understood, that his own observations had been merely intended to bear a Pickwickian construction. (Cheers.)"

MR. TUPMAN IS SMITTEN

The quiet seclusion of Dingley Dell, the presence of so many of the gentler sex, and the solicitude and anxiety they evinced in his behalf were all favourable to the growth and development of those softer feelings which nature had implanted deep in the bosom of Mr. Tracy Tupman, and which now appeared destined to centre in one lovely object. The young ladies were pretty, their manners winning, their dispositions unexceptionable ; but there was a dignity in the air, a touch-me-not-ishness in the walk, a majesty in the eye of the spinster aunt, to which, at their time of life, they could lay no claim, which distinguished her from any female on whom Mr. Tupman had ever gazed. That there was something kindred in their nature, something congenial in their souls, something mysteriously sympathetic in their bosoms, was evident. Her name was the first that rose to Mr. Tupman's lips as he lay wounded on the grass ; and her hysteric laughter was the first sound that fell upon his ear when he was supported to the house.

* * * * *

THE FAT BOY AWAKE

It was evening. Isabella and Emily had strolled out with Mr. Trundle; the deaf old lady had fallen asleep in her chair; the snoring of the fat boy, penetrated in a low and monotonous sound from the distant kitchen; the buxom servants were lounging at the side-door, enjoying the pleasantness of the hour, and the delights of a flirtation, on first principles, with certain unwieldy animals attached to the farm; and there sat the interesting pair, uncared for by all, caring for none, and dreaming only of themselves; there they sat, in short, like a pair of carefully-folded kid-gloves—bound up in each other.

"I have forgotten my flowers," said the spinster aunt.

"Water them now," said Mr. Tupman in accents of persuasion.

"You will take cold in the evening air," urged the spinster aunt, affectionately.

"No, no," said Mr. Tupman, rising; "it will do me good. Let me accompany you."

The lady paused to adjust the sling in which the left arm of the youth was placed, and taking his right arm led him to the garden.

There was a bower at the further end, with honeysuckle, jessamine, and creeping plants—one of those sweet retreats which humane men erect for the accommodation of spiders.

The spinster aunt took up a large watering-pot which lay in one corner, and was about to leave the arbour. Mr. Tupman detained her, and drew her to a seat beside him.

"Miss Wardle!" said he.

The spinster aunt trembled, till some pebbles which had accidentally found their way into the large watering-pot shook like an infant's rattle.

"Miss Wardle," said Mr. Tupman, "you are an angel."

"Mr. Tupman!" exclaimed Rachael, blushing as red as the watering-pot itself.

"Nay," said the eloquent Pickwickian—"I know it but too well."

"All women are angels, they say," murmured the lady, playfully.

"Then what can *you* be; or to what, without presumption, can I compare you?" replied Mr. Tupman. "Where was the woman ever seen who resembled you? Where else could I hope to find so rare a combination of excellence and beauty? Where else could I seek to --Oh!" Here Mr. Tupman paused, and pressed the hand which clasped the handle of the happy watering-pot.

The lady turned aside her head. "Men are such deceivers," she softly whispered.

"They are, they are," ejaculated Mr. Tupman; "but not all men. There lives at least one being who can never change—one being who would be content to devote his whole existence to your happiness—who lives but in your eyes—who breathes but in your smiles—who bears the heavy burden of life itself only for you."

"Could such an individual be found," said the lady ---

"But he *can* be found," said the ardent Mr. Tupman, interposing. "He *is* found. He is here, Miss Wardle." And ere the lady was aware of his intention, Mr. Tupman had sunk upon his knees at her feet.

"Mr. Tupman, rise," said Rachael.

"Never!" was the valorous reply. "Oh, Rachael!" He seized her passive hand, and the watering-pot fell to the ground as he pressed it to his lips--"Oh, Rachael! say you love me."

"Mr. Tupman," said the spinster aunt, with averted head—"I can hardly speak the words; but but you are not wholly indifferent to me."

Mr. Tupman had no sooner heard this avowal, than he proceeded to do what his enthusiastic emotions prompted, and what, for aught we know (for we are but little acquainted with such matters), people so circumstanced always do. He jumped up, and, throwing his arm round the neck of the spinster aunt, imprinted upon her lips numerous kisses, which after a due show of struggling and resistance, she received so passively, that there is no telling how many more Mr. Tupman might have bestowed, if the lady had not given a very unaffected start and exclaimed in an affrighted tone ---

" Mr. Tupman, we are observed! -we are discovered!"

Mr. Tupman looked round. There was the fat boy, perfectly motionless, with his large circular eyes staring into the arbour, but without the slightest expression on his face that the most expert physiognomist could have referred to astonishment, curiosity, or any other known passion that agitates the human breast. Mr. Tupman gazed on the fat boy, and the fat boy stared at him; and the longer Mr. Tupman observed the utter vacancy of the fat boy's countenance, the more convinced he became that he either did not know, or did not understand, anything that had been going forward. Under this impression, he said with great firmness--

" What do you want here, sir?"

" Supper's ready, sir," was the prompt reply.

" Have you just come here, sir?" inquired Mr. Tupman, with a piercing look.

" Just," replied the fat boy.

Mr. Tupman looked at him very hard again; but there was not a wink in his eye, or a curve in his face.

Mr. Tupman took the arm of the spinster aunt, and walked towards the house; the fat boy followed behind.

" He knows nothing of what has happened," he whispered.

" Nothing," said the spinster aunt.

There was a sound behind them, as of an imperfectly suppressed chuckle. Mr. Tupman turned sharply round. No; it could not have been the fat boy; there was not a gleam of mirth, or anything but feeding in his whole visage.

" He must have been fast asleep," whispered Mr. Tupman.

" I have not the least doubt of it," replied the spinster aunt.

They both laughed heartily.

Mr. Tupman was wrong. The fat boy, for once, had not been fast asleep. He was awake—wide awake—to what had been going forward.

MR. PICKWICK IN THE POUND

After the luncheon party following the shooting expedition, Mr. Pickwick found himself in rather a merry mood, and after rising to his legs to address the company in an eloquent speech, he fell into the wheelbarrow, and fast asleep simultaneously.

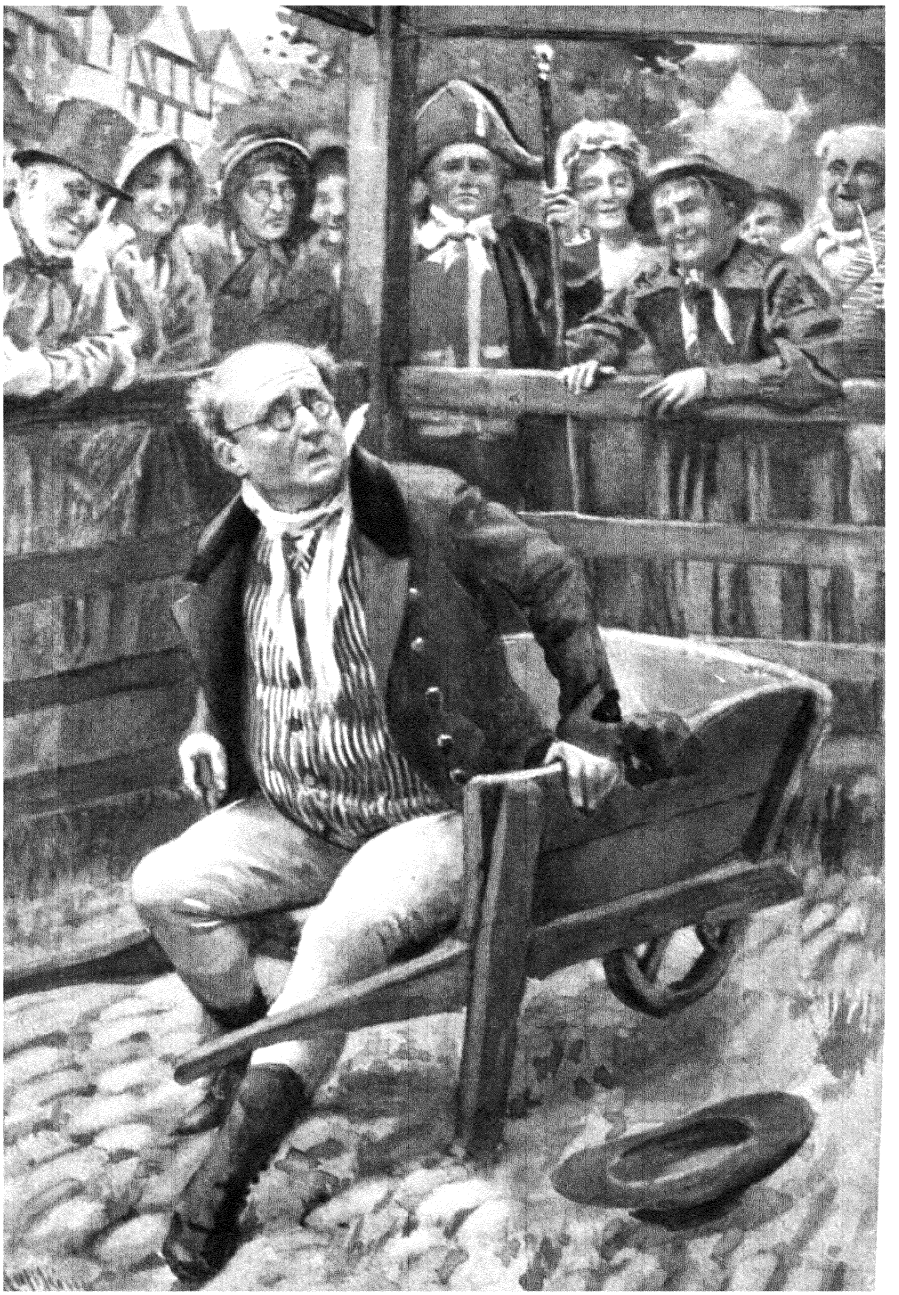
THAT Mr. Pickwick would have continued to snore in the shade until his friends came back, or, in default thereof, until the shades of evening had fallen on the landscape, there appears no reasonable cause to doubt; always supposing that he had been suffered to remain there in peace. But he was *not* suffered to remain there in peace. And this was what prevented him.

Captain Boldwig was a little fierce man in a stiff black neckerchief and blue surtout, who, when he did condescend to walk about his property, did it in company with a thick rattan stick with a brass ferrule, and a gardener and sub-gardener with meek faces, to whom (the gardeners, not the stick) Captain Boldwig gave his orders with all due grandeur and ferocity: for Captain Boldwig's wife's sister had married a Marquis, and the Captain's house was a villa, and his land "grounds," and it was all very high, and mighty, and great.

Mr. Pickwick had not been asleep half an hour when little Captain Boldwig, followed by the two gardeners, came striding along as fast as his size and importance would let him; and when he came near the oak tree, Captain Boldwig paused, and drew a long breath, and looked at the prospect as if he thought the prospect ought to be highly gratified at having him to take notice of it; and then he struck the ground emphatically with his stick, and summoned the head-gardener.

* * * * *

"Well, Wilkins, what's the matter with *you*?" said Captain Boldwig.



" I beg your pardon, sir—but I think there have been trespassers here to-day."

" Ha !" said the Captain, scowling around him.

" Yes, sir—they have been dining here, I think, sir."

" Why, confound their audacity, so they have," said Captain Boldwig, as the crumbs and fragments that were strewn upon the grass met his eye. " They have actually been devouring their food here. I wish I had the vagabonds here !" said the Captain, clenching the thick stick.

" I wish I had the vagabonds here," said the Captain, wrathfully.

" Beg your pardon, sir," said Wilkins, " but—"

" But what ? Eh ?" roared the Captain ; and following the timid glance of Wilkins, his eyes encountered the wheelbarrow and Mr. Pickwick.

" Who are you, you rascal ?" said the Captain, administering several pokes to Mr. Pickwick's body with the thick stick. " What's your name ?"

" Cold punch," murmured Mr. Pickwick, as he sunk to sleep again.

" What ?" demanded Captain Boldwig.

No reply.

" What did he say his name was ?" asked the Captain.

" Punch, I think, sir," replied Wilkins.

" That's his impudence, that's his confounded impudence," said Captain Boldwig. " He's only feigning to be asleep now," said the Captain, in a high passion. " He's drunk ; he's a drunken plebeian. Wheel him away, Wilkins, wheel him away directly."

" Where shall I wheel him to, sir ?" inquired Wilkins, with great timidity.

" Wheel him to the Devil," replied Captain Boldwig.

" Very well, sir," said Wilkins.

" Stay," said the Captain.

Will [illegible]

"Wheel him," said the Captain, "wheel him to the Pound; and let us see whether he calls himself Punch when he comes to himself. He shall not bully me, he shall not bully me. Wheel him away."

Away Mr. Pickwick was wheeled in compliance with this imperious mandate; and the great Captain Boldwig, swelling with indignation, proceeded on his walk.

* * * * *

Meanwhile Mr. Pickwick had been wheeled to the Pound, and safely deposited therein, fast asleep in the wheelbarrow, to the immeasurable delight and satisfaction, not only of all the boys in the village, but three-fourths of the whole population, who had gathered round, in expectation of his waking. If their most intense gratification had been excited by seeing him wheeled in, how many hundredfold was their joy increased when, after a few indistinct cries of "Sam!" he sat up in the barrow, and gazed with indescribable astonishment on the faces before him.

A general shout was of course the signal of his having woke up; and his involuntary inquiry of "What's the matter?" occasioned another, louder than the first, if possible.

"Here's a game!" roared the populace.

"Where am I?" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"In the Pound," replied the mob.

"How came I here? What was I doing? Where was I brought from?"

"Boldwig! Captain Boldwig!" was the only reply.

"Let me out," cried Mr. Pickwick. "Where's my servant? Where are my friends?"

"You an't got no friends. Hurrah!" Then there came a turnip, then a potato, and then an egg: with a few other little tokens of the playful disposition of the many-headed.

How long this scene might have lasted, or how much Mr. Pickwick might have suffered, no one can tell, had not a carriage, which was driving swiftly by, suddenly pulled up, from whence there

descended old Wardle and Sam Weller, the former of whom, in far less time than it takes to write it, if not to read it, had made his way to Mr. Pickwick's side, and placed him in the vehicle, just as the latter had concluded the third and last round of a single combat with the town-beadle.

SAM WELLER AND HIS FATHER

"THAT 'ere your governor's luggage, Sammy?" inquired Mr. Weller of his affectionate son, as he entered the yard of the Bull Inn, Whitechapel, with a travelling bag and a small portmanteau.

"You might ha' made a worser guess than that, old feller," replied Mr. Weller the younger, setting down his burden in the yard, and sitting himself down upon it afterwards. "The Governor hisself 'll be down here presently."

"He's a cabbin' it, I suppose?" said the father.

"Yes, he's a havin' two mile o' danger at eight-pence," responded the son. "How's mother-in-law this mornin'?"

"Queer, Sammy, queer," replied the elder Mr. Weller, with impressive gravity. "She's been gettin' rayther in the Methodistical order lately, Sammy; and she is uncommon pious, to be sure. She's too good a creetur for me, Sammy. I feel I don't deserve her."

"Ah," said Mr. Samuel, "that's wery self-denyin' o' you."

"Wery," replied his parent, with a sigh. "She's got hold o' some inwention for grown-up people being born again, Sammy; the new birth, I thinks they calls it. I should wery much like to see that system in haction, Sammy. I should wery much like to see your mother-in-law born again. Wouldn't I put her out to nurse!"

"What do you think them women does t'other day," continued Mr. Weller, after a short pause, during which he had significantly struck the side of his nose with his fore-finger some half-dozen times. "What do you think they does, t'other day, Sammy?"

" Don't know," replied Sammy, " what ?"

" Goes and gets up a grand tea drinkin' for a feller they calls their shepherd," said Mr. Weller. " I was a standing starin' in at the pictur shop down at our place, when I sees a little bill about it ; ' tickets half-a-crown. All applications to be made to the committee. Secretary, Mrs. Weller ' ; and when I got home there was the committee a sittin' in our back parlour. Fourteen women ; I wish you could ha' heard 'em, Sammy. There they was, a passin' resolutions, and wotin' supplies, and all sorts o' games. Well, what with your mother-in-law a worrying me to go, and what with my looking for-ard to seein' some queer starts if I did, I put my name down for a ticket ; at six o'clock on the Friday evenin' I dresses myself out wery smart, and off I goes with the old 'ooman, and up we walks into a fust floor where there was tea things for thirty, and a whole lot o' women as begins whisperin' at one another, and lookin' at me, as if they'd never seen a rayther stout gen'l'm'n of eight-and-fifty afore. By-and-bye, there comes a great bustle down-stairs, and a lanky chap with a red nose and a white neckcloth rushes up, and sings out, ' Here's the shepherd a coming to wisit his faithful flock ' ; and in comes a fat chap in black, vith a great white face, a smilin' avay like clockwork. Such goin's on, Sammy ! ' The kiss of peace,' says the shepherd ; and then he kissed the women all round, and ven he'd done, the man vith the red nose began. I was just a thinkin' whether I hadn't better begin too —'specially as there was a wery nice lady a sittin' next me—ven in comes the tea, and your mother-in-law, as had been makin' the kettle bile down-stairs. At it they went, tooth and nail. Such a precious loud hymn, Sammy, while the tea was a brewing ; such a grace, such eatin' and drinkin' ! I wish you could ha' seen the shepherd walkin' into the ham and muffins. I never see such a chap to eat and drink ; never. The red-nosed man warn't by no means the sort of person you'd like to grub by contract, but he was nothin' to the shepherd. Well ; arter the tea was over, they sang another hymn, and then the shepherd began to preach : and wery well he did it, considerin' how heavy

SAM WELLER AND HIS FATHER

them muffins must have lied on his chest. Presently he pulls up, all of a sudden, and hollers out, ' Where is the sinner ; where is the mis'rable sinner ?' Upon which, all the women looked at me, and began to groan as if they was a dying. I thought it was rather sing'ler, but hows'ever, I says nothing. Presently he pulls up again, and lookin' wery hard at me, says, ' Where is the sinner ; where is the mis'rable sinner ?' and all the women groans again, ten times louder than afore. I got rather wild at this, so I takes a step or two for'ard and says, ' My friend,' says I, ' did you apply that 'ere observation to me ?' 'Stead of begging my pardon as any gen'l'm'n would ha' done, he got more abusive than ever: called me a wessel, Sammy—a wessel of wrath—and all sorts o' names. So my blood being reg'larly up, I first give him two or three for himself, and then two or three more to hand over to the man with the red nose, and walked off. I wish you could ha' heard how the women screamed, Sammy, ven they picked up the shepherd from under the table——Hallo ! here's the governor, the size of life."

As Mr. Weller spoke, Mr. Pickwick dismounted from a cab, and entered the yard.

OLIVER TWIST

Oliver Twist first appeared as a serial in " Bentley's Miscellany " during the years 1837-38. In it Dickens assailed the abuses of the poor-law and workhouse system. " I have yet to learn," he said, " that a lesson of the purest good may not be drawn from the vilest evil. . . . I saw no reason, when I wrote this book, why the dregs of life, so long as their speech did not offend the ear, should not serve the purpose of a moral, at least as well as its froth and cream." By his effort many of the evils of his own time were reformed or abolished, and *Oliver Twist* stands to-day as the indictment that brought about the change in the poor law system.

Oliver Twist, an orphan, was born in a workhouse and left to the tender mercies of church-wardens and overseers. He was, a year or two later, " farmed out " with other boys to an old lady, Mrs. Mann, who lived three miles away, and who was paid by the Parish to " bring them up."

Oliver's ninth birth-day found him a pale, thin child, somewhat diminutive in stature, and decidedly small in circumference.

The first incident extracted from the story is his transference from Mrs. Mann back to " the house " under Mr. Bumble's guidance, and is followed by that incident which has become world-wide in renown, when he had the temerity to ask for more gruel.

OLIVER TWIST RETURNS TO THE HOUSE

NATURE or inheritance had implanted a good sturdy spirit in Oliver's breast. It had had plenty of room to expand, thanks to the spare diet of the establishment; and perhaps to this circumstance may be attributed his having any ninth birth-day at all. Be this as it may, however, it *was* his ninth birth-day; and he was keeping it in the coal-cellar with a select party of two other young gentlemen, who, after participating with him in a sound thrashing, had been locked up for atrociously presuming to be hungry, when Mrs. Mann, the good lady of the house, was unexpectedly startled by the apparition of Mr. Bumble, the beadle, striving to undo the wicket of the garden-gate.

"Goodness gracious! Is that you, Mr. Bumble, sir?" said Mrs. Mann, thrusting her head out of the window in well-affected ecstasies of joy. "(Susan, take Oliver and them two brats up-stairs, and wash 'em directly.) My heart alive! Mr. Bumble, how glad I am to see you, sure-ly!"

Now, Mr. Bumble was a fat man, and a choleric; so, instead of responding to this open-hearted salutation in a kindred spirit, he gave the little wicket a tremendous shake, and then bestowed upon it a kick which could have emanated from no leg but a beadle's.

"Lor, only think," said Mrs. Mann, running out,—for the three boys had been removed by this time,—"only think of that! That I should have forgotten that the gate was bolted on the inside, on account of them dear children! Walk in, sir; walk in, pray, Mr. Bumble, do, sir."

* * * * *

"And now about business," said the beadle, taking out a leathern pocket-book. "The child that was half-baptized Oliver Twist is nine year old to-day."

"Bless him!" interposed Mrs. Mann, inflaming her left eye with the corner of her apron.

"And notwithstanding a offered reward of ten pound, which was afterwards increased to twenty pound. Notwithstanding the most superlative, and, I may say, supernat'ral exertions on the part of this parish," said Bumble, "we have never been able to discover who is his father, or what was his mother's settlement, name, or con—dition."

Mrs. Mann raised her hands in astonishment; but added, after a moment's reflection, "How comes he to have any name at all, then?"

The beadle drew himself up with great pride, and said, "I inwented it."

"You, Mr. Bumble!"

"I, Mrs. Mann. We name our fondlings in alphabetical order. The last was a S,—Swubble, I named him. This was a T,—Twist, I named *him*. The next one as comes will be Unwin, and the next Vilkins. I have got names ready made to the end of the alphabet, and all the way through it again, when we come to Z."

"Why, you're quite a literary character, sir!" said Mrs. Mann.

"Well, well," said the beadle, evidently gratified with the compliment; "perhaps I may be. Perhaps I may be, Mrs. Mann;" and added, "Oliver being now too old to remain here, the board have determined to have him back into the house. I have come out myself to take him there. So let me see him at once."

"I'll fetch him directly," said Mrs. Mann, leaving the room for that purpose. Oliver, having had by this time as much of the outer coat of dirt which encrusted his face and hands, removed, as could be scrubbed off in one washing, was led into the room by his benevolent protectress.

"Make a bow to the gentleman, Oliver," said Mrs. Mann.

Oliver made a bow, which was divided between the beadle on the chair, and the cocked-hat on the table.

"Will you go along with me, Oliver?" said Mr. Bumble, in a majestic voice.

MR 'BUMBLE AND OLIVER TWIST

Oliver was about to say that he would go along with anybody with great readiness, when, glancing upward, he caught sight of Mrs. Mann, who had got behind the beadle's chair, and was shaking her fist at him with a furious countenance. He took the hint at once, for the fist had been too often impressed upon his body not to be deeply impressed upon his recollection.

" Will *she* go with me ?" inquired poor Oliver.

" No, she can't," replied Mr. Bumble, " But she'll come and see you sometimes."

This was no very great consolation to the child. Young as he was, however, he had sense enough to make a feint of feeling great regret at going away. It was no very difficult matter for the boy to call tears into his eyes. Hunger and recent ill-usage are great assistants if you want to cry ; and Oliver cried very naturally indeed. Mrs. Mann gave him a thousand embraces, and, what Oliver wanted a great deal more, a piece of bread and butter, lest he should seem too hungry when he got to the workhouse. With the slice of bread in his hand, and the little brown-cloth parish cap on his head, Oliver was then led away by Mr. Bumble from the wretched home where one kind word or look had never lighted the gloom of his infant years. And yet he burst into an agony of childish grief, as the cottage-gate closed after him. Wretched as were the little companions in misery he was leaving behind, they were the only friends he had ever known ; and a sense of his loneliness in the great wide world, sank into the child's heart for the first time.

Mr. Bumble walked on with long strides ; little Oliver, firmly grasping his gold-laced cuff, trotted beside him, inquiring at the end of every quarter of a mile whether they were " nearly there." To these interrogations Mr. Bumble returned very brief and snappish replies ; for the temporary blandness which gin-and-water awakens in some bosoms had by this time evaporated ; and he was once again a beadle.

OLIVER ASKS FOR MORE

OLIVER had not been within the walls of the workhouse a quarter of an hour, and had scarcely completed the demolition of a second slice of bread, when Mr. Bumble, who had handed him over to the care of an old woman, returned ; and, telling him it was a board night, informed him that the board had said he was to appear before it forthwith.

Not having a very clearly defined notion of what a live board was, Oliver was rather astounded by this intelligence, and was not quite certain whether he ought to laugh or cry. He had no time to think about the matter, however ; for Mr. Bumble gave him a tap on the head, with his cane, to wake him up : and another on the back to make him lively : and bidding him follow, conducted him into a large whitewashed-room, where eight or ten fat gentlemen were sitting round a table. At the top of the table, seated in an arm-chair rather higher than the rest, was a particularly fat gentleman with a very round, red face.

" Bow to the board," said Bumble. Oliver brushed away two or three tears that were lingering in his eyes ; and seeing no board but the table, fortunately bowed to that.

" What's your name, boy ?" said the gentleman in the high chair.

Oliver was frightened at the sight of so many gentlemen, which made him tremble : and the beadle gave him another tap behind, which made him cry. These two causes made him answer in a very low and hesitating voice ; whereupon a gentleman in a white waist-coat said he was a fool. Which was a capital way of raising his spirits, and putting him quite at his ease.

" Boy," said the gentleman in the high chair, " listen to me. You know you're an orphan, I suppose ?"

"What's that, sir?" inquired poor Oliver.

"The boy *is* a fool– I thought he was," said the gentleman in the white waistcoat.

"Hush!" said the gentleman who had spoken first. "You know you've got no father or mother, and that you were brought up by the parish, don't you?"

"Yes, sir," replied Oliver, weeping bitterly.

"What are you crying for?" inquired the gentleman in the white waistcoat. And to be sure it was very extraordinary. What *could* the boy be crying for?

"I hope you say your prayers every night," said another gentleman in a gruff voice; "and pray for the people who feed you, and take care of you—like a Christian."

"Yes, sir," stammered the boy. The gentleman who spoke last was unconsciously right. It would have been *very* like a Christian, and a marvellously good Christian, too, if Oliver had prayed for the people who fed and took care of *him*. But he hadn't, because nobody had taught him.

"Well! You have come here to be educated, and taught a useful trade," said the red-faced gentleman in the high chair.

"So you'll begin to pick oakum to-morrow morning at six o'clock," added the surly one in the white waistcoat.

For the combination of both these blessings in the one simple process of picking oakum, Oliver bowed low by the direction of the beadle, and was then hurried away to a large ward; where, on a rough, hard bed, he sobbed himself to sleep. What a noble illustration of the tender laws of England! They let the paupers go to sleep!

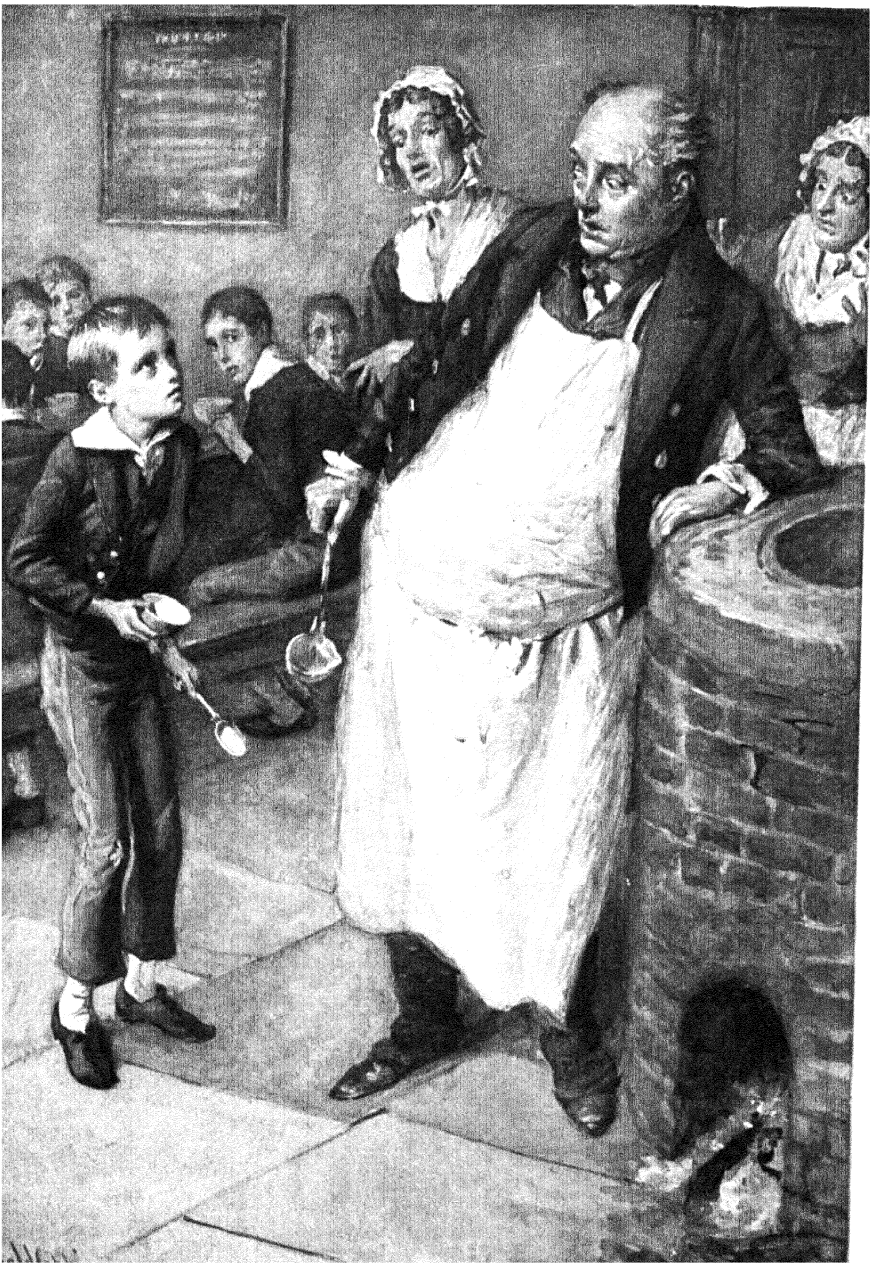
Poor Oliver! He little thought, as he lay sleeping in happy unconsciousness of all around him, that the board had that very day arrived at a decision which would exercise the most material influence over all his future fortunes.

* * * * *

The room in which the boys were fed, was a large stone hall, with a copper at one end: out of which the master, dressed in an apron for the purpose, and assisted by one or two women, ladled the gruel at meal-times. Of this festive composition each boy had one porringer, and no more—except on occasions of great public rejoicing, when he had two ounces and a quarter of bread besides. The bowls never wanted washing. The boys polished them with their spoons till they shone again; and when they had performed this operation (which never took very long, the spoons being nearly as large as the bowls), they would sit staring at the copper, with such eager eyes, as if they could have devoured the very bricks of which it was composed; employing themselves, meanwhile, in sucking their fingers most assiduously, with the view of catching up any stray splashes of gruel that might have been cast thereon. Boys have generally excellent appetites. Oliver Twist and his companions suffered the tortures of slow starvation for three months: at last they got so voracious and wild with hunger, that one boy, who was tall for his age, and hadn't been used to that sort of thing (for his father had kept a small cook-shop), hinted darkly to his companions, that unless he had another basin of gruel *per diem*, he was afraid he might some night happen to eat the boy who slept next him, who happened to be a weakly youth of tender age. He had a wild, hungry eye; and they implicitly believed him. A council was held; lots were cast who should walk up to the master after supper that evening, and ask for more; and it fell to Oliver Twist.

The evening arrived; the boys took their places. The master, in his cook's uniform, stationed himself at the copper; his pauper assistants ranged themselves behind him; the gruel was served out; and a long grace was said over the short commons. The gruel disappeared; the boys whispered each other, and winked at Oliver; while his next neighbours nudged him. Child as he was, he was desperate with hunger, and reckless with misery. He rose from the table; and advancing to the master, basin and spoon in hand, said, somewhat alarmed at his own temerity:

OLIVER ASKS FOR MORE



" Please, sir, I want some more."

The master was a fat, healthy man ; but he turned very pale. He gazed in stupefied astonishment on the small rebel for some seconds, and then clung for support to the copper. The assistants were paralysed with wonder ; the boys with fear.

" What !" said the master at length, in a faint voice.

" Please, sir," replied Oliver, " I want some more."

The master aimed a blow at Oliver's head with the ladle ; pinioned him in his arms ; and shrieked aloud for the beadle.

The board were sitting in solemn conclave, when Mr. Bumble rushed into the room in great excitement, and addressing the gentleman in the high chair, said,

" Mr. Limbkins, I beg your pardon, sir ! Oliver Twist has asked for more !"

There was a general start. Horror was depicted on every countenance.

" For *more !* " said Mr. Limbkins. " Compose yourself, Bumble, and answer me distinctly. Do I understand that he asked for more, after he had eaten the supper allotted by the dietary ?"

" He did, sir," replied Bumble.

" That boy will be hung," said the gentleman in the white waistcoat. " I know that boy will be hung."

Nobody controverted the prophetic gentleman's opinion. An animated discussion took place. Oliver was ordered into instant confinement ; and a bill was next morning pasted on the outside of the gate, offering a reward of five pounds to anybody who would take Oliver Twist off the hands of the parish. In other words, five pounds and Oliver Twist were offered to any man or woman who wanted an apprentice to any trade, business, or calling.

" I never was more convinced of anything in my life," said the gentleman in the white waistcoat, as he knocked at the gate and read the bill next morning : " I never was more convinced of anything in my life, than I am that that boy will come to be hung."

NICHOLAS NICKLEBY

In writing *Nicholas Nickleby* the chief object Dickens had in mind was the exposure of " the monstrous neglect of education in England, and the disregard of it by the State, as a means of forming good or bad citizens, and miserable or happy men." He aimed at doing this by showing up, as a notable example, the cheap Yorkshire schools which flourished notoriously at the time. That he succeeded in his object is well known, and even when a later edition of the book was published, Dickens was able to say in a preface to it that the race of schoolmasters of whom Squeers was a typical example, was fast dwindling away.

In the three following extracts are presented a pen picture of Wackford Squeers, introducing incidentally the famous Saracen's Head Inn, a landmark of the old coaching days ; a humorous incident between Fanny Squeers and Nicholas ; and a fine portrait of the wonderful Cheeryble Brothers.

WACKFORD SQUEERS AND THE NEW PUPIL

NEAR to the jail, and by consequence near to Smithfield also, and the Compter, and the bustle and noise of the city ; and just on that particular part of Snow Hill where omnibus horses going eastward seriously think of falling down on purpose, and where horses in hackney cabriolets going westward not unfrequently fall by accident, is the coach-yard of the Saracen's Head Inn ; its portal guarded by two Saracens' heads and shoulders. . . . The inn itself garnished with another Saracen's Head, frowns upon you from the top of the yard ; while from the door of the hind boot of all the red coaches that are standing therein, there glares a small Saracen's Head, with a twin expression to the large Saracens' heads below, so that the general appearance of the pile is decidedly of the Saracenic order.

When you walk up this yard, you will see the booking-office on your left, and the tower of St. Sepulchre's church, darting abruptly up into the sky, on your right, and a gallery of bedrooms on both sides. Just before you, you will observe a long window with the words " coffee-room " legibly painted above it ; and looking out of that window, you would have seen in addition, if you had gone at the right time, Mr. Wackford Squeers with his hands in his pockets.

* * * * *

Mr. Squeers was standing in a box by one of the coffee-room fire-places, fitted with one such table as is usually seen in coffee-rooms, and two of extraordinary shapes and dimensions made to suit the angles of the partition. In a corner of the seat was a very small deal trunk, tied round with a scanty piece of cord ; and on the trunk was perched—his lace-up half-boots and corduroy trousers dangling in the air—a diminutive boy, with his shoulders drawn up to his ears, and his hands planted on his knees, who glanced timidly at the schoolmaster from time to time, with evident dread and apprehension.

" Half-past three," muttered Mr. Squeers, turning from the window, and looking sulkily at the coffee-room clock. " There will be nobody here to-day."

Much vexed by this reflection, Mr. Squeers looked at the little boy to see whether he was doing anything he could beat him for. As he happened not to be doing anything at all, he merely boxed his ears, and told him not to do it again.

" At Midsummer," muttered Mr. Squeers, resuming his complaint, " I took down ten boys ; ten twentys is two hundred pound. I go back at eight o'clock to-morrow morning, and have got only three—three oughts is an ought—three twos is six—sixty pound. What's come of all the boys ? what's parents got in their heads ? what does it all mean ?"

Here the little boy on the top of the trunk gave a violent sneeze.

" Halloa, sir !" growled the schoolmaster, turning round. " What's that, sir ?"

" Nothing, please sir," said the little boy.

" Nothing, sir !" exclaimed Mr. Squeers.

" Please sir, I sneezed," rejoined the boy, trembling till the little trunk shook under him.

" Oh ! sneezed, did you ?" retorted Mr. Squeers. " Then what did you say ' nothing ' for, sir ?"

In default of a better answer to this question, the little boy screwed a couple of knuckles into each of his eyes and began to cry, wherefore Mr. Squeers knocked him off the trunk with a blow on one side of his face, and knocked him on again with a blow on the other.

" Wait till I get you down into Yorkshire, my young gentleman," said Mr. Squeers, " and then I'll give you the rest. Will you hold that noise, sir ?"

" Ye—ye—yes," sobbed the little boy, rubbing his face very hard with the Beggar's Petition printed in calico.

" Then do so at once, sir," said Squeers. " Do you hear ?"

As this admonition was accompanied with a threatening gesture, and uttered with a savage aspect, the little boy rubbed his face

WACKFORD SQUEERS AND THE NEW PUPIL

harder, as if to keep the tears back ; and, beyond alternately sniffing and choking, gave no further vent to his emotions.

" Mr. Squeers," said the waiter, looking in at this juncture ; " here's a gentleman asking for you at the bar."

" Show the gentleman in, Richard," replied Mr. Squeers, in a soft voice. " Put your handkerchief in your pocket, you little scoundrel, or I'll murder you when the gentleman goes."

The schoolmaster had scarcely uttered these words in a fierce whisper, when the stranger entered. Affecting not to see him, Mr. Squeers feigned to be intent upon mending a pen, and offering benevolent advice to his youthful pupil.

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" It *is* the gentleman," observed the stranger, stopping the schoolmaster in the rehearsal of his advertisement. " Mr. Squeers, I believe, sir ?"

" The same, sir," said Mr. Squeers, with an assumption of extreme surprise.

" The gentleman," said the stranger, " that advertised in the Times newspaper ?"

" . . . You come on business, sir. I see by my young friends. How do you do, my little gentleman ? and how do *you* do, sir ?" With this salutation Mr. Squeers patted the heads of two hollow-eyed, small-boned little boys, whom the applicant had brought with him, and waited for further communications.

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" I have been thinking, Mr. Squeers, of placing my two boys at your school."

" It is not for me to say so, sir," replied Mr. Squeers, " but I don't think you could possibly do a better thing."

" Hem !" said the other. " Twenty pounds per annewum, I believe, Mr. Squeers ?"

" Guineas," rejoined the schoolmaster, with a persuasive smile.

" Pounds for two, I think, Mr. Squeers," said Mr. Snawley, solemnly.

"I don't think it could be done, sir," replied Squeers, as if he had never considered the proposition before. "Let me see; four fives is twenty, double that, and deduct the—well, a pound either way shall not stand betwixt us. You must recommend me to your connection, sir, and make it up that way."

"They are not great eaters," said Mr. Snawley.

"Oh! that doesn't matter at all," replied Squeers. "We don't consider the boys' appetites at our establishment." This was strictly true; they did not.

"Every wholesome luxury, sir, that Yorkshire can afford," continued Squeers; "every beautiful moral that Mrs. Squeers can instil; every—in short, every comfort of a home that a boy could wish for, will be theirs, Mr. Snawley."

"I should wish their morals to be particularly attended to," said Mr. Snawley.

"I am glad of that, sir," replied the schoolmaster, drawing himself up. "They have come to the right shop for morals, sir."

"You are a moral man yourself," said Mr. Snawley.

"I rather believe I am, sir," replied Squeers.

"I have the satisfaction to know you are, sir," said Mr. Snawley. "I asked one of your references, and he said you were pious."

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"The payments regular, and no questions asked," said Squeers nodding his head.

"That's it, exactly," rejoined the other. "Morals strictly attended to, though."

"Strictly," said Squeers.

"Not too much writing home allowed, I suppose?" said the step-father, hesitating.

"None, except a circular at Christmas, to say they never were so happy, and hope they may never be sent for," rejoined Squeers.

"Nothing could be better," said the step-father, rubbing his hands.

"Then, as we understand each other," said Squeers, "will you allow me to ask you whether you consider me a highly virtuous, exemplary, and well-conducted man in private life; and whether, as a person whose business it is to take charge of youth, you place the strongest confidence in my unimpeachable integrity, liberality, religious principles, and ability?"

"Certainly I do," replied the step-father, reciprocating the schoolmaster's grin.

"Perhaps you won't object to say that, if I make you a reference?"

"Not the least in the world."

"That's your sort!" said Squeers, taking up a pen; "this is doing business, and that's what I like."

Having entered Mr. Snawley's address, the schoolmaster had next to perform the still more agreeable office of entering the receipt of the first quarter's payment in advance.

FANNY SQUEERS FALLS IN LOVE

Miss Fanny Squeers was in her three-and-twentieth year. If there be any one grace or loveliness inseparable from that particular period of life, Miss Squeers may be presumed to have been possessed of it, as there is no reason to suppose that she was a solitary exception to a universal rule. She was not tall like her mother, but short like her father; from the former she inherited a voice of harsh quality; from the latter a remarkable expression of the right eye, something akin to having none at all.

Miss Squeers had been spending a few days with a neighbouring friend, and had only just returned to the parental roof. To this circumstance may be referred, her having heard nothing of Nicholas, until Mr. Squeers himself now made him the subject of conversation.

" Well, my dear," said Squeers, drawing up his chair, " what do you think of him by this time ?"

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" He's a nasty stuck-up monkey, that's what I consider him," said Mrs. Squeers, reverting to Nicholas.

" Supposing he is," said Squeers, " he is as well stuck up in our school-room as anywhere else, isn't he ?—especially as he don't like it."

" Well," observed Mrs. Squeers, " there's something in that. I hope it'll bring his pride down, and it shall be no fault of mine if it don't."

Now, a proud usher in a Yorkshire school was such a very extraordinary and unaccountable thing to hear of,—any usher at all being a novelty ; but a proud one, a being of whose existence the wildest imagination could never have dreamed—that Miss Squeers, who seldom troubled herself with scholastic matters, inquired with much curiosity who this Knuckleboy was, that gave himself such airs.

" Nickleby," said Squeers, spelling the name according to some eccentric system which prevailed in his own mind ; " your mother always calls things and people by their wrong names."

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" Your father has got some nonsense in his head that he's the son of a poor gentleman that died the other day," said Mrs. Squeers.

" The son of a gentleman !"

" Yes ; but I don't believe a word of it. If he's a gentleman's son at all, he's a fondling, that's my opinion."

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Miss Fanny Squeers carefully treasured up this, and much more conversation on the same subject, until she retired for the night, when she questioned the hungry servant, minutely, regarding the outward appearance and demeanour of Nicholas ; to which queries the girl returned such enthusiastic replies, coupled with so many laudatory remarks touching his beautiful dark eyes, and his sweet

FANNY SQUEERS AND NICHOLAS NICKLEBY

smile, and his straight legs—upon which last-named articles she laid particular stress; the general run of legs at Dotheboys Hall being crooked—that Miss Squeers was not long in arriving at the conclusion that the new usher must be a very remarkable person, or, as she herself significantly phrased it, "something quite out of the common." And so Miss Squeers made up her mind that she would take a personal observation of Nicholas the very next day.

In pursuance of this design, the young lady watched the opportunity of her mother being engaged, and her father absent, and went accidentally into the school-room to get a pen mended: where, seeing nobody but Nicholas presiding over the boys, she blushed very deeply, and exhibited great confusion.

"I beg your pardon," faltered Miss Squeers; "I thought my father was—or might be—dear me, how very awkward!"

"Mr. Squeers is out," said Nicholas, by no means overcome by the apparition, unexpected though it was.

"Do you know will he be long, sir?" asked Miss Squeers, with bashful hesitation.

"He said about an hour," replied Nicholas—politely of course, but without any indication of being stricken to the heart by Miss Squeers' charms.

"I never knew anything happen so cross," exclaimed the young lady. "Thank you! I am very sorry I intruded, I am sure. If I hadn't thought my father was here, I wouldn't upon any account have—it is very provoking—must look so very strange," murmured Miss Squeers, blushing once more, and glancing, from the pen in her hand, to Nicholas at his desk, and back again.

"If that is all you want," said Nicholas, pointing to the pen, and smiling, in spite of himself, at the affected embarrassment of the schoolmaster's daughter, "perhaps I can supply his place."

Miss Squeers glanced at the door, as if dubious of the propriety of advancing any nearer to an utter stranger; then round the school-room, as though in some measure reassured by the presence of forty boys; and finally sidled up to Nicholas and delivered the pen into

his hand, with a most winning mixture of reserve and condescension.

"Shall it be a hard or a soft nib?" inquired Nicholas, smiling to prevent himself from laughing outright.

"He *has* a beautiful smile" thought Miss Squeers.

"Which did you say?" asked Nicholas.

"Dear me, I was thinking of something else for the moment, I declare," replied Miss Squeers—"Oh! as soft as possible, if you please." With which words, Miss Squeers sighed. It might be, to give Nicholas to understand that her heart was soft, and that the pen was wanted to match.

Upon these instructions Nicholas made the pen; when he gave it to Miss Squeers, Miss Squeers dropped it; and when he stooped to pick it up, Miss Squeers stooped also, and they knocked their heads together; whereat five-and-twenty little boys laughed aloud: being positively for the first and only time that half year.

"Very awkward of me," said Nicholas, opening the door for the young lady's retreat.

"Not at all, sir," replied Miss Squeers; "it was my fault. It was all my foolish—a—a—good morning!"

"Good bye," said Nicholas. "The next I make for you, I hope will be made less clumsily. Take care! You are biting the nib off now."

"Really," said Miss Squeers; "so embarrassing that I scarcely know what I—very sorry to give you so much trouble."

"Not the least trouble in the world," replied Nicholas, closing the school-room door.

"I never saw such legs in the whole course of my life!" said Miss Squeers, as she walked away.

In fact, Miss Squeers was in love with Nicholas Nickleby.

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The little interview with Nicholas had no sooner passed, as above described, however, than Miss Squeers, putting on her bonnet, made her way, with great precipitation, to her friend's house, and, upon a solemn renewal of divers old vows of secrecy, revealed how

that she was—not exactly engaged, but going to be—to a gentleman's son—(none of your corn-factors, but a gentleman's son of high descent)—who had come down as teacher to Dotheboys Hall, under most mysterious and remarkable circumstances—indeed, as Miss Squeers more than once hinted she had good reason to believe, induced, by the fame of her many charms, to seek her out, and woo and win her.

"Isn't it an extraordinary thing?" said Miss Squeers, emphasizing the adjective strongly.

"Most extraordinary," replied the friend. "But what has he said to you?"

"Don't ask me what he said, my dear," rejoined Miss Squeers. "If you had only seen his looks and smiles! I never was so overcome in all my life."

"Did he look in this way?" inquired the miller's daughter, counterfeiting, as nearly as she could, a favourite leer of the corn-factor.

"Very like that—only more genteel," replied Miss Squeers.

"Ah!" said the friend, "then he means something, depend on it."

Miss Squeers, having slight misgivings on the subject, was by no means ill pleased to be confirmed by a competent authority; and, discovering, on further conversation and comparison of notes, a great many points of resemblance between the behaviour of Nicholas and that of the corn-factor, grew so exceedingly confidential, that she intrusted her friend with a vast number of things Nicholas had *not* said, which were all so very complimentary as to be quite conclusive. Then, she dilated on the fearful hardship of having a father and mother strenuously opposed to her intended husband; on which unhappy circumstance she dwelt at great length; for the friend's father and mother were quite agreeable to her being married, and the whole courtship was in consequence as flat and common-place an affair as it was possible to imagine.

"DON'T say another word. Not another word!" said he. "Come along with me. We mustn't lose a minute."

So saying, the old gentleman dragged him back into Oxford Street, and hailing an omnibus on its way to the city, pushed Nicholas in before him, and followed himself.

As he appeared in a most extraordinary condition of restless excitement, and whenever Nicholas offered to speak, immediately interposed with: "Don't say another word, my dear sir, on any account—not another word!" the young man thought it better to attempt no further interruption. Into the city they journeyed accordingly, without interchanging any conversation; and the farther they went, the more Nicholas wondered what the end of the adventure could possibly be.

The old gentleman got out, with great alacrity, when they reached the Bank, and once more taking Nicholas by the arm, hurried him along Threadneedle Street, and through some lanes and passages on the right, until they, at length, emerged in a quiet shady little square. Into the oldest and cleanest-looking house of business in the square, he led the way. The only inscription on the door-post was "Cheeryble, Brothers"; but from a hasty glance at the directions of some packages which were lying about, Nicholas supposed that the Brothers Cheeryble were German-merchants.

Passing through a warehouse which presented every indication of a thriving business, Mr. Cheeryble (for such Nicholas supposed him to be, from the respect which had been shown him by the warehousemen and porters whom they passed) led him into a little partitioned-off counting-house like a large glass-case, in which counting-house there sat—as free from dust and blemish as if he had been fixed into the glass-case before the top was put on, and had

never come out since—a fat, elderly, large-faced clerk, with silver spectacles and a powdered head.

" Is my brother in his room, Tim ?" said Mr. Cheeryble, with no less kindness of manner than he had shown to Nicholas.

" Yes, he is, sir," replied the fat clerk, turning his spectacle-glasses towards his principal, and his eyes towards Nicholas, " but Mr. Trimmers is with him."

" Ay ! And what has he come about, Tim ?" said Mr. Cheeryble.

" He is getting up a subscription for the widow and family of a man who was killed in the East India Docks this morning, sir," rejoined Tim. " Smashed, sir, by a cask of sugar."

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Mr. Cheeryble led Nicholas, equally astonished and affected by what he had seen and heard in this short space, to the half-opened door of another room.

" Brother Ned," said Mr. Cheeryble, tapping with his knuckles, and stooping to listen : " are you busy, my dear brother, or can you spare time for a word or two with me ?"

" Brother Charles, my dear fellow," replied a voice from the inside ; so like in its tones to that which had just spoken, that Nicholas started, and almost thought it was the same, " don't ask me such a question, but come in directly."

They went in, without further parley. What was the amazement of Nicholas when his conductor advanced, and exchanged a warm greeting with another old gentleman, the very type and model of himself—the same face, the same figure, the same coat, waistcoat, and neckcloth, the same breeches and gaiters—nay, there was the very same white hat hanging against the wall.

As they shook each other by the hand—the face of each lighted up by beaming looks of affection, which would have been most delightful to behold in infants, and which, in men so old, was inexpressibly touching—Nicholas could observe that the last old gentleman was something stouter than his brother ; this, and a slight additional shade of clumsiness in his gait and stature, formed

the only perceptible difference between them. Nobody could have doubted their being twin brothers.

"Brother Ned," said Nicholas's friend, closing the room-door, "here is a young friend of mine, whom we must assist. We must make proper inquiries into his statements, in justice to him as well as to ourselves, and if they are confirmed—as I feel assured they will be—we must assist him, we must assist him, brother Ned."

"It is enough, my dear brother, that you say we should," returned the other. "When you say that, no further inquiries are needed. He *shall* be assisted. What are his necessities, and what does he require? Where is Tim Linkinwater? Let us have him here?"

Both the brothers, it may be here remarked, had a very emphatic and earnest delivery; both had lost nearly the same teeth, which imparted the same peculiarity to their speech; and both spoke as if, besides possessing the utmost serenity of mind that the kindliest and most unsuspecting nature could bestow, they had, in collecting the plums from Fortune's choicest pudding, retained a few for present use, and kept them in their mouths.

"Where is Tim Linkinwater?" said brother Ned.

"Stop, stop, stop!" said brother Charles, taking the other aside. "I've a plan, my dear brother, I've a plan. Tim is getting old, and Tim has been a faithful servant, brother Ned, and I don't think pensioning Tim's mother and sister, and buying a little tomb for the family when his poor brother died, was a sufficient recompense for his faithful services."

"No, no, no," replied the other. "Certainly not. Not half enough, not half."

"If we could lighten Tim's duties," said the old gentleman, "and prevail upon him to go into the country, now and then, and sleep in the fresh air, two or three times a week (which he could, if he began business an hour later in the morning), old Tim Linkinwater would grow young again in time; and he's three good years our senior now. Old Tim Linkinwater young again! Eh, brother Ned,

THE BROTHERS CHEERYBLE

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eh ? why, I recollect old Tim Linkinwater quite a little boy, don't you ? Ha, ha, ha ! Poor Tim, poor Tim !"

The fine old fellows laughed pleasantly together : each with a tear of regard for old Tim Linkinwater, standing in his eye.

" But hear this first—hear this first, brother Ned," said the old man, hastily, placing two chairs, one on each side of Nicholas. " I'll tell it you myself, brother Ned, because the young gentleman is modest, and is a scholar, Ned, and I shouldn't feel it right that he should tell us his story over and over again, as if he was a beggar, or as if we doubted him. No, no, no."

" No, no, no," returned the other, nodding his head gravely. " Very right, my dear brother, very right."

" He will tell me I'm wrong, if I make a mistake," said Nicholas's friend. " But whether I do or not, you'll be very much affected, brother Ned, remembering the time when we were two friendless lads, and earned our first shilling in this great city."

The twins pressed each other's hands in silence ; and in his own homely manner, brother Charles related the particulars he had heard from Nicholas. The conversation which ensued, was a long one, and when it was over, a secret conference of almost equal duration took place between brother Ned and Tim Linkinwater in another room. It is no disparagement to Nicholas to say, that before he had been closeted with the two brothers ten minutes, he could only wave his hand at every fresh expression of kindness and sympathy, and sob like a little child.

THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP

The Old Curiosity Shop has for its chief theme the wanderings of Little Nell and her grandfather seeking a safe retreat. Incidentally, it aims at showing the evils of gambling. Dickens, in writing about the book, said: "The many friends it won me, and the many hearts it turned to me when they were full of private sorrow, invest it with an interest in my mind which is not a public one, and the rightful place of which appears to be 'a more removed ground.'"

In writing the book, he has told us, he had it always in his fancy to surround the lovely figure of the child with grotesque and wild, but not impossible companions, and to gather about her innocent face and pure intentions associates as strange and uncongenial as the grim objects that are about her bed when her history is first foreshadowed.

In addition to the two central figures, the story is full of life-like and uncommon characters, two of whom form the text of the first extract here given: Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness; whilst the second is devoted to a pathetic incident in Little Nell's career.

DICK SWIVELLER AND THE MARCHIONESS

"COME in!" said Dick. "Don't stand upon ceremony. The business will get rather complicated if I've many more customers. Come in!"

"Oh, please," said a little voice very low down in the doorway, "will you come and show the lodgings?"

Dick leant over the table, and descried a small slipshod girl in a dirty coarse apron and bib, which left nothing of her visible but her face and feet. She might as well have been dressed in a violin-case.

"Why, who are you?" said Dick.

To which the only reply was, "Oh, please will you come and show the lodgings?"

There never was such an old-fashioned child in her looks and manner. She must have been at work from her cradle. She seemed as much afraid of Dick as Dick was amazed at her.

"I hav'n't got anything to do with the lodgings," said Dick. "Tell 'em to call again."

"Oh, but please will you come and show the lodgings," returned the girl; "it's eighteen shillings a week and us finding plate and linen. Boots and clothes is extra, and fires in winter time is eightpence a day."

"Why don't you show 'em yourself? You seem to know all about 'em," said Dick.

"Miss Sally said I wasn't to, because people wouldn't believe the attendance was good if they saw how small I was first."

"Well, but they'll see how small you are afterwards, won't they?" said Dick.

"Ah! But then they'll have taken 'em for a fortnight certain," replied the child with a shrewd look; "and people don't like moving when they're once settled."

"This is a queer sort of thing," muttered Dick, rising. "What do you mean to say you are - the cook?"

"Yes, I do plain cooking," replied the child. "I'm housemaid too; I do all the work of the house."

"I suppose Brass and the Dragon and I, do the dirtiest part of it," thought Dick. And he might have thought much more, being in a doubtful and hesitating mood, but that the girl again urged her request, and certain mysterious bumping sounds on the passage and staircase seemed to give note of the applicant's impatience. Richard Swiveller, therefore, sticking a pen behind each ear, and carrying another in his mouth as a token of his great importance and devotion to business, hurried out to meet and treat with the single gentleman.

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(*Later in the story Dick Swiveller was seized with an alarming illness, and in twenty-four hours was stricken with a raging fever*)

Tossing to and fro upon his hot, uneasy bed; tormented by a fierce thirst which nothing could appease; unable to find, in any change of posture, a moment's peace or ease; and rambling ever through deserts of thought where there was no resting-place, no sight or sound suggestive of refreshment or repose, nothing but a dull eternal weariness, with no change but the restless shiftings of his miserable body, and the weary wanderings of his mind, constant still to one ever-present anxiety - to a sense of something left undone, of some fearful obstacle to be surmounted, of some carking care that would not be driven away, and haunted the distempered brain, now in this form, now in that - always shadowy and dim, but recognisable for the same phantom in every shape it took, darkening every vision like an evil conscience, and making slumber horrible; in these slow tortures of his dread disease, the unfortunate Richard lay wasting and consuming inch by inch, until at last, when he seemed to fight and struggle to rise up, and to be held down by devils, he sank into a deep sleep, and dreamed no more.

He awoke; and, with a sensation of most blissful rest, better than sleep itself, began gradually to remember something of these sufferings, and to think what a long night it had been, and whether he had not been delirious twice or thrice. Happening in the midst of these cogitations to raise his hand, he was astonished to find how heavy it seemed, and yet how thin and light it really was. Still he felt indifferent and happy; and having no curiosity to pursue the subject, remained in the same waking slumber until his attention was attracted by a cough. This made him doubt whether he had locked his door last night, and feel a little surprised at having a companion in the room. Still, he lacked energy to follow up this train of thought; and unconsciously fell, in a luxury of repose, to staring at some green stripes upon the bed-furniture, and associating them strangely with patches of fresh turf, while the yellow ground between made gravel-walks, and so helped out a long perspective of trim gardens.

He was rambling in imagination upon these terraces, and had quite lost himself among them indeed, when he heard the cough once more. The walks shrank into stripes again at the sound; and raising himself a little in the bed, and holding the curtain open with one hand, he looked out.

The same room certainly, and still by candle-light; but with what unbounded astonishment did he see all those bottles, and basins, and articles of linen airing by the fire, and such-like furniture of a sick chamber—all very clean and neat, but all quite different from anything he had left there, when he went to bed. The atmosphere, too, filled with a cool smell of herbs and vinegar; the floor newly sprinkled; the—the what? The Marchioness? Yes; playing cribbage with herself at the table. There she sat, intent upon her game, coughing now and then in a subdued manner as if she feared to disturb him—shuffling the cards, cutting, dealing, playing, counting, pegging—going through all the mysteries of cribbage as though she had been in full practice from her cradle!

Mr. Swiveller contemplated these things for a short time, and suffering the curtain to fall into its former position, laid his head upon the pillow again.

"I'm dreaming," thought Richard, "that's clear. When I went to bed, my hands were not made of egg-shells; and now I can almost see through 'em. If this is not a dream, I have woke up by mistake in an Arabian Night, instead of a London one. But I have no doubt I'm asleep. Not the least."

Here the small servant had another cough.

"Very remarkable!" thought Mr. Swiveller. "I never dreamt such a real cough as that before. I don't know, indeed, that I ever dreamt either a cough or a sneeze. Perhaps it's part of the philosophy of dreams that one never does. There's another—and another—I say,—I'm dreaming rather fast!"

For the purpose of testing his real condition, Mr. Swiveller, after some reflection, pinched himself in the arm.

"Queerer still!" he thought. "I came to bed rather plump than otherwise, and now there's nothing to lay hold of. I'll take another survey."

The result of this further inspection was, to convince Mr. Swiveller that the objects by which he was surrounded were real, and that he saw them, beyond all question, with his waking eyes.

"It's an Arabian Night, that's what it is," said Richard. "I'm in Damascus or Grand Cairo. The Marchioness is a Genie, and having had a wager with another Genie about who is the handsomest young man alive, and the worthiest to be the husband of the Princess of China, has brought me away, room and all, to compare us together. Perhaps," said Mr. Swiveller, turning languidly round upon his pillow, and looking on that side of his bed which was next the wall, "the Princess may be still—No, she's gone."

Not feeling quite satisfied with this explanation, as, even taking it to be the correct one, it still involved a little mystery and doubt, Mr. Swiveller raised the curtain again, determined to take the first favourable opportunity of addressing his companion.

An occasion soon presented itself. The Marchioness dealt, turned up a knave, and omitted to take the usual advantage; upon which Mr. Swiveller called out as loud as he could—"Two for his heels!"

The Marchioness jumped up quickly, and clapped her hands. "Arabian Night, certainly," thought Mr. Swiveller; "they always clap their hands instead of ringing the bell. Now for the two thousand black slaves, with jars of jewels on their heads!"

It appeared, however, that she had only clapped her hands in joy; for directly afterwards she began to laugh, and then to cry; declaring, not in choice Arabic but in familiar English, that she was "so glad, she didn't know what to do."

"Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller thoughtfully, "be pleased to draw nearer. First of all, will you have the goodness to inform me where I shall find my voice; and secondly, what has become of my flesh?"

The Marchioness only shook her head mournfully, and cried again; whereupon Mr. Swiveller (being very weak) felt his own eyes affected likewise.

"I begin to infer, from your manner and these appearances, Marchioness,"—said Richard after a pause, and smiling with a trembling lip, "that I have been ill."

"You just have!" replied the small servant, wiping her eyes. "And haven't you been a talking nonsense!"

"Oh!" said Dick. "Very ill, Marchioness, have I been?"

"Dead, all but," replied the small servant. "I never thought you'd get better. Thank Heaven you have!"

Mr. Swiveller was silent for a long while. By-and-by, he began to talk again—inquiring how long he had been there.

"Three weeks to-morrow," replied the small servant.

"Three what?" said Dick.

"Weeks," returned the Marchioness emphatically; "three long, slow weeks."

The bare thought of having been in such extremity caused Richard to fall into another silence, and to lie flat down again at

his full length. The Marchioness, having arranged the bed-clothes more comfortably, and felt that his hands and forehead were quite cool—a discovery that filled her with delight—cried a little more, and then applied herself to getting tea ready, and making some thin dry toast.

While she was thus engaged, Mr. Swiveller looked on with a grateful heart, very much astonished to see how thoroughly at home she made herself, and attributing this attention, in its origin, to Sally Brass, whom, in his own mind, he could not thank enough. When the Marchioness had finished her toasting, she spread a clean cloth on a tray, and brought him some crisp slices and a great basin of weak tea, with which (she said) the doctor had left word he might refresh himself when he awoke. She propped him up with pillows, if not as skilfully as if she had been a professional nurse all her life, at least as tenderly; and looked on with unutterable satisfaction while the patient—stopping every now and then to shake her by the hand—took his poor meal with an appetite and relish, which the greatest dainties of the earth, under any other circumstances, would have failed to provoke. Having cleared away, and disposed everything comfortably about him again, she sat down at the table to take her own tea.

"Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, "how's Sally?"

The small servant screwed her face into an expression of the very uttermost entanglement of slyness, and shook her head.

"What, haven't you seen her lately?" said Dick.

"Seen her!" cried the small servant. "Bless you, I've run away!"

Mr. Swiveller immediately laid himself down again quite flat, and so remained for about five minutes. By slow degrees he resumed his sitting posture after that lapse of time, and inquired:

"And where do you live, Marchioness?"

"Live!" cried the small servant. "Here!"

"Oh!" said Mr. Swiveller.

And with that he fell down flat again, as suddenly as if

he had been shot. Thus he remained, motionless and bereft of speech, until she had finished her meal, put everything in its place, and swept the hearth; when he motioned her to bring a chair to the bedside, and, being propped up again, opened a farther conversation.

"And so," said Dick, "you have run away?"

"Yes," said the Marchioness, "and they've been a tizing of me."

"Been—I beg your pardon," said Dick—"what have they been doing?"

"Been a tizing of me—tizing you know—in the newspapers," rejoined the Marchioness.

"Ay, ay," said Dick, "advertising?"

The small servant nodded, and winked. Her eyes were so red with waking and crying, that the Tragic Muse might have winked with greater consistency. And so Dick felt.

"Tell me," said he, "how it was that you thought of coming here."

"Why, you see," returned the Marchioness, "when you was gone, I hadn't any friend at all, because the lodger he never come back, and I didn't know where either him or you was to be found, you know. But one morning, when I was——"

"Was near a key-hole?" suggested Mr. Swiveller, observing that she faltered.

"Well then," said the small servant, nodding; "when I was near the office key-hole—as you see me through, you know—I heard somebody saying that she lived here, and was the lady whose house you lodged at, and that you was took very bad, and wouldn't nobody come and take care of you. Mr. Brass, he says, 'It's no business of mine;' and Miss Sally, she says, 'He's a funny chap, but it's no business of mine;' and the lady went away, and slammed the door to, when she went out, I can tell you. So I run away that night, and come here, and told 'em you was my brother, and they believed me, and I've been here ever since."

"This poor little Marchioness has been wearing herself to death!" cried Dick.

"No I haven't," she returned, "not a bit of it. Don't you mind about me. I like sitting up, and I've often had a sleep, bless you, in one of them chairs. But if you could have seen how you tried to jump out o' winder, and if you could have heard how you used to keep on singing and making speeches, you wouldn't have believed it—I'm so glad you're better, Mr. Liverer."

"Liverer indeed!" said Dick thoughtfully. "It's well I *am* a liverer. I strongly suspect I should have died, Marchioness, but for you."

At this point, Mr. Swiveller took the small servant's hand in his again, and being, as we have seen, but poorly, might, in struggling to express his thanks, have made his eyes as red as hers, but that she quickly changed the theme by making him lie down, and urging him to keep very quiet.

"The doctor," she told him, "said you was to be kept quite still, and there was to be no noise nor nothing. Now, take a rest, and then we'll talk again. I'll sit by you, you know. If you shut your eyes, perhaps you'll go to sleep. You'll be all the better for it, if you do."

LITTLE NELL IN THE OLD CHURCH

NELL was stirring early in the morning; and having discharged her household tasks, and put everything in order for the good schoolmaster (though sorely against his will, for he would have spared her the pains), took down, from its nail by the fireside, a little bundle of keys with which the bachelor had formally invested her on the previous day, and went out alone to visit the old church.

The sky was serene and bright, the air clear, perfumed with the fresh scent of newly-fallen leaves, and grateful to every

sense. The neighbouring stream sparkled, and rolled onward with a tuneful sound ; the dew glistened on the green mounds, like tears shed by Good Spirits over the dead.

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Full of meditations, she reached the church. It was easy to find the key belonging to the outer door, for each was labelled on a scrap of yellow parchment. Its very turning in the lock awoke a hollow sound, and when she entered with a faltering step, the echoes that it raised in closing made her start.

Everything in our lives, whether of good or evil, affects us most by contrast. If the peace of the simple village had moved the child more strongly, because of the dark and troubled ways that lay beyond and through which she had journeyed with such failing feet, what was the deep impression of finding herself alone in that solemn building ; where the very light, coming through sunken windows, seemed old and grey, and the air, redolent of earth and mould, seemed laden with decay, purified by time of all its grosser particles, and sighing through arch and aisle, and clustered pillars, like the breath of ages gone ! Here was the broken pavement, worn so long ago by pious feet, that Time, stealing on the pilgrims' steps, had trodden out their track, and left but crumbling stones. Here were the rotten beam, the sinking arch, the sapped and mouldering wall, the lowly trench of earth, the stately tomb on which no epitaph remained,—all,—marble, stone, iron, wood, and dust, one common monument of ruin. The best work and the worst, the plainest and the richest, the stateliest and the least imposing—both of Heaven's work and Man's—all found one common level here, and told one common tale.

Some part of the edifice had been a baronial chapel, and here were effigies of warriors stretched upon their beds of stone with folded hands, cross-legged—those who had fought in the Holy Wars—girded with their swords, and cased in armour as they had lived. Some of these knights had their own weapons, helmets, coats of mail, hanging upon the walls hard by, and dangling from

rusty hooks. Broken and dilapidated as they were, they yet retained their ancient form, and something of their ancient aspect. Thus violent deeds live after men upon the earth, and traces of war and bloodshed will survive in mournful shapes, long after those who worked the desolation are but atoms of earth themselves.

The child sat down in this old, silent place, among the stark figures on the tombs—they made it more quiet there, than elsewhere, to her fancy—and gazing round with a feeling of awe, tempered with a calm delight, felt that now she was happy, and at rest. She took a Bible from the shelf, and read; then, laying it down, thought of the summer days and the bright spring-time that would come—of the rays of sun that would fall in aslant upon the sleeping forms—of the leaves that would flutter at the window, and play in glistening shadows on the pavement—of the songs of birds, and growth of buds and blossoms out of doors—of the sweet air, that would steal in and gently wave the tattered banners overhead. What if the spot awakened thoughts of death! Die who would, it would still remain the same; these sights and sounds would still go on as happily as ever. It would be no pain to sleep amidst them.

She left the chapel—very slowly and often turning back to gaze again—and coming to a low door, which plainly led into the tower, opened it, and climbed the winding stair in darkness; save where she looked down through narrow loopholes on the place she had left, or caught a glimmering vision of the dusty bells. At length she gained the end of the ascent and stood upon the turret top.

Oh! the glory of the sudden burst of light; the freshness of the fields and woods, stretching away on every side and meeting the bright blue sky; the cattle grazing in the pasturage; the smoke, that, coming from among the trees, seemed to rise upward from the green earth; the children yet at their gambols down below—all, everything, so beautiful and happy! It was like passing from death to life; it was drawing nearer Heaven.

BARNABY RUDGE

(A TALE OF THE RIOTS OF 'EIGHTY)

Barnaby Rudge is an historical novel, and, as the second title indicates, a story of the Protestant riots of 1780. We believe it to be most accurate as regards its historical setting ; indeed, evidence exists to prove this. But Dickens created some of his best characters in those who are not historical figures, and their personalities brighten what might otherwise have been a sordid picture. Barnaby and his raven, the Vardens, the Willets, Miggs—all are of the Dickens mould ; and the scene when Joe Willet bids Dolly good-bye, which Mr. Copping has illustrated, serves as a typical instance of the power and artistry which pervades the book.

JOE WILLET BIDS DOLLY VARDEN GOOD-BYE

JOE WILLET had walked up and down before the house, on the opposite side of the way, two or three times, when as he returned to it again, he caught a glimpse of a fluttering skirt at the door. It was Dolly's—to whom else could it belong? no dress but hers had such a flow as that. He plucked up his spirits, and followed it into the workshop of the Golden Key.

His darkening the door caused her to look round. Oh, that face! "If it hadn't been for that," thought Joe, "I should never have walked into poor Tom Cobb. She's twenty times handsomer than ever. She might marry a Lord!"

He didn't say this. He only thought it—perhaps looked it also. Dolly was glad to see him, and was so sorry her father and mother were away from home. Joe begged she wouldn't mention it on any account.

Dolly hesitated to lead the way into the parlour, for there it was nearly dark; at the same time she hesitated to stand talking in the workshop, which was yet light and open to the street. They had got by some means, too, before the little forge; and Joe having her hand in his (which he had no right to have, for Dolly only gave it him to shake), it was so like standing before some homely altar being married, that it was the most embarrassing state of things in the world.

"I have come," said Joe, "to say good-bye—to say good-bye for I don't know how many years; perhaps for ever. I am going abroad."

Now this was exactly what he should not have said. Here he was, talking like a gentleman at large who was free to come and go and roam about the world at his pleasure, when that gallant

coachmaker had vowed but the night before that Miss Varden held him bound in adamantine chains; and had positively stated in so many words that she was killing him by inches, and that in a fortnight more or thereabouts he expected to make a decent end and leave the business to his mother.

Dolly released her hand and said "Indeed!" She remarked in the same breath that it was a fine night, and, in short, betrayed no more emotion than the forge itself.

"I couldn't go," said Joe, "without coming to see you. I hadn't the heart to."

Dolly was more sorry than she could tell, that he should have taken so much trouble. It was such a long way, and he must have such a deal to do. And how *was* Mr. Willet—that dear old gentleman——

"Is that all you say!" said Joe.

All! Good gracious, what did the man expect! She was obliged to take her apron in her hand and run her eyes along the hem from corner to corner, to keep herself from laughing in his face;—not because his gaze confused her—not at all.

Joe had small experience in love affairs, and had no notion how different young ladies are at different times; he had expected to take Dolly up again at the very point where he had left her after that delicious evening ride, and was no more prepared for such an alteration than to see the sun and moon change places. He had buoyed himself up all day with an indistinct idea that she would certainly say "Don't go," or "Don't leave us," or "Why do you go?" or "Why do you leave us?" or would give him some little encouragement of that sort; he had even entertained the possibility of her bursting into tears, of her throwing herself into his arms, and of her falling down in a fainting-fit without previous word or sign; but any approach to such a line of conduct as this had been so far from his thoughts that he could only look at her in silent wonder.

Dolly in the meanwhile turned to the corners of her apron,

and measured the sides, and smoothed out the wrinkles, and was as silent as he. At last, after a long pause, Joe said good-bye. "Good-bye"—said Dolly—with as pleasant a smile as if he were going into the next street, and were coming back to supper; "good-bye."

"Come," said Joe, putting out both his hands. "Dolly, dear Dolly, don't let us part like this. I love you dearly, with all my heart and soul; with as much truth and earnestness as ever man loved woman in this world, I do believe. I am a poor fellow, as you know—poorer now than ever, for I have fled from home, not being able to bear it any longer, and must fight my own way without help. You are beautiful, admired, are loved by everybody, are well off and happy; and may you ever be so! Heaven forbid I should ever make you otherwise; but give me a word of comfort. Say something kind to me. I have no right to expect it of you, I know, but I ask it because I love you, and shall treasure the slightest word from you all through my life. Dolly, dearest, have you nothing to say to me?"

No. Nothing. Dolly was a coquette by nature, and a spoilt child. She had no notion of being carried by storm in this way. The coachmaker would have been dissolved in tears, and would have knelt down, and called himself names, and clasped his hands, and beat his breast, and tugged wildly at his cravat, and done all kinds of poetry. Joe had no business to be going abroad. He had no right to be able to do it. If he was in adamantine chains, he couldn't.

"I have said good-bye," said Dolly, "twice. Take your arm away directly, Mr. Joseph, or I'll call Miggs."

"I'll not reproach you," answered Joe, "it's my fault, no doubt. I have thought sometimes that you didn't quite despise me, but I was a fool to think so. Every one must, who has seen the life I have led—you most of all. God bless you!"

He was gone, actually gone. Dolly waited a little while, thinking he would return, peeped out at the door, looked up the street and

JOE WILLET AND DOLLY VARDEN

down as well as the increasing darkness would allow, came in again, waited a little longer, went up-stairs humming a tune, bolted herself in, laid her head down on her bed, and cried as if her heart would break. And yet such natures are made up of so many contradictions, that if Joe Willet had come back that night, next day, next week, next month, the odds are a hundred to one she would have treated him in the very same manner, and have wept for it afterwards with the very same distress.

MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT

IN one of his prefaces to *Martin Chuzzlewit,* Dickens declares that his main object was " to exhibit in a variety of aspects the commonest of all the vices ; to show how selfishness propagates itself ; and to what a grim giant it may grow, from small beginnings."

In the person of Pecksniff he created a character that has become a by-word for hypocrisy, whilst other characters, such as Sairey Gamp and old Martin Chuzzlewit, have taken their place in the gallery of the immortals. On the reverse side, equally inimitable, are to be found Tom Pinch, Mark Tapley, Ruth Pinch, John Westlock, and scores of others. The selections made from the book represent these phases. Old Martin is introduced in the first excerpt, delightful Ruth Pinch and her brother in the next, whilst the immortal tea party of Sairey Gamp and Betsey Prig forms the third.

OLD MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT CALLS ON PECKSNIFF

MR. PECKSNIFF was seated in the landlady's little room, and his visitor found him reading—by an accident: he apologised for it—an excellent theological work. There were cake and wine upon a little table—by another accident, for which he also apologised. Indeed he said, he had given his visitor up, and was about to partake of that simple refreshment with his children, when he knocked at the door.

"Your daughters are well?" said old Martin, laying down his hat and stick.

Mr. Pecksniff endeavoured to conceal his agitation as a father, when he answered. Yes, they were. They were good girls, he said, very good. He would not venture to recommend Mr. Chuzzlewit to take the easy-chair, or to keep out of the draught from the door. If he made any such suggestion, he would expose himself, he feared, to most unjust suspicion. He would, therefore, content himself with remarking that there was an easy-chair in the room; and that the door was far from being air-tight. This latter imperfection, he might perhaps venture to add, was not uncommonly to be met with in old houses.

The old man sat down in the easy-chair, and after a few moments' silence, said:

"In the first place, let me thank you for coming to London so promptly, at my almost unexplained request: I need scarcely add, at my cost."

"At *your* cost, my good sir!" cried Mr. Pecksniff, in a tone of great surprise.

"It is not," said Martin, waving his hand impatiently, "my habit to put my—well! my relatives—to any personal expense to gratify my caprices."

"Caprices, my good sir!" cried Mr. Pecksniff.

"That is scarcely the proper word either, in this instance," said the old man. "No. You are right."

Mr. Pecksniff was inwardly very much relieved to hear it, though he didn't at all know why.

"You are right," repeated Martin. "It is not a caprice. It is built up on reason, proof, and cool comparison. Caprices never are. Moreover, I am not a capricious man. I never was."

"Most assuredly not," said Mr. Pecksniff.

"How do you know?" returned the other quickly. "You are to begin to know it now. You are to test and prove it, in time to come. You and yours are to find that I can be constant, and am not to be diverted from my end. Do you hear?"

"Perfectly," said Mr. Pecksniff.

"I very much regret," Martin resumed, looking steadily at him, and speaking in a slow and measured tone: "I very much regret that you and I held such a conversation together, as that which passed between us, at our last meeting. I very much regret that I laid open to you what were then my thoughts of you, so freely as I did. The intentions that I bear towards you, now, are of another kind; deserted by all in whom I have ever trusted; hoodwinked and beset by all who should help and sustain me; I fly to you for refuge. I confide in you to be my ally; to attach yourself to me by ties of Interest and Expectation;" he laid great stress upon these words, though Mr. Pecksniff particularly begged him not to mention it; "and to help me to visit the consequences of the very worst species of meanness, dissimulation, and subtlety, on the right heads."

"My noble sir!" cried Mr. Pecksniff, catching at his outstretched hand. "And *you* regret the having harboured unjust thoughts of me! *you* with those gray hairs!"

"Regrets," said Martin, "are the natural property of gray hairs; and I enjoy, in common with all other men, at least my share of such inheritance. And so enough of that. I regret having been

MR PECKSNIFF AND OLD MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT

severed from you so long. If I had known you sooner, and sooner used you as you well deserve, I might have been a happier man."

Mr. Pecksniff looked up to the ceiling, and clasped his hands in rapture.

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"You talk confidently," said Martin, "and you mean well; but I fear you don't know what an old man's humours are. You don't know what it is to be required to court his likings and dislikings; to adapt yourself to his prejudices; to do his bidding, be it what it may; to bear with his distrusts and jealousies; and always still be zealous in his service. When I remember how numerous these failings are in me, and judge of their occasional enormity by the injurious thoughts I lately entertained of you, I hardly dare to claim you for my friend."

"My worthy sir," returned his relative, "how *can* you talk in such a painful strain! What was more natural than that you should make one slight mistake, when in all other respects you were so very correct, and have had such reason, such very sad and undeniable reason, to judge of every one about you in the worst light!"

"True," replied the other. "You are very lenient with me."

"We always said, my girls and I," cried Mr. Pecksniff with increasing obsequiousness, "that while we mourned the heaviness of our misfortune in being confounded with the base and mercenary, still we could not wonder at it.

"We uttered no complaint," said Mr. Pecksniff. "Occasionally we had the presumption to console ourselves with the remark that Truth would in the end prevail, and Virtue be triumphant; but not often."

RUTH PINCH MAKES A PUDDING

Tom sat gravely down to write, at one end of the parlour table, while Ruth prepared to make the pudding, at the other end; for there was nobody in the house but an old woman (the landlord being

a mysterious sort of man, who went out early in the morning, and was scarcely ever seen); and saving in mere household drudgery, they waited on themselves.

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"*You* make a beef-steak pudding, indeed!" said Tom, giving her a gentle push. "Why, you haven't boldness enough for a dumpling!"

"You *will* call it a pudding, Tom. Mind! I told you not!"

"I may as well call it that, till it proves to be something else," said Tom. "Oh, you are going to work in earnest, are you?"

Aye, aye! That she was. And in such pleasant earnest, moreover, that Tom's attention wandered from his writing every moment. First, she tripped down-stairs into the kitchen for the flour, then for the pie-board, then for the eggs, then for the butter, then for a jug of water, then for the rolling-pin, then for a pudding-basin, then for the pepper, then for the salt; making a separate journey for everything, and laughing every time she started off afresh. When all the materials were collected, she was horrified to find she had no apron on, and so ran *up*-stairs, by way of a variety, to fetch it. She didn't put it on upstairs, but came dancing down with it in her hand; and being one of those little women to whom an apron is a most becoming little vanity, it took an immense time to arrange; having to be carefully smoothed down beneath—Oh, heaven, what a wicked little stomacher! and to be gathered up into little plaits by the strings before it could be tied, and to be tapped, rebuked, and wheedled, at the pockets, before it would set right, which at last it did, and when it did—but never mind; this is a sober chronicle. And then, there were her cuffs to be tucked up, for fear of flour; and she had a little ring to pull off her finger, which wouldn't come off (foolish little ring!); and during the whole of these preparations she looked demurely every now and then at Tom, from under her dark eye-lashes, as if they were all a part of the pudding, and indispensable to its composition.

For the life and soul of him Tom could get no further in his

RUTH PINCH MAKES A PUDDING

writing than, "A respectable young man, aged thirty-five," and this, notwithstanding the show she made of being supernaturally quiet, and going about on tiptoe, lest she should disturb him: which only served as an additional means of distracting his attention, and keeping it upon her.

"Tom," she said at last, in high glee. "Tom!"

"What now?" said Tom, repeating to himself, "aged thirty-five!"

"Will you look here a moment, please?"

As if he hadn't been looking all the time!

"I am going to begin, Tom. Don't you wonder why I butter the inside of the basin?" said his busy little sister.

"Not more than you do, I dare say," replied Tom, laughing. "For I believe you don't know anything about it."

"What an Infidel you are, Tom! How else do you think it would turn out easily when it was done? For a civil-engineer and land-surveyor not to know that! My goodness, Tom!"

It was wholly out of the question to try to write. Tom lined out "A respectable young man, aged thirty-five;" and sat looking on, pen in hand, with one of the most loving smiles imaginable.

Such a busy little woman as she was! So full of self-importance, and trying so hard not to smile, or seem uncertain about anything! It was a perfect treat to Tom to see her with her brows knit, and her rosy lips pursed up, kneading away at the crust, rolling it out, cutting it up into strips, lining the basin with it, shaving it off fine round the rim, chopping up the steak into small pieces, raining down pepper and salt upon them, packing them into the basin, pouring in cold water for gravy, and never venturing to steal a look in his direction, lest her gravity should be disturbed; until, at last, the basin being quite full and only wanting the top crust, she clapped her hands all covered with paste and flour, at Tom, and burst out heartily into such a charming little laugh of triumph, that the pudding need have had no other seasoning to commend it to the taste of any reasonable man on earth.

"Where's the pudding?" said Tom. For he was cutting his jokes, Tom was.

"Where!" she answered, holding it up with both hands. "Look at it!"

"*That* a pudding!" said Tom.

"It will be, you stupid fellow, when it's covered in," returned his sister. Tom still pretending to look incredulous, she gave him a tap on the head with the rolling-pin, and still laughing merrily, had returned to the composition of the top-crust, when she started and turned very red. Tom started, too, for following her eyes, he saw John Westlock in the room.

SAIREY GAMP AND BETSEY PRIG

MRS. GAMP'S apartment in Kingsgate Street, High Holborn, wore, metaphorically speaking, a robe of state. It was swept and garnished for the reception of a visitor. That visitor was Betsey Prig: Mrs. Prig, of Bartlemy's; or as some said Barklemy's, or as some said Bardlemy's: for by all these endearing and familiar appellations, had the hospital of Saint Bartholomew become a household word among the sisterhood which Betsey Prig adorned.

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Mrs. Gamp raised her eyes in satisfaction when she had arranged the tea-board, and had concluded her arrangements for the reception of Betsey Prig, even unto the setting forth of two pounds of Newcastle salmon, intensely pickled.

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"My precious Betsey," said Mrs. Gamp, "how late you are!"

The worthy Mrs. Prig replied, with some asperity, "that if perwerse people went off dead, when they was least expected, it warn't no fault of her'n." And further, "that it was quite aggrawation enough to be made late when one was dropping for one's tea, without hearing on it again."

Mrs. Gamp, deriving from this exhibition of repartee some clue to the state of Mrs. Prig's feelings, instantly conducted her upstairs: deeming that the sight of pickled salmon might work a softening change.

But Betsey Prig expected pickled salmon. It was obvious that she did: for her first words, after glancing at the table, were:

"I know'd she wouldn't have a coucumber!"

Mrs. Gamp changed colour, and sat down upon the bedstead.

"Lord bless you, Betsey Prig, your words is true. I quite forgot it!"

Mrs. Prig, looking steadfastly at her friend, put her hand in her pocket, and, with an air of surly triumph, drew forth either the oldest of lettuces or youngest of cabbages, but at any rate, a green vegetable of an expansive nature, and of such magnificent proportions that she was obliged to shut it up like an umbrella before she could pull it out. She also produced a handful of mustard and cress, a trifle of the herb called dandelion, three bunches of radishes, an onion rather larger than an average turnip, three substantial slices of beetroot, and a short prong or antler of celery; the whole of this garden-stuff having been publicly exhibited, but a short time before, as a twopenny salad, and purchased by Mrs. Prig, on condition that the vendor could get it all into her pocket. Which had been happily accomplished, in High Holborn, to the breathless interest of a hackney-coach stand. And she laid so little stress on this surprising forethought, that she did not even smile, but returning her pocket into its accustomed sphere, merely recommended that these productions of nature should be sliced up, for immediate consumption, in plenty of vinegar.

"And don't go a dropping none of your snuff in it," said Mrs. Prig. "In gruel, barley-water, apple-tea, mutton-broth, and that, it don't signify. It stimulates a patient. But I don't relish it myself."

"Why, Betsey Prig!" cried Mrs. Gamp, "how *can* you talk so!"

" Why, ain't your patients, wotever their diseases is, always a sneezin' their wery heads off, along of your snuff ?" said Mrs. Prig.

" And wot if they are !" said Mrs. Gamp.

" Nothing if they are," said Mrs. Prig. " But don't deny it, Sairah."

" Who deniges of it ?" Mrs. Gamp inquired.

Mrs. Prig returned no answer.

" WHO deniges of it, Betsey ?" Mrs. Gamp inquired again. Then Mrs. Gamp, by reversing the question, imparted a deeper and more awful character of solemnity to the same. " Betsey, who deniges of it ?"

It was the nearest possible approach to a very decided difference of opinion between these ladies ; but Mrs. Prig's impatience for the meal being greater at the moment than her impatience of contradiction, she replied, for the present, " Nobody, if you don't, Sairah," and prepared herself for tea. For a quarrel can be taken up at any time, but a limited quantity of salmon cannot.

Her toilet was simple. She had merely to " chuck " her bonnet and shawl upon the bed ; give her hair two pulls, one upon the right side and one upon the left, as if she were ringing a couple of bells ; and all was done. The tea was already made, Mrs. Gamp was not long over the salad, and they were soon at the height of their repast.

The temper of both parties was improved, for the time being, by the enjoyments of the table. When the meal came to a termination (which it was pretty long in doing), and Mrs. Gamp having cleared away, produced the tea-pot from the top-shelf, simultaneously with a couple of wine-glasses, they were quite amiable.

" Betsey," said Mrs. Gamp, filling her own glass, and passing the tea-pot, " I will now propoge a toast. My frequent pardner, Betsey Prig !"

" Which, altering the name to Sairah Gamp ; I drink," said Mrs. Prig, " with love and tenderness."

From this moment symptoms of inflammation began to lurk

SAIREY GAMP AND BETSEY PRIG

in the nose of each lady ; and perhaps, notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary, in the temper also.

" Now, Sairah," said Mrs. Prig, " joining business with pleasure, wot is this case in which you wants me ?"

Mrs. Gamp betraying in her face some intention of returning an evasive answer, Betsey added :

" *Is* it Mrs. Harris !"

" No, Betsey Prig, it ain't," was Mrs. Gamp's reply.

" Well !" said Mrs. Prig, with a short laugh, " I'm glad of that, at any rate."

" Why should you be glad of that, Betsey ?" Mrs. Gamp retorted, warmly. " She is unbeknown to you except by hearsay, why should you be glad ? If you have anythink to say contrairy to the character of Mrs. Harris, which well I knows behind her back, afore her face, or anywheres, is not to be impeaged, out with it, Betsey. I have know'd that sweetest and best of women," said Mrs. Gamp, shaking her head, and shedding tears, " ever since afore her First, which Mr. Harris who was dreadful timid went and stopped his ears in a empty dog-kennel, and never took his hands away or come out once till he was showed the baby, wen bein' took with fits, the doctor collared him and laid him on his back upon the airy stones, and she was told to ease her mind, his owls was organs. And I have know'd her, Betsey Prig, when he has hurt her feelin' art by sayin' of his Ninth that it was one too many, if not two, while that dear innocent was cooin' in his face, which thrive it did though bandy, but I have never know'd as you had occagion to be glad, Betsey, on accounts of Mrs. Harris not requiring you. Require she never will, depend upon it, for her constant words in sickness is, and will be, ' Send for Sairey !' "

During this touching address, Mrs. Prig adroitly feigning to be the victim of that absence of mind which has its origin in excessive attention to one topic, helped herself from the tea-pot without appearing to observe it. Mrs. Gamp observed it, however, and came to a premature close in consequence.

" Well it ain't her, it seems," said Mrs. Prig, coldly : " who is it then ?"

" You have heerd me mention, Betsey," Mrs. Gamp replied, after glancing in an expressive and marked manner at the tea-pot, " a person as I took care on at the time as you and me was pardners off and on, in that there fever at the Bull ?"

" Old Snuffey," Mrs. Prig observed.

Sarah Gamp looked at her with an eye of fire, for she saw in this mistake of Mrs. Prig, another wilful and malignant stab at that same weakness or custom of hers, an ungenerous allusion to which, on the part of Betsey, had first disturbed their harmony that evening. And she saw it still more clearly, when, politely but firmly correcting that lady by the distinct enunciation of the word " Chuffey," Mrs. Prig received the correction with a diabolical laugh.

The best among us have their failings, and it must be conceded of Mrs. Prig, that if there were a blemish in the goodness of her disposition, it was a habit she had of not bestowing all its sharp and acid properties upon her patients (as a thoroughly amiable woman would have done), but of keeping a considerable remainder for the service of her friends. Highly pickled salmon, and lettuces chopped up in vinegar, may, as viands possessing some acidity of their own, have encouraged and increased this failing in Mrs. Prig ; and every application to the tea-pot certainly did ; for it was often remarked of her by her friends, that she was most contradictory when most elevated. It is certain that her countenance became about this time derisive and defiant, and that she sat with her arms folded, and one eye shut up, in a somewhat offensive, because obtrusively intelligent, manner.

Mrs. Gamp observing this, felt it the more necessary that Mrs. Prig should know her place, and be made sensible of her exact station in society, as well as of her obligations to herself. She therefore assumed an air of greater patronage and importance, as she went on to answer Mrs. Prig a little more in detail.

" Mr. Chuffey, Betsey," said Mrs. Gamp, " is weak in his mind.

Excuge me if I makes remark, that he may neither be so weak as people thinks, nor people may not think he is so weak as they pretends, and what I knows, I knows; and what you don't, you don't; so do not ask me, Betsey. But Mr. Chuffey's friends has made propojals for his bein' took care on, and has said to me, 'Mrs. Gamp, *will* you undertake it? We couldn't think,' they says, 'of trusting him to nobody but you, for, Sairey, you are gold as has passed the furnage. Will you undertake it, at your own price, day and night, and by your own self?' 'No,' I says, 'I will not. Do not reckon on it. There is,' I says, 'but one creetur in the world as I would undertake on sech terms, and her name is Harris. But,' I says, 'I am acquainted with a friend, whose name is Betsey Prig, that I can recommend, and will assist me. Betsey,' I says, 'is always to be trusted, under me, and will be guided as I could desire.'"

Here Mrs. Prig, without any abatement of her offensive manner, again counterfeited abstraction of mind, and stretched out her hand to the tea-pot. It was more than Mrs. Gamp could bear. She stopped the hand of Mrs. Prig with her own, and said, with great feeling:

"No, Betsey! Drink fair, wotever you do!"

Mrs. Prig, thus baffled, threw herself back in her chair, and closing the same eye more emphatically, and folding her arms tighter, suffered her head to roll slowly from side to side, while she surveyed her friend with a contemptuous smile.

Mrs. Gamp resumed:

"Mrs. Harris, Betsey—"

"Bother Mrs. Harris!" said Betsey Prig.

Mrs. Gamp looked at her with amazement, incredulity, and indignation; when Mrs. Prig, shutting her eye still closer, and folding her arms still tighter, uttered these memorable and tremendous words:

"I don't believe there's no sich a person!"

After the utterance of which expressions, she leaned forward, and snapped her fingers once, twice, thrice; each time nearer to

the face of Mrs. Gamp, and then rose to put on her bonnet, as one who felt that there was now a gulf between them, which nothing could ever bridge across.

The shock of this blow was so violent and sudden, that Mrs. Gamp sat staring at nothing with uplifted eyes, and her mouth open as if she were gasping for breath, until Betsey Prig had put on her bonnet and her shawl, and was gathering the latter about her throat. Then Mrs. Gamp rose—morally and physically rose—and denounced her.

"What!" said Mrs. Gamp, "you bage creetur, have I know'd Mrs. Harris five and thirty year, to be told at last that there ain't no sech a person livin'! Have I stood her friend in all her troubles, great and small, for it to come at last to sech a end as this, which her own sweet picter hanging up afore you all the time, to shame your Bragian words! But well you mayn't believe there's no sech a creetur, for she wouldn't demean herself to look at you, and often has she said, when I have made mention of your name, which, to my sinful sorrow, I have done, 'What, Sairey Gamp! debage yourself to *her*!' Go along with you!"

"I'm a goin', ma'am, ain't I?" said Mrs. Prig, stopping as she said it.

"You had better, ma'am," said Mrs. Gamp.

"Do you know who you're talking to, ma'am?" inquired her visitor.

"Aperiently," said Mrs. Gamp, surveying her with scorn from head to foot, "to Betsey Prig. Aperiently so. *I* know her. No one better. Go along with you!"

"And *you* was a going to take me under you!" cried Mrs. Prig surveying Mrs. Gamp from head to foot in her turn. "*You* was, was you? Oh, how kind! Why, deuce take your imperence," said Mrs. Prig, with a rapid change from banter to ferocity, "what do you mean?"

"Go along with you!" said Mrs. Gamp. "I blush for you."

"You had better blush a little for yourself, while you *are* about

it !" said Mrs. Prig. " You and your Chuffeys ! What, the poor old creetur isn't mad enough, isn't he ? Aha !"

" He'd very soon be mad enough, if you had anything to do with him," said Mrs. Gamp.

" And that's what I was wanted for, is it ?" cried Mrs. Prig, triumphantly. " Yes. But you'll find yourself deceived. I won't go near him. We shall see how you get on without me. I won't have nothink to do with him."

" You never spoke a truer word than that !" said Mrs. Gamp. " Go along with you !"

She was prevented from witnessing the actual retirement of Mrs. Prig from the room, notwithstanding the great desire she had expressed to behold it, by that lady, in her angry withdrawal, coming into contact with the bedstead, and bringing down the previously-mentioned pippins ; three or four of which came rattling on the head of Mrs. Gamp so smartly, that when she recovered from this wooden shower-bath, Mrs. Prig was gone.

DOMBEY AND SON

Of *Dombey and Son*, Dickens said after its completion that he considered that if any of his books " are read years hence, ' Dombey ' will be remembered as among the best of them." That might have been said of most of them. But there is no doubt Dickens was proud of " Dombey," and we know how little Paul appealed to him, and how affected he was when writing his death scene. However, he had a still more favourite book in *David Copperfield*.

His aim in writing *Dombey and Son* was to show the humbling of pride and the awakening of parental love, and the book is a great contribution to the subject. It is as packed full of real characters as any of his books, whilst the story has more dramatic interest than most.

Captain Cuttle is a veritable triumph of creative power, and although the scene we give is pleasant and characteristic, it hardly does justice to the man who made immortal the phrase " when found, make a note of it."

CAPTAIN CUTTLE'S BRIGHT IDEA

Solomon Gills was in financial trouble, and things had gone so far that Walter Gay, when he returned one afternoon, disagreeably to his surprise, found Mr. Brogley the broker sitting in the back parlour of the Little Wooden Midshipman with his hands in his pockets, and his hat hanging up behind the door.

"WELL, Uncle Sol!" said Walter. The old man was sitting ruefully on the opposite side of the table, with his spectacles over his eyes, for a wonder, instead of on his forehead. "How are you now?"

Solomon shook his head, and waved one hand towards the broker, as introducing him.

"Is there anything the matter?" asked Walter, with a catching in his breath.

"No, no. There's nothing the matter," said Mr. Brogley. "Don't let it put you out of the way."

Walter looked from the broker to his uncle in mute amazement.

"The fact is," said Mr. Brogley, "there's a little payment on a bond debt—three hundred and seventy odd, over due: and I'm in possession."

"In possession!" cried Walter, looking round at the shop.

"Ah!" said Mr. Brogley, in confidential assent, and nodding his head as if he would urge the advisability of their all being comfortable together. "It's an execution. That's what it is. Don't let it put you out of the way. I come myself, because of keeping it quiet and sociable. You know me. It's quite private."

"Uncle Sol!" faltered Walter.

"Wally, my boy," returned his uncle. "It's the first time. Such a calamity never happened to me before. I'm an old man to begin." Pushing up his spectacles again (for they were useless any longer to conceal his emotion), he covered his face with his hand, and sobbed aloud, and his tears fell down upon his coffee-coloured waistcoat.

" Uncle Sol ! Pray ! oh don't !" exclaimed Walter, who really felt a thrill of terror in seeing the old man weep. " For God's sake don't do that. Mr. Brogley, what shall I do ?"

" *I* should recommend you looking up a friend or so," said Mr. Brogley, " and talking it over."

" To be sure !" cried Walter, catching at anything. " Certainly ! Thankee. Captain Cuttle's the man, Uncle. Wait till I run to Captain Cuttle. Keep your eye upon my uncle, will you, Mr. Brogley, and make him as comfortable as you can while I am gone ? Don't despair, Uncle Sol. Try and keep a good heart, there's a dear fellow !"

Saying this with great fervour, and disregarding the old man's broken remonstrances, Walter dashed out of the shop again as hard as he could go ; and, having hurried round to the office to excuse himself on the plea of his uncle's sudden illness, set off, full speed, for Captain Cuttle's residence.

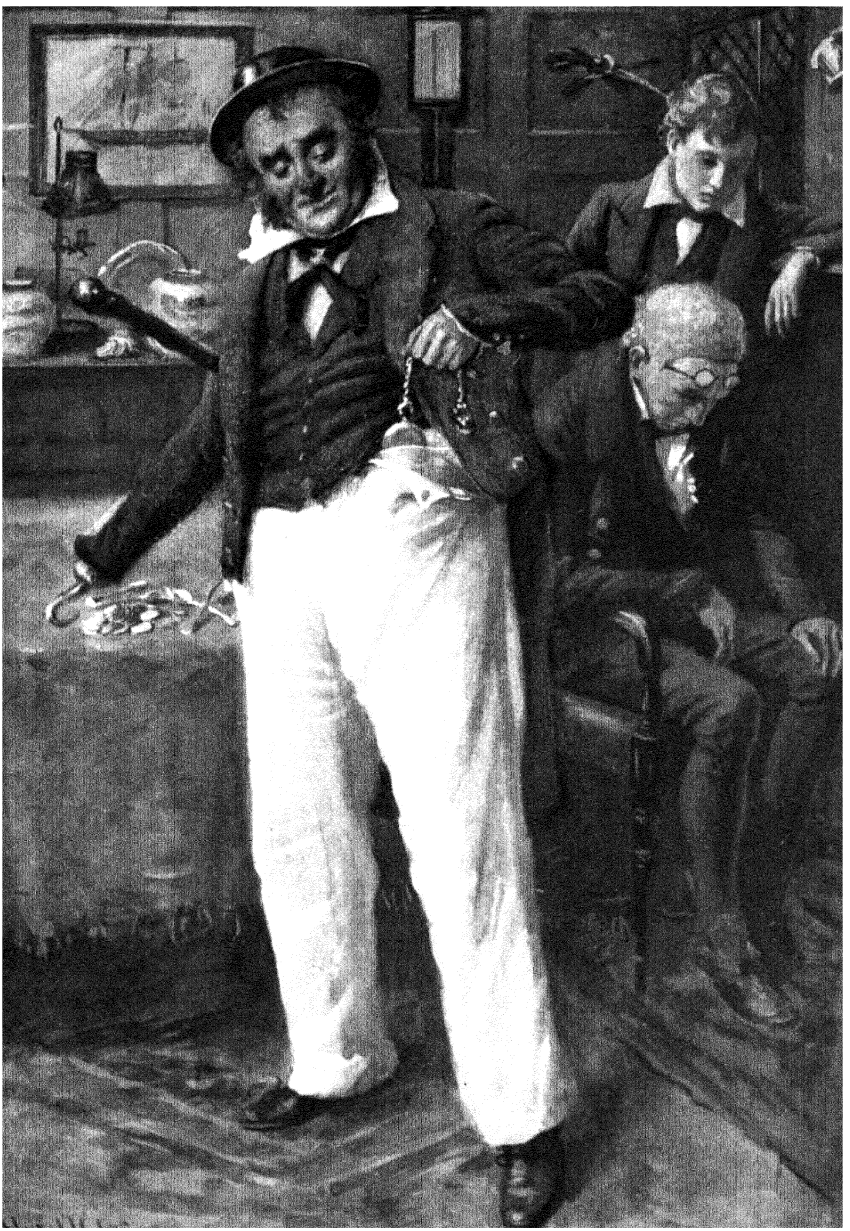
* * * * *

Walter, who had by this time recovered his breath, and lost his spirits—or such temporary spirits as his rapid journey had given him—looked at his questioner for a moment, said " Oh, Captain Cuttle !" and burst into tears.

No words can describe the Captain's consternation at this sight. Mrs. MacStinger faded into nothing before it. He dropped the potato and the fork—and would have dropped the knife too if he could—and sat gazing at the boy, as if he expected to hear next moment that a gulf had opened in the City, which had swallowed up his old friend, coffee-coloured suit, buttons, chronometer, spectacles, and all.

But when Walter told him what was really the matter, Captain Cuttle, after a moment's reflection, started up into full activity. He emptied out of a little tin canister on the top shelf of the cupboard, his whole stock of ready money (amounting to thirteen pounds and half-a-crown), which he transferred to one of the pockets of his square blue coat ; further enriched that repository with the

CAPTAIN CUTTLE'S BRIGHT IDEA



contents of his plate chest, consisting of two withered atomies of tea-spoons, and an obsolete pair of knock-knee'd sugar-tongs; pulled up his immense double-cased silver watch from the depths in which it reposed, to assure himself that that valuable was sound and whole; re-attached the hook to his right wrist; and seizing the stick covered over with nobs, bade Walter come along.

* * * * *

"Uncle much hove down, Wal'r?" inquired the Captain, as they were walking along.

"I am afraid so. If you had seen him this morning, you would never have forgotten it."

"Walk fast, Wal'r, my lad," returned the Captain, mending his pace; "and walk the same all the days of your life. Overhaul the catechism for that advice, and keep it!"

The Captain was too busy with his own thoughts of Solomon Gills, mingled perhaps with some reflections on his late escape from Mrs. MacStinger, to offer any further quotations on the way for Walter's moral improvement. They interchanged no other word until they arrived at old Sol's door, where the unfortunate wooden midshipman, with his instrument at his eye, seemed to be surveying the whole horizon in search of some friend to help him out of his difficulty.

"Gills!" said the Captain, hurrying into the back parlour, and taking him by the hand quite tenderly. "Lay your head well to the wind, and we'll fight through it. All you've got to do," said the Captain, with the solemnity of a man who was delivering himself of one of the most precious practical tenets ever discovered by human wisdom, "is to lay your head well to the wind, and we'll fight through it!"

Old Sol returned the pressure of his hand, and thanked him.

Captain Cuttle, then, with a gravity suitable to the nature of the occasion, put down upon the table the two tea-spoons and the sugar-tongs, the silver watch, and the ready money; and asked Mr. Brogley, the broker, what the damage was.

"Come! What do you make of it?" said Captain Cuttle.

"Well, Lord help you!" returned the broker; "you don't suppose that property's of any use, do you?"

"Why not?" inquired the Captain.

"Why? The amount's three hundred and seventy, odd," replied the broker.

"Never mind," returned the Captain, though he was evidently dismayed by the figures: "all's fish that comes to your net, I suppose?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Brogley. "But sprats an't whales, you know."

The philosophy of this observation seemed to strike the Captain. He ruminated for a minute; eyeing the broker, meanwhile, as a deep genius; and then called the instrument-maker aside.

"Gills," said Captain Cuttle, "what's the bearings of this business? Who's the creditor?"

"Hush!" returned the old man. "Come away. Don't speak before Wally. It's a matter of security for Wally's father—an old bond. I've paid a good deal of it, Ned, but the times are so bad with me that I can't do more just now. I've foreseen it, but I couldn't help it. Not a word before Wally for all the world."

"You've got *some* money, haven't you?" whispered the Captain.

"Yes, yes—oh yes—I've got some," returned old Sol, first putting his hands into his empty pockets, and then squeezing his Welsh wig between them, as if he thought he might wring some gold out of it; "but I—the little I have got, isn't convertible, Ned; it can't be got at. I have been trying to do something with it for Wally, and I'm old fashioned, and behind the time. It's here and there, and –and, in short, it's as good as nowhere," said the old man, looking in bewilderment about him.

He had so much the air of a half-witted person who had been hiding his money in a variety of places, and had forgotten where,

that the Captain followed his eyes, not without a faint hope that he might remember some few hundred pounds concealed up the chimney, or down in the cellar. But Solomon Gills knew better than that.

"I'm behind the time altogether, my dear Ned," said Sol, in resigned despair, "a long way. It's no use my lagging on so far behind it. The stock had better be sold—it's worth more than this debt—and I had better go and die somewhere, on the balance. I haven't any energy left. I don't understand things. This had better be the end of it. Let 'em sell the stock and take *him* down," said the old man, pointing feebly to the wooden midshipman, "and let us both be broken up together."

"And what d'ye mean to do with Wal'r?" said the Captain. "There, there! Sit ye down, Gills, sit ye down, and let me think o' this. If I warn't a man on a small annuity, that was large enough till to-day, I hadn't need to think of it. But you only lay your head well to the wind," said the Captain, again administering that unanswerable piece of consolation, "and you're all right!"

Old Sol thanked him from his heart, and went and laid it against the back parlour fire-place instead.

Captain Cuttle walked up and down the shop for some time, cogitating profoundly, and bringing his bushy black eyebrows to bear so heavily on his nose, like clouds setting on a mountain, that Walter was afraid to offer any interruption to the current of his reflections. Mr. Brogley, who was averse to being any constraint upon the party, and who had an ingenious cast of mind, went, softly whistling, among the stockware; rattling the glasses, shaking compasses as if they were physic, catching up keys with loadstones, looking through telescopes, endeavouring to make himself acquainted with the use of the globes, setting parallel rulers astride on to his nose, and amusing himself with other philosophical transactions.

"Wal'r?" said the Captain at last. "I've got it."

"Have you, Captain Cuttle?" cried Walter, with great animation.

"Come this way, my lad," said the Captain. "The stock's

one security. I'm another. Your governor's the man to advance the money."

"Mr. Dombey!" faltered Walter.

The Captain nodded gravely. "Look at him," he said. "Look at Gills. If they was to sell off these things now, he'd die of it. You know he would. We mustn't leave a stone unturned—and there's a stone for you."

"A stone!—Mr. Dombey!" faltered Walter.

"You run round to the office, first of all, and see if he's there," said Captain Cuttle, clapping him on the back. "Quick!"

Walter felt he must not dispute the command—a glance at his uncle would have determined him if he had felt otherwise—and disappeared to execute it. He soon returned, out of breath, to say that Mr. Dombey was not there. It was Saturday, and he had gone to Brighton.

"I tell you what, Wal'r!" said the Captain, who seemed to have prepared himself for this contingency in his absence. "We'll go to Brighton. I'll back you, my boy. I'll back you, Wal'r. We'll go to Brighton by the afternoon's coach."

If the application must be made to Mr. Dombey at all, which was awful to think of, Walter felt that he would rather prefer it alone and unassisted, than backed by the personal influence of Captain Cuttle, to which he hardly thought Mr. Dombey would attach much weight. But as the Captain appeared to be of quite another opinion, and was bent upon it, and as his friendship was too zealous and serious to be trifled with by one so much younger than himself, he forbore to hint the least objection. Cuttle, therefore, taking a hurried leave of Solomon Gills, and returning the ready money, the teaspoons, the sugar-tongs, and the silver watch, to his pocket—with a view, as Walter thought, with horror, to making a gorgeous impression on Mr. Dombey—bore him off to the coach-office, without a minute's delay, and repeatedly assured him, on the road, that he would stick by him to the last.

DAVID COPPERFIELD

"OF all my books, I like this the best. It will be easily believed that I am a fond parent to every child of my fancy, and that no one can ever love that family as dearly as I love them; but, like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favourite child, and his name is David Copperfield."

So wrote Dickens in the preface to the original edition, and his own choice is shared by thousands of his readers. The book is in many respects the story of Dickens's own life up to a certain period, and the reality of it has stamped it as one of the first half-dozen novels in the language.

Full as it is of incident, whimsicality, humour, pathos and adventure, the outstanding features of the book are its groups of characters, all of whom become staunch friends wherever his books are read.

The four incidents following, deal with different periods of David's life, associated with Little Em'ly, Mr. Micawber, Uriah Heep, and many others—all old acquaintances.

DAVID AND LITTLE EM'LY

David Copperfield goes to stay with Daniel Peggotty, and is driven from his home to the inn at Yarmouth in Barkis's carrier's cart and met there by Ham, who conducts him to Peggotty's old boat-house on Yarmouth beach.

"YON'S our house, Mas'r Davy!"

I looked in all directions, as far as I could stare over the wilderness, and away at the sea, and away at the river, but no house could *I* make out. There was a black barge, or some other kind of superannuated boat, not far off, high and dry on the ground, with an iron funnel sticking out of it for a chimney and smoking very cosily; but nothing else in the way of a habitation that was visible to *me*.

"That's not it?" said I. "That ship-looking thing?"

"That's it, Mas'r Davy," returned Ham.

If it had been Aladdin's palace, roc's egg and all, I suppose I could not have been more charmed with the romantic idea of living in it. There was a delightful door cut in the side, and it was roofed in, and there were little windows in it; but the wonderful charm of it was, that it was a real boat which had no doubt been upon the water hundreds of times, and which had never been intended to be lived in, on dry land. That was the captivation of it to me. If it had ever been meant to be lived in, I might have thought it small, or inconvenient, or lonely; but never having been designed for any such use, it became a perfect abode.

* * * * *

(David went to bed in his little room and slept soundly until the morning. Almost as soon as the sun shone on the oyster-shell frame of the mirror in front of him, he was out of bed, and out with little Em'ly, picking up stones upon the beach.)

"You're quite a sailor, I suppose?" I said to Em'ly. I don't

DAVID AND LITTLE EM'LY

know that I supposed anything of the kind, but I felt it an act of gallantry to say something; and a shining sail close to us made such a pretty little image of itself, at the moment, in her bright eye, that it came into my head to say this.

"No," replied Em'ly, shaking her head, "I'm afraid of the sea."

"Afraid!" I said, with a becoming air of boldness, and looking very big at the mighty ocean. "*I* an't!"

"Ah! but it's cruel," said Em'ly. "I have seen it very cruel to some of our men. I have seen it tear a boat as big as our house all to pieces."

"I hope it wasn't the boat that——"

"That father was drownded in?" said Em'ly. "No. Not that one, I never see that boat."

"Nor him?" I asked her.

Little Em'ly shook her head. "Not to remember?"

* * * * *

"Besides," said Em'ly, as she looked about for shells and pebbles, "your father was a gentleman and your mother is a lady; and my father was a fisherman and my mother was a fisherman's daughter, and my uncle Dan is a fisherman."

"Dan is Mr. Peggotty, is he?" said I.

"Uncle Dan—yonder," answered Em'ly, nodding at the boat-house.

"Yes. I mean him. He must be very good, I should think?"

"Good?" said Em'ly. "If I was ever to be a lady, I'd give him a sky-blue coat with diamond buttons, nankeen trousers, a red velvet waistcoat, a cocked hat, a large gold watch, a silver pipe, and a box of money."

I said I had no doubt that Mr. Peggotty well deserved these treasures. I must acknowledge that I felt it difficult to picture him quite at his ease in the raiment proposed for him by his grateful little niece, and that I was particularly doubtful of the policy of the cocked hat; but I kept these sentiments to myself.

Little Em'ly had stopped and looked up at the sky in her

enumeration of these articles, as if they were a glorious vision. We went on again, picking up shells and pebbles.

" You would like to be a lady ?" I said.

Emily looked at me, and laughed and nodded " yes."

" I should like it very much. We would all be gentlefolks together, then. Me, and uncle, and Ham, and Mrs. Gummidge. We wouldn't mind then, when there come stormy weather.—Not for our own sakes, I mean. We would for the poor fishermen's to be sure, and we'd help 'em with money when they come to any hurt."

This seemed to me to be a very satisfactory, and therefore not at all improbable, picture. I expressed my pleasure in the contemplation of it, and little Em'ly was emboldened to say, shyly,

" Don't you think you are afraid of the sea, now ?"

It was quiet enough to reassure me, but I have no doubt if I had seen a moderately large wave come tumbling in, I should have taken to my heels, with an awful recollection of her drowned relations. However, I said " No," and I added, " You don't seem to be, either, though you say you are ;"—for she was walking much too near the brink of a sort of old jetty or wooden causeway we had strolled upon and I was afraid of her falling over.

" I'm not afraid in this way," said little Em'ly. " But I wake when it blows, and tremble to think of Uncle Dan and Ham, and believe I hear 'em crying out for help. That's why I should like so much to be a lady. But I'm not afraid in this way. Not a bit. Look here !"

She started from my side, and ran along a jagged timber which protruded from the place we stood upon, and overhung the deep water at some height, without the least defence. The incident is so impressed on my remembrance, that if I were a draughtsman I could draw its form here, I dare say, accurately as it was that day, and little Em'ly springing forward to her destruction (as it appeared to me), with a look that I have never forgotten, directed far out to sea.

The light, bold, fluttering little figure turned and came back

PEGGOTTY AND LITTLE EM'LY

safe to me, and I soon laughed at my fears, and at the cry I had uttered ; fruitlessly in any case, for there was no one near.

* * * * *

We strolled a long way, and loaded ourselves with things that we thought curious, and put some stranded starfish carefully back into the water—I hardly know enough of the race at this moment to be quite certain whether they had reason to feel obliged to us for doing so, or the reverse—and then made our way home to Mr. Peggotty's dwelling. We stopped under the lee of the lobster-outhouse to exchange an innocent kiss, and went in to breakfast glowing with health and pleasure.

" Like two young mavishes," Mr. Peggotty said. I knew this meant, in our local dialect, like two young thrushes, and received it as a compliment.

Of course I was in love with little Em'ly. I am sure I loved that baby quite as truly, quite as tenderly, with greater purity and more disinterestedness, than can enter into the best love of a later time of life, high and ennobling as it is. I am sure my fancy raised up something round that blue-eyed mite of a child, which etherealised, and made a very angel of her. If, any sunny forenoon, she had spread a little pair of wings, and flown away before my eyes, I don't think I should have regarded it as much more than I had had reason to expect.

We used to walk about that dim old flat at Yarmouth in a loving manner, hours and hours. The days sported by us, as if Time had not grown up himself yet, but were a child too, and always at play. I told Em'ly I adored her, and that unless she confessed she adored me I should be reduced to the necessity of killing myself with a sword. She said she did, and I have no doubt she did.

As to any sense of inequality, or youthfulness, or other difficulty in our way, little Em'ly and I had no such trouble, because we had no future. We made no more provision for growing older, than we did for growing younger.

DAVID COPPERFIELD STARTS FOR SCHOOL

Arrangements having been made for David Copperfield to leave home for school near London, he started one morning in Barkis the carrier's cart for Yarmouth, there to catch the coach for London. The cart duly arrived at the door, and his box was taken out and lifted into it.

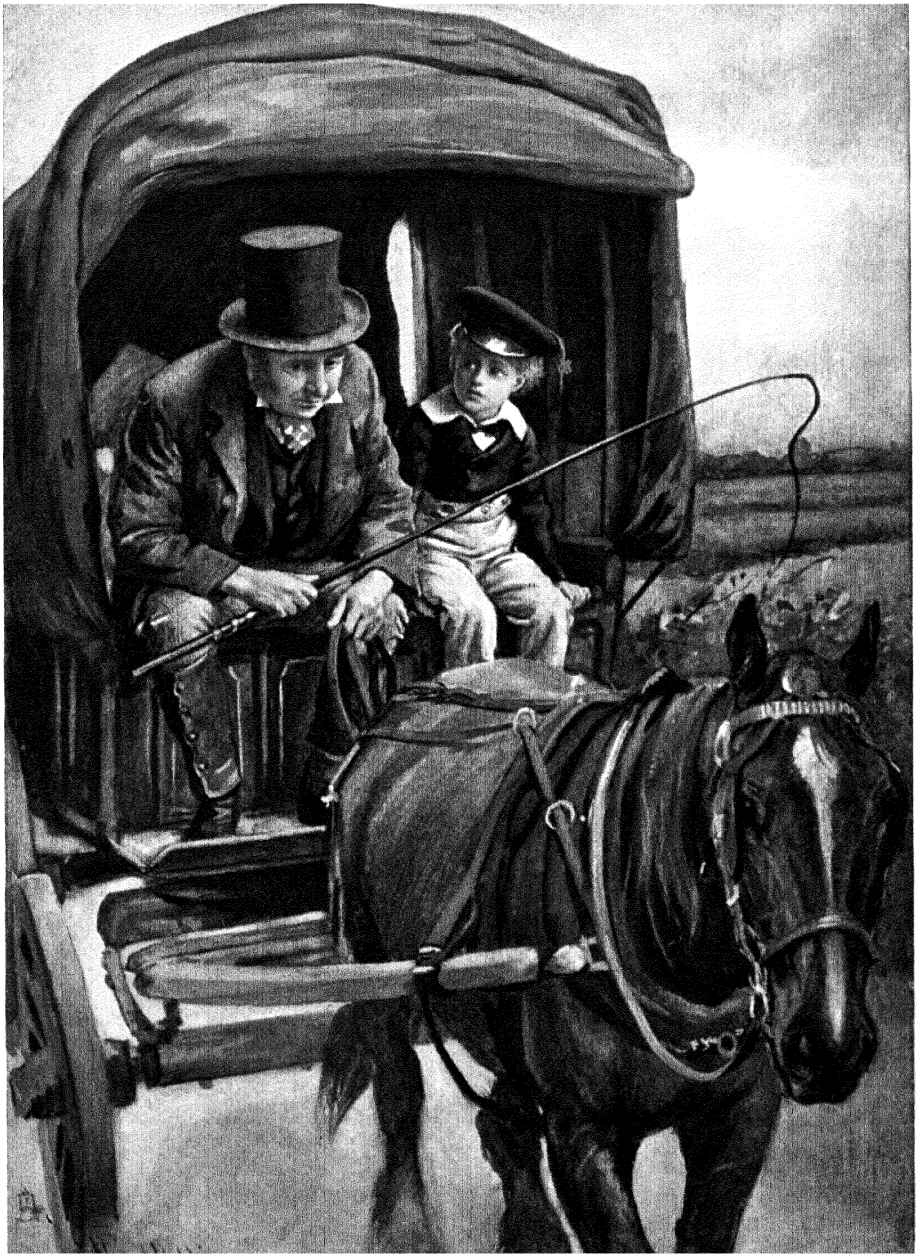
WE might have gone about half a mile, and my pocket-handkerchief was quite wet through, when the carrier stopped short.

Looking out to ascertain for what, I saw, to my amazement, Peggotty burst from a hedge and climb into the cart. She took me in both her arms, and squeezed me to her stays until the pressure on my nose was extremely painful, though I never thought of that till afterwards when I found it very tender. Not a single word did Peggotty speak. Releasing one of her arms, she put it down in her pocket to the elbow, and brought out some paper bags of cakes which she crammed into my pockets, and a purse which she put into my hand, but not one word did she say. After another and a final squeeze with both arms, she got down from the cart and ran away; and my belief is, and has always been, without a solitary button on her gown. I picked up one, of several that were rolling about, and treasured it as a keepsake for a long time.

The carrier looked at me, as if to inquire if she were coming back. I shook my head, and said I thought not. "Then, come up," said the carrier to the lazy horse; who came up accordingly.

Having by this time cried as much as I possibly could, I began to think it was of no use crying any more, especially as neither Roderick Random, nor that Captain in the Royal British Navy had ever cried, that I could remember, in trying situations. The carrier seeing me in this resolution, proposed that my pocket-handkerchief should be spread upon the horse's back to dry. I

BARKIS DRIVES DAVID TO YARMOUTH



thanked him, and assented ; and particularly small it looked, under those circumstances.

I had now leisure to examine the purse. It was a stiff leather purse, with a snap, and had three bright shillings in it, which Peggotty had evidently polished up with whitening, for my greater delight. But its most precious contents were two half-crowns folded together in a bit of paper, on which was written, in my mother's hand, " For Davy. With my love." I was so overcome by this, that I asked the carrier to be so good as to reach me my pocket-handkerchief again ; but he said he thought I had better do without it, and I thought I really had, so I wiped my eyes on my sleeve and stopped myself.

For good, too ; though, in consequence of my previous emotions I was still occasionally seized with a stormy sob. After we had jogged on for some little time, I asked the carrier if he was going all the way ?

" All the way where ?" inquired the carrier.

" There," I said.

" Where's there ?" inquired the carrier.

" Near London," I said.

" Why that horse," said the carrier, jerking the rein to point him out, " would be deader than pork afore he got over half the ground."

" Are you only going to Yarmouth, then ? " I asked.

" That's about it," said the carrier. " And there I shall take you to the stage-cutch, and the stage-cutch that 'll take you to—wherever it is."

As this was a great deal for the carrier (whose name was Mr. Barkis) to say—he being of a phlegmatic temperament, and not at all conversational—I offered him a cake as a mark of attention, which he ate at one gulp, exactly like an elephant, and which made no more impression on his big face than it would have done on an elephant's.

* * * * *

Mr. Barkis relapsed into perfect silence; and I, feeling quite worn out by all that had happened lately, lay down on a sack in the cart and fell asleep. I slept soundly until we got to Yarmouth: which was so entirely new and strange to me in the inn-yard to which we drove, that I at once abandoned a latent hope I had had of meeting with some of Mr. Peggotty's family there, perhaps even with little Em'ly herself.

The coach was in the yard, shining very much all over, but without any horses to it as yet; and it looked in that state as if nothing was more unlikely than its ever going to London. I was thinking this, and wondering what would ultimately become of my box, which Mr. Barkis had put down on the yard-pavement by the pole (he having driven up the yard to turn his cart), and also what would ultimately become of me, when a lady looked out of a bow-window where some fowls and joints of meat were hanging up, and said:

"Is that the little gentleman from Blunderstone?"

"Yes, ma'am," I said.

"What name?" inquired the lady.

"Copperfield, ma'am," I said.

"That won't do," returned the lady. "Nobody's dinner is paid for here, in that name."

"Is it Murdstone, ma'am?" I said.

"If you're Master Murdstone," said the lady, "why do you go and give another name, first?"

I explained to the lady how it was, who then rang a bell, and called out, "William! show the coffee-room!" upon which a waiter came running out of a kitchen on the opposite side of the yard to show it, and seemed a good deal surprised when he was only to show it to me.

It was a large long room with some large maps in it. I doubt if I could have felt much stranger if the maps had been real foreign countries, and I cast away in the middle of them. I felt it was taking a liberty to sit down, with my cap in my hand, on the corner

of the chair nearest the door ; and when the waiter laid a cloth on purpose for me, and put a set of casters on it, I think I must have turned red all over with modesty.

He brought me some chops and vegetables, and took the covers off in such a bouncing manner that I was afraid I must have given him some offence. But he greatly relieved my mind by putting a chair for me at the table, and saying very affably, " Now, six-foot ! come on !"

I thanked him, and took my seat at the board ; but found it extremely difficult to handle my knife and fork with anything like dexterity, or to avoid splashing myself with the gravy, while he was standing opposite, staring so hard, and making me blush in the most dreadful manner every time I caught his eye. After watching me into the second chop, he said :

" There's half a pint of ale for you. Will you have it now ?"

I thanked him and said " Yes." Upon which he poured it out of a jug into a large tumbler, and held it up against the light, and made it look beautiful.

" My eye !" he said. " It seems a good deal, don't it ?"

" It does seem a good deal," I answered with a smile. For it was quite delightful to me to find him so pleasant. He was a twinkling-eyed, pimple-faced man, with his hair standing upright all over his head ; and as he stood with one arm a-kimbo, holding up the glass to the light with the other hand, he looked quite friendly.

" There was a gentleman here yesterday," he said—" a stout gentleman, by the name of Topsawyer—perhaps you know him ?"

" No," I said, " I don't think——"

" In breeches and gaiters, broad-brimmed hat, grey coat, speckled choaker," said the waiter.

" No," I said bashfully, " I haven't the pleasure——"

" He came in here," said the waiter, looking at the light through the tumbler, " ordered a glass of this ale—*would* order it—I told him not—drank it, and fell dead. It was too old for him. It oughtn't to be drawn ; that's the fact."

I was very much shocked to hear of this melancholy accident, and said I thought I had better have some water.

"Why you see," said the waiter, still looking at the light through the tumbler, with one of his eyes shut up, "our people don't like things being ordered and left. It offends 'em. But *I'll* drink it, if you like. I'm used to it, and use is everything. I don't think it 'll hurt me, if I throw my head back, and take it off quick. Shall I ?"

I replied that he would much oblige me by drinking it, if he thought he could do it safely, but by no means otherwise. When he did throw his head back, and take it off quick, I had a horrible fear, I confess, of seeing him meet the fate of the lamented Mr. Topsawyer, and fall lifeless on the carpet. But it didn't hurt him. On the contrary, I thought he seemed the fresher for it.

"What have we got here ?" he said, putting a fork into my dish. "Not chops ?"

"Chops," I said.

"Lord bless my soul !" he exclaimed. "I didn't know they were chops. Why a chop's the very thing to take off the bad effects of that beer ! Ain't it lucky ?"

So he took a chop by the bone in one hand, and a potato in the other, and ate away with a very good appetite, to my extreme satisfaction. He afterwards took another chop and another potato ; and after that another chop and another potato. When he had done, he brought me a pudding, and having set it before me, seemed to ruminate, and to become absent in his mind for some moments.

"How's the pie ?" he said, rousing himself.

"It's a pudding," I made answer.

"Pudding !" he exclaimed. "Why, bless me, so it is ! What !" looking at it nearer. "You don't mean to say it's a batter-pudding ?"

"Yes, it is indeed."

"Why, a batter-pudding," he said, taking up a table-spoon,

DAVID AND THE FRIENDLY WAITER

" is my favourite pudding! Ain't that lucky? Come on, little 'un, and let's see who'll get most."

The waiter certainly got most. He entreated me more than once to come in and win, but what with his table-spoon to my tea-spoon, his dispatch to my dispatch, and his appetite to my appetite, I was left far behind at the first mouthful, and had no chance with him. I never saw anyone enjoy a pudding so much, I think; and he laughed, when it was all gone, as if his enjoyment of it lasted still.

Finding him so very friendly and companionable, it was then that I asked for the pen and ink and paper, to write to Peggotty. He not only brought it immediately, but was good enough to look over me while I wrote the letter. When I had finished it, he asked me where I was going to school.

I said, " Near London," which was all I knew.

" Oh! my eye!" he said, looking very low-spirited, " I am sorry for that."

" Why?" I asked him.

" Oh, Lord!" he said, shaking his head, " that's the school where they broke the boy's ribs—two ribs—a little boy he was. I should say he was—let me see—how old are you, about?"

I told him between eight and nine.

" That's just his age," he said. " He was eight years and six months old when they broke his first rib; eight years and eight months old when they broke his second, and did for him."

I could not disguise from myself, or from the waiter, that this was an uncomfortable coincidence, and inquired how it was done. His answer was not cheering to my spirits, for it consisted of two dismal words, " With whopping."

The blowing of the coach-horn in the yard was a seasonable diversion, which made me get up and hesitatingly inquire, in the mingled pride and diffidence of having a purse (which I took out of my pocket), if there were anything to pay.

" There's a sheet of letter-paper," he returned. " Did you ever buy a sheet of letter-paper?"

I could not remember that I ever had.

"It's dear," he said, "on account of the duty. Threepence. That's the way we're taxed in this country. There's nothing else, except the waiter. Never mind the ink. *I* lose by that."

"What should you—what should I—how much ought I to—what would it be right to pay the waiter, if you please?" I stammered, blushing.

"If I hadn't a family, and that family hadn't the cowpock," said the waiter, "I wouldn't take a sixpence. If I didn't support a aged pairint, and a lovely sister,"—here the waiter was greatly agitated—"I wouldn't take a farthing. If I had a good place, and was well treated here, I should beg acceptance of a trifle, instead of taking of it. But I live on broken wittles—and I sleep on the coals"—here the waiter burst into tears.

I was very much concerned for his misfortunes, and felt that any recognition short of ninepence would be mere brutality and hardness of heart. Therefore I gave him one of my three bright shillings, which he received with much humility and veneration, and spun up with his thumb, directly afterwards, to try the goodness of.

DAVID IS LODGED WITH MR. MICAWBER

David Copperfield in due course is found employment in Murdstone and Grinby's warehouse down in Blackfriars, and lodgings are provided for him in Mr. Micawber's house.

THE counting-house clock was at half-past twelve, and there was general preparation for going to dinner, when Mr. Quinion tapped at the counting-house window, and beckoned to me to go in. I went in, and found there a stoutish, middle-aged person, in a brown surtout and black tights and shoes, with no more hair upon his head (which was a large one, and very shining) than there is upon an

egg, and with a very extensive face, which he turned full upon me. His clothes were shabby, but he had an imposing shirt-collar on. He carried a jaunty sort of a stick, with a large pair of rusty tassels to it; and a quizzing-glass hung outside his coat,—for ornament, I afterwards found, as he very seldom looked through it, and couldn't see anything when he did.

"This," said Mr. Quinion, in allusion to myself, "is he."

"This," said the stranger, with a certain condescending roll in his voice, and a certain indescribable air of doing something genteel, which impressed me very much, "is Master Copperfield. I hope I see you well, sir?"

I said I was very well, and hoped he was. I was sufficiently ill at ease, Heaven knows; but it was not in my nature to complain much at that time of my life, so I said I was very well, and hoped he was.

"I am," said the stranger, "thank Heaven, quite well. I have received a letter from Mr. Murdstone, in which he mentions that he would desire me to receive into an apartment in the rear of my house, which is at present unoccupied—and is, in short, to be let as a—in short," said the stranger, with a smile and in a burst of confidence, "as a bedroom—the young beginner whom I have now the pleasure to—" and the stranger waved his hand, and settled his chin in his shirt-collar.

"This is Mr. Micawber," said Mr. Quinion to me.

"Ahem!" said the stranger, "that is my name."

"Mr. Micawber," said Mr. Quinion, "is known to Mr. Murdstone. He takes orders for us on commission, when he can get any. He has been written to by Mr. Murdstone, on the subject of your lodgings, and he will receive you as a lodger."

"My address," said Mr. Micawber, "is Windsor Terrace, City Road. I—in short," said Mr. Micawber, with the same genteel air, and in another burst of confidence—"I live there."

I made him a bow.

"Under the impression," said Mr. Micawber, "that your

peregrinations in this metropolis have not as yet been extensive, and that you might have some difficulty in penetrating the arcana of the Modern Babylon in the direction of the City Road—in short," said Mr. Micawber, in another burst of confidence, " that you might lose yourself—I shall be happy to call this evening, and instal you in the knowledge of the nearest way."

I thanked him with all my heart, for it was friendly in him to offer to take that trouble.

" At what hour," said Mr. Micawber, " shall I——"

" At about eight," said Mr. Quinion.

" At about eight," said Mr. Micawber. " I beg to wish you good day, Mr. Quinion. I will intrude no longer."

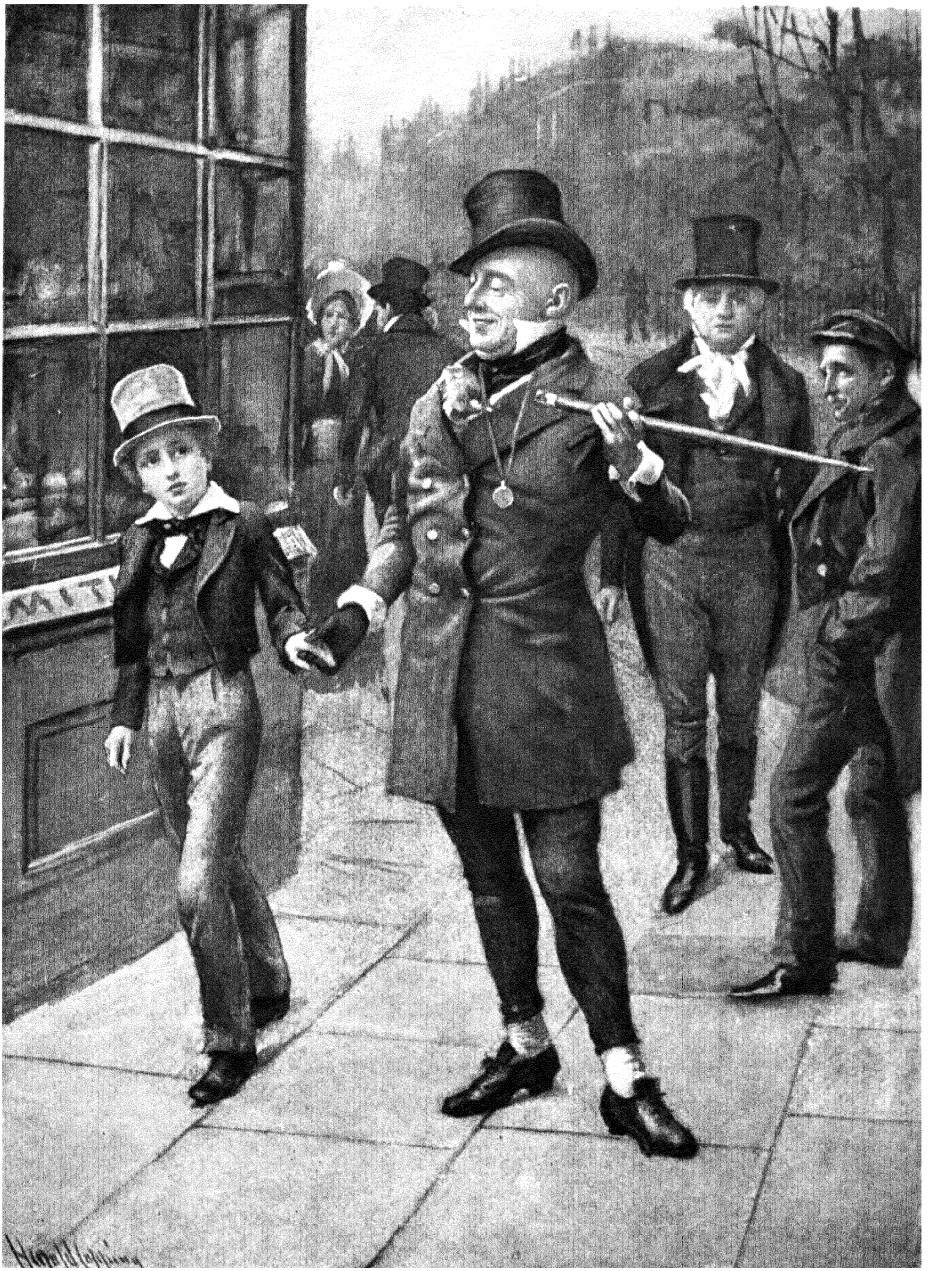
So he put on his hat, and went out with his cane under his arm : very upright, and humming a tune when he was clear of the counting-house.

Mr. Quinion then formally engaged me to be as useful as I could in the warehouse of Murdstone and Grinby, at a salary, I think, of six shillings a week. I am not clear whether it was six or seven. I am inclined to believe, from my uncertainty on this head, that it was six at first and seven afterwards. He paid me a week down (from his own pocket, I believe), and I gave Mealy sixpence out of it to get my trunk carried to Windsor Terrace at night : it being too heavy for my strength, small as it was. I paid sixpence more for my dinner, which was a meat pie and a turn at a neighbouring pump ; and passed the hour which was allowed for that meal, in walking about the streets.

At the appointed time in the evening, Mr. Micawber reappeared. I washed my hands and face, to do the greater honour to his gentility, and we walked to our house, as I suppose I must now call it, together ; Mr. Micawber impressing the names of streets, and the shapes of corner houses upon me, as we went along, that I might find my way back, easily, in the morning.

Arrived at his house in Windsor Terrace (which I noticed was shabby like himself, but also, like himself, made all the show it

MR MICAWBER CONDUCTS DAVID HOME



could), he presented me to Mrs. Micawber, a thin and faded lady, not at all young.

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My room was at the top of the house, at the back: a close chamber; stencilled all over with an ornament which my young imagination represented as a blue muffin; and very scantily furnished.

DAVID COPPERFIELD AND URIAH HEEP

David Copperfield entered school life again by becoming a scholar at Doctor Strong's at Canterbury. He stayed at Mr. Wickfield's house in the city, and there met Uriah Heep.

"THAT'S a fine fellow!" said Mr. Wickfield. "As long as you are glad to be here, you shall stay here." He shook hands with me upon it, and clapped me on the back; and told me that when I had anything to do at night after Agnes had left us, or when I wished to read for my own pleasure, I was free to come down to his room, if he were there, and if I desired it for company's sake, and to sit with him. I thanked him for his consideration, and, as he went down soon afterwards, and I was not tired, went down too, with a book in my hand, to avail myself, for half-an-hour, of his permission.

But, seeing a light in the little round office, and immediately feeling myself attracted towards Uriah Heep, who had a sort of fascination for me, I went in there instead. I found Uriah reading a great fat book, with such demonstrative attention, that his lank fore-finger followed up every line as he read, and made clammy tracks along the page (or so I fully believed) like a snail.

"You are working late to-night, Uriah," says I.

"Yes, Master Copperfield," says Uriah.

As I was getting on the stool opposite, to talk to him more conveniently, I observed that he had not such a thing as a smile about him, and that he could only widen his mouth and make two

hard creases down his cheeks, one on each side, to stand for one.

"I am not doing office-work, Master Copperfield," said Uriah.

"What work, then?" I asked.

"I am improving my legal knowledge, Master Copperfield," said Uriah. "I am going through Tidd's Practice. Oh, what a writer Mr. Tidd is, Master Copperfield!"

My stool was such a tower of observation, that as I watched him reading on again, after this rapturous exclamation, and following up the lines with his forefinger, I observed that his nostrils, which were thin and pointed, with sharp dints in them, had a singular and most uncomfortable way of expanding and contracting themselves; that they seemed to twinkle instead of his eyes, which hardly ever twinkled at all.

"I suppose you are quite a great lawyer?" I said, after looking at him for some time.

"Me, Master Copperfield?" said Uriah. "Oh, no! I'm a very umble person."

It was no fancy of mine about his hands, I observed; for he frequently ground the palms against each other as if to squeeze them dry and warm, besides often wiping them, in a stealthy way, on his pocket-handkerchief.

"I am well aware that I am the umblest person going," said Uriah Heep, modestly; "let the other be where he may. My mother is likewise a very umble person. We live in a umble abode, Master Copperfield, but have much to be thankful for. My father's former calling was umble. He was a sexton."

"What is he now?" I asked.

"He is a partaker of glory at present, Master Copperfield," said Uriah Heep. "But we have much to be thankful for. How much have I to be thankful for in living with Mr. Wickfield!"

I asked Uriah if he had been with Mr. Wickfield long?

"I have been with him going on four year, Master Copperfield," said Uriah, shutting up his book, after carefully marking the place where he had left off. "Since a year after my father's death. How

much have I to be thankful for, in that! How much have I to be thankful for, in Mr. Wickfield's kind intention to give me my articles, which would otherwise not lay within the umble means of mother and self!"

"Then, when your articled time is over, you'll be a regular lawyer, I suppose?" said I.

"With the blessing of Providence, Master Copperfield," returned Uriah.

"Perhaps you'll be a partner in Mr. Wickfield's business, one of these days," I said, to make myself agreeable; "and it will be Wickfield and Heep, or Heep late Wickfield."

"Oh no, Master Copperfield," returned Uriah, shaking his head, "I am much too umble for that!"

He certainly did look uncommonly like the carved face on the beam outside my window, as he sat, in his humility, eyeing me sideways, with his mouth widened, and the creases in his cheeks.

"Mr. Wickfield is a most excellent man, Master Copperfield," said Uriah. "If you have known him long, you know it, I am sure, much better than I can inform you."

I replied that I was certain he was; but that I had not known him long myself, though he was a friend of my aunt's.

"Oh, indeed, Master Copperfield," said Uriah. "Your aunt is a sweet lady, Master Copperfield!"

He had a way of writhing when he wanted to express enthusiasm, which was very ugly; and which diverted my attention from the compliment he had paid my relation, to the snaky twistings of his throat and body.

"A sweet lady, Master Copperfield!" said Uriah Heep. "She has a great admiration for Miss Agnes, Master Copperfield, I believe?"

I said, "Yes," boldly; not that I knew anything about it, Heaven forgive me!

"I hope you have, too, Master Copperfield," said Uriah. "But I am sure you must have."

" Everybody must have," I returned.

" Oh, thank you, Master Copperfield," said Uriah Heep, " for that remark ! It is so true ! Umble as I am, I know it is *so* true ! Oh, thank you, Master Copperfield !"

He writhed himself quite off his stool in the excitement of his feelings, and, being off, began to make arrangements for going home.

" Mother will be expecting me," he said, referring to a pale, inexpressive-faced watch in his pocket, " and getting uneasy ; for though we are very umble, Master Copperfield, we are much attached to one another. If you would come and see us, any afternoon, and take a cup of tea at our lowly dwelling, mother would be as proud of your company as I should be."

I said I should be glad to come.

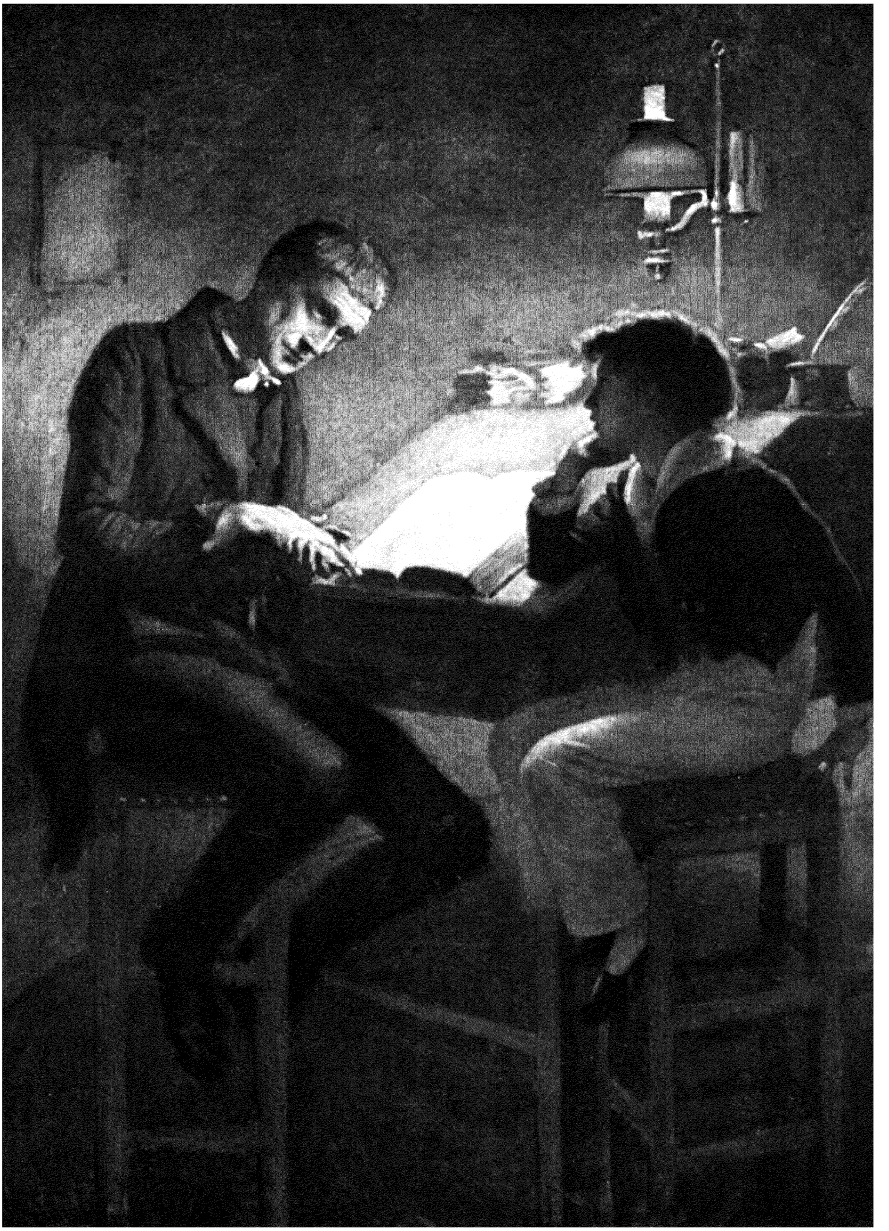
" Thank you, Master Copperfield," returned Uriah, putting his book away upon the shelf.—" I suppose you stop here, some time, Master Copperfield ?"

I said I was going to be brought up there, I believed, as long as I remained at school.

" Oh, indeed !" exclaimed Uriah. " I should think *you* would come into the business at last, Master Copperfield !"

I protested that I had no views of that sort, and that no such scheme was entertained in my behalf by anybody ; but Uriah insisted on blandly replying to all my assurances, " Oh, yes, Master Copperfield, I should think you would, indeed !" and, " Oh, indeed, Master Copperfield, I should think you would, certainly !" over and over again. Being, at last, ready to leave the office for the night, he asked me if it would suit my convenience to have the light put out ; and on my answering " Yes," instantly extinguished it. After shaking hands with me—his hand felt like a fish, in the dark—he opened the door into the street a very little, and crept out, and shut it, leaving me to grope my way back into the house : which cost me some trouble and a fall over his stool. This was the proximate cause, I suppose, of my dreaming about him, for what appeared to

DAVID COPPERFIELD AND URIAH HEEP



me to be half the night; and dreaming, among other things, that he had launched Mr. Peggotty's house on a piratical expedition, with a black flag at the mast-head, bearing the inscription "Tidd's Practice," under which diabolical ensign he was carrying me and little Em'ly to the Spanish Main, to be drowned.

LITTLE DORRIT

IN *Little Dorrit* Dickens again drew upon his own life for incidents and characters in the same way, although not to the same extent, that he did in *David Copperfield*. The scenes in the Marshalsea Prison are the outcome of the days when his father was there, and it may be said old Dorrit has many characteristics of his parent. Flora Finching was drawn from an old friend, and Clennam moulded a good deal upon Dickens himself.

The story was directed against two systems that wanted reforming: the English debtors' prison, and the red-tape system in government offices. The former has disappeared, but the latter we still have with us. The scene is laid in London and on the Continent.

The one incident Mr. Copping illustrates is that when Arthur Clennam calls at the Marshalsea to communicate the good news of Little Dorrit's father's inheritance of a great estate, which would free him and his family from the prison walls, and henceforth live in luxury.

LITTLE DORRIT'S FATHER INHERITS A FORTUNE

MR. PANCKS, in discharge of his compact with Clennam, revealed to him the whole of his gipsy story, and told him Little Dorrit's fortune. Her father was heir-at-law to a great estate that had long lain unknown of, unclaimed, and accumulating. His right was now clear, nothing interposed in his way, the Marshalsea gates stood open, the Marshalsea walls were down, a few flourishes of his pen, and he was extremely rich.

* * * * *

Clennam, of course, resolved to go direct to Mr. Casby's. He dressed and got out so quickly, that he found himself at the corner of the patriarchal street nearly an hour before her time; but he was not sorry to have the opportunity of calming himself with a leisurely walk.

When he returned to the street, and had knocked at the bright brass knocker, he was informed that she had come, and was shown up-stairs to Flora's breakfast-room. Little Dorrit was not there herself, but Flora was, and testified the greatest amazement at seeing him.

* * * * *

Little Dorrit's step was already on the stairs, and in another moment she was at the door. Do what he would to compose his face, he could not convey so much of an ordinary expression into it, but that the moment she saw it she dropped her work, and cried, "Mr. Clennam! What's the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing. That is, no misfortune has happened. I have come to tell you something, but it is a piece of great good-fortune."

"Good-fortune?"

"Wonderful fortune!"

They stood in a window, and her eyes, full of light, were fixed upon his face. He put an arm about her, seeing her likely to sink down. She put a hand upon that arm, partly to rest upon it, and partly so to preserve their relative positions as that her intent look at him should be shaken by no change of attitude in either of them. Her lips seemed to repeat " Wonderful fortune ?" He repeated it again, aloud.

" Dear Little Dorrit ! Your father."

The ice of the pale face broke at the word, and little lights and shoots of expression passed all over it. They were all expressions of pain. Her breath was faint and hurried. Her heart beat fast. He would have clasped the little figure closer, but he saw that the eyes appealed to him not to be moved.

" Your father can be free within this week. He does not know it ; we must go to him from here, to tell him of it. Your father will be free within a few days. Your father will be free within a few hours. Remember we must go to him from here, to tell him of it !"

That brought her back. Her eyes were closing, but they opened again.

" This is not all the good-fortune. This is not all the wonderful good-fortune, my dear Little Dorrit. Shall I tell you more ?"

Her lips shaped " Yes."

" Your father will be no beggar when he is free. He will want for nothing. Shall I tell you more ? Remember ! He knows nothing of it ; we must go to him, from here, to tell him of it ?"

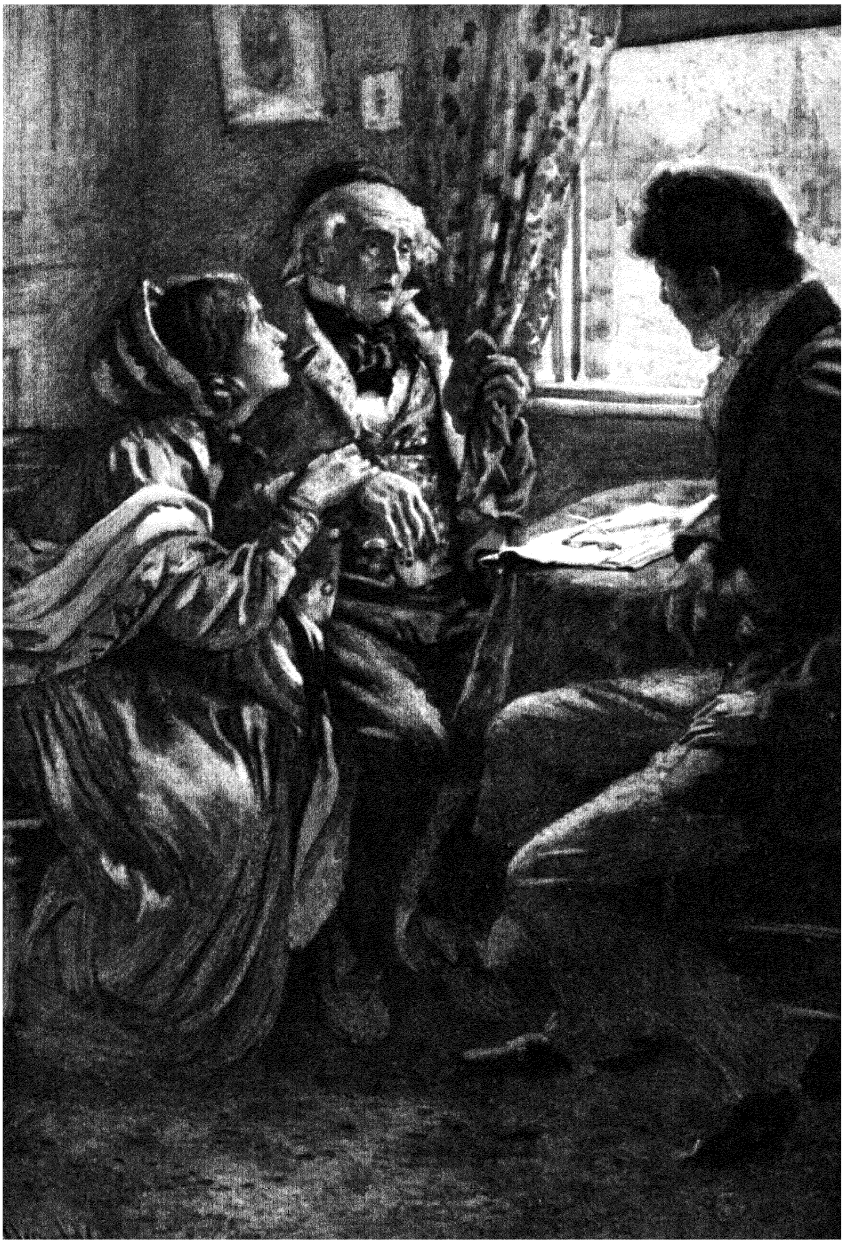
She seemed to entreat him for a little time. He held her in his arm, and, after a pause, bent down his ear to listen.

" Did you ask me to go on ?"

" Yes."

" He will be a rich man. He is a rich man. A great sum of money is waiting to be paid over to him as his inheritance ; you are all henceforth very wealthy. Bravest and best of children, I thank Heaven that you are rewarded !"

ARTHUR CLENNAM TELLS THE GOOD NEWS



As he kissed her, she turned her head towards his shoulder, and raised her arm towards his neck ; cried out " Father ! Father ! Father !" and swooned away.

* * * * *

But, Little Dorrit's solicitude to get to her father, and to carry the joyful tidings to him, and not to leave him in his jail a moment with this happiness in store for him and still unknown to him, did more for her speedy restoration than all the skill and attention on earth could have done. " Come with me to my dear father. Pray come and tell my dear father !" were the first words she said. Her father, her father. She spoke of nothing but him, thought of nothing but him. Kneeling down and pouring out her thankfulness with uplifted hands, her thanks were for her father.

* * * * *

Little Dorrit finally came out of the house with Clennam, and took coach for the Marshalsea.

It was a strangely unreal ride through the old squa'id streets, with a sensation of being raised out of them, into an airy world of wealth and grandeur. When Arthur told her that she would soon ride in her own carriage through very different scenes, when all the familiar experiences would have vanished away, she looked frightened. But, when he substituted her father for herself, and told her how he would ride in his carriage, and how great and grand he would be, her tears of joy and innocent pride fell fast. Seeing that the happiness her mind could realise was all shining upon him, Arthur kept that single figure before her ; and so they rode brightly through the poor streets in the prison neighbourhood, to carry him the great news.

* * * * *

Little Dorrit opened the door from without, and they both entered. He was sitting in his old grey gown, and his old black cap, in the sunlight by the window, reading his newspaper. His glasses were in his hand, and he had just looked round ; surprised at first, no doubt, by her step upon the stairs, not expecting her until night ;

surprised again, by seeing Arthur Clennam in her company. As they came in, the same unwonted look in both of them which had already caught attention in the yard below, struck him. He did not rise or speak, but laid down his glasses and his newspaper on the table beside him, and looked at them with his mouth a little open, and his lips trembling. When Arthur put out his hand, he touched it, but not with his usual state ; and then he turned to his daughter, who had sat down close beside him with her hands upon his shoulder, and looked attentively in her face.

" Father ! I have been made so happy this morning !"

" You have been made so happy, my dear ?"

" By Mr. Clennam, father. He brought me such joyful and wonderful intelligence about you ! If he had not with his great kindness and gentleness, prepared me for it, father—prepared me for it, father—I think I could not have borne it."

Her agitation was exceedingly great, and the tears rolled down her face. He put his hand suddenly to his heart, and looked at Clennam.

" Compose yourself, sir," said Clennam, " and take a little time to think. To think of the brightest and most fortunate accidents of life. We have all heard of great surprises of joy. They are not at an end, sir. They are rare, but not at an end."

" Mr. Clennam ? Not at an end ? Not at an end for——" He touched himself upon the breast, instead of saying " me."

" No," returned Clennam.

" What surprise," he asked, keeping his left hand over his heart, and there stopping in his speech, while with his right hand he put his glasses exactly level on the table : " what such surprise can be in store for me ?"

" Let me answer with another question. Tell me, Mr. Dorrit, what surprise would be the most unlooked for and the most acceptable to you. Do not be afraid to imagine it, or to say what it would be."

He looked steadfastly at Clennam, and, so looking at him,

seemed to change into a very old haggard man. The sun was bright upon the wall beyond the window, and on the spikes at top. He slowly stretched out the hand, that had been upon his heart and pointed at the wall.

" It is down," said Clennam. " Gone !"

He remained in the same attitude, looking steadfastly at him.

" And in its place," said Clennam, slowly and distinctly, " are the means to possess and enjoy the utmost that they have so long shut out. Mr. Dorrit, there is not the smallest doubt that within a few days you will be free, and highly prosperous. I congratulate you with all my soul on this change of fortune, and on the happy future into which you are soon to carry the treasure you have been blest with here—the best of all the riches you can have elsewhere—the treasure at your side."

With those words, he pressed his hand and released it ; and his daughter, laying her face against his, encircled him in the hour of his prosperity with her arms, as she had in the long years of his adversity encircled him with her love and toil and truth ; and poured out her full heart in gratitude, hope, joy, blissful ecstasy, and all for him.

" I shall see him, as I never saw him yet. I shall see my dear love, with the dark cloud cleared away. I shall see him, as my poor mother saw him long ago. O my dear, my dear ! O father, father ! O thank God, thank God !"

He yielded himself to her kisses and caresses, but did not return them, except that he put an arm about her. Neither did he say one word. His steadfast look was now divided between her and Clennam, and he began to shake as if he were very cold. Explaining to Little Dorrit that he would run to the coffee-house for a bottle of wine, Arthur fetched it with all the haste he could use. While it was being brought from the cellar to the bar, a number of excited people asked him what had happened ; when he hurriedly informed them, that Mr. Dorrit had succeeded to a fortune.

OUR MUTUAL FRIEND

Our Mutual Friend, the last completed book that Dickens wrote, has a more intricate plot than the majority of those which preceded it. Although involved, it is well knit and has three distinct themes, the chief one being concerned with a young man supposed to be dead, and being dead to all intents and purposes external to himself, eludes and deceives all those around him. The second is that of the pursuit of a young woman by a man her social superior, and the third of two society adventurers.

The book is more exciting reading than most of Dickens's books, the characters are as finely drawn, and the humour equal to any.

The scene Mr. Copping has chosen for his purpose, that where Mr. Boffin engages the services of Silas Wegg, is a typical example of Dickens's whimsicality and his power of humorous description.

MR. BOFFIN AND SILAS WEGG

OVER against a London house, a corner house not far from Cavendish Square, a man with a wooden leg had sat for some years, with his remaining foot in a basket in cold weather, picking up a living on this wise :—Every morning at eight o'clock, he stumped to the corner, carrying a chair, a clothes-horse, a pair of trestles, a board, a basket, and an umbrella, all strapped together. Separating these, the board and trestles became a counter, the basket supplied the few small lots of fruit and sweets that he offered for sale upon it and became a foot-warmer, the unfolded clothes-horse displayed a choice collection of halfpenny ballads and became a screen, and the stool planted within it became his post for the rest of the day. All weathers saw the man at the post. This is to be accepted in a double sense, for he contrived a back to his wooden stool by placing it against the lamp-post. When the weather was wet, he put up his umbrella over his stock-in-trade, not over himself ; when the weather was dry, he furled that faded article, tied it round with a piece of yarn, and laid it cross-wise under the trestles : where it looked like an unwholesomely-forced lettuce that had lost in colour and crispness what it had gained in size.

He had established his right to the corner by imperceptible prescription. He had never varied his ground an inch, but had in the beginning diffidently taken the corner upon which the side of the house gave. A howling corner in the winter time, a dusty corner in the summer time, an undesirable corner at the best of times. Shelterless fragments of straw and paper got up revolving storms there, when the main street was at peace ; and the water-cart, as if it were drunk or short-sighted, came blundering and jolting round it, making it muddy when all else was clean.

On the front of his sale-board hung a little placard, like a kettle-holder, bearing the inscription in his own small text :

Errands gone
On with fi
Delity By
Ladies and Gentlemen
I remain
Your humble Servt.
Silas Wegg.

* * * * *

The only article in which Silas dealt, that was not hard, was gingerbread. On a certain day, some wretched infant having purchased the damp gingerbread-horse (fearfully out of condition), and the adhesive bird-cage, which had been exposed for the day's sale, he had taken a tin box from under his stool to produce a relay of those dreadful specimens, and was going to look in at the lid, when he said to himself, pausing : " Oh ! Here you are again !"

The words referred to a broad, round-shouldered, one-sided old fellow in mourning, coming comically ambling towards the corner, dressed in a pea overcoat, and carrying a large stick. He wore thick shoes, and thick leather gaiters, and thick gloves like a hedger's. Both as to his dress and to himself, he was of an overlapping rhinoceros build, with folds in his cheeks, and his forehead, and his eyelids, and his lips, and his ears ; but with bright, eager, childishly-inquiring grey eyes, under his ragged eyebrows, and broad-brimmed hat. A very odd-looking old fellow altogether.

" Here you are again," repeated Mr. Wegg, musing.

" Morning, sir ! Morning ! Morning !"

" Do you remember me, then ?" asked his new acquaintance, stopping in his amble, one-sided, before the stall, and speaking in a pouncing way, though with great good-humour.

" I have noticed you go past our house, sir, several times in the course of the last week or so."

" Our house," repeated the other. " Meaning—— ?"

" Yes," said Mr. Wegg, nodding, as the other pointed the

MR. BOFFIN AND SILAS WEGG

clumsy forefinger of his right glove at the corner house.

"Did you ever hear of the name of Boffin?"

"No," said Mr. Wegg, who was growing restive under this examination. "I never did hear of the name of Boffin."

"My name's Boffin. What's your name?"

"Silas Wegg.—I don't," said Mr. Wegg, bestirring himself to take the same precaution as before, "I don't know why Silas, and I don't know why Wegg."

"Now, Wegg," said Mr. Boffin, hugging his stick closer, "I want to make a sort of offer to you."

* * * * *

"Here's a man with a wooden leg—a literary man with——"

"N—not exactly so, sir," said Mr. Wegg.

"Why, you know every one of these songs by name and by tune, and if you want to read or to sing any one on 'em off straight, you've only to whip on your spectacles and do it!" cried Mr. Boffin. "I see you at it!"

"Well, sir," returned Mr. Wegg, with a conscious inclination of the head; "we'll say literary, then."

"'A literary man—*with* a wooden leg—and all Print is open to him!' That's what I thought to myself, that morning," pursued Mr. Boffin, leaning forward to describe, uncramped by the clothes-horse, as large an arc as his right arm could make; "'all Print is open to him!' And it is, ain't it?"

"Why, truly, sir," Mr. Wegg admitted with modesty; "I believe you couldn't show me the piece of English print, that I wouldn't be equal to collaring and throwing."

"On the spot?" said Mr. Boffin.

"On the spot."

"I know'd it! Then consider this. Here am I, a man without a wooden leg, and yet all print is shut to me."

"Indeed, sir?" Mr. Wegg returned with increasing self-complacency. "Education neglected?"

* * * * *

"Now, look here. I'm retired from business. Me and Mrs. Boffin—Henerietty Boffin—which her father's name was Henery, and her mother's name was Hetty, and so you get it—we live on a compittance, under the will of a diseased governor."

"Gentleman dead, sir?"

"Man alive, don't I tell you? A diseased governor? Now, it's too late for me to begin shovelling and sifting at alphabeds and grammar-books. I'm getting to be a old bird, and I want to take it easy. But I want some reading—some fine bold reading, some splendid book in a gorging Lord-Mayor's Show of wollumes" (probably meaning gorgeous, but misled by association of ideas); "as'll reach right down your pint of view, and take time to go by you. How can I get that reading, Wegg? By," tapping him on the breast with the head of his thick stick, "paying a man truly qualified to do it, so much an hour (say twopence) to come and do it."

"Hem! Flattered, sir, I am sure," said Wegg, beginning to regard himself in quite a new light. "Hem! This is the offer you mentioned, sir?"

"Yes. Do you like it?"

"I am considering of it, Mr. Boffin."

"I don't," said Mr. Boffin, in a free-handed manner, "want to tie a literary man—*with* a wooden leg—down too tight. A half-penny an hour shan't part us. The hours are your own to choose, after you've done for the day with your house here. I live over Maiden Lane way—out Holloway direction—and you've only got to go East-and-by-North when you've finished here, and you're there. Twopence halfpenny an hour," said Boffin, taking a piece of chalk from his pocket and getting off the stool to work the sum on the top of it in his own way; "two long'uns and a short'un—twopence half-penny; two short'uns is a long'un, and two two long'uns is four long'uns—making five long'uns; six nights a week at five long'uns a night," scoring them all down separately, "and you mount up to thirty long'uns. A round'un! Half-a-crown!"

Pointing to this result as a large and satisfactory one, Mr. Boffin smeared it out with his moistened glove, and sat down on the remains.

"Half a crown," said Wegg, meditating. "Yes. (It ain't much, sir.) Half a crown."

"Per week, you know."

* * * * *

"What do you think of the terms, Wegg?" Mr. Boffin then demanded, with unconcealed anxiety.

Silas, who had stimulated this anxiety by his hard reserve of manner, and who had begun to understand his man very well, replied with an air; as if he were saying something extraordinarily generous and great:

"Mr. Boffin, I never bargain."

"So I should have thought of you!" said Mr. Boffin, admiringly.

"No, sir. I never did 'aggle and I never will 'aggle. Consequently I meet you at once, free and fair, with—Done, for double the money!"

Mr. Boffin seemed a little unprepared for this conclusion, but assented, with the remark, "You know better what it ought to be than I do, Wegg," and again shook hands with him upon it.

"Could you begin to-night, Wegg?" he then demanded.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Wegg, careful to leave all the eagerness to him. "I see no difficulty if you wish it. You are provided with the needful implement—a book, sir?"

"Bought him at a sale," said Mr. Boffin. "Eight wollumes. Red and gold. Purple ribbon in every wollume, to keep the place where you leave off. Do you know him?"

"The book's name, sir?" inquired Silas.

"I thought you might have know'd him without it," said Mr. Boffin, slightly disappointed. "His name is Decline-and-Fall-Off-The-Rooshan-Empire." (Mr. Boffin went over these stones slowly and with much caution.)

"Ay indeed!" said Mr. Wegg, nodding his head with an air of friendly recognition.

"You know him, Wegg?"

"I haven't been not to say right slap through him, very lately," Mr. Wegg made answer, "having been otherwise employed, Mr. Boffin. But know him? Old familiar declining and falling off the Rooshan? Rather, sir! Ever since I was not so high as your stick. Ever since my eldest brother left our cottage to enlist into the army."

* * * * *

Much impressed by this family circumstance, and also by the friendly disposition of Mr. Wegg, Mr. Boffin again shook hands with that ligneous sharper, and besought him to name his hour. Mr. Wegg named eight.

"Where I live," said Mr. Boffin, "is called The Bower. Boffin's Bower is the name Mrs. Boffin christened it when we come into it as a property. If you should meet with anybody that don't know it by that name (which hardly anybody does), when you've got nigh upon about a odd mile, or say and a quarter if you like, up Maiden Lane, Battle Bridge, ask for Harmony Jail, and you'll be put right. I shall expect you, Wegg," said Mr. Boffin, clapping him on the shoulder with the greatest enthusiasm, "most jyfully. I shall have no peace or patience till you come. Print is now opening ahead of me. This night, a literary man—*with* a wooden leg—" he bestowed an admiring look upon that decoration, as if it greatly enhanced the relish of Mr. Wegg's attainments—"will begin to lead me a new life! My fist again, Wegg. Morning, morning, morning!"

CHRISTMAS STORIES

IN 1843 Dickens published *A Christmas Carol*, that wonderful little masterpiece which immediately earned for him the soubriquet of "The Apostle of Christmas." Indeed, so inseparable had become the words Dickens and Christmas, that when he died a poor, ragged little child was heard to ask, "And will Father Christmas die too?"

Other Christmas stories followed: *The Chimes*, *The Cricket on the Hearth*, *The Battle of Life*, *The Haunted Man*, besides shorter sketches and tales associated with the festive season.

The extracts given in the following pages are typical of the joyous and whimsical spirit which pervades them all, and which one never tires of reading again and again.

A JOYOUS CHRISTMAS DINNER

(A CHRISTMAS CAROL)

The Ghost of Christmas Present takes Scrooge to Bob Cratchit's humble dwelling on Christmas Day, and they witness the happy Christmas dinner he and his family enjoy.

THEN up rose Mrs. Cratchit, Cratchit's wife, dressed out but poorly in a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons, which are cheap and make a goodly show for sixpence ; and she laid the cloth, assisted by Belinda Cratchit, second of her daughters, also brave in ribbons ; while Master Peter Cratchit plunged a fork into the saucepan of potatoes, and getting the corners of his monstrous shirt collar (Bob's private property, conferred upon his son and heir in honour of the day) into his mouth, rejoiced to find himself so gallantly attired, and yearned to show his linen in the fashionable Parks. And now two smaller Cratchits, boy and girl, came tearing in, screaming that outside the baker's they had smelt the goose, and known it for their own ; and basking in luxurious thoughts of sage and onion, these young Cratchits danced about the table, and exalted Master Peter Cratchit to the skies, while he (not proud, although his collars nearly choked him) blew the fire, until the slow potatoes bubbling up, knocked loudly at the saucepan-lid to be let out and peeled.

" What has ever got your precious father then ?" said Mrs. Cratchit. " And your brother, Tiny Tim ! And Martha warn't as late last Christmas Day by half-an-hour ?"

" Here's Martha, mother !" said a girl, appearing as she spoke.

" Here's Martha, mother !" cried the two young Cratchits. " Hurrah ! There's *such* a goose, Martha !"

" Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are !" said Mrs. Cratchit, kissing her a dozen times, and taking off her shawl and bonnet for her with officious zeal.

BOB CRATCHIT AND TINY TIM

" We'd a deal of work to finish up last night," replied the girl, " and had to clear away this morning, mother !"

" Well ! Never mind so long as you are come," said Mrs. Cratchit. " Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm, Lord bless ye !"

" No, no ! There's father coming," cried the two young Cratchits, who were everywhere at once. " Hide, Martha, hide !"

So Martha hid herself, and in came little Bob, the father, with at least three feet of comforter exclusive of the fringe hanging down before him ; and his threadbare clothes darned up and brushed, to look seasonable ; and Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Alas for Tiny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame !

" Why, where's our Martha ?" cried Bob Cratchit, looking round.

" Not coming," said Mrs. Cratchit.

" Not coming !" said Bob, with a sudden declension in his high spirits ; for he had been Tim's blood horse all the way from church, and had come home rampant. " Not coming upon Christmas Day !"

Martha didn't like to see him disappointed, if it were only in joke ; so she came out prematurely from behind the closet door, and ran into his arms, while the two young Cratchits hustled Tiny Tim, and bore him off into the wash-house, that he might hear the pudding singing in the copper.

" And how did little Tim behave ?" asked Mrs. Cratchit, when she had rallied Bob on his credulity, and Bob had hugged his daughter to his heart's content.

" As good as gold," said Bob, " and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day, Who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see."

Bob's voice was tremulous when he told them this, and trembled more when he said that Tiny Tim was growing strong and hearty.

His active little crutch was heard upon the floor, and back came Tiny Tim before another word was spoken, escorted by his brother and sister to his stool before the fire ; and while Bob, turning up his cuffs—as if, poor fellow, they were capable of being made more shabby—compounded some hot mixture in a jug with gin and lemons, and stirred it round and round and put it on the hob to simmer ; Master Peter, and the two ubiquitous young Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon returned in high procession.

Such a bustle ensued that you might have thought a goose the rarest of all birds ; a feathered phenomenon, to which a black swan was a matter of course—and in truth it was something very like it in that house. Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy (ready beforehand in a little saucepan) hissing hot ; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with incredible vigour ; Miss Belinda sweetened up the apple-sauce ; Martha dusted the hot plates ; Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner at the table ; the two young Cratchits set chairs for everybody, not forgetting themselves, and mounting guard upon their posts, crammed spoons into their mouths, lest they should shriek for goose before their turn came to be helped. At last the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs. Cratchit, looking slowly all along the carving-knife, prepared to plunge it in the breast ; but when she did, and when the long expected gush of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of delight arose all round the board, and even Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchits, beat on the table with the handle of his knife, and feebly cried Hurrah !

There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavour, size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by apple-sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family ; indeed, as Mrs. Cratchit said with great delight (surveying one small atom of a bone upon the dish), they hadn't

ate it all at last! Yet every one had had enough, and the youngest Cratchits in particular, were steeped in sage and onion to the eyebrows! But now, the plates being changed by Miss Belinda, Mrs. Cratchit left the room alone—too nervous to bear witnesses—to take the pudding up and bring it in.

Suppose it should not be done enough! Suppose it should break in turning out! Suppose somebody should have got over the wall of the back-yard, and stolen it, while they were merry with the goose—a supposition at which the two young Cratchits became livid! All sorts of horrors were supposed.

Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing-day! That was the cloth. A smell like an eating-house and a pastrycook's next door to each other, with a laundress's next door to that! That was the pudding! In half a minute Mrs. Cratchit entered—flushed, but smiling proudly—with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quartern of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top.

Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs. Cratchit since their marriage. Mrs. Cratchit said that now the weight was off her mind, she would confess she had had her doubts about the quantity of flour. Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for a large family. It would have been flat heresy to do so. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.

At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. The compound in the jug being tasted, and considered perfect, apples and oranges were put upon the table, and a shovel-full of chestnuts on the fire. Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth, in what Bob Cratchit called a circle, meaning half a one; and at Bob Cratchit's elbow stood the family display of glass. Two tumblers, and a custard-cup without a handle.

These held the hot stuff from the jug, however, as well as golden goblets would have done; and Bob served it out with beaming looks, while the chestnuts on the fire sputtered and cracked noisily. Then Bob proposed:

"A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!"

Which all the family re-echoed.

"God bless us every one!" said Tiny Tim, the last of all.

TROTTY VECK'S DINNER-TIME

(THE CHIMES)

Trotty Veck was a ticket porter, and stood all day just outside a church-door and waited there for customers to send him on errands with letters and on other missions.

AND a breezy, goose-skinned, blue-nosed, red-eyed, stony-toed, tooth-chattering place it was, to wait in, in the winter-time, as Toby Veck well knew. The wind came tearing round the corner—especially the east wind—as if it had sallied forth, express, from the confines of the earth, to have a blow at Toby. And oftentimes it seemed to come upon him sooner than it had expected, for bouncing round the corner, and passing Toby, it would suddenly wheel round again, as if it cried "Why, here he is!" Incontinently his little white apron would be caught up over his head like a naughty boy's garments, and his feeble little cane would be seen to wrestle and struggle unavailingly in his hand, and his legs would undergo tremendous agitation, and Toby himself all aslant, and facing now in this direction, now in that, would be so banged and buffeted, and touzled, and worried, and hustled, and lifted off his feet, as to render it a state of things but one degree removed from a positive miracle, that he wasn't carried up bodily into the air as a colony of frogs or snails or other very portable creatures sometimes are, and rained down again, to the great astonishment of the natives, on some

strange corner of the world where ticket-porters are unknown.

* * * * *

They called him Trotty from his pace, which meant speed if it didn't make it. He could have Walked faster perhaps; most likely; but rob him of his trot, and Toby would have taken to his bed and died.

* * * * *

"Dinner-time, eh!" said Toby, trotting up and down before the church. "Ah!"

"Dinner-time, eh!" repeated Toby, using his right-hand muffler like an infantine boxing-glove, and punishing his chest for being cold. "Ah-h-h-h!"

He took a silent trot, after that, for a minute or two.

"There's nothing," said Toby, breaking forth afresh—but here he stopped short in his trot, and with a face of great interest and some alarm, felt his nose carefully all the way up. It was but a little way (not being much of a nose) and he had soon finished.

* * * * *

"There's nothing," said Toby, "more regular in its coming round than dinner-time, and nothing less regular in its coming round than dinner. That's the great difference between 'em. It's took me a long time to find it out. I wonder whether it would be worth any gentleman's while, now, to buy that observation for the Papers; or the Parliament!"

Toby was only joking, for he gravely shook his head in self-depreciation.

* * * * *

"Why, father, father!" said a pleasant voice, hard by.

But Toby, not hearing it, continued to trot backwards and forwards: musing as he went, and talking to himself.

* * * * *

"Why, father, father!" said the pleasant voice again.

Toby heard it this time; started; stopped; and shortening his sight, which had been directed a long way off as seeking the

enlightenment in the very heart of the approaching year, found himself face to face with his own child, and looking close into her eyes.

Bright eyes they were. Eyes that would bear a world of looking in, before their depth was fathomed. Dark eyes, that reflected back the eyes which searched them; not flashingly, or at the owner's will, but with a clear, calm, honest, patient radiance, claiming kindred with that light which Heaven called into being. Eyes that were beautiful and true, and beaming with Hope. With Hope so young and fresh; with Hope so buoyant, vigorous, and bright, despite the twenty years of work and poverty on which they had looked; that they became a voice to Trotty Veck, and said: "I think we have some business here—a little!"

Trotty kissed the lips belonging to the eyes, and squeezed the blooming face between his hands.

"Why, Pet," said Trotty. "What's to do? I didn't expect you to-day, Meg."

"Neither did I expect to come, father," cried the girl, nodding her head and smiling as she spoke. "But here I am! And not alone! not alone!"

"Why you don't mean to say," observed Trotty, looking curiously at a covered basket which she carried in her hand, "that you——"

"Smell it, father dear," said Meg. "Only smell it!"

Trotty was going to lift up the cover at once, in a great hurry, when she gaily interposed her hand.

"No, no, no," said Meg, with the glee of a child. "Lengthen it out a little. Let me just lift up the corner; just the lit-tle ti-ny cor-ner, you know," said Meg, suiting the action to the word with the utmost gentleness, and speaking very softly, as if she were afraid of being overheard by something inside the basket. "There! Now. What's that?"

Toby took the shortest possible sniff at the edge of the basket, and cried out in a rapture:

"Why, it's hot!"

"It's burning hot!" cried Meg. "Ha, ha, ha! It's scalding hot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Toby, with a sort of kick. "It's scalding hot!"

"But what is it, father?" said Meg. "Come. You haven't guessed what it is. And you must guess what it is. I can't think of taking it out, till you guess what it is. Don't be in such a hurry! Wait a minute! A little bit more of the cover. Now guess!"

Meg was in a perfect fright lest he should guess right too soon; shrinking away, as she held the basket towards him; curling up her pretty shoulders; stopping her ear with her hand, as if by so doing she could keep the right word out of Toby's lips; and laughing softly the whole time.

Meanwhile Toby, putting a hand on each knee, bent down his nose to the basket, and took a long inspiration at the lid; the grin upon his withered face expanding in the process, as if he were inhaling laughing gas.

"Ah! It's very nice," said Toby. "It an't—I suppose it an't Polonies?"

"No, no, no!" cried Meg, delighted. "Nothing like Polonies!"

"No," said Toby, after another sniff. "It's—it's mellower than Polonies. It's very nice. It improves every moment. It's too decided for Trotters. An't it?"

Meg was in ecstasy. He could not have gone wider of the mark than Trotters—except Polonies.

"Liver?" said Toby, communing with himself. "No. There's a mildness about it that don't answer to liver. Pettitoes? No. It ain't faint enough for pettitoes. It wants the stringiness of cocks' heads. And I know it an't sausages. I'll tell you what it is. It's chitterlings!"

"No, it an't!" cried Meg, in a burst of delight. "No, it an't!"

"Why, what am I a thinking of!" said Toby, suddenly

recovering a position as near the perpendicular as it was possible for him to assume. "I shall forget my own name next. It's tripe!"

Tripe it was; and Meg, in high joy, protested he should say, in half a minute more, it was the best tripe ever stewed.

"And so," said Meg, busying herself exultingly with the basket, "I'll lay the cloth at once, father; for I have brought the tripe in a basin, and tied the basin up in a pocket-handkerchief; and if I like to be proud for once, and spread that for a cloth, and call it a cloth, there's no law to prevent me; is there, father?"

"Not that I know of, my dear," said Toby. "But they're always a bringing up some new law or other."

"And according to what I was reading you in the paper the other day, father; what the Judge said, you know; we poor people are supposed to know them all. Ha, ha! What a mistake! My goodness me, how clever they think us!"

"Yes, my dear," cried Trotty; "and they'd be very fond of any one of us that *did* know 'em all. He'd grow fat upon the work he'd get, that man, and be popular with the gentlefolks in his neighbourhood. Very much so!"

"He'd eat his dinner with an appetite, whoever he was, if it smelt like this," said Meg, cheerfully. "Make haste, for there's a hot potato besides, and half a pint of fresh-drawn beer in a bottle. Where will you dine, father? On the Post or on the Steps? Dear, dear, how grand we are! Two places to choose from!"

"The steps to-day, my Pet," said Trotty. "Steps in dry weather. Post in wet. There's a greater conveniency in the steps at all times, because of the sitting down; but they're rheumatic in the damp."

"Then here," said Meg, clapping her hands, after a moment's bustle; "here it is, all ready! And beautiful it looks! Come, father! Come!"

Since his discovery of the contents of the basket, Trotty had been standing looking at her—and had been speaking too—in an abstracted manner, which showed that though she was the object of his thoughts

TROTTY VECK AND HIS DAUGHTER MEG

and eyes, to the exclusion even of tripe, he neither saw nor thought about her as she was at that moment, but had before him some imaginary rough sketch or drama of her future life. Roused, now, by her cheerful summons, he shook off a melancholy shake of the head which was just coming upon him, and trotted to her side. As he was stooping to sit down, the Chimes rang.

"Amen!" said Trotty, pulling off his hat and looking up towards them.

"Amen to the Bells, father?" cried Meg.

"They broke in like a grace, my dear," said Trotty, taking his seat. "They'd say a good one, I am sure, if they could. Many's the kind thing they say to me."

* * * * *

Trotty made no pause in his attack upon the savoury meat before him, but cut and ate, and cut and drank, and cut and chewed, and dodged about, from tripe to hot potato, and from hot potato back again to tripe, with an unctuous and unflagging relish.

JOHN AND DOT PEERYBINGLE

(THE CRICKET ON THE HEARTH)

DOT arranged the great chair in the chimney-corner for her husband; filled his pipe and gave it him; and took her usual little stool beside him on the hearth.

She always *would* sit on that little stool. I think she must have had a kind of notion that it was a coaxing, wheedling, little stool.

She was, out and out, the very best filler of a pipe, I should say, in the four quarters of the globe. To see her put that chubby little finger in the bowl, and then blow down the pipe to clear the tube, and, when she had done so, affect to think that there was really something in the tube, and blow a dozen times, and hold it

to her eye like a telescope, with a most provoking twist in her capital little face, as she looked down it, was quite a brilliant thing. As to the tobacco, she was perfect mistress of the subject ; and her lighting of the pipe, with a wisp of paper, when the Carrier had it in his mouth —going so very near his nose, and yet not scorching it—was Art, high Art.

And the Cricket and the Kettle, tuning up again, acknowledged it! The bright fire, blazing up again, acknowledged it! The little Mower on the clock, in his unheeded work, acknowledged it! The Carrier, in his smoothing forehead and expanding face, acknowledged it, the readiest of all.

And as he soberly and thoughtfully puffed at his old pipe, and as the Dutch clock ticked, and as the red fire gleamed, and as the Cricket chirped ; that Genius of his Hearth and Home (for such the Cricket was) came out, in fairy shape, into the room, and summoned many forms of Home about him. Dots of all ages, and all sizes, filled the chamber. Dots who were merry children, running on before him gathering flowers in the fields ; coy Dots, half shrinking from, half yielding to, the pleading of his own rough image ; newly-married Dots, alighting at the door, and taking wondering possession of the household keys ; motherly little Dots, attended by fictitious Slowboys, bearing babies to be christened ; matronly Dots, still young and blooming, watching Dots of daughters, as they danced at rustic balls ; fat Dots, encircled and beset by troops of rosy grandchildren ; withered Dots, who leaned on sticks, and tottered as they crept along. Old Carriers too, appeared, with blind old Boxers lying at their feet ; and newer carts with younger drivers (" Peerybingle Brothers " on the tilt) ; and sick old Carriers, tended by the gentlest hands ; and graves of dead and gone old Carriers, green in the churchyard. And as the Cricket showed him all these things—he saw them plainly, though his eyes were fixed upon the fire—the Carrier's heart grew light and happy, and he thanked his Household Gods with all his might, and cared no more for Gruff and Tackleton than you do.

JOHN AND DOT PEERYBINGLE

CALEB PLUMMER AND HIS BLIND DAUGHTER

(THE CRICKET ON THE HEARTH)

CALEB PLUMMER and his Blind Daughter lived all alone by themselves in a little cracked nutshell of a wooden house. The premises of Gruff and Tackleton were the great feature of the street; but you might have knocked down Caleb Plummer's dwelling with a hammer or two, and carried off the pieces in a cart.

* * * * *

I should have said that Caleb lived here, and his poor Blind Daughter somewhere else—in an enchanted home of Caleb's furnishing, where scarcity and shabbiness were not, and trouble never entered. Caleb was no sorcerer, but in the only magic art that still remains to us, the magic of devoted, deathless love, Nature had been the mistress of his study; and from her teaching all the wonder came.

The Blind Girl never knew that ceilings were discoloured, walls blotched and bare of plaster here and there, high crevices unstopped and widening every day, beams mouldering and tending downward. The Blind Girl never knew that iron was rusting, wood rotting, paper peeling off; the size, and shape, and true proportion of the dwelling, withering away. The Blind Girl never knew that ugly shapes of delf and earthenware were on the board; that sorrow and faint-heartedness were in the house; that Caleb's scanty hairs were turning greyer and more grey, before her sightless face. The Blind Girl never knew they had a master, cold, exacting, and uninterested—never knew that Tackleton was Tackleton in short; but lived in the belief of an eccentric humorist who loved to have his jest with them, and who, while he was the Guardian Angel of their lives disdained to hear one word of thankfulness.

* * * * *

Caleb and his daughter were at work together in their usual working-room, which served them for their ordinary living-room as well; and a strange place it was. There were houses in it, finished and unfinished, for Dolls of all stations in life. Suburban tenements for Dolls of moderate means; kitchens and single apartments for Dolls of the lower classes; capital town residences for Dolls of high estate. Some of these establishments were already furnished according to estimate, with a view to the convenience of Dolls of limited income; others could be fitted on the most expensive scale, at a moment's notice, from whole shelves of chairs and tables, sofas, bedsteads, and upholstery. The nobility and gentry, and public in general, for whose accommodation these tenements were designed, lay, here and there, in baskets, staring straight up at the ceiling; but in denoting their degrees in society, and confining them to their respective stations (which experience shows to be lamentably difficult in real life), the makers of these Dolls had far improved on Nature, who is often froward and perverse; for they, not resting on such arbitrary marks as satin, cotton-print, and bits of rag, had superadded striking personal differences which allowed of no mistake. Thus, the Doll-lady of distinction had wax limbs of perfect symmetry; but only she and her compeers. The next grade in the social scale being made of leather, and the next of coarse linen stuff. As to the common-people, they had just so many matches out of tinder-boxes, for their arms and legs, and there they were—established in their sphere at once, beyond the possibility of getting out of it.

There were various other samples of his handicraft, besides Dolls, in Caleb Plummer's room. There were Noah's Arks, in which the Birds and Beasts were an uncommonly tight fit, I assure you; though they could be crammed in, anyhow, at the roof, and rattled and shaken into the smallest compass. By a bold poetical licence, most of these Noah's Arks had knockers on the doors; inconsistent appendages, perhaps, as suggestive of morning callers and a Post-man, yet a pleasant finish to the outside of the building. There were scores of melancholy little carts which, when the wheels went round,

CALEB PLUMMER AND HIS BLIND DAUGHTER

performed most doleful music. Many small fiddles, drums and other instruments of torture; no end of cannon, shields, swords, spears, and guns. There were little tumblers in red breeches, incessantly swarming up high obstacles of red-tape, and coming down, head first, on the other side; and there were innumerable old gentlemen of respectable, not to say venerable, appearance, insanely flying over horizontal pegs, inserted, for the purpose, in their own street doors. There were beasts of all sorts; horses, in particular, of every breed, from the spotted barrel on four pegs, with a small tippet for a mane, to the thoroughbred rocker on his highest mettle. As it would have been hard to count the dozens upon dozens of grotesque figures that were ever ready to commit all sorts of absurdities on the turning of a handle, so it would be no easy task to mention any human folly, vice, or weakness, that had not its type, immediate or remote, in Caleb Plummer's room. And not in an exaggerated form, for very little handles will move men and women to as strange performances as any Toy was ever made to undertake.

In the midst of all these objects, Caleb and his daughter sat at work. The Blind Girl busy as a Doll's dress-maker; Caleb painting and glazing the four-pair front of a desirable family mansion.

* * * * *

"There we are," said Caleb, falling back a pace or two to form the better judgment of his work; "as near the real thing as sixpenn'orth of halfpence is to sixpence. What a pity that the whole front of the house opens at once! If there was only a staircase in it, now, and regular doors to the rooms to go in at! But that's the worst of my calling, I'm always deluding myself, and swindling myself."

MR. AND MRS. HARRY WALMERS, JUNIOR

(THE HOLLY-TREE)

MASTER HARRY WALMERS' father, you see, he lived at the Elmses, down away by Shooter's Hill there, six or seven miles from Lunnon. He was a gentleman of spirit, and good-looking, and held his head up when he walked, and had what you may call Fire about him. He wrote poetry, and he rode, and he ran, and he cricketed, and he danced, and he acted, and he done it all equally beautiful. He was uncommon proud of Master Harry as was his only child; but he didn't spoil him neither.

* * * * *

How did Boots happen to know all this? Why, through being under-gardener.

* * * * *

He couldn't say he had taken particular notice of children before that; but really it was pretty to see them two mites a going about the place together, deep in love. And the courage of the boy! Bless your soul, he'd have throwed off his little hat and tucked up his little sleeves, and gone in at a Lion, he would, if they had happened to meet one, and she had been frightened of him. One day he stops, along with her, where Boots was hoeing weeds in the gravel, and says, speaking up, "Cobbs," he says, "I like *you*." "Do you, sir? I'm proud to hear it." "Yes, I do, Cobbs. Why do I like you, do you think, Cobbs?" "Don't know, Master Harry, I am sure." "Because Norah likes you, Cobbs." "Indeed, sir? That's very gratifying." "Gratifying, Cobbs? It's better than millions of the brightest diamonds to be liked by Norah." "Certainly, sir." "You're going away, ain't you, Cobbs?" "Yes, sir." "Would you like another situation, Cobbs?" "Well, sir, I shouldn't

object, if it was a good 'un." "Then, Cobbs," says he, "you shall be our Head Gardener when we are married." And he tucks her, in her little sky-blue mantle, under his arm, and walks away.

Boots could assure me that it was better than a picter, and equal to a play, to see them babies, with their long, bright, curling hair, their sparkling eyes, and their beautiful light tread, a rambling about the garden, deep in love. Boots was of opinion that the birds believed they was birds, and kept up with 'em, singing to please 'em. Sometimes they would creep under the Tulip-tree, and would sit there with their arms round one another's necks, and their soft cheeks touching, a reading about the Prince and the Dragon, and the good and bad enchanters, and the king's fair daughter. Sometimes he would hear them planning about having a house in a forest, keeping bees and a cow, and living entirely on milk and honey. Once he came upon them by the pond, and heard Master Harry say, "Adorable Norah, kiss me, and say you love me to distraction, or I'll jump in head-foremost." And Boots made no question he would have done it if she hadn't complied. On the whole, Boots said it had a tendency to make him feel as if he was in love himself—only he didn't exactly know who with.

"Cobbs," said Master Harry, one evening, when Cobbs was watering the flowers, "I am going on a visit, this present Midsummer, to my grandmamma's at York."

"Are you indeed, sir? I hope you'll have a pleasant time. I am going into Yorkshire, myself, when I leave here."

"Are you going to your grandmamma's, Cobbs?"

"No, sir. I haven't got such a thing."

"Not as a grandmamma, Cobbs?"

"No, sir."

The boy looked on at the watering of the flowers for a little while, and then said, "I shall be very glad indeed to go, Cobbs,—Norah's going."

"You'll be all right then, sir," says Cobbs, "with your beautiful sweetheart by your side."

"Cobbs," returned the boy, flushing, "I never let anybody joke about it, when I can prevent them."

"It wasn't a joke, sir," says Cobbs, with humility,—"wasn't so meant."

"I am glad of that, Cobbs, because I like you, you know, and you're going to live with us.—Cobbs!"

"Sir."

"What do you think my grandmamma gives me when I go down there?"

"I couldn't so much as make a guess, sir."

"A Bank of England five-pound note, Cobbs."

"Whew!" says Cobbs, "that's a spanking sum of money, Master Harry."

"A person could do a good deal with such a sum of money as that,—couldn't a person, Cobbs?"

"I believe you, sir!"

"Cobbs," said the boy, "I'll tell you a secret. At Norah's house, they have been joking her about me, and pretending to laugh at our being engaged,—pretending to make game of it, Cobbs!"

"Such, sir," says Cobbs, "is the depravity of human natur."

The boy, looking exactly like his father, stood for a few minutes with his glowing face towards the sunset, and then departed with, "Good-night, Cobbs. I'm going in."

If I was to ask Boots how it happened that he was a going to leave that place just at that present time, well, he couldn't rightly answer me. He did suppose he might have stayed there till now if he had been anyways inclined. But, you see, he was younger then, and he wanted change. That's what he wanted,—change. Mr. Walmers, he said to him when he gave him notice of his intentions to leave, "Cobbs," he says, "have you anythink to complain of? I make the inquiry because if I find that any of my people really has anythink to complain of, I wish to make it right if I can." "No, sir," says Cobbs; "thanking you, sir, I find myself as well sitiwated here as I could hope to be anywheres. The truth is, sir, that I'm a going

to seek my fortun'." "O, indeed, Cobbs!" he says; "I hope you may find it." And Boots could assure me—which he did, touching his hair with his bootjack, as a salute in the way of his present calling—that he hadn't found it yet.

Well, sir! Boots left the Elmses when his time was up, and Master Harry, he went down to the old lady's at York, which old lady would have given that child the teeth out of her head (if she had had any), she was so wrapped up in him. What does that Infant do,—for Infant you may call him, and be within the mark,—but cut away from that old lady's with his Norah, on a expedition to go to Gretna Green and be married!

Sir, Boots was at this identical Holly-Tree Inn (having left it several times since to better himself, but always come back through one thing or another), when, one summer afternoon, the coach drives up, and out of the coach gets them two children. The Guard says to our Governor, "I don't quite make out these little passengers, but the young gentleman's words was, that they was to be brought here." The young gentleman gets out; hands his lady out; gives the Guard something for himself; says to our Governor, "We're to stop here to-night, please. Sitting-room and two bedrooms will be required. Chops and cherry-pudding for two!" and tucks her, in her little sky-blue mantle, under his arm, and walks into the house much bolder than Brass.

Boots leaves me to judge what the amazement of that establishment was, when these two tiny creatures all alone by themselves was marched into the Angel,—much more so, when he, who had seen them without their seeing him, give the Governor his views of the expedition they was upon. "Cobbs," says the Governor, "if this is so, I must set off myself to York, and quiet their friends' minds. In which case you must keep your eye upon 'em, and humour 'em, till I come back. But before I take these measures, Cobbs, I should wish you to find from themselves whether your opinion is correct." "Sir, to you," says Cobbs, "that shall be done directly."

So Boots goes up-stairs to the Angel, and there he finds Master

Harry on a e-normous sofa,—immense at any time, but looking like the Great Bed of Ware, compared with him,—a drying the eyes of Miss Norah with his pocket-hankecher. Their little legs was entirely off the ground, of course, and it really is not possible for Boots to express to me how small them children looked.

"It's Cobbs! It's Cobbs!" cries Master Harry, and comes running to him, and catching hold of his hand. Miss Norah comes running to him on t'other side, and catching hold of his t'other hand, and they both jump for joy.

"I see you a getting out, sir," says Cobbs. "I thought it was you. I thought I couldn't be mistaken in your height and figure. What's the object of your journey, sir?—Matrimonial?"

"We are going to be married, Cobbs, at Gretna Green," returned the boy. "We have run away on purpose. Norah has been in rather low spirits, Cobbs; but she'll be happy, now we have found you to be our friend."

"Thank you, sir, and thank *you*, miss," says Cobbs, "for your good opinion. *Did* you bring any luggage with you, sir?"

If I will believe Boots when he gives me his word and honour upon it, the lady had got a parasol, a smelling-bottle, a round and a half of cold buttered toast, eight peppermint drops, and a hair-brush,—seemingly a doll's. The gentleman had got about half a dozen yards of string, a knife, three or four sheets of writing-paper folded up surprising small, a orange, and a Chaney mug with his name upon it.

"What may be the exact natur of your plans, sir?" says Cobbs.

"To go on," replied the boy,—which the courage of that boy was something wonderful!—"in the morning, and be married to-morrow."

"Just so, sir," says Cobbs. "Would it meet your views, sir, if I was to accompany you."

When Cobbs said this, they both jumped for joy again, and cried out, "Oh, yes, yes, Cobbs! Yes!"

"Well, sir," says Cobbs. "If you will excuse my having the

MR. AND MRS. HARRY WALMERS AND COBBS

freedom to give an opinion, what I should recommend would be this. I'm acquainted with a pony, sir, which, put in a pheayton that I could borrow, would take you and Mrs. Harry Walmers, Junior, (myself driving, if you approved,) to the end of your journey in a very short space of time. I am not altogether sure, sir, that this pony will be at liberty to-morrow, but even if you had to wait over to-morrow for him, it might be worth your while. As to the small account here, sir, in case you was to find yourself running at all short, that don't signify; because I'm a part proprietor of this inn, and it could stand over."

Boots assures me that when they clapped their hands, and jumped for joy again, and called him "Good Cobbs!" and "Dear Cobbs!" and bent across him to kiss one another in the delight of their confiding hearts, he felt himself the meanest rascal for deceiving 'em that ever was born.

"Is there anything you want just at present, sir?" says Cobbs, mortally ashamed of himself.

"We should like some cakes after dinner," answered Master Harry, folding his arms, putting out one leg, and looking straight at him, "and two apples,—and jam. With dinner we should like to have toast-and-water. But Norah has always been accustomed to half a glass of currant wine at dessert. And so have I."

"It shall be ordered at the bar, sir," says Cobbs; and away he went.

Boots has the feeling as fresh upon him at this minute of speaking as he had then, that he would far rather have had it out in half a dozen rounds with the Governor than have combined with him; and that he wished with all his heart there was any impossible place where those two babies could make an impossible marriage, and live impossibly happy ever afterwards. However, as it couldn't be, he went into the Governor's plans, and the Governor set off for York in half an hour.

The way in which the women of that house—without exception —every one of 'em—married *and* single—took to that boy when they

heard the story, Boots considers surprising. It was as much as he could do to keep 'em from dashing into the room and kissing him. They climbed up all sorts of places, at the risk of their lives, to look at him through a pane of glass. They was seven deep at the key-hole. They was out of their minds about him and his bold spirit.

In the evening, Boots went into the room to see how the runaway couple was getting on. The gentleman was on the window-seat, supporting the lady in his arms. She had tears upon her face, and was lying, very tired and half asleep, with her head upon his shoulder.

" Mrs. Harry Walmers, Junior, fatigued, sir ?" says Cobbs.

" Yes, she is tired, Cobbs ; but she is not used to be away from home, and she has been in low spirits again. Cobbs, do you think you could bring a biffin, please ?"

" I ask your pardon, sir," says Cobbs. " What was it you——?"

" I think a Norfolk biffin would rouse her, Cobbs. She is very fond of them."

Boots withdrew in search of the required restorative, and, when he brought it in, the gentleman handed it to the lady, and fed her with a spoon, and took a little himself ; the lady being heavy with sleep, and rather cross. " What should you think, sir," says Cobbs, " of a chamber candlestick ?" The gentleman approved ; the chambermaid went first up the great staircase ; the lady, in her sky-blue mantle, followed, gallantly escorted by the gentleman ; the gentleman embraced her at her door, and retired to his own apartment, where Boots softly locked him up.

Boots couldn't but feel with increased acuteness what a base deceiver he was, when they consulted him at breakfast (they had ordered sweet milk-and-water, and toast and currant jelly, over-night) about the pony. It really was as much as he could do, he don't mind confessing to me, to look them two young things in the face, and think what a wicked old father of lies he had grown up to be. Howsomever, he went on a lying like a Trojan about the pony. He told 'em that it did so unfort'nately happen that the pony was half clipped, you see, and that he couldn't be taken out in that

state, for fear it should strike to his inside. But that he'd be finished clipping in the course of the day, and that to-morrow morning at eight o'clock the pheayton would be ready. Boots' view of the whole case, looking back on it in my room, is, that Mrs. Harry Walmers, Junior, was beginning to give in. She hadn't had her hair curled when she went to bed, and she didn't seem quite up to brushing it herself, and its getting in her eyes put her out. But nothing put out Master Harry. He sat behind his breakfast-cup, a tearing away at the jelly, as if he had been his own father.

After breakfast, Boots is inclined to consider that they drawed soldiers,—at least, he knows that many such was found in the fire-place, all on horseback. In the course of the morning, Master Harry rang the bell,—it was surprising how that there boy did carry on,—and said, in a sprightly way, "Cobbs, is there any good walks in this neighbourhood?"

"Yes, sir," says Cobbs. "There's Love-lane."

"Get out with you, Cobbs!"—that was that there boy's expression,—"you're joking."

"Begging your pardon, sir," says Cobbs, "there really is Love-lane. And a pleasant walk it is, and proud shall I be to show it to yourself and Mrs. Harry Walmers, Junior."

"Norah, dear," said Master Harry, "this is curious. We really ought to see Love-lane. Put on your bonnet, my sweetest darling, and we will go there with Cobbs."

Boots leaves me to judge what a Beast he felt himself to be, when that young pair told him, as they all three jogged along together, that they had made up their minds to give him two thousand guineas a year as head-gardener, on accounts of his being so true a friend to 'em. Boots could have wished at the moment that the earth would have opened and swallowed him up, he felt so mean, with their beaming eyes a looking at him, and believing him. Well, sir, he turned the conversation as well as he could, and he took 'em down Love-lane to the water-meadows, and there Master Harry would have drowned himself in half a moment more, a getting out

a water-lily for her,—but nothing daunted that boy. Well, sir, they was tired out. All being so new and strange to 'em, they was tired as tired could be. And they laid down on a bank of daisies, like the children in the wood, leastways meadows, and fell asleep.

Boots don't know—perhaps I do,—but never mind, it don't signify either way—why it made a man fit to make a fool of himself to see them two pretty babies a lying there in the clear still sunny day, not dreaming half so hard when they was asleep as they done when they was awake. But, Lord! when you come to think of yourself, you know, and what a game you have been up to ever since you was in your own cradle, and what a poor sort of a chap you are, and how it's always either Yesterday with you, or else To-morrow, and never To-day, that's where it is!

Well, sir, they woke up at last, and then one thing was getting pretty clear to Boots, namely, that Mrs. Harry Walmerses, Junior's, temper was on the move. When Master Harry took her round the waist, she said he "teased her so;" and when he says, "Norah, my young May Moon, your Harry tease you?" she tells him, "Yes; and I want to go home!"

A biled fowl, and baked bread-and-butter pudding, brought Mrs. Walmers up a little; but Boots could have wished, he must privately own to me, to have seen her more sensible of the woice of love, and less abandoning of herself to currants. However, Master Harry, he kept up, and his noble heart was as fond as ever. Mrs. Walmers turned very sleepy about dusk, and began to cry. Therefore, Mrs. Walmers went off to bed as per yesterday; and Master Harry ditto repeated.

About eleven or twelve at night comes back the Governor in a chaise, along with Mr. Walmers and a elderly lady. Mr. Walmers looks amused and very serious, both at once, and says to our missis, "We are much indebted to you, ma'am, for your kind care of our little children, which we can never sufficiently acknowledge. Pray, ma'am, where is my boy?" Our missis says, "Cobbs has the dear child in charge, sir. Cobbs, show Forty!" Then he says to Cobbs,

" Ah, Cobbs, I am glad to see *you!* I understood you was here!" And Cobbs says, " Yes, sir. Your most obedient, sir."

I may be surprised to hear Boots say it, perhaps; but Boots assures me that his heart beat like a hammer, going up-stairs. " I beg your pardon, sir," says he, while unlocking the door; " I hope you are not angry with Master Harry. For Master Harry is a fine boy, sir, and will do you credit and honour." And Boots signifies to me, that, if the fine boy's father had contradicted him in the daring state of mind in which he then was, he thinks he should have " fetched him a crack," and taken the consequences.

But Mr. Walmers only says, " No, Cobbs. No, my good fellow. Thank you!" And, the door being opened, goes in.

Boots goes in too, holding the light, and he sees Mr. Walmers go up to the bedside, bend gently down, and kiss the little sleeping face. Then he stands looking at it for a minute, looking wonderfully like it (they do say he ran away with Mrs. Walmers); and then he gently shakes the little shoulder.

" Harry, my dear boy! Harry!"

Master Harry starts up and looks at him. Looks at Cobbs too. Such is the honour of that mite, that he looks at Cobbs, to see whether he has brought him into trouble.

" I am not angry, my child. I only want you to dress yourself and come home."

" Yes, pa."

Master Harry dresses himself quickly. His breast begins to swell when he has nearly finished, and it swells more and more as he stands, at last, a looking at his father: his father standing a looking at him, the quiet image of him.

" Please may I "—the spirit of that little creatur, and the way he kept his rising tears down!—" please, dear pa—may I—kiss Norah before I go?"

" You may, my child."

So he takes Master Harry in his hand, and Boots leads the way with the candle, and they come to that other bedroom, where the

elderly lady is seated by the bed, and poor little Mrs. Harry Walmers, Junior, is fast asleep. There the father lifts the child up to the pillow, and he lays his little face down for an instant by the little warm face of poor unconscious little Mrs. Harry Walmers, Junior, and gently draws it to him,—a sight so touching to the chambermaids who are peeping through the door, that one of them calls out, "It's a shame to part 'em!" But this chambermaid was always, as Boots informs me, a soft-hearted one. Not that there was any harm in that girl. Far from it.

Finally, Boots says, that's all about it. Mr. Walmers drove away in the chaise, having hold of Master Harry's hand. The elderly lady and Mrs. Harry Walmers, Junior, that was never to be (she married a Captain long afterwards, and died in India), went off next day. In conclusion, Boots put it to me whether I hold with him in two opinions: firstly, that there are not many couples on their way to be married who are half as innocent of guile as those two children; secondly, that it would be a jolly good thing for a great many couples on their way to be married, if they could only be stopped in time, and brought back separately.

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