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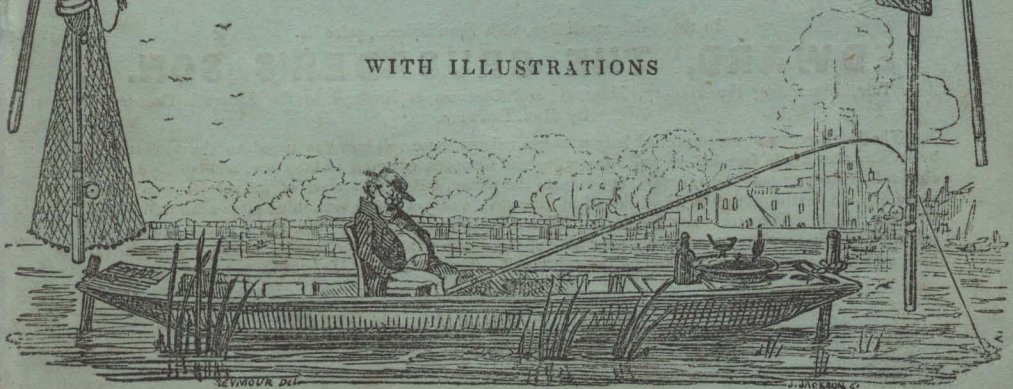
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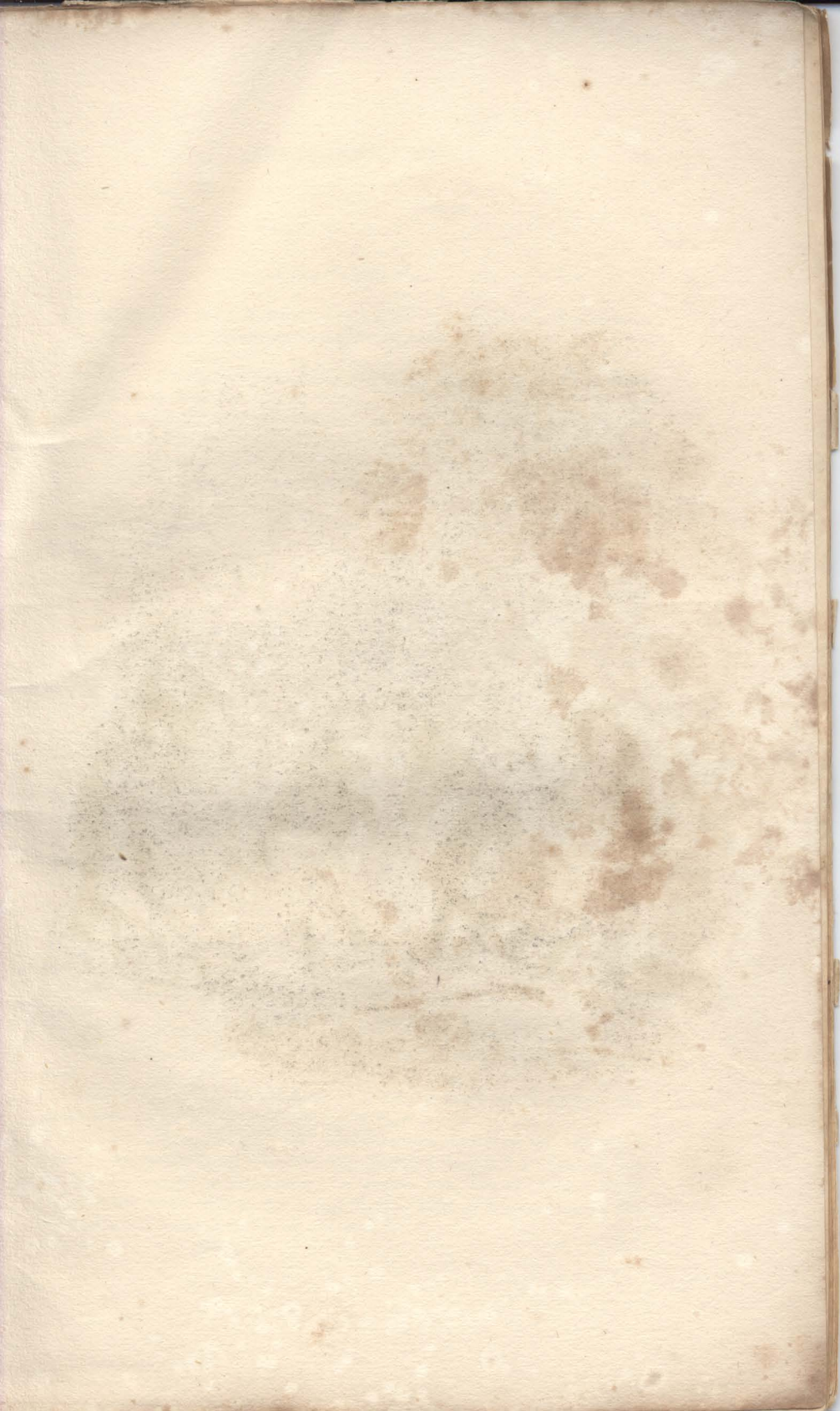






*John. 82.*







*Miss Sel.*



## CHAPTER VI.

AN OLD-FASHIONED CARD-PARTY—THE CLERGYMAN'S VERSES—  
THE STORY OF THE CONVICT'S RETURN.

SEVERAL guests who were assembled in the old parlour, rose to greet Mr. Pickwick and his friends upon their entrance; and during the performance of the ceremony of introduction, with all due formalities, Mr. Pickwick had leisure to observe the appearance, and speculate upon the characters and pursuits, of the persons by whom he was surrounded—a habit in which he in common with many other great men delighted to indulge.

A very old lady, in a lofty cap and faded silk gown—no less a personage than Mr. Wardle's mother—occupied the post of honour on the right-hand corner of the chimney-piece; and various certificates of her having been brought up in the way she should go when young, and of her not having departed from it when old, ornamented the walls, in the form of samplers of ancient date, worsted landscapes of equal antiquity, and crimson silk tea-kettle holders of a more modern period. The aunt, the two young ladies, and Mr. Wardle, each vying with the other in paying zealous and unremitting attentions to the old lady, crowded round her easy chair, one holding her ear-trumpet, another an orange, and a third a smelling-bottle, while a fourth was busily engaged in patting and punching the pillows, which were arranged for her support. On the opposite side, sat a bald-headed old gentleman, with a good-humoured benevolent face—the clergyman of Dingley Dell; and next him sat his wife, a stout blooming old lady, who looked as if she were well skilled, not only in the art and mystery of manufacturing home-made cordials greatly to other people's satisfaction, but of tasting them occasionally very much to her own. A little hard-headed, Ripstone pippin-faced man, was conversing with a fat old gentleman in one corner; and two or three more old gentlemen, and two or three more old ladies, sat bolt-upright and motionless on their chairs, staring very hard at Mr. Pickwick and his fellow-voyagers.

"Mr. Pickwick, mother," said Mr. Wardle, at the very top of his voice.

"Ah!" said the old lady, shaking her head; "I can't hear you."

"Mr. Pickwick, grandma!" screamed both the young ladies together.

"Ah!" exclaimed the old lady. "Well; it don't much matter. He don't care for an old 'ooman like me, I dare say."

"I assure you, Ma'am," said Mr. Pickwick, grasping the old lady's hand; and speaking so loud that the exertion imparted a crimson hue to his benevolent countenance; "I assure you, Ma'am, that nothing delights me more, than to see a lady of your time of life heading so fine a family, and looking so young and well."

"Ah!" said the old lady, after a short pause; "It's all very fine, I dare say; but I can't hear him."

"Grandma's rather put out now," said Miss Isabella Wardle, in a low tone; "but she'll talk to you presently."

Mr. Pickwick nodded his readiness to humour the infirmities of age, and entered into a general conversation with the other members of the circle.

"Delightful situation this," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Delightful!" echoed Messrs. Snodgrass, Tupman, and Winkle.

"Well, I think it is," said Mr. Wardle.

"There ain't a better spot o' ground in all Kent, Sir," said the hard-headed man with the pippin-face; "there ain't indeed, Sir—I'm sure there ain't, Sir;" and the hard-headed man looked triumphantly round, as if he had been very much contradicted by somebody, but had got the better of him at last.

"There ain't a better spot o' ground in all Kent," said the hard-headed man again, after a pause.

"'Cept Mullins' Meadows," observed the fat man, solemnly.

"Mullins' Meadows!" ejaculated the other, with profound contempt.

"Ah, Mullins' Meadows," repeated the fat man.

"Reg'lar good land that," interposed another fat man.

"And so it is, sure-ly," said a third fat man.

"Everybody knows that," said the corpulent host.

The hard-headed man looked dubiously round, but finding himself in a minority, assumed a compassionate air, and said no more.

"What are they talking about?" inquired the old lady of one of her grand-daughters, in a very audible voice; for, like many deaf people, she never seemed to calculate on the possibility of other persons hearing what she said herself.

"About the land, grandma."

"What about the land?—Nothing the matter, is there?"

"No, no. Mr. Miller was saying our land was better than Mullins' Meadows."

"How should he know anything about it?" inquired the old lady indignantly. "Miller's a conceited coxcomb, and you may tell him I said so." Saying which, the old lady, quite unconscious that she had spoken above a whisper, drew herself up, and looked carving knives at the hard-headed delinquent.

"Come, come," said the bustling host, with a natural anxiety to change the conversation,— "What say you to a rubber, Mr. Pickwick?"

"I should like it of all things," replied that gentleman; "but pray don't make up one on my account."

"Oh, I assure you, mother's very fond of a rubber," said Mr. Wardle; "ain't you mother?"

The old lady, who was much less deaf on this subject than on any other, replied in the affirmative.

"Joe, Joe," said the old gentleman—"Joe—gamn that—oh, here he is; put out the card-tables."



The lethargic youth contrived without any additional rousing, to set out two card-tables; the one for Pope Joan, and the other for whist. The whist-players were, Mr. Pickwick and the old lady; Mr. Miller and the fat gentleman. The round game comprised the rest of the company.

The rubber was conducted with all that gravity of deportment, and sedateness of demeanour, which befit the pursuit entitled "whist"—a solemn observance, to which, as it appears to us, the title of "game" has been very irreverently and ignominiously applied. The round-game table on the other hand, was so boisterously merry, as materially to interrupt the contemplations of Mr. Miller, who not being quite so much absorbed as he ought to have been, contrived to commit various high crimes and misdemeanours, which excited the wrath of the fat gentleman to a very great extent, and called forth the good-humour of the old lady in a proportionate degree.

"There!" said the criminal Miller triumphantly, as he took up the odd trick at the conclusion of a hand; "that could not have been played better, I flatter myself;—impossible to have made another trick!"

"Miller ought to have trumped the diamond, oughtn't he Sir?" said the old lady.

Mr. Pickwick nodded assent.

"Ought I, though?" said the unfortunate, with a doubtful appeal to his partner.

"You ought Sir," said the fat gentleman in an awful voice.

"Very sorry," said the crest-fallen Miller.

"Much use that," growled the fat gentleman.

"Two by honours—makes us eight," said Mr. Pickwick.

Another hand. "Can you one?" inquired the old lady.

"I can," replied Mr. Pickwick. "Double, single, and the rub."

"Never was such luck," said Mr. Miller.

"Never was such cards," said the fat gentleman.

A solemn silence; Mr. Pickwick humorous, the old lady serious, the fat gentleman captious, and Mr. Miller timorous.

"Another double," said the old lady: triumphantly making a memorandum of the circumstance, by placing one sixpence and a battered halfpenny, under the candlestick.

"A double, Sir," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Quite aware of the fact, Sir," replied the fat gentleman, sharply.

Another game, with a similar result, was followed by a revoke from the unlucky Miller; on which the fat gentleman burst into a state of high personal excitement which lasted until the conclusion of the game, when he retired into a corner, and remained perfectly mute for one hour and twenty-seven minutes; at the end of which time, he emerged from his retirement, and offered Mr. Pickwick a pinch of snuff with the air of a man who had made up his mind to a Christian forgiveness of injuries sustained. The old lady's hearing decidedly improved, and the unlucky Miller felt as much out of his element, as a dolphin in a sentry-box.

Meanwhile the round game proceeded right merrily. Isabella Wardle



and Mr. Trundle "went partners," and Emily Wardle and Mr. Snodgrass did the same; and even Mr. Tupman and the spinster aunt, established a joint-stock company of fish and flattery. Old Mr. Wardle was in the very height of his jollity; and he was *so* funny in his management of the board, and the old ladies were *so* sharp after their winnings, that the whole table was in a perpetual roar of merriment and laughter. There was one old lady who always had about half a dozen cards to pay for, at which everybody laughed, regularly every round; and when the old lady looked cross at having to pay, they laughed louder than ever; on which the old lady's face gradually brightened up, till at last she laughed louder than any of them. Then, when the spinster aunt got "matrimony," the young ladies laughed afresh, and the spinster aunt seemed disposed to be pettish; till, feeling Mr. Tupman squeezing her hand under the table, *she* brightened up too, and looked rather knowing as if matrimony in reality were not quite so far off as some people thought for; whereupon everybody laughed again, and especially old Mr. Wardle, who enjoyed a joke as much as the youngest. As to Mr. Snodgrass, he did nothing but whisper poetical sentiments into his partner's ear, which made one old gentleman facetiously sly, about partnerships at cards, and partnerships for life, and caused the aforesaid old gentleman to make some remarks thereupon, accompanied with divers winks and chuckles, which made the company very merry and the old gentleman's wife especially so. And Mr. Winkle came out with jokes which are very well known in town, but are not at all known in the country; and as everybody laughed at them very heartily and said they were very capital, Mr. Winkle was in a state of great honour and glory. And the benevolent clergyman looked pleasantly on; for the happy faces which surrounded the table made the good old man feel happy too; and though the merriment was rather boisterous, still it came from the heart and not from the lips: and this is the right sort of merriment, after all.

The evening glided swiftly away, in these cheerful recreations; and when the substantial, though homely supper had been despatched, and the little party formed a social circle round the fire, Mr. Pickwick thought he had never felt so happy in his life, and at no time so much disposed to enjoy, and make the most of, the passing moments.

"Now this," said the hospitable host, who was sitting in great state next the old lady's arm-chair, with her hand fast clasped in his—"This is just what I like—the happiest moments of my life have been passed at this old fire-side: and I am so attached to it, that I keep up a blazing fire here every evening, until it actually grows too hot to bear it. Why, my poor old mother, here, used to sit before this fire-place upon that little stool, when she was a girl—didn't you, mother?"

The tear which starts unbidden to the eye when the recollection of old times and the happiness of many years ago, is suddenly recalled, stole down the old lady's face, as she shook her head with a melancholy smile.

"You must excuse my talking about this old place, Mr. Pickwick," resumed the host, after a short pause—"for I love it dearly, and know



no other—the old houses and fields seem like living friends to me: and so does our little church with the ivy,—about which, by-the-by, our excellent friend there, made a song when he first came amongst us. Mr. Snodgrass, have you anything in your glass?”

“Plenty, thank you,” replied that gentleman, whose poetic curiosity had been greatly excited by the last observations of his entertainer. “I beg your pardon, but you were talking about the song of the Ivy.”

“You must ask our friend opposite about that,” said the host knowingly: indicating the clergyman by a nod of his head.

“May I say that I should like to hear you repeat it, Sir?” said Mr. Snodgrass.

“Why really,” replied the clergyman, “it’s a very slight affair; and the only excuse I have for having ever perpetrated it, is, that I was a young man at the time. Such as it is, however, you shall hear it if you wish.”

A murmur of curiosity was of course the reply; and the old gentleman proceeded to recite, with the aid of sundry promptings from his wife, the lines in question. “I call them,” said he,

#### The Ivy Green.

Oh, a dainty plant is the Ivy green,  
That creepeth o’er ruins old!  
Of right choice food are his meals, I ween,  
In his cell so lone and cold.  
The wall must be crumbled, the stone decayed,  
To pleasure his dainty whim:  
And the mouldering dust that years have made,  
Is a merry meal for him.

Creeping where no life is seen,  
A rare old plant is the Ivy green.

Fast he stealeth on, though he wears no wings,  
And a staunch old heart has he.  
How closely he twineth, how tight he clings,  
To his friend the huge Oak Tree!  
And slyly he trailleth along the ground,  
And his leaves he gently waves,  
As he joyously hugs and crawleth round  
The rich mould of dead men’s graves.  
Creeping where grim death has been,  
A rare old plant is the Ivy green.

Whole ages have fled and their works decayed,  
And nations have scattered been;  
But the stout old Ivy shall never fade,  
From its hale and hearty green.  
The brave old plant in its lonely days,  
Shall fatten upon the past:  
For the stateliest building man can raise,  
Is the Ivy’s food at last.

Creeping on, where time has been,  
A rare old plant is the Ivy green.

While the old gentleman repeated these lines a second time, to enable Mr. Snodgrass to note them down, Mr. Pickwick perused the lineaments of his face with an expression of great interest. The old gentleman having concluded his dictation, and Mr. Snodgrass having returned his note-book to his pocket, Mr. Pickwick said,—

“Excuse me, Sir, for making the remark on so short an acquaintance; but a gentleman like yourself cannot fail, I should think, to have observed many scenes and incidents worth recording, in the course of your experience as a minister of the Gospel.”

“I have witnessed some certainly,” replied the old gentleman; “but the incidents and characters have been of a homely and ordinary nature, my sphere of action being so very limited.”

“You *did* make some notes, I think, about John Edmunds, did you not?” inquired Mr. Wardle who appeared very desirous to draw his friend out, for the edification of his new visitors.

The old gentleman slightly nodded his head in token of assent, and was proceeding to change the subject, when Mr. Pickwick said,—

“I beg your pardon, Sir; but pray, if I may venture to inquire, who was John Edmunds?”

“The very thing I was about to ask,” said Mr. Snodgrass, eagerly.

“You are fairly in for it,” said the jolly host. “You must satisfy the curiosity of these gentlemen, sooner or later; so you had better take advantage of this favourable opportunity, and do so at once.”

The old gentleman smiled good-humouredly as he drew his chair forward;—the remainder of the party drew their chairs closer together, especially Mr. Tupman and the spinster aunt, who were possibly rather hard of hearing; and the old lady’s ear-trumpet having been duly adjusted, and Mr. Miller (who had fallen asleep during the recital of the verses) roused from his slumbers by an admonitory pinch, administered beneath the table by his ex-partner the solemn fat man, the old gentleman, without further preface, commenced the following tale, to which we have taken the liberty of prefixing the title of

#### THE CONVICT’S RETURN.

“When I first settled in this village,” said the old gentleman, “which is now just five-and-twenty years ago, the most notorious person among my parishioners was a man of the name of Edmunds, who leased a small farm near this spot. He was a morose, savage-hearted, bad man: idle and dissolute in his habits; cruel and ferocious in his disposition. Beyond the few lazy and reckless vagabonds with whom he sauntered away his time in the fields, or sotted in the ale-house, he had not a single friend or acquaintance; no one cared to speak to the man whom many feared, and every one detested—and Edmunds was shunned by all.

“This man had a wife and one son, who, when I first came here, was about twelve years old. Of the acuteness of that woman’s sufferings, of the gentle and enduring manner in which she bore them, of the agony of solicitude with which she reared that boy, no one can form an adequate conception. Heaven forgive me the supposition, if it be an uncharitable one, but I do firmly and in my soul believe, that the man systematically tried for many years to break her heart; but she bore it all



for her child's sake, and, however strange it may seem to many, for his father's too; for brute as he was and cruelly as he treated her, she had loved him once; and the recollection of what he had been to her, awakened feelings of forbearance and meekness under suffering in her bosom, to which all God's creatures, but women, are strangers.

"They were poor—they could not be otherwise when the man pursued such courses; but the woman's unceasing and unwearied exertions, early and late, morning, noon, and night, kept them above actual want. Those exertions were but ill repaid. People who passed the spot in the evening—sometimes at a late hour of the night—reported that they had heard the moans and sobs of a woman in distress, and the sound of blows: and more than once, when it was past midnight, the boy knocked softly at the door of a neighbour's house, whither he had been sent, to escape the drunken fury of his unnatural father.

"During the whole of this time, and when the poor creature often bore about her marks of ill-usage and violence which she could not wholly conceal, she was a constant attendant at our little church. Regularly every Sunday, morning and afternoon, she occupied the same seat with the boy at her side; and though they were both poorly dressed—much more so than many of their neighbours who were in a lower station—they were always neat and clean. Every one had a friendly nod and a kind word for 'poor Mrs. Edmunds;' and sometimes, when she stopped to exchange a few words with a neighbour at the conclusion of the service in the little row of elm trees which leads to the church porch, or lingered behind to gaze with a mother's pride and fondness upon her healthy boy, as he sported before her with some little companions, her care-worn face would lighten up with an expression of heartfelt gratitude; and she would look, if not cheerful and happy, at least tranquil and contented.

"Five or six years passed away; the boy had become a robust and well-grown youth. The time that had strengthened the child's slight frame and knit his weak limbs into the strength of manhood, had bowed his mother's form, and enfeebled her steps; but the arm that should have supported her was no longer locked in hers; the face that should have cheered her, no more looked upon her own. She occupied her old seat, but there was a vacant one beside her. The Bible was kept as carefully as ever, the places were found and folded down as they used to be: but there was no one to read it with her; and the tears fell thick and fast upon the book, and blotted the words from her eyes. Neighbours were as kind as they were wont to be of old, but she shunned their greetings with averted head. There was no lingering among the old elm trees now—no cheering anticipations of happiness yet in store. The desolate woman drew her bonnet closer over her face, and walked hurriedly away.

"Shall I tell you, that the young man, who, looking back to the earliest of his childhood's days to which memory and consciousness extended, and carrying his recollection down to that moment, could remember nothing which was not in some way connected with a long series of voluntary privations suffered by his mother for his sake, with ill-usage, and insult, and violence, and all endured for him;—shall I tell you, that he, with a reckless disregard of her breaking heart, and



a sullen wilful forgetfulness of all she had done and borne for him, had linked himself with depraved and abandoned men, and was madly pursuing a headlong career, which must bring death to him, and shame to her? Alas for human nature! You have anticipated it long since.

“The measure of the unhappy woman’s misery and misfortune was about to be completed. Numerous offences had been committed in the neighbourhood; the perpetrators remained undiscovered, and their boldness increased. A robbery of a daring and aggravated nature occasioned a vigilance of pursuit, and a strictness of search, they had not calculated on. Young Edmunds was suspected with three companions. He was apprehended—committed—tried—condemned—to die.

“The wild and piercing shriek from a woman’s voice, which resounded through the court when the solemn sentence was pronounced, rings in my ears at this moment. That cry struck a terror to the culprit’s heart, which trial, condemnation—the approach of death itself, had failed to awaken. The lips which had been compressed in dogged sullenness throughout, quivered and parted involuntarily; the face turned ashy pale as the cold perspiration broke forth from every pore; the sturdy limbs of the felon trembled, and he staggered in the dock.

“In the first transports of her mental anguish, the suffering mother threw herself upon her knees at my feet, and fervently besought the Almighty Being who had hitherto supported her in all her troubles, to release her from a world of woe and misery, and to spare the life of her only child. A burst of grief, and a violent struggle, such as I hope I may never have to witness again, succeeded. I knew that her heart was breaking from that hour; but I never once heard complaint or murmur escape her lips.

“It was a piteous spectacle to see that woman in the prison yard from day to day, eagerly and fervently attempting, by affection and entreaty, to soften the hard heart of her obdurate son. It was in vain. He remained moody, obstinate, and unmoved. Not even the unlooked-for commutation of his sentence to transportation for fourteen years, softened for an instant the sullen hardihood of his demeanour.

“But the spirit of resignation and endurance that had so long upheld her, was unable to contend against bodily weakness and infirmity. She fell sick. She dragged her tottering limbs from the bed to visit her son once more, but her strength failed her, and she sunk powerless on the ground.

“And now the boasted coldness and indifference of the young man were tested indeed; and the retribution that fell heavily upon him, nearly drove him mad. A day passed away and his mother was not there; another flew by, and she came not near him: a third evening arrived, and yet he had not seen her; and in four-and-twenty hours, he was to be separated from her—perhaps for ever. Oh! how the long-forgotten thoughts of former days rushed upon his mind, as he almost ran up and down the narrow yard—as if intelligence would arrive the sooner for *his* hurrying—and how bitterly a sense of his helplessness and desolation rushed upon him, when he heard the truth! His mother, the only parent he had ever known, lay ill—it might be, dying—within one mile of the ground



he stood on; were he free and unfettered, a few minutes would place him by her side. He rushed to the gate, and, grasping the iron rails with the energy of desperation, shook it till it rang again, and threw himself against the thick wall as if to force a passage through the stone; but the strong building mocked his feeble efforts, and he beat his hands together and wept like a child.

“I bore the mother’s forgiveness and blessing to her son in prison; and I carried his solemn assurance of repentance, and his fervent supplication for pardon, to her sick bed. I heard with pity and compassion, the repentant man devise a thousand little plans for her comfort and support, when he returned; but I knew that many months before he could reach his place of destination, his mother would be no longer of this world.

“He was removed by night. A few weeks afterwards the poor woman’s soul took its flight I confidently hope, and solemnly believe, to a place of eternal happiness and rest. I performed the burial service over her remains. She lies in our little churchyard. There is no stone at her grave’s head. Her sorrows were known to man; her virtues to God.

“It had been arranged previously to the convict’s departure, that he should write to his mother so soon as he could obtain permission, and that the letter should be addressed to me. The father had positively refused to see his son from the moment of his apprehension; and it was a matter of indifference to him whether he lived or died. Many years passed over without any intelligence of him; and when more than half his term of transportation had expired and I had received no letter, I concluded him to be dead, as, indeed, I almost hoped he might be.

“Edmunds, however, had been sent a considerable distance up the country on his arrival at the settlement; and to this circumstance, perhaps, may be attributed the fact, that though several letters were despatched none of them ever reached my hands. He remained in the same place during the whole fourteen years. At the expiration of the term steadily adhering to his old resolution, and the pledge he gave his mother, he made his way back to England amidst innumerable difficulties, and returned, on foot, to his native place.

“On a fine Sunday evening, in the month of August, John Edmunds set foot in the village he had left with shame and disgrace seventeen years before. His nearest way lay through the churchyard. The man’s heart swelled as he crossed the stile. The tall old elms, through whose branches the declining sun cast here and there a rich ray of light upon the shady path, awakened the associations of his earliest days. He pictured himself as he was then, clinging to his mother’s hand, and walking peacefully to church. He remembered how he used to look up into her pale face; and how her eyes would sometimes fill with tears as she gazed upon his features—tears which fell hot upon his forehead as she stooped to kiss him, and made him weep too, although he little knew then what bitter tears hers were. He thought how often he had run merrily down that path with some childish play-fellow, looking back ever and again, to catch his mother’s smile, or hear her gentle voice; and then a veil seemed lifted from his memory,



and words of kindness unrequited, and warnings despised, and promises broken, thronged upon his recollection till his heart failed him, and he could bear it no longer.

“ He entered the church. The evening service was concluded and the congregation had dispersed, but it was not yet closed. His steps echoed through the low building with a hollow sound, and he almost feared to be alone, it was so still and quiet. He looked round him. Nothing was changed. The place seemed smaller than it used to be; but there were the old monuments on which he had gazed with childish awe a thousand times; the little pulpit with its faded cushion; the Communion table before which he had so often repeated the Commandments he had revered as a child, and forgotten as a man. He approached the old seat; it looked cold and desolate. The cushion had been removed, and the Bible was not there. Perhaps his mother now occupied a poorer seat, or possibly she had grown infirm and could not reach the church alone. He dared not think of what he feared. A cold feeling crept over him, and he trembled violently, as he turned away.

“ An old man entered the porch just as he reached it. Edmunds started back for he knew him well; many a time had he watched him digging graves in the churchyard. What would *he* say to the returned convict? The old man raised his eyes to the stranger's face, bid him ‘good evening,’ and walked slowly on. He had forgotten him.

“ He walked down the hill, and through the village. The weather was warm, and the people were sitting at their doors, or strolling in their little gardens as he passed, enjoying the serenity of the evening, and their rest from labour. Many a look was turned towards him, and many a doubtful glance he cast on either side to see whether any knew and shunned him. There were strange faces in almost every house; in some he recognised the burly form of some old schoolfellow—a boy when he last saw him—surrounded by a troop of merry children; in others he saw, seated in an easy-chair at the cottage door a feeble and infirm old man, whom he only remembered as a hale and hearty labourer; but they had all forgotten him, and he passed on unknown.

“ The last soft light of the setting sun had fallen on the earth, casting a rich glow on the yellow corn sheaves, and lengthening the shadows of the orchard trees, as he stood before the old house—the home of his infancy, to which his heart had yearned with an intensity of affection not to be described, through long and weary years of captivity and sorrow. The paling was low—though he well remembered the time, when it had seemed a high wall to him; and he looked over into the old garden. There were more seeds and gayer flowers than there used to be, but there were the old trees still—the very tree, under which he had lain a thousand times when tired with playing in the sun, and felt the soft mild sleep of happy boyhood steal gently upon him. There were voices within the house. He listened but they fell strangely upon his ear; he knew them not. They were merry too; and he well knew that his poor old mother could not be cheerful, and he away. The door opened, and a group of little children bounded out, shouting and romping. The father with a little boy in his arms, appeared at the door, and they



crowded round him, clapping their tiny hands, and dragging him out, to join their joyous sports. The convict thought on the many times he had shrunk from his father's sight in that very place. He remembered how often he had buried his trembling head beneath the bed-clothes, and heard the harsh word, and the hard stripe, and his mother's wailing; and though the man sobbed aloud with agony of mind as he left the spot, his fist was clenched, and his teeth were set, in fierce and deadly passion.

"And such was the return to which he had looked through the weary perspective of many years, and for which he had undergone so much suffering! No face of welcome, no look of forgiveness, no house to receive, no hand to help him—and this too in the old village. What was his loneliness in the wild thick woods where man was never seen, to this!

"He felt that in the distant land of his bondage and infamy, he had thought of his native place as it was when he left it;—not as it would be, when he returned. The sad reality struck coldly at his heart, and his spirit sank within him. He had not courage to make inquiries, or to present himself to the only person who was likely to receive him with kindness and compassion. He walked slowly on; and shunning the road-side like a guilty man, turned into a meadow he well remembered; and covering his face with his hands, threw himself upon the grass.

"He had not observed that a man was lying on the bank beside him; his garments rustled as he turned round to steal a look at the new comer: and Edmunds raised his head.

"The man had moved into a sitting posture. His body was much bent, and his face was wrinkled and yellow. His dress denoted him an inmate of the workhouse: he had the appearance of being very old, but it looked more the effect of dissipation or disease, than length of years. He was staring hard at the stranger, and though his eyes were lustreless and heavy at first, they appeared to glow with an unnatural and alarmed expression after they had been fixed upon him for a short time, until they seemed to be starting from their sockets. Edmunds gradually raised himself to his knees, and looked more and more earnestly upon the old man's face. They gazed upon each other in silence.

"The old man was ghastly pale. He shuddered and tottered to his feet. Edmunds sprang to his. He stepped back a pace or two. Edmunds advanced.

"'Let me hear you speak,' said the convict in a thick broken voice.

"'Stand off,' cried the old man, with a dreadful oath. The convict drew closer to him.

"'Stand off,' shrieked the old man. Furious with terror he raised his stick, and struck Edmunds a heavy blow across the face.

"'Father—devil,' murmured the convict, between his set teeth. He rushed wildly forward, and clenched the old man by the throat—but he was his father; and his arm fell powerless by his side.

"The old man uttered a loud yell which rang through the lonely fields like the howl of an evil spirit. His face turned black: the gore rushed from his mouth and nose, and dyed the grass a deep dark red, as he staggered and fell. He had ruptured a blood vessel: and he was a



dead man before his son could raise him from that thick, sluggish, pool.

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“In that corner of the churchyard,” said the old gentleman, after a silence of a few moments, “In that corner of the churchyard of which I have before spoken, there lies buried a man, who was in my employment for three years after this event: and who was truly contrue, penitent, and humbled, if ever man was. No one save myself knew in that man’s life-time who he was, or whence he came:—it was John Edmunds the returned convict.”

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## CHAPTER VII.

HOW MR. WINKLE, INSTEAD OF SHOOTING AT THE PIGEON AND KILLING THE CROW, SHOT AT THE CROW AND WOUNDED THE PIGEON; HOW THE DINGLEY DELL CRICKET CLUB, PLAYED ALL MUGGLETON, AND HOW ALL MUGGLETON DINED AT THE DINGLEY DELL EXPENSE: WITH OTHER INTERESTING AND INSTRUCTIVE MATTERS.

THE fatiguing adventures of the day or the somniferous influence of the clergyman’s tale, operated so strongly on the drowsy tendencies of Mr. Pickwick, that, in less than five minutes after he had been shown to his comfortable bed-room, he fell into a sound and dreamless sleep, from which he was only awakened by the morning sun darting his bright beams reproachfully into the apartment. Mr. Pickwick was no sluggard; and he sprang like an ardent warrior from his tent—bedstead.

“Pleasant, pleasant country,” sighed the enthusiastic gentleman, as he opened his lattice window. “Who could live to gaze from day to day on bricks and slates, who had once felt the influence of a scene like this? Who could continue to exist, where there are no cows but the cows on the chimney-pots; nothing redolent of Pan but pan-tiles; no crop but stone crop? Who could bear to drag out a life in such a spot? Who I ask could endure it?” and, having cross-examined solitude after the most approved precedents, at considerable length, Mr. Pickwick thrust his head out of the lattice, and looked around him.

The rich, sweet smell of the hay-ricks rose to his chamber window; the hundred perfumes of the little flower-garden beneath scented the air around; the deep-green meadows shone in the morning dew that glistened on every leaf as it trembled in the gentle air; and the birds sang as if every sparkling drop were to them a fountain of inspiration. Mr. Pickwick fell into an enchanting, and delicious reverie.

“Hallo!” was the sound that roused him.

He looked to the right but he saw nobody; his eyes wandered to the left, and pierced the prospect; he stared into the sky, but he wasn’t wanted there; and then he did what a common mind would have done at once—looked into the garden, and there saw Mr. Wardle.

“How are you?” said that good-humoured individual, out of breath with his own anticipations of pleasure. “Beautiful morning, ain’t it?”



Glad to see you up so early. Make haste down, and come out. I'll wait for you here."

Mr. Pickwick needed no second invitation. Ten minutes sufficed for the completion of his toilet, and at the expiration of that time he was by the old gentleman's side.

"Hallo!" said Mr. Pickwick in his turn: seeing that his companion was armed with a gun, and that another lay ready on the grass. "What's going forward?"

"Why, your friend and I," replied the host, "are going out rook-shooting before breakfast. He's a very good shot ain't he?"

"I've heard him say he's a capital one," replied Mr. Pickwick; "but I never saw him aim at anything."

"Well," said the host, "I wish he'd come. Joe—Joe."

The fat boy, who under the exciting influence of the morning did not appear to be more than three parts and a fraction asleep, emerged from the house.

"Go up, and call the gentleman, and tell him he'll find me and Mr. Pickwick in the rookery. Show the gentleman the way there; d'ye hear?"

The boy departed to execute his commission; and the host, carrying both guns like a second Robinson Crusoe, led the way from the garden.

"This is the place," said the old gentleman, pausing after a few minutes walking, in an avenue of trees. The information was unnecessary; for the incessant cawing of the unconscious rooks, sufficiently indicated their whereabouts.

The old gentleman laid one gun on the ground, and loaded the other.

"Here they are," said Mr. Pickwick; and as he spoke, the forms of Mr. Tupman, Mr. Snodgrass, and Mr. Winkle appeared in the distance. The fat boy, not being quite certain which gentleman he was directed to call, had with peculiar sagacity, and to prevent the possibility of any mistake, called them all.

"Come along," shouted the old gentlemen, addressing Mr. Winkle; "a keen hand like you ought to have been up long ago, even to such poor work as this."

Mr. Winkle responded with a forced smile, and took up the spare gun with an expression of countenance which a metaphysical rook, impressed with a foreboding of his approaching death by violence, may be supposed to assume. It might have been keenness, but it looked remarkably like misery.

The old gentleman nodded; and two ragged boys who had been marshalled to the spot under the direction of the infant Lambert, forthwith commenced climbing up two of the trees.

"What are those lads for?" inquired Mr. Pickwick abruptly. He was rather alarmed; for he was not quite certain but that the distress of the agricultural interest, about which he had often heard a great deal, might have compelled the small boys, attached to the soil, to earn a precarious and hazardous subsistence by making marks of themselves for inexperienced sportsmen.



"Only to start the game," replied Mr. Wardle, laughing.

"To what?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Why, in plain English to frighten the rooks."

"Oh! Is that all?"

"You are satisfied?"

"Quite."

"Very well. Shall I begin?"

"If you please," said Mr. Winkle, glad of any respite.

"Stand aside, then. Now for it."

The boy shouted, and shook a branch with a nest on it. Half a dozen young rooks in violent conversation, flew out to ask what the matter was. The old gentleman fired by way of reply. Down fell one bird, and off flew the others.

"Take him up, Joe," said the old gentleman.

There was a smile upon the youth's face as he advanced. Indistinct visions of rook-pie floated through his imagination. He laughed as he retired with the bird—it was a plump one.

"Now, Mr. Winkle," said the host, reloading his own gun. "Fire away."

Mr. Winkle advanced, and levelled his gun. Mr. Pickwick and his friends covered involuntarily to escape damage from the heavy fall of rooks, which they felt quite certain would be occasioned by the devastating barrel of their friend. There was a solemn pause—a shout—a flapping of wings—a faint click.

"Hallo!" said the old gentleman.

"Won't it go?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Missed fire," said Mr. Winkle, who was very pale, probably from disappointment.

"Odd," said the old gentleman, taking the gun. "Never knew one of them miss fire before. Why, I don't see anything of the cap."

"Bless my soul," said Mr. Winkle. "I declare I forgot the cap!"

The slight omission was rectified. Mr. Pickwick crouched again. Mr. Winkle stepped forward with an air of determination and resolution; and Mr. Tupman looked out from behind a tree. The boy shouted;—four birds flew out. Mr. Winkle fired. There was a scream as of an individual—not a rook—in corporeal anguish. Mr. Tupman had saved the lives of innumerable unoffending birds, by receiving a portion of the charge in his left arm.

To describe the confusion that ensued would be impossible. To tell how Mr. Pickwick in the first transports of his emotion called Mr. Winkle "Wretch!" how Mr. Tupman lay prostrate on the ground; and how Mr. Winkle knelt horror-stricken beside him; how Mr. Tupman called distractedly upon some feminine Christian name, and then opened first one eye, and then the other, and then fell back and shut them both;—all this would be as difficult to describe in detail, as it would be to depict the gradual recovering of the unfortunate individual, the binding up his arm with pocket-handkerchiefs, and the conveying him back by slow degrees supported by the arms of his anxious friends.

They drew near the house. The ladies were at the garden-gate,



waiting for their arrival and their breakfast. The spinster aunt appeared; she smiled, and beckoned them to walk quicker. 'Twas evident she knew not of the disaster. Poor thing! There are times when ignorance is bliss indeed.

They approached nearer.

"Why, what is the matter with the little old gentleman?" said Isabella Wardle. The spinster aunt heeded not the remark; she thought it applied to Mr. Pickwick. In her eyes Tracy Tupman was a youth; she viewed his years through a diminishing glass.

"Don't be frightened," called out the old host fearful of alarming his daughters. The little party had crowded so completely round Mr. Tupman, that they could not yet clearly discern the nature of the accident.

"Don't be frightened," said the host.

"What's the matter?" screamed the ladies.

"Mr. Tupman has met with a little accident; that's all."

The spinster aunt uttered a piercing scream, burst into an hysterical laugh, and fell backwards in the arms of her nieces.

"Throw some cold water over her," said the old gentleman.

"No, no," murmured the spinster aunt; "I am better now. Bella, Emily—a surgeon! Is he wounded?—Is he dead?—Is he—ha, ha, ha!" Here the spinster aunt burst into fit number two, of hysterical laughter, interspersed with screams.

"Calm yourself," said Mr. Tupman, affected almost to tears by this expression of sympathy with his sufferings. "Dear, dear Madam, calm yourself."

"It is his voice!" exclaimed the spinster aunt; and strong symptoms of fit number three developed themselves forthwith.

"Do not agitate yourself I entreat you, dearest Madam," said Mr. Tupman, soothingly. "I am very little hurt, I assure you."

"Then you are not dead!" ejaculated the hysterical lady. "Oh, say you are not dead!"

"Don't be a fool, Rachael," interposed Mr. Wardle, rather more roughly than was quite consistent with the poetic nature of the scene. "What the devil's the use of his *saying* he isn't dead?"

"No, no, I am not," said Mr. Tupman. "I require no assistance but yours. Let me lean on your arm," he added, in a whisper, "Oh Miss Rachael!" The agitated female advanced, and offered her arm. They turned into the breakfast parlour. Mr. Tracy Tupman gently pressed her hand to his lips, and sank upon the sofa.

"Are you faint?" inquired the anxious Rachael.

"No," said Mr. Tupman. "It is nothing. I shall be better presently." He closed his eyes.

"He sleeps," murmured the spinster aunt. (His organs of vision had been closed nearly twenty seconds). "Dear—dear—Mr. Tupman."

Mr. Tupman jumped up—"Oh, say those words again!" he exclaimed.

The lady started. "Surely you did not hear them!" she said, bashfully.



"Oh yes I did!" replied Mr. Tupman; "repeat them. If you would have me recover, repeat them."

"Hush!" said the Lady. "My brother."

Mr. Tracy Tupman resumed his former position; and Mr. Wardle accompanied by a surgeon, entered the room.

The arm was examined, the wound dressed, and pronounced to be a very slight one; and the minds of the company having been thus satisfied, they proceeded to satisfy their appetites with countenances to which an expression of cheerfulness was again restored. Mr. Pickwick alone was silent and reserved. Doubt and distrust were exhibited in his countenance. His confidence in Mr. Winkle had been shaken—greatly shaken—by the proceedings of the morning.

"Are you a cricketer?" inquired Mr. Wardle of the marksman.

At any other time, Mr. Winkle would have replied in the affirmative. He felt the delicacy of his situation, and modestly replied, "No."

"Are you, Sir?" inquired Mr. Snodgrass.

"I was once upon a time," replied the host; "but I have given it up now. I subscribe to the club here, but I don't play."

"The grand match is played to-day, I believe," said Mr. Pickwick.

"It is," replied the host. "Of course you would like to see it."

"I, Sir," replied Mr. Pickwick, "am delighted to view any sports which may be safely indulged in, and in which the impotent effects of unskilful people do not endanger human life." Mr. Pickwick paused, and looked steadily on Mr. Winkle, who quailed beneath his leader's searching glance. The great man withdrew his eyes after a few minutes, and added: "Shall we be justified in leaving our wounded friend to the care of the ladies?"

"You cannot leave me in better hands," said Mr. Tupman.

"Quite impossible," said Mr. Snodgrass.

It was therefore settled that Mr. Tupman should be left at home in charge of the females; and that the remainder of the guests under the guidance of Mr. Wardle should proceed to the spot, where was to be held that trial of skill, which had roused all Muggleton from its torpor, and inoculated Dingley Dell with a fever of excitement.

As their walk which was not above two miles long, lay through shady lanes, and sequestered footpaths; and as their conversation turned upon the delightful scenery by which they were on every side surrounded, Mr. Pickwick was almost inclined to regret the expedition they had used, when he found himself in the main street of the town of Muggleton.

Everybody whose genius has a topographical bent, knows perfectly well, that Muggleton is a corporate town, with a mayor, burgesses, and freemen; and anybody who has consulted the addresses of the mayor to the freemen, or the freemen to the mayor, or both to the corporation, or all three to Parliament, will learn from thence what they ought to have known before, that Muggleton is an ancient and loyal borough, mingling a zealous advocacy of Christian principles with a devoted attachment to commercial rights; in demonstration whereof, the mayor, corporation, and other inhabitants, have presented at divers times, no fewer than one thousand four hundred and twenty petitions, against the



continuance of negro slavery abroad, and an equal number against any interference with the factory system at home; sixty-eight for permitting the sale of benefices in the church, and eighty-six for abolishing Sunday trading in the streets.

Mr. Pickwick stood in the principal street of this illustrious town, and gazed with an air of curiosity not unmixed with interest, on the objects around him. There was an open square for the market-place; and in the centre of it, a large inn with a sign-post in front, displaying an object very common in art, but rarely met with in nature—to wit, a blue lion with three bow legs in the air, balancing himself on the extreme point of the centre claw of his fourth foot. There were, within sight, an auctioneer's and fire-agency office, a corn-factor's, a linen draper's, a saddler's, a distiller's, a grocer's, and a shoe shop—the last-mentioned warehouse being also appropriated to the diffusion of hats, bonnets, wearing apparel, cotton umbrellas, and useful knowledge. There was a red-brick house with a small paved court-yard in front, which anybody might have known belonged to the attorney: and there was, moreover, another red-brick house with Venetian blinds, and a large brass door-plate, with a very legible announcement that it belonged to the surgeon. A few boys were making their way to the cricket-field; and two or three shopkeepers who were standing at their doors, looked as if they should like to be making their way to the same spot, as indeed to all appearance they might have done, without losing any great amount of custom thereby. Mr. Pickwick having paused to make these observations, to be noted down at a more convenient period, hastened to rejoin his friends, who had turned out of the main street, and were already within sight of the field of battle.

The wickets were pitched, and so were a couple of marquees for the rest and refreshment of the contending parties. The game had not yet commenced. Two or three Dingley Dellers, and All-Muggletonians, were amusing themselves with a majestic air by throwing the ball carelessly from hand to hand; and several other gentlemen dressed like them, in straw hats, flannel jackets, and white trowsers,—a costume in which they looked very much like amateur stone-masons—were sprinkled about the tents, towards one of which Mr. Wardle conducted the party.

Several dozen of "How-are-you's?" hailed the old gentleman's arrival; and a general raising of the straw hats, and bending forward of the flannel jackets, followed his introduction of his guests as gentlemen from London, who were extremely anxious to witness the proceedings of the day, with which, he had no doubt, they would be greatly delighted.

"You had better step into the marquee I think, Sir," said one very stout gentleman, whose body and legs looked like half a gigantic roll of flannel, elevated on a couple of inflated pillow-cases.

"You'll find it much pleasanter Sir," urged another stout gentleman, who strongly resembled the other half of the roll of flannel aforesaid.

"You're very good," said Mr. Pickwick.

"This way," said the first speaker; "they notch in here—it's the



best place in the whole field;" and the cricketer, panting on before, preceded them to the tent.

"Capital game—smart sport—fine exercise—very," were the words which fell upon Mr. Pickwick's ear as he entered the tent; and the first object that met his eyes, was his green-coated friend of the Rochester coach, holding forth, to the no small delight and edification of a select circle of the chosen of All-Muggleton. His dress was slightly improved, and he wore boots; but there was no mistaking him.

The stranger recognised his friends immediately: and, darting forward and seizing Mr. Pickwick by the hand, dragged him to a seat, with his usual impetuosity, talking all the while as if the whole of the arrangements were under his especial patronage and direction.

"This way—this way—capital fun—lots of beer—hogsheads; rounds of beef—bullocks; mustard—cart loads; glorious day—down with you—make yourself at home—glad to see you—very."

Mr. Pickwick sat down as he was bid, and Mr. Winkle and Mr. Snodgrass also complied with the directions of their mysterious friend. Mr. Wardle looked on, in silent wonder.

"Mr. Wardle—a friend of mine," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Friend of yours!—My dear Sir, how are you?—Friend of *my* friend's—give me your hand, Sir"—and the stranger grasped Mr. Wardle's hand with all the fervour of a close intimacy of many years, and then stepped back a pace or two as if to take a full survey of his face and figure, and then shook hands with him again, if possible, more warmly than before.

"Well; and how came you here?" said Mr. Pickwick, with a smile in which benevolence struggled with surprise.

"Come," replied the stranger—"stopping at Crown—Crown at Muggleton—met a party—flannel jackets—white trowsers—anchovy sandwiches—devil'd kidneys—splendid fellows—glorious."

Mr. Pickwick was sufficiently versed in the stranger's system of stenography to infer from this rapid and disjointed communication that he had, somehow or other, contracted an acquaintance with the All-Muggletons, which he had converted, by a process peculiar to himself, into that extent of good fellowship on which a general invitation may be easily founded. His curiosity was therefore satisfied, and putting on his spectacles he prepared himself to watch the play which was just commencing.

All-Muggleton had the first innings; and the interest became intense when Mr. Dumkins and Mr. Podder, two of the most renowned members of that most distinguished club, walked, bat in hand, to their respective wickets. Mr. Luffey, the highest ornament of Dingley Dell was pitched to bowl against the redoubtable Dumkins, and Mr. Struggles was selected to do the same kind office for the hitherto unconquered Podder. Several players were stationed, to "look out," in different parts of the field, and each fixed himself into the proper attitude by placing one hand on each knee, and stooping very much as if he were "making a back" for some beginner at leap-frog. All the regular players do this sort of thing;—indeed it's generally



supposed that it is quite impossible to look out properly in any other position.

The umpires were stationed behind the wickets; the scorers were prepared to notch the runs; a breathless silence ensued. Mr. Luffey retired a few paces behind the wicket of the passive Podder, and applied the ball to his right eye for several seconds. Dumkins confidently awaited its coming, with his eyes fixed on the motions of Luffey.

"Play," suddenly cried the bowler. The ball flew from his hand straight and swift towards the centre stump of the wicket. The wary Dumkins was on the alert; it fell upon the tip of the bat, and bounded far away over the heads of the scouts, who had just stooped low enough to let it fly over them.

"Run—run—another.—Now, then, throw her up—up with her—stop there—another—no—yes—no—throw her up, throw her up."—Such were the shouts which followed the stroke; and, at the conclusion of which All-Muggleton had scored two. Nor was Podder behind-hand in earning laurels wherewith to garnish himself and Muggleton. He blocked the doubtful balls, missed the bad ones, took the good ones, and sent them flying to all parts of the field. The scouts were hot and tired; the bowlers were changed and bowled till their arms ached; but Dumkins and Podder remained unconquered. Did an elderly gentleman essay to stop the progress of the ball, it rolled between his legs, or slipped between his fingers. Did a slim gentleman try to catch it, it struck him on the nose, and bounded pleasantly off with redoubled violence, while the slim gentleman's eyes filled with water, and his form writhed with anguish. Was it thrown straight up to the wicket, Dumkins had reached it before the ball. In short, when Dumkins was caught out, and Podder stumped out, All-Muggleton had notched some fifty-four, while the score of the Dingley Dellers was as blank as their faces. The advantage was too great to be recovered. In vain did the eager Luffey, and the enthusiastic Struggles, do all that skill and experience could suggest, to regain the ground Dingley Dell had lost in the contest;—it was of no avail; and in an early period of the winning game Dingley Dell gave in, and allowed the superior prowess of All-Muggleton.

The stranger, meanwhile, had been eating, drinking, and talking, without cessation. At every good stroke he expressed his satisfaction and approval of the player in a most condescending and patronising manner, which could not fail to have been highly gratifying to the party concerned; while at every bad attempt at a catch, and every failure to stop the ball, he launched his personal displeasure at the head of the devoted individual in such denunciations as—"Ah, ah!—stupid"—"Now butter-fingers"—"Muff"—"Humbug"—and so forth—ejaculations which seemed to establish him in the opinion of all around, as a most excellent and undeniable judge of the whole art and mystery of the noble game of cricket.

"Capital game—well played—some strokes admirable," said the stranger as both sides crowded into the tent, at the conclusion of the game.



"You have played it Sir?" inquired Mr. Wardle, who had been much amused by his loquacity.

"Played it! Think I have—thousands of times—not here—West Indies—exciting thing—hot work—very."

"It must be rather a warm pursuit in such a climate," observed Mr. Pickwick.

"Warm!—red hot—scorching—glowing. Played a match once—single wicket—friend the Colonel—Sir Thomas Blazo—who should get the greatest number of runs.—Won the toss—first innings—seven o'clock, A.M.—six natives to look out—went in; kept in—heat intense—natives all fainted—taken away—fresh half-dozen ordered—fainted also—Blazo bowling—supported by two natives—couldn't bowl me out—fainted too—cleared away the Colonel—wouldn't give in—faithful attendant—Quanko Samba—last man left—sun so hot, bat in blisters, ball scorched brown—five hundred and seventy runs—rather exhausted—Quanko mustered up last remaining strength—bowled me out—had a bath, and went out to dinner."

"And what became of what's-his-name, Sir?" inquired an old gentleman.

"Blazo?"

"No—the other gentleman."

"Quanko Samba?"

"Yes Sir."

"Poor Quanko—never recovered it—bowled on, on my account—bowled off, on his own—died Sir." Here the stranger buried his countenance in a brown jug, but whether to hide his emotion or imbibe its contents, we cannot distinctly affirm. We only know that he paused suddenly, drew a long and deep breath, and looked anxiously on, as two of the principal members of the Dingley Dell club approached Mr. Pickwick, and said—

"We are about to partake of a plain dinner at the Blue Lion, Sir; we hope you and your friends will join us."

"Of course," said Mr. Wardle, "among our friends we include Mr. ———;" and he looked towards the stranger.

"Jingle," said that versatile gentleman, taking the hint at once. "Jingle—Alfred Jingle, Esq., of No Hall, Nowhere."

"I shall be very happy, I am sure," said Mr. Pickwick.

"So shall I," said Mr. Alfred Jingle, drawing one arm through Mr. Pickwick's, and another through Mr. Wardle's, as he whispered confidentially in the ear of the former gentleman:—

"Devilish good dinner—cold, but capital—peeped into the room this morning—fowls and pies, and all that sort of thing—pleasant fellows these—well behaved, too—very."

There being no further preliminaries to arrange, the company straggled into the town in little knots of twos and threes; and within a quarter of an hour were all seated in the great room of the Blue Lion Inn Muggleton—Mr. Dumkins acting as chairman, and Mr. Luffey officiating as vice.

There was a vast deal of talking and rattling of knives and forks,



and plates : a great running about of three ponderous headed waiters, and a rapid disappearance of the substantial viands on the table ; to each and every of which item of confusion, the facetious Mr. Jingle lent the aid of half-a-dozen ordinary men at least. When everybody had eat as much as they could, the cloth was removed, bottles, glasses, and dessert were placed on the table ; and the waiters withdrew to "clear away," or in other words, to appropriate to their own private use and emolument, whatever remnants of the eatables and drinkables they could contrive to lay their hands on.

Amidst the general hum of mirth and conversation that ensued, there was a little man with a puffy Say-nothing-to-me,-or-I'll-contradict-you sort of countenance, who remained very quiet ; occasionally looking round him when the conversation slackened, as if he contemplated putting in something very weighty : and now and then bursting into a short cough of inexpressible grandeur. At length, during a moment of comparative silence, the little man called out in a very loud, solemn voice,

" Mr. Luffey."

Everybody was hushed into a profound stillness as the individual addressed, replied,

" Sir."

" I wish to address a few words to you Sir, if you will entreat the gentlemen to fill their glasses."

Mr. Jingle uttered a patronizing "hear, hear," which was responded to, by the remainder of the company : and the glasses having been filled the Vice-President assumed an air of wisdom in a state of profound attention ; and said,

" Mr. Staple."

" Sir," said the little man, rising, " I wish to address what I have to say to *you* and not to our worthy chairman, because our worthy chairman is in some measure—I may say in a great degree—the subject of what I have to say, or I may say to—to—

" State," suggested Mr. Jingle.

—" Yes, to state" said the little man, " I thank my honourable friend, if he will allow me to call him so—(four hears, and one certainly from Mr. Jingle)—for the suggestion. Sir, I am a Deller—a Dingley Deller, (cheers). I cannot lay claim to the honour of forming an item in the population of Muggleton ; nor Sir, I will frankly admit, do I covet that honour : and I will tell you why Sir, (hear) ; to Muggleton I will readily concede all those honours and distinctions to which it can fairly lay claim—they are too numerous and too well known to require aid or recapitulation from me. But Sir, while we remember that Muggleton has given birth to a Dumkins and a Podder, let us never forget that Dingley Dell can boast a Luffey and a Struggles. (Vociferous cheering.) Let me not be considered as wishing to detract from the merits of the former gentlemen. Sir, I envy them the luxury of their own feelings, on this occasion. (Cheers). Every gentleman who hears me, is probably acquainted with the reply made by an individual, who—to use an ordinary figure of speech—'hung out' in a tub, to the emperor Alexander:—'If I were not Diogenes,' said he 'I would be Alexander.'



I can well imagine these gentlemen to say, 'If I were not Dumkins I would be Luffey; if I were not Podder I would be Struggles.' (Enthusiasm.) But gentlemen of Muggleton is it in cricket alone that your fellow-townsmen stand pre-eminent? Have you never heard of Dumkins and determination? Have you never been taught to associate Podder with property? (Great applause). Have you never, when struggling for your rights, your liberties, and your privileges, been reduced, if only for an instant, to misgiving and despair? And when you have been thus depressed, has not the name of Dumkins laid afresh within your breast, the fire which had just gone out; and has not a word from that man, lighted it again as brightly as if it had never expired? (Great cheering.) Gentlemen, I beg you to surround with a rich halo of enthusiastic cheering, the united names of 'Dumkins and Podder.'

Here the little man ceased, and here the company commenced a raising of voices, and thumping of tables, which lasted with little intermission during the remainder of the evening. Other toasts were drunk. Mr. Luffey and Mr. Struggles, Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Jingle, were, each in his turn, the subject of unqualified eulogium; and each in due course returned thanks for the honour.

Enthusiastic as we are in the noble cause to which we have devoted ourselves, we should have felt a sensation of pride which we cannot express, and a consciousness of having done something to merit immortality of which we are now deprived, could we have laid the faintest outline of these addresses before our ardent readers. Mr. Snodgrass, as usual, took a great mass of notes, which would no doubt have afforded most useful and valuable information, had not the burning eloquence of the words or the feverish influence of the wine made that gentleman's hand so extremely unsteady, as to render his writing nearly unintelligible, and his style wholly so. By dint of patient investigation, we have been enabled to trace some characters bearing a faint resemblance to the names of the speakers; and we can also discern an entry of a song (supposed to have been sung by Mr. Jingle,) in which the words "bowl" "sparkling" "ruby" "bright," and "wine" are frequently repeated at short intervals. We fancy too, that we can discern at the very end of the notes, some indistinct reference to "broiled bones;" and then the words "cold" "without" occur: but as any hypothesis we could found upon them must necessarily rest upon mere conjecture, we are not disposed to indulge in any of the speculations to which they may give rise.

We will therefore return to Mr. Tupman; merely adding that within some few minutes before twelve o'clock that night, the convocation of worthies of Dingley Dell and Muggleton, were heard to sing with great feeling and emphasis, the beautiful and pathetic national air, of

We won't go home 'till morning,  
 We won't go home 'till morning,  
 We won't go home 'till morning,  
 'Till day-light doth appear.



## CHAPTER VIII.

STRONGLY ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE POSITION, THAT THE COURSE  
OF TRUE LOVE IS NOT A RAILWAY.

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. But had her agitation arisen from an amiable and feminine sensibility which would have been equally irrepressible in any case; or had it been called forth by a more ardent and passionate feeling, which he, of all men living, could alone awaken? These were the doubts which racked his brain as he lay extended on the sofa: these were the doubts which he determined should be at once and for ever resolved.

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 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 physiogno-



mist 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.

The supper passed off without any attempt at a general conversation. The old lady had gone to bed; Isabella Wardle devoted herself exclusively to Mr. Trundle; the spinster aunt's attentions were reserved for Mr. Tupman; and Emily's thoughts appeared to be engrossed by some distant object—possibly they were with the absent Snodgrass.

Eleven—twelve—one o'clock had struck, and the gentlemen had not arrived. Consternation sat on every face. Could they have been way-laid and robbed? Should they send men and lanterns in every direction by which they could be supposed likely to have travelled home? or should they—Hark! there they were. What could have made them so late? A strange voice, too! To whom could it belong? They rushed into the kitchen whither the truants had repaired, and at once obtained rather more than a glimmering of the real state of the case.

Mr. Pickwick, with his hands in his pockets and his hat cocked completely over his left eye, was leaning against the dresser, shaking his head from side to side, and producing a constant succession of the blandest and most benevolent smiles without being moved thereunto by any discernible cause or pretence whatsoever; old Mr. Wardle, with a highly-inflamed countenance, was grasping the hand of a strange gentleman muttering protestations of eternal friendship; Mr. Winkle, supporting himself by the eight-day clock, was feebly invoking destruc-



tion upon the head of any member of the family who should suggest the propriety of his retiring for the night; and Mr. Snodgrass had sunk into a chair, with an expression of the most abject and hopeless misery that the human mind can imagine, portrayed in every lineament of his expressive face.

"Is anything the matter?" inquired the three ladies.

"Nothin' the matter," replied Mr. Pickwick. "We—we're—all right.—I say, Wardle, we're all right, ain't we?"

"I should think so," replied the jolly host.—"My dears, here's my friend Mr. Jingle—Mr. Pickwick's friend, Mr. Jingle, come 'pon—little visit."

"Is anything the matter with Mr. Snodgrass Sir?" inquired Emily, with great anxiety.

"Nothing the matter, Ma'am," replied the stranger. "Cricket dinner—glorious party—capital songs—old port—claret—good—very good—wine, Ma'am—wine."

"It wasn't the wine," murmured Mr. Snodgrass, in a broken voice. "It was the salmon." (Somehow or other, it never *is* the wine, in these cases).

"Hadn't they better go to bed Ma'am?" inquired Emma. "Two of the boys will carry the gentlemen up stairs."

"I won't go to bed," said Mr. Winkle, firmly.

"No living boy shall carry me," said Mr. Pickwick, stoutly;—and he went on smiling as before.

"Hurrah!" gasped Mr. Winkle faintly.

"Hurrah!" echoed Mr. Pickwick, taking off his hat and dashing it on the floor, and insanely casting his spectacles into the middle of the kitchen.—At this humorous feat he laughed outright.

"Let's—have—'nother—bottle," cried Mr. Winkle, commencing in a very loud key, and ending in a very faint one. His head dropped upon his breast; and, muttering his invincible determination not to go to his bed, and a sanguinary regret that he had not "done for old Tupman" in the morning, he fell fast asleep; in which condition he was borne to his apartment by two young giants under the personal superintendence of the fat boy, to whose protecting care Mr. Snodgrass shortly afterwards confided his own person. Mr. Pickwick accepted the proffered arm of Mr. Tupman and quietly disappeared, smiling more than ever; and Mr. Wardle after taking as affectionate a leave of the whole family as if he were ordered for immediate execution, consigned to Mr. Trundle the honour of conveying him up stairs, and retired, with a very futile attempt to look impressively solemn and dignified.

"What a shocking scene!" said the spinster aunt.

"Dis-gusting!" ejaculated both the young ladies.

"Dreadful—dreadful!" said Jingle, looking very grave; he was about a bottle and a half ahead of any of his companions. "Horrid spectacle—very."

"What a nice man!" whispered the spinster aunt to Mr. Tupman.

"Good-looking, too!" whispered Emily Wardle.

"Oh, decidedly," observed the spinster aunt.

Mr. Tupman thought of the widow at Rochester: and his mind was



troubled. The succeeding half-hour's conversation was not of a nature to calm his perturbed spirit. The new visiter was very talkative, and the number of his anecdotes was only to be exceeded by the extent of his politeness. Mr. Tupman felt, that as Jingle's popularity increased, he (Tupman) retired further into the shade. His laughter was forced—his merriment feigned; and when at last he laid his aching temples between the sheets, he thought, with horrid delight on the satisfaction it would afford him, to have Jingle's head at that moment between the feather bed and the mattress.

The indefatigable stranger rose betimes next morning, and, although his companions remained in bed overpowered with the dissipation of the previous night, exerted himself most successfully to promote the hilarity of the breakfast-table. So successful were his efforts, that even the deaf old lady insisted on having one or two of his best jokes retailed through the trumpet; and even she condescended to observe to the spinster aunt, that "he" (meaning Jingle) "was an impudent young fellow"—a sentiment in which all her relations then and there present thoroughly coincided.

It was the old lady's habit on the fine summer mornings to repair to the arbour in which Mr. Tupman had already signalised himself, in form and manner following:—first, the fat boy fetched from a peg behind the old lady's bed-room door, a close black satin bonnet, a warm cotton shawl, and a thick stick with a capacious handle; and the old lady having put on the bonnet and shawl at her leisure, would lean one hand on the stick and the other on the fat boy's shoulder, and walk leisurely to the arbour, where the fat boy would leave her to enjoy the fresh air for the space of half an hour; at the expiration of which time he would return and reconduct her back to the house.

The old lady was very precise and very particular; and as this ceremony had been observed for three successive summers without the slightest deviation from the accustomed form, she was not a little surprised on this particular morning, to see the fat boy, instead of leaving the arbour, walk a few paces out of it, look carefully round him in every direction, and return towards her with great stealth and an air of the most profound mystery.

The old lady was timorous—most old ladies are—and her first impression was that the bloated lad was about to do her some grievous bodily harm with the view of possessing himself of her loose coin. She would have cried for assistance, but age and infirmity had long ago deprived her of the power of screaming; she, therefore, watched his motions with feelings of intense terror, which were in no degree diminished by his coming close up to her, and shouting in her ear in an agitated, and as it seemed to her, a threatening tone,—

"Missus!"

Now it so happened that Mr. Jingle was walking in the garden close to the arbour at this moment. He too heard the shout of "Missus," and stopped to hear more. There were three reasons for his doing so. In the first place, he was idle and curious; secondly, he was by no means scrupulous; thirdly, and lastly, he was concealed from view by some flowering shrubs. So there he stood, and there he listened.



"Missus," shouted the fat boy.

"Well Joe," said the trembling old lady. "I'm sure I have been a good mistress to you Joe. You have invariably been treated very kindly. You have never had too much to do; and you have always had enough to eat."

This last was an appeal to the fat boy's most sensitive feelings. He seemed touched as he replied, emphatically,—

"I knows I has."

"Then what can you want to do now?" said the old lady, gaining courage.

"I wants to make your flesh creep," replied the boy.

This sounded like a very blood-thirsty mode of showing one's gratitude; and as the old lady did not precisely understand the process by which such a result was to be attained, all her former horrors returned.

"What do you think I see in this very arbour last night?" inquired the boy.

"Bless us! What?" exclaimed the old lady, alarmed at the solemn manner of the corpulent youth.

"The strange gentleman—him as had his arm hurt—a kissin' and huggin'—"

"Who, Joe—who? None of the servants, I hope."

"Worsen than that," roared the fat boy, in the old lady's ear.

"Not one of my grand-da'aters?"

"Worsen than that."

"Worse than *that* Joe!" said the old lady, who had thought this the extreme limit of human atrocity. "Who was it, Joe? I insist upon knowing."

The fat boy looked cautiously round, and having concluded his survey, shouted in the old lady's ear,—

"Miss Rachael."

"What!" said the old lady, in a shrill tone. "Speak louder."

"Miss Rachael," roared the fat boy.

"My da'ater!"

The train of nods which the fat boy gave by way of assent, communicated a *blanc-mange* like motion to his fat cheeks.

"And she suffered him!" exclaimed the old lady.

A grin stole over the fat boy's features as he said,—

"I see her a kissin' of him agin."

If Mr. Jingle, from his place of concealment, could have beheld the expression which the old lady's face assumed at this communication, the probability is that a sudden burst of laughter would have betrayed his close vicinity to the summer-house. He listened attentively. Fragments of angry sentences such as, "Without my permission!"—"At her time of life"—"Miserable old 'ooman like me"—"Might have waited till I was dead," and so forth, reached his ears; and then he heard the heels of the fat boy's boots crunching the gravel, as he retired and left the old lady alone.

It was a remarkable coincidence perhaps, but it was nevertheless a fact, that Mr. Jingle within five minutes after his arrival at Manor Farm on the preceding night, had inwardly resolved to lay siege to



the heart of the spinster aunt, without delay. He had observation enough to see, that his off-hand manner was by no means disagreeable to the fair object of his attack; and he had more than a strong suspicion that she possessed that most desirable of all requisites, a small independence. The imperative necessity of ousting his rival by some means or other, flashed quickly upon him, and he immediately resolved to adopt certain proceedings tending to that end and object, without a moment's delay. Fielding tells us that man is fire, and woman tow, and the Prince of Darkness sets a light to 'em. Mr. Jingle knew that young men, to spinster aunts, are as lighted gas to gunpowder, and he determined to essay the effect of an explosion without loss of time.

Full of reflections upon this important decision, he crept from his place of concealment, and, under cover of the shrubs before mentioned, approached the house. Fortune seemed determined to favour his design. Mr. Tupman and the rest of the gentlemen left the garden by the side gate just as he obtained a view of it; and the young ladies he knew, had walked out alone, soon after breakfast. The coast was clear.

The breakfast-parlour door was partially open. He peeped in. The spinster aunt was knitting. He coughed; she looked up and smiled. Hesitation formed no part of Mr. Alfred Jingle's character. He laid his finger on his lips mysteriously, walked in, and closed the door.

"Miss Wardle," said Mr. Jingle, with affected earnestness, "forgive intrusion—short acquaintance—no time for ceremony—all discovered."

"Sir!" said the spinster aunt, rather astonished by the unexpected apparition and somewhat doubtful of Mr. Jingle's sanity.

"Hush!" said Mr. Jingle, in a stage whisper;—"large boy—dumpling face—round eyes—rascal!" Here he shook his head expressively, and the spinster aunt trembled with agitation.

"I presume you allude to Joseph Sir?" said the lady, making an effort to appear composed.

"Yes, Ma'am—damn that Joe!—treacherous dog, Joe—told the old lady—old lady furious—wild—raving—arbour—Tupman—kissing and hugging—all that sort of thing—eh, Ma'am—eh?"

"Mr. Jingle," said the spinster aunt, "if you come here Sir, to insult me——"

"Not at all—by no means," replied the unabashed Mr. Jingle;—"overheard the tale—came to warn you of your danger—tender my services—prevent the hubbub. Never mind—think it an insult—leave the room"—and he turned, as if to carry the threat into execution.

"What *shall* I do!" said the poor spinster, bursting into tears. "My brother will be furious!"

"Of course he will," said Mr. Jingle pausing—"outrageous."

"Oh Mr. Jingle, what *can* I say!" exclaimed the spinster aunt, in another flood of despair.

"Say he dreamt it," replied Mr. Jingle, coolly.

A ray of comfort darted across the mind of the spinster aunt at this suggestion. Mr. Jingle perceived it, and followed up his advantage.



"Pooh, pooh!—nothing more easy—blackguard boy—lovely woman—fat boy horsewhipped—you believed—end of the matter—all comfortable."

Whether the probability of escaping from the consequences of this ill-timed discovery was delightful to the spinster's feelings, or whether the hearing herself described as a "lovely woman" softened the asperity of her grief, we know not. She blushed slightly, and cast a grateful look on Mr. Jingle.

That insinuating gentleman sighed deeply, fixed his eyes on the spinster aunt's face for a couple of minutes, started melo-dramatically, and suddenly withdrew them.

"You seem unhappy Mr. Jingle," said the lady, in a plaintive voice. "May I show my gratitude for your kind interference, by inquiring into the cause, with a view, if possible, to its removal?"

"Ha!" exclaimed Mr. Jingle, with another start—"removal! remove *my* unhappiness, and your love bestowed upon a man who is insensible to the blessing—who even now contemplates a design upon the affections of the niece of the creature who—but no; he is my friend; I will not expose his vices. Miss Wardle—farewell!" At the conclusion of this address, the most consecutive he was ever known to utter, Mr. Jingle applied to his eyes the remnant of a handkerchief before noticed, and turned towards the door.

"Stay, Mr. Jingle!" said the spinster aunt emphatically. "You have made an allusion to Mr. Tupman—explain it."

"Never!" exclaimed Jingle, with a professional (i. e. theatrical) air. "Never!" and, by way of showing that he had no desire to be questioned further, he drew a chair close to that of the spinster aunt and sat down.

"Mr. Jingle," said the aunt, "I entreat—I implore you, if there is any dreadful mystery connected with Mr. Tupman, reveal it."

"Can I," said Mr. Jingle, fixing his eyes on the aunt's face—"Can I see—lovely creature—sacrificed at the shrine—heartless avarice!" He appeared to be struggling with various conflicting emotions for a few seconds, and then said in a low deep voice—"Tupman only wants your money."

"The wretch!" exclaimed the spinster, with energetic indignation. (Mr. Jingle's doubts were resolved. She *had* money).

"More than that," said Jingle—"loves another."

"Another!" ejaculated the spinster. "Who?"

"Short girl—black eyes—niece Emily."

There was a pause.

Now if there were one individual in the whole world, of whom the spinster aunt entertained a mortal and deeply-rooted jealousy, it was this identical niece. The colour rushed over her face and neck, and she tossed her head in silence with an air of ineffable contempt. At last, biting her thin lips, and bridling up, she said,—

"It can't be. I won't believe it."

"Watch 'em" said Jingle.

"I will" said the aunt.

"Watch his looks"



"I will."

"His whispers."

"I will."

"He'll sit next her at table."

"Let him."

"He'll flatter her."

"Let him."

"He'll pay her every possible attention."

"Let him."

"And he'll cut you."

"Cut me!" screamed the spinster aunt. "*He cut me;—will he!*" and she trembled with rage and disappointment.

"You will convince yourself?" said Jingle.

"I will.

"You'll show your spirit?"

"I will."

"You'll not have him afterwards?"

"Never."

"You'll take somebody else?"

"Yes."

"You shall."

Mr. Jingle fell on his knees, remained thereupon for five minutes thereafter: and rose the accepted lover of the spinster aunt—conditionally upon Tupman's perjury being made clear and manifest.

The burden of proof lay with Mr. Alfred Jingle; and he produced his evidence that very day at dinner. The spinster aunt could hardly believe her eyes. Mr. Tracy Tupman was established at Emily's side, ogling, whispering, and smiling, in opposition to Mr. Snodgrass. Not a word, not a look, not a glance, did he bestow upon his heart's pride of the evening before.

"Damn that boy!" thought old Mr. Wardle to himself.—He had heard the story from his mother. "Damn that boy! He *must* have been asleep. It's all imagination."

"Traitor!" thought the spinster aunt to herself. "Dear Mr. Jingle was not deceiving me. Oh! how I hate the wretch!"

The following conversation may serve to explain to our readers, this apparently unaccountable alteration of deportment, on the part of Mr. Tracy Tupman.

The time was evening; the scene the garden. There were two figures walking in a side path; one was rather short and stout; the other rather tall and slim. They were Mr. Tupman and Mr. Jingle. The stout figure commenced the dialogue.

"How did I do it?" he inquired.

"Splendid—capital—couldn't act better myself—you must repeat the part to-morrow—every evening, till further notice."

"Does Rachael still wish it?"

"Of course—she don't like it—but must be done—avert suspicion—afraid of her brother—says there's no help for it—only few days more—when old folks blinded—crown your happiness,"



"Any message?"

"Love—best love—kindest regards—unalterable affection. Can I say anything for you?"

"My dear fellow" replied the unsuspecting Mr. Tupman, fervently grasping his "friend's" hand—"carry my best love—say how hard I find it to dissemble—say anything that's kind: but add how sensible I am of the necessity of the suggestion she made to me, through you, this morning. Say I applaud her wisdom and admire her discretion."

"I will. Anything more?"

"Nothing; only add how ardently I long for the time when I may call her mine, and all dissimulation may be unnecessary."

"Certainly, certainly. Anything more?"

"Oh, my friend!" said poor Mr. Tupman, again grasping the hand of his companion, "receive my warmest thanks for your disinterested kindness; and forgive me if I have ever, even in thought, done you the injustice of supposing that you *could* stand in my way. My dear friend can I ever repay you?"

"Don't talk of it," replied Mr. Jingle. He stopped short, as if suddenly recollecting something, and said,—“By-the-by, you can't spare ten pounds, can you?—very particular purpose—pay you in three days.”

"I dare say I can," replied Mr. Tupman, in the fulness of his heart. "Three days, you say?"

"Only three days—all over then—no more difficulties."

Mr. Tupman counted the money into his companion's hand, and he dropped it piece by piece into his pocket, as they walked towards the house.

"Be careful," said Mr. Jingle—"not a look."

"Not a wink," said Mr. Tupman.

"Not a syllable."

"Not a whisper."

"All your attentions to the niece—rather rude, than otherwise, to the aunt—only way of deceiving the old ones."

"I'll take care," said Mr. Tupman, aloud.

"And I'll take care," said Mr. Jingle internally; and they entered the house.

The scene of that afternoon was repeated that evening, and on the three afternoons and evenings next ensuing. On the fourth, the host was in high spirits, for he had satisfied himself that there was no ground for the charge against Mr. Tupman. So was Mr. Tupman, for Mr. Jingle had told him that his affair would soon be brought to a crisis. So was Mr. Pickwick, for he was seldom otherwise. So was not Mr. Snodgrass, for he had grown jealous of Mr. Tupman. So was the old lady, for she had been winning at whist. So were Mr. Jingle and Miss Wardle, for reasons of sufficient importance in this eventful history, to be narrated in another chapter.



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