SKETCHES BY BOZ

Illustrative of Every-Day Life

and Every-Day People

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By CHARLES DICKENS

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\_With Illustrations by George Cruickshank and Phiz\_

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PREFACE

The whole of these Sketches were written and published, one by one, when

I was a very young man. They were collected and republished while I was

still a very young man; and sent into the world with all their

imperfections (a good many) on their heads.

They comprise my first attempts at authorshipâwith the exception of

certain tragedies achieved at the mature age of eight or ten, and

represented with great applause to overflowing nurseries. I am conscious

of their often being extremely crude and ill-considered, and bearing

obvious marks of haste and inexperience; particularly in that section of

the present volume which is comprised under the general head of Tales.

But as this collection is not originated now, and was very leniently and

favourably received when it was first made, I have not felt it right

either to remodel or expunge, beyond a few words and phrases here and

there.

OUR PARISH

CHAPTER IâTHE BEADLE. THE PARISH ENGINE. THE SCHOOLMASTER

How much is conveyed in those two short wordsââThe Parish!â And with how

many tales of distress and misery, of broken fortune and ruined hopes,

too often of unrelieved wretchedness and successful knavery, are they

associated! A poor man, with small earnings, and a large family, just

manages to live on from hand to mouth, and to procure food from day to

day; he has barely sufficient to satisfy the present cravings of nature,

and can take no heed of the future. His taxes are in arrear, quarter-day

passes by, another quarter-day arrives: he can procure no more quarter

for himself, and is summoned byâthe parish. His goods are distrained,

his children are crying with cold and hunger, and the very bed on which

his sick wife is lying, is dragged from beneath her. What can he do? To

whom is he to apply for relief? To private charity? To benevolent

individuals? Certainly notâthere is his parish. There are the parish

vestry, the parish infirmary, the parish surgeon, the parish officers,

the parish beadle. Excellent institutions, and gentle, kind-hearted men.

The woman diesâshe is buried by the parish. The children have no

protectorâthey are taken care of by the parish. The man first neglects,

and afterwards cannot obtain, workâhe is relieved by the parish; and when

distress and drunkenness have done their work upon him, he is maintained,

a harmless babbling idiot, in the parish asylum.

The parish beadle is one of the most, perhaps \_the\_ most, important

member of the local administration. He is not so well off as the

churchwardens, certainly, nor is he so learned as the vestry-clerk, nor

does he order things quite so much his own way as either of them. But

his power is very great, notwithstanding; and the dignity of his office

is never impaired by the absence of efforts on his part to maintain it.

The beadle of our parish is a splendid fellow. It is quite delightful to

hear him, as he explains the state of the existing poor laws to the deaf

old women in the board-room passage on business nights; and to hear what

he said to the senior churchwarden, and what the senior churchwarden said

to him; and what âweâ (the beadle and the other gentlemen) came to the

determination of doing. A miserable-looking woman is called into the

boardroom, and represents a case of extreme destitution, affecting

herselfâa widow, with six small children. âWhere do you live?â inquires

one of the overseers. âI rents a two-pair back, gentlemen, at Mrs.

Brownâs, Number 3, Little King Williamâs-alley, which has lived there

this fifteen year, and knows me to be very hard-working and industrious,

and when my poor husband was alive, gentlemen, as died in the

hospitalâââWell, well,â interrupts the overseer, taking a note of the

address, âIâll send Simmons, the beadle, to-morrow morning, to ascertain

whether your story is correct; and if so, I suppose you must have an

order into the HouseâSimmons, go to this womanâs the first thing

to-morrow morning, will you?â Simmons bows assent, and ushers the woman

out. Her previous admiration of âthe boardâ (who all sit behind great

books, and with their hats on) fades into nothing before her respect for

her lace-trimmed conductor; and her account of what has passed inside,

increasesâif that be possibleâthe marks of respect, shown by the

assembled crowd, to that solemn functionary. As to taking out a summons,

itâs quite a hopeless case if Simmons attends it, on behalf of the

parish. He knows all the titles of the Lord Mayor by heart; states the

case without a single stammer: and it is even reported that on one

occasion he ventured to make a joke, which the Lord Mayorâs head footman

(who happened to be present) afterwards told an intimate friend,

confidentially, was almost equal to one of Mr. Hoblerâs.

See him again on Sunday in his state-coat and cocked-hat, with a

large-headed staff for show in his left hand, and a small cane for use in

his right. How pompously he marshals the children into their places! and

how demurely the little urchins look at him askance as he surveys them

when they are all seated, with a glare of the eye peculiar to beadles!

The churchwardens and overseers being duly installed in their curtained

pews, he seats himself on a mahogany bracket, erected expressly for him

at the top of the aisle, and divides his attention between his

prayer-book and the boys. Suddenly, just at the commencement of the

communion service, when the whole congregation is hushed into a profound

silence, broken only by the voice of the officiating clergyman, a penny

is heard to ring on the stone floor of the aisle with astounding

clearness. Observe the generalship of the beadle. His involuntary look

of horror is instantly changed into one of perfect indifference, as if he

were the only person present who had not heard the noise. The artifice

succeeds. After putting forth his right leg now and then, as a feeler,

the victim who dropped the money ventures to make one or two distinct

dives after it; and the beadle, gliding softly round, salutes his little

round head, when it again appears above the seat, with divers double

knocks, administered with the cane before noticed, to the intense delight

of three young men in an adjacent pew, who cough violently at intervals

until the conclusion of the sermon.

Such are a few traits of the importance and gravity of a parish beadleâa

gravity which has never been disturbed in any case that has come under

our observation, except when the services of that particularly useful

machine, a parish fire-engine, are required: then indeed all is bustle.

Two little boys run to the beadle as fast as their legs will carry them,

and report from their own personal observation that some neighbouring

chimney is on fire; the engine is hastily got out, and a plentiful supply

of boys being obtained, and harnessed to it with ropes, away they rattle

over the pavement, the beadle, runningâwe do not exaggerateârunning at

the side, until they arrive at some house, smelling strongly of soot, at

the door of which the beadle knocks with considerable gravity for

half-an-hour. No attention being paid to these manual applications, and

the turn-cock having turned on the water, the engine turns off amidst the

shouts of the boys; it pulls up once more at the work-house, and the

beadle âpulls upâ the unfortunate householder next day, for the amount of

his legal reward. We never saw a parish engine at a regular fire but

once. It came up in gallant styleâthree miles and a half an hour, at

least; there was a capital supply of water, and it was first on the spot.

Bang went the pumpsâthe people cheeredâthe beadle perspired profusely;

but it was unfortunately discovered, just as they were going to put the

fire out, that nobody understood the process by which the engine was

filled with water; and that eighteen boys, and a man, had exhausted

themselves in pumping for twenty minutes, without producing the slightest

effect!

The personages next in importance to the beadle, are the master of the

workhouse and the parish schoolmaster. The vestry-clerk, as everybody

knows, is a short, pudgy little man, in black, with a thick gold

watch-chain of considerable length, terminating in two large seals and a

key. He is an attorney, and generally in a bustle; at no time more so,

than when he is hurrying to some parochial meeting, with his gloves

crumpled up in one hand, and a large red book under the other arm. As to

the churchwardens and overseers, we exclude them altogether, because all

we know of them is, that they are usually respectable tradesmen, who wear

hats with brims inclined to flatness, and who occasionally testify in

gilt letters on a blue ground, in some conspicuous part of the church, to

the important fact of a gallery having being enlarged and beautified, or

an organ rebuilt.

The master of the workhouse is not, in our parishânor is he usually in

any otherâone of that class of men the better part of whose existence has

passed away, and who drag out the remainder in some inferior situation,

with just enough thought of the past, to feel degraded by, and

discontented with the present. We are unable to guess precisely to our

own satisfaction what station the man can have occupied before; we should

think he had been an inferior sort of attorneyâs clerk, or else the

master of a national schoolâwhatever he was, it is clear his present

position is a change for the better. His income is small certainly, as

the rusty black coat and threadbare velvet collar demonstrate: but then

he lives free of house-rent, has a limited allowance of coals and

candles, and an almost unlimited allowance of authority in his petty

kingdom. He is a tall, thin, bony man; always wears shoes and black

cotton stockings with his surtout; and eyes you, as you pass his

parlour-window, as if he wished you were a pauper, just to give you a

specimen of his power. He is an admirable specimen of a small tyrant:

morose, brutish, and ill-tempered; bullying to his inferiors, cringing to

his superiors, and jealous of the influence and authority of the beadle.

Our schoolmaster is just the very reverse of this amiable official. He

has been one of those men one occasionally hears of, on whom misfortune

seems to have set her mark; nothing he ever did, or was concerned in,

appears to have prospered. A rich old relation who had brought him up,

and openly announced his intention of providing for him, left him

10,000\_l.\_ in his will, and revoked the bequest in a codicil. Thus

unexpectedly reduced to the necessity of providing for himself, he

procured a situation in a public office. The young clerks below him,

died off as if there were a plague among them; but the old fellows over

his head, for the reversion of whose places he was anxiously waiting,

lived on and on, as if they were immortal. He speculated and lost. He

speculated again and wonâbut never got his money. His talents were

great; his disposition, easy, generous and liberal. His friends profited

by the one, and abused the other. Loss succeeded loss; misfortune

crowded on misfortune; each successive day brought him nearer the verge

of hopeless penury, and the quondam friends who had been warmest in their

professions, grew strangely cold and indifferent. He had children whom

he loved, and a wife on whom he doted. The former turned their backs on

him; the latter died broken-hearted. He went with the streamâit had ever

been his failing, and he had not courage sufficient to bear up against so

many shocksâhe had never cared for himself, and the only being who had

cared for him, in his poverty and distress, was spared to him no longer.

It was at this period that he applied for parochial relief. Some

kind-hearted man who had known him in happier times, chanced to be

churchwarden that year, and through his interest he was appointed to his

present situation.

He is an old man now. Of the many who once crowded round him in all the

hollow friendship of boon-companionship, some have died, some have fallen

like himself, some have prosperedâall have forgotten him. Time and

misfortune have mercifully been permitted to impair his memory, and use

has habituated him to his present condition. Meek, uncomplaining, and

zealous in the discharge of his duties, he has been allowed to hold his

situation long beyond the usual period; and he will no doubt continue to

hold it, until infirmity renders him incapable, or death releases him.

As the grey-headed old man feebly paces up and down the sunny side of the

little court-yard between school hours, it would be difficult, indeed,

for the most intimate of his former friends to recognise their once gay

and happy associate, in the person of the Pauper Schoolmaster.

CHAPTER IIâTHE CURATE. THE OLD LADY. THE HALF-PAY CAPTAIN

We commenced our last chapter with the beadle of our parish, because we

are deeply sensible of the importance and dignity of his office. We will

begin the present, with the clergyman. Our curate is a young gentleman

of such prepossessing appearance, and fascinating manners, that within

one month after his first appearance in the parish, half the young-lady

inhabitants were melancholy with religion, and the other half, desponding

with love. Never were so many young ladies seen in our parish church on

Sunday before; and never had the little round angelsâ faces on Mr.

Tomkinsâs monument in the side aisle, beheld such devotion on earth as

they all exhibited. He was about five-and-twenty when he first came to

astonish the parishioners. He parted his hair on the centre of his

forehead in the form of a Norman arch, wore a brilliant of the first

water on the fourth finger of his left hand (which he always applied to

his left cheek when he read prayers), and had a deep sepulchral voice of

unusual solemnity. Innumerable were the calls made by prudent mammas on

our new curate, and innumerable the invitations with which he was

assailed, and which, to do him justice, he readily accepted. If his

manner in the pulpit had created an impression in his favour, the

sensation was increased tenfold, by his appearance in private circles.

Pews in the immediate vicinity of the pulpit or reading-desk rose in

value; sittings in the centre aisle were at a premium: an inch of room in

the front row of the gallery could not be procured for love or money; and

some people even went so far as to assert, that the three Miss Browns,

who had an obscure family pew just behind the churchwardensâ, were

detected, one Sunday, in the free seats by the communion-table, actually

lying in wait for the curate as he passed to the vestry! He began to

preach extempore sermons, and even grave papas caught the infection. He

got out of bed at half-past twelve oâclock one winterâs night, to

half-baptise a washerwomanâs child in a slop-basin, and the gratitude of

the parishioners knew no boundsâthe very churchwardens grew generous, and

insisted on the parish defraying the expense of the watch-box on wheels,

which the new curate had ordered for himself, to perform the funeral

service in, in wet weather. He sent three pints of gruel and a quarter

of a pound of tea to a poor woman who had been brought to bed of four

small children, all at onceâthe parish were charmed. He got up a

subscription for herâthe womanâs fortune was made. He spoke for one hour

and twenty-five minutes, at an anti-slavery meeting at the Goat and

Bootsâthe enthusiasm was at its height. A proposal was set on foot for

presenting the curate with a piece of plate, as a mark of esteem for his

valuable services rendered to the parish. The list of subscriptions was

filled up in no time; the contest was, not who should escape the

contribution, but who should be the foremost to subscribe. A splendid

silver inkstand was made, and engraved with an appropriate inscription;

the curate was invited to a public breakfast, at the before-mentioned

Goat and Boots; the inkstand was presented in a neat speech by Mr.

Gubbins, the ex-churchwarden, and acknowledged by the curate in terms

which drew tears into the eyes of all presentâthe very waiters were

melted.

One would have supposed that, by this time, the theme of universal

admiration was lifted to the very pinnacle of popularity. No such thing.

The curate began to cough; four fits of coughing one morning between the

Litany and the Epistle, and five in the afternoon service. Here was a

discoveryâthe curate was consumptive. How interestingly melancholy! If

the young ladies were energetic before, their sympathy and solicitude now

knew no bounds. Such a man as the curateâsuch a dearâsuch a perfect

loveâto be consumptive! It was too much. Anonymous presents of

black-currant jam, and lozenges, elastic waistcoats, bosom friends, and

warm stockings, poured in upon the curate until he was as completely

fitted out with winter clothing, as if he were on the verge of an

expedition to the North Pole: verbal bulletins of the state of his health

were circulated throughout the parish half-a-dozen times a day; and the

curate was in the very zenith of his popularity.

About this period, a change came over the spirit of the parish. A very

quiet, respectable, dozing old gentleman, who had officiated in our

chapel-of-ease for twelve years previously, died one fine morning,

without having given any notice whatever of his intention. This

circumstance gave rise to counter-sensation the first; and the arrival of

his successor occasioned counter-sensation the second. He was a pale,

thin, cadaverous man, with large black eyes, and long straggling black

hair: his dress was slovenly in the extreme, his manner ungainly, his

doctrines startling; in short, he was in every respect the antipodes of

the curate. Crowds of our female parishioners flocked to hear him; at

first, because he was \_so\_ odd-looking, then because his face was \_so\_

expressive, then because he preached \_so\_ well; and at last, because they

really thought that, after all, there was something about him which it

was quite impossible to describe. As to the curate, he was all very

well; but certainly, after all, there was no denying thatâthatâin short,

the curate wasnât a novelty, and the other clergyman was. The

inconstancy of public opinion is proverbial: the congregation migrated

one by one. The curate coughed till he was black in the faceâit was in

vain. He respired with difficultyâit was equally ineffectual in

awakening sympathy. Seats are once again to be had in any part of our

parish church, and the chapel-of-ease is going to be enlarged, as it is

crowded to suffocation every Sunday!

The best known and most respected among our parishioners, is an old lady,

who resided in our parish long before our name was registered in the list

of baptisms. Our parish is a suburban one, and the old lady lives in a

neat row of houses in the most airy and pleasant part of it. The house

is her own; and it, and everything about it, except the old lady herself,

who looks a little older than she did ten years ago, is in just the same

state as when the old gentleman was living. The little front parlour,

which is the old ladyâs ordinary sitting-room, is a perfect picture of

quiet neatness; the carpet is covered with brown Holland, the glass and

picture-frames are carefully enveloped in yellow muslin; the table-covers

are never taken off, except when the leaves are turpentined and

beesâ-waxed, an operation which is regularly commenced every other

morning at half-past nine oâclockâand the little nicknacks are always

arranged in precisely the same manner. The greater part of these are

presents from little girls whose parents live in the same row; but some

of them, such as the two old-fashioned watches (which never keep the same

time, one being always a quarter of an hour too slow, and the other a

quarter of an hour too fast), the little picture of the Princess

Charlotte and Prince Leopold as they appeared in the Royal Box at Drury

Lane Theatre, and others of the same class, have been in the old ladyâs

possession for many years. Here the old lady sits with her spectacles

on, busily engaged in needleworkânear the window in summer time; and if

she sees you coming up the steps, and you happen to be a favourite, she

trots out to open the street-door for you before you knock, and as you

must be fatigued after that hot walk, insists on your swallowing two

glasses of sherry before you exert yourself by talking. If you call in

the evening you will find her cheerful, but rather more serious than

usual, with an open Bible on the table, before her, of which âSarah,â who

is just as neat and methodical as her mistress, regularly reads two or

three chapters in the parlour aloud.

The old lady sees scarcely any company, except the little girls before

noticed, each of whom has always a regular fixed day for a periodical

tea-drinking with her, to which the child looks forward as the greatest

treat of its existence. She seldom visits at a greater distance than the

next door but one on either side; and when she drinks tea here, Sarah

runs out first and knocks a double-knock, to prevent the possibility of

her âMissisâsâ catching cold by having to wait at the door. She is very

scrupulous in returning these little invitations, and when she asks Mr.

and Mrs. So-and-so, to meet Mr. and Mrs. Somebody-else, Sarah and she

dust the urn, and the best china tea-service, and the Pope Joan board;

and the visitors are received in the drawing-room in great state. She

has but few relations, and they are scattered about in different parts of

the country, and she seldom sees them. She has a son in India, whom she

always describes to you as a fine, handsome fellowâso like the profile of

his poor dear father over the sideboard, but the old lady adds, with a

mournful shake of the head, that he has always been one of her greatest

trials; and that indeed he once almost broke her heart; but it pleased

God to enable her to get the better of it, and she would prefer your

never mentioning the subject to her again. She has a great number of

pensioners: and on Saturday, after she comes back from market, there is a

regular levee of old men and women in the passage, waiting for their

weekly gratuity. Her name always heads the list of any benevolent

subscriptions, and hers are always the most liberal donations to the

Winter Coal and Soup Distribution Society. She subscribed twenty pounds

towards the erection of an organ in our parish church, and was so

overcome the first Sunday the children sang to it, that she was obliged

to be carried out by the pew-opener. Her entrance into church on Sunday

is always the signal for a little bustle in the side aisle, occasioned by

a general rise among the poor people, who bow and curtsey until the

pew-opener has ushered the old lady into her accustomed seat, dropped a

respectful curtsey, and shut the door: and the same ceremony is repeated

on her leaving church, when she walks home with the family next door but

one, and talks about the sermon all the way, invariably opening the

conversation by asking the youngest boy where the text was.

Thus, with the annual variation of a trip to some quiet place on the

sea-coast, passes the old ladyâs life. It has rolled on in the same

unvarying and benevolent course for many years now, and must at no

distant period be brought to its final close. She looks forward to its

termination, with calmness and without apprehension. She has everything

to hope and nothing to fear.

A very different personage, but one who has rendered himself very

conspicuous in our parish, is one of the old ladyâs next-door neighbours.

He is an old naval officer on half-pay, and his bluff and unceremonious

behaviour disturbs the old ladyâs domestic economy, not a little. In the

first place, he \_will\_ smoke cigars in the front court, and when he wants

something to drink with themâwhich is by no means an uncommon

circumstanceâhe lifts up the old ladyâs knocker with his walking-stick,

and demands to have a glass of table ale, handed over the rails. In

addition to this cool proceeding, he is a bit of a Jack of all trades, or

to use his own words, âa regular Robinson Crusoe;â and nothing delights

him better than to experimentalise on the old ladyâs property. One

morning he got up early, and planted three or four roots of full-grown

marigolds in every bed of her front garden, to the inconceivable

astonishment of the old lady, who actually thought when she got up and

looked out of the window, that it was some strange eruption which had

come out in the night. Another time he took to pieces the eight-day

clock on the front landing, under pretence of cleaning the works, which

he put together again, by some undiscovered process, in so wonderful a

manner, that the large hand has done nothing but trip up the little one

ever since. Then he took to breeding silk-worms, which he \_would\_ bring

in two or three times a day, in little paper boxes, to show the old lady,

generally dropping a worm or two at every visit. The consequence was,

that one morning a very stout silk-worm was discovered in the act of

walking up-stairsâprobably with the view of inquiring after his friends,

for, on further inspection, it appeared that some of his companions had

already found their way to every room in the house. The old lady went to

the seaside in despair, and during her absence he completely effaced the

name from her brass door-plate, in his attempts to polish it with

aqua-fortis.

But all this is nothing to his seditious conduct in public life. He

attends every vestry meeting that is held; always opposes the constituted

authorities of the parish, denounces the profligacy of the churchwardens,

contests legal points against the vestry-clerk, will make the

tax-gatherer call for his money till he wonât call any longer, and then

he sends it: finds fault with the sermon every Sunday, says that the

organist ought to be ashamed of himself, offers to back himself for any

amount to sing the psalms better than all the children put together, male

and female; and, in short, conducts himself in the most turbulent and

uproarious manner. The worst of it is, that having a high regard for the

old lady, he wants to make her a convert to his views, and therefore

walks into her little parlour with his newspaper in his hand, and talks

violent politics by the hour. He is a charitable, open-hearted old

fellow at bottom, after all; so, although he puts the old lady a little

out occasionally, they agree very well in the main, and she laughs as

much at each feat of his handiwork when it is all over, as anybody else.

CHAPTER IIIâTHE FOUR SISTERS

The row of houses in which the old lady and her troublesome neighbour

reside, comprises, beyond all doubt, a greater number of characters

within its circumscribed limits, than all the rest of the parish put

together. As we cannot, consistently with our present plan, however,

extend the number of our parochial sketches beyond six, it will be better

perhaps, to select the most peculiar, and to introduce them at once

without further preface.

The four Miss Willises, then, settled in our parish thirteen years ago.

It is a melancholy reflection that the old adage, âtime and tide wait for

no man,â applies with equal force to the fairer portion of the creation;

and willingly would we conceal the fact, that even thirteen years ago the

Miss Willises were far from juvenile. Our duty as faithful parochial

chroniclers, however, is paramount to every other consideration, and we

are bound to state, that thirteen years since, the authorities in

matrimonial cases, considered the youngest Miss Willis in a very

precarious state, while the eldest sister was positively given over, as

being far beyond all human hope. Well, the Miss Willises took a lease of

the house; it was fresh painted and papered from top to bottom: the paint

inside was all wainscoted, the marble all cleaned, the old grates taken

down, and register-stoves, you could see to dress by, put up; four trees

were planted in the back garden, several small baskets of gravel

sprinkled over the front one, vans of elegant furniture arrived, spring

blinds were fitted to the windows, carpenters who had been employed in

the various preparations, alterations, and repairs, made confidential

statements to the different maid-servants in the row, relative to the

magnificent scale on which the Miss Willises were commencing; the

maid-servants told their âMissises,â the Missises told their friends, and

vague rumours were circulated throughout the parish, that No. 25, in

Gordon-place, had been taken by four maiden ladies of immense property.

At last, the Miss Willises moved in; and then the âcallingâ began. The

house was the perfection of neatnessâso were the four Miss Willises.

Everything was formal, stiff, and coldâso were the four Miss Willises.

Not a single chair of the whole set was ever seen out of its placeânot a

single Miss Willis of the whole four was ever seen out of hers. There

they always sat, in the same places, doing precisely the same things at

the same hour. The eldest Miss Willis used to knit, the second to draw,

the two others to play duets on the piano. They seemed to have no

separate existence, but to have made up their minds just to winter

through life together. They were three long graces in drapery, with the

addition, like a school-dinner, of another long grace afterwardsâthe

three fates with another sisterâthe Siamese twins multiplied by two. The

eldest Miss Willis grew biliousâthe four Miss Willises grew bilious

immediately. The eldest Miss Willis grew ill-tempered and religiousâthe

four Miss Willises were ill-tempered and religious directly. Whatever

the eldest did, the others did, and whatever anybody else did, they all

disapproved of; and thus they vegetatedâliving in Polar harmony among

themselves, and, as they sometimes went out, or saw company âin a

quiet-wayâ at home, occasionally icing the neighbours. Three years

passed over in this way, when an unlooked for and extraordinary

phenomenon occurred. The Miss Willises showed symptoms of summer, the

frost gradually broke up; a complete thaw took place. Was it possible?

one of the four Miss Willises was going to be married!

Now, where on earth the husband came from, by what feelings the poor man

could have been actuated, or by what process of reasoning the four Miss

Willises succeeded in persuading themselves that it was possible for a

man to marry one of them, without marrying them all, are questions too

profound for us to resolve: certain it is, however, that the visits of

Mr. Robinson (a gentleman in a public office, with a good salary and a

little property of his own, besides) were receivedâthat the four Miss

Willises were courted in due form by the said Mr Robinsonâthat the

neighbours were perfectly frantic in their anxiety to discover which of

the four Miss Willises was the fortunate fair, and that the difficulty

they experienced in solving the problem was not at all lessened by the

announcement of the eldest Miss Willis,ââ\_We\_ are going to marry Mr.

Robinson.â

It was very extraordinary. They were so completely identified, the one

with the other, that the curiosity of the whole rowâeven of the old lady

herselfâwas roused almost beyond endurance. The subject was discussed at

every little card-table and tea-drinking. The old gentleman of silk-worm

notoriety did not hesitate to express his decided opinion that Mr.

Robinson was of Eastern descent, and contemplated marrying the whole

family at once; and the row, generally, shook their heads with

considerable gravity, and declared the business to be very mysterious.

They hoped it might all end well;âit certainly had a very singular

appearance, but still it would be uncharitable to express any opinion

without good grounds to go upon, and certainly the Miss Willises were

\_quite\_ old enough to judge for themselves, and to be sure people ought

to know their own business best, and so forth.

At last, one fine morning, at a quarter before eight oâclock, A.M., two

glass-coaches drove up to the Miss Willisesâ door, at which Mr. Robinson

had arrived in a cab ten minutes before, dressed in a light-blue coat and

double-milled kersey pantaloons, white neckerchief, pumps, and

dress-gloves, his manner denoting, as appeared from the evidence of the

housemaid at No. 23, who was sweeping the door-steps at the time, a

considerable degree of nervous excitement. It was also hastily reported

on the same testimony, that the cook who opened the door, wore a large

white bow of unusual dimensions, in a much smarter head-dress than the

regulation cap to which the Miss Willises invariably restricted the

somewhat excursive tastes of female servants in general.

The intelligence spread rapidly from house to house. It was quite clear

that the eventful morning had at length arrived; the whole row stationed

themselves behind their first and second floor blinds, and waited the

result in breathless expectation.

At last the Miss Willisesâ door opened; the door of the first glass-coach

did the same. Two gentlemen, and a pair of ladies to correspondâfriends

of the family, no doubt; up went the steps, bang went the door, off went

the first class-coach, and up came the second.

The street door opened again; the excitement of the whole row

increasedâMr. Robinson and the eldest Miss Willis. âI thought so,â said

the lady at No. 19; âI always said it was \_Miss\_ Willis!âââWell, I

never!â ejaculated the young lady at No. 18 to the young lady at No.

17.ââDid you ever, dear!â responded the young lady at No. 17 to the young

lady at No. 18. âItâs too ridiculous!â exclaimed a spinster of an

\_un\_certain age, at No. 16, joining in the conversation. But who shall

portray the astonishment of Gordon-place, when Mr. Robinson handed in

\_all\_ the Miss Willises, one after the other, and then squeezed himself

into an acute angle of the glass-coach, which forthwith proceeded at a

brisk pace, after the other glass-coach, which other glass-coach had

itself proceeded, at a brisk pace, in the direction of the parish church!

Who shall depict the perplexity of the clergyman, when \_all\_ the Miss

Willises knelt down at the communion-table, and repeated the responses

incidental to the marriage service in an audible voiceâor who shall

describe the confusion which prevailed, whenâeven after the difficulties

thus occasioned had been adjustedâ\_all\_ the Miss Willises went into

hysterics at the conclusion of the ceremony, until the sacred edifice

resounded with their united wailings!

As the four sisters and Mr. Robinson continued to occupy the same house

after this memorable occasion, and as the married sister, whoever she

was, never appeared in public without the other three, we are not quite

clear that the neighbours ever would have discovered the real Mrs.

Robinson, but for a circumstance of the most gratifying description,

which \_will\_ happen occasionally in the best-regulated families. Three

quarter-days elapsed, and the row, on whom a new light appeared to have

been bursting for some time, began to speak with a sort of implied

confidence on the subject, and to wonder how Mrs. Robinsonâthe youngest

Miss Willis that wasâgot on; and servants might be seen running up the

steps, about nine or ten oâclock every morning, with âMissisâs

compliments, and wishes to know how Mrs. Robinson finds herself this

morning?â And the answer always was, âMrs. Robinsonâs compliments, and

sheâs in very good spirits, and doesnât find herself any worse.â The

piano was heard no longer, the knitting-needles were laid aside, drawing

was neglected, and mantua-making and millinery, on the smallest scale

imaginable, appeared to have become the favourite amusement of the whole

family. The parlour wasnât quite as tidy as it used to be, and if you

called in the morning, you would see lying on a table, with an old

newspaper carelessly thrown over them, two or three particularly small

caps, rather larger than if they had been made for a moderate-sized doll,

with a small piece of lace, in the shape of a horse-shoe, let in behind:

or perhaps a white robe, not very large in circumference, but very much

out of proportion in point of length, with a little tucker round the top,

and a frill round the bottom; and once when we called, we saw a long

white roller, with a kind of blue margin down each side, the probable use

of which, we were at a loss to conjecture. Then we fancied that Dr.

Dawson, the surgeon, &c., who displays a large lamp with a different

colour in every pane of glass, at the corner of the row, began to be

knocked up at night oftener than he used to be; and once we were very

much alarmed by hearing a hackney-coach stop at Mrs. Robinsonâs door, at

half-past two oâclock in the morning, out of which there emerged a fat

old woman, in a cloak and night-cap, with a bundle in one hand, and a

pair of pattens in the other, who looked as if she had been suddenly

knocked up out of bed for some very special purpose.

When we got up in the morning we saw that the knocker was tied up in an

old white kid glove; and we, in our innocence (we were in a state of

bachelorship then), wondered what on earth it all meant, until we heard

the eldest Miss Willis, \_in propriÃ¢ personÃ¢\_ say, with great dignity, in

answer to the next inquiry, â\_My\_ compliments, and Mrs. Robinsonâs doing

as well as can be expected, and the little girl thrives wonderfully.â

And then, in common with the rest of the row, our curiosity was

satisfied, and we began to wonder it had never occurred to us what the

matter was, before.

CHAPTER IVâTHE ELECTION FOR BEADLE

A great event has recently occurred in our parish. A contest of

paramount interest has just terminated; a parochial convulsion has taken

place. It has been succeeded by a glorious triumph, which the countryâor

at least the parishâit is all the sameâwill long remember. We have had

an election; an election for beadle. The supporters of the old beadle

system have been defeated in their stronghold, and the advocates of the

great new beadle principles have achieved a proud victory.

Our parish, which, like all other parishes, is a little world of its own,

has long been divided into two parties, whose contentions, slumbering for

a while, have never failed to burst forth with unabated vigour, on any

occasion on which they could by possibility be renewed. Watching-rates,

lighting-rates, paving-rates, sewerâs-rates, church-rates,

poorâs-ratesâall sorts of rates, have been in their turns the subjects of

a grand struggle; and as to questions of patronage, the asperity and

determination with which they have been contested is scarcely credible.

The leader of the official partyâthe steady advocate of the

churchwardens, and the unflinching supporter of the overseersâis an old

gentleman who lives in our row. He owns some half a dozen houses in it,

and always walks on the opposite side of the way, so that he may be able

to take in a view of the whole of his property at once. He is a tall,

thin, bony man, with an interrogative nose, and little restless perking

eyes, which appear to have been given him for the sole purpose of peeping

into other peopleâs affairs with. He is deeply impressed with the

importance of our parish business, and prides himself, not a little, on

his style of addressing the parishioners in vestry assembled. His views

are rather confined than extensive; his principles more narrow than

liberal. He has been heard to declaim very loudly in favour of the

liberty of the press, and advocates the repeal of the stamp duty on

newspapers, because the daily journals who now have a monopoly of the

public, never give \_verbatim\_ reports of vestry meetings. He would not

appear egotistical for the world, but at the same time he must say, that

there are \_speeches\_âthat celebrated speech of his own, on the emoluments

of the sexton, and the duties of the office, for instanceâwhich might be

communicated to the public, greatly to their improvement and advantage.

His great opponent in public life is Captain Purday, the old naval

officer on half-pay, to whom we have already introduced our readers. The

captain being a determined opponent of the constituted authorities,

whoever they may chance to be, and our other friend being their steady

supporter, with an equal disregard of their individual merits, it will

readily be supposed, that occasions for their coming into direct

collision are neither few nor far between. They divided the vestry

fourteen times on a motion for heating the church with warm water instead

of coals: and made speeches about liberty and expenditure, and

prodigality and hot water, which threw the whole parish into a state of

excitement. Then the captain, when he was on the visiting committee, and

his opponent overseer, brought forward certain distinct and specific

charges relative to the management of the workhouse, boldly expressed his

total want of confidence in the existing authorities, and moved for âa

copy of the recipe by which the paupersâ soup was prepared, together with

any documents relating thereto.â This the overseer steadily resisted; he

fortified himself by precedent, appealed to the established usage, and

declined to produce the papers, on the ground of the injury that would be

done to the public service, if documents of a strictly private nature,

passing between the master of the workhouse and the cook, were to be thus

dragged to light on the motion of any individual member of the vestry.

The motion was lost by a majority of two; and then the captain, who never

allows himself to be defeated, moved for a committee of inquiry into the

whole subject. The affair grew serious: the question was discussed at

meeting after meeting, and vestry after vestry; speeches were made,

attacks repudiated, personal defiances exchanged, explanations received,

and the greatest excitement prevailed, until at last, just as the

question was going to be finally decided, the vestry found that somehow

or other, they had become entangled in a point of form, from which it was

impossible to escape with propriety. So, the motion was dropped, and

everybody looked extremely important, and seemed quite satisfied with the

meritorious nature of the whole proceeding.

This was the state of affairs in our parish a week or two since, when

Simmons, the beadle, suddenly died. The lamented deceased had

over-exerted himself, a day or two previously, in conveying an aged

female, highly intoxicated, to the strong room of the work-house. The

excitement thus occasioned, added to a severe cold, which this

indefatigable officer had caught in his capacity of director of the

parish engine, by inadvertently playing over himself instead of a fire,

proved too much for a constitution already enfeebled by age; and the

intelligence was conveyed to the Board one evening that Simmons had died,

and left his respects.

The breath was scarcely out of the body of the deceased functionary, when

the field was filled with competitors for the vacant office, each of whom

rested his claims to public support, entirely on the number and extent of

his family, as if the office of beadle were originally instituted as an

encouragement for the propagation of the human species. âBung for

Beadle. Five small children!âââHopkins for Beadle. Seven small

children!!âââTimkins for Beadle. Nine small children!!!â Such were the

placards in large black letters on a white ground, which were plentifully

pasted on the walls, and posted in the windows of the principal shops.

Timkinsâs success was considered certain: several mothers of families

half promised their votes, and the nine small children would have run

over the course, but for the production of another placard, announcing

the appearance of a still more meritorious candidate. âSpruggins for

Beadle. Ten small children (two of them twins), and a wife!!!â There

was no resisting this; ten small children would have been almost

irresistible in themselves, without the twins, but the touching

parenthesis about that interesting production of nature, and the still

more touching allusion to Mrs. Spruggins, must ensure success. Spruggins

was the favourite at once, and the appearance of his lady, as she went

about to solicit votes (which encouraged confident hopes of a still

further addition to the house of Spruggins at no remote period),

increased the general prepossession in his favour. The other candidates,

Bung alone excepted, resigned in despair. The day of election was fixed;

and the canvass proceeded with briskness and perseverance on both sides.

The members of the vestry could not be supposed to escape the contagious

excitement inseparable from the occasion. The majority of the lady

inhabitants of the parish declared at once for Spruggins; and the

\_quondam\_ overseer took the same side, on the ground that men with large

families always had been elected to the office, and that although he must

admit, that, in other respects, Spruggins was the least qualified

candidate of the two, still it was an old practice, and he saw no reason

why an old practice should be departed from. This was enough for the

captain. He immediately sided with Bung, canvassed for him personally in

all directions, wrote squibs on Spruggins, and got his butcher to skewer

them up on conspicuous joints in his shop-front; frightened his

neighbour, the old lady, into a palpitation of the heart, by his awful

denunciations of Sprugginsâs party; and bounced in and out, and up and

down, and backwards and forwards, until all the sober inhabitants of the

parish thought it inevitable that he must die of a brain fever, long

before the election began.

The day of election arrived. It was no longer an individual struggle,

but a party contest between the ins and outs. The question was, whether

the withering influence of the overseers, the domination of the

churchwardens, and the blighting despotism of the vestry-clerk, should be

allowed to render the election of beadle a formâa nullity: whether they

should impose a vestry-elected beadle on the parish, to do their bidding

and forward their views, or whether the parishioners, fearlessly

asserting their undoubted rights, should elect an independent beadle of

their own.

The nomination was fixed to take place in the vestry, but so great was

the throng of anxious spectators, that it was found necessary to adjourn

to the church, where the ceremony commenced with due solemnity. The

appearance of the churchwardens and overseers, and the ex-churchwardens

and ex-overseers, with Spruggins in the rear, excited general attention.

Spruggins was a little thin man, in rusty black, with a long pale face,

and a countenance expressive of care and fatigue, which might either be

attributed to the extent of his family or the anxiety of his feelings.

His opponent appeared in a cast-off coat of the captainâsâa blue coat

with bright buttons; white trousers, and that description of shoes

familiarly known by the appellation of âhigh-lows.â There was a serenity

in the open countenance of Bungâa kind of moral dignity in his confident

airâan âI wish you may get itâ sort of expression in his eyeâwhich

infused animation into his supporters, and evidently dispirited his

opponents.

The ex-churchwarden rose to propose Thomas Spruggins for beadle. He had

known him long. He had had his eye upon him closely for years; he had

watched him with twofold vigilance for months. (A parishioner here

suggested that this might be termed âtaking a double sight,â but the

observation was drowned in loud cries of âOrder!â) He would repeat that

he had had his eye upon him for years, and this he would say, that a more

well-conducted, a more well-behaved, a more sober, a more quiet man, with

a more well-regulated mind, he had never met with. A man with a larger

family he had never known (cheers). The parish required a man who could

be depended on (âHear!â from the Spruggins side, answered by ironical

cheers from the Bung party). Such a man he now proposed (âNo,â âYesâ).

He would not allude to individuals (the ex-churchwarden continued, in the

celebrated negative style adopted by great speakers). He would not

advert to a gentleman who had once held a high rank in the service of his

majesty; he would not say, that that gentleman was no gentleman; he would

not assert, that that man was no man; he would not say, that he was a

turbulent parishioner; he would not say, that he had grossly misbehaved

himself, not only on this, but on all former occasions; he would not say,

that he was one of those discontented and treasonable spirits, who

carried confusion and disorder wherever they went; he would not say, that

he harboured in his heart envy, and hatred, and malice, and all

uncharitableness. No! He wished to have everything comfortable and

pleasant, and therefore, he would sayânothing about him (cheers).

The captain replied in a similar parliamentary style. He would not say,

he was astonished at the speech they had just heard; he would not say, he

was disgusted (cheers). He would not retort the epithets which had been

hurled against him (renewed cheering); he would not allude to men once in

office, but now happily out of it, who had mismanaged the workhouse,

ground the paupers, diluted the beer, slack-baked the bread, boned the

meat, heightened the work, and lowered the soup (tremendous cheers). He

would not ask what such men deserved (a voice, âNothing a-day, and find

themselves!â). He would not say, that one burst of general indignation

should drive them from the parish they polluted with their presence

(âGive it him!â). He would not allude to the unfortunate man who had

been proposedâhe would not say, as the vestryâs tool, but as Beadle. He

would not advert to that individualâs family; he would not say, that nine

children, twins, and a wife, were very bad examples for pauper imitation

(loud cheers). He would not advert in detail to the qualifications of

Bung. The man stood before him, and he would not say in his presence,

what he might be disposed to say of him, if he were absent. (Here Mr.

Bung telegraphed to a friend near him, under cover of his hat, by

contracting his left eye, and applying his right thumb to the tip of his

nose). It had been objected to Bung that he had only five children

(âHear, hear!â from the opposition). Well; he had yet to learn that the

legislature had affixed any precise amount of infantine qualification to

the office of beadle; but taking it for granted that an extensive family

were a great requisite, he entreated them to look to facts, and compare

\_data\_, about which there could be no mistake. Bung was 35 years of age.

Sprugginsâof whom he wished to speak with all possible respectâwas 50.

Was it not more than possibleâwas it not very probableâthat by the time

Bung attained the latter age, he might see around him a family, even

exceeding in number and extent, that to which Spruggins at present laid

claim (deafening cheers and waving of handkerchiefs)? The captain

concluded, amidst loud applause, by calling upon the parishioners to

sound the tocsin, rush to the poll, free themselves from dictation, or be

slaves for ever.

On the following day the polling began, and we never have had such a

bustle in our parish since we got up our famous anti-slavery petition,

which was such an important one, that the House of Commons ordered it to

be printed, on the motion of the member for the district. The captain

engaged two hackney-coaches and a cab for Bungâs peopleâthe cab for the

drunken voters, and the two coaches for the old ladies, the greater

portion of whom, owing to the captainâs impetuosity, were driven up to

the poll and home again, before they recovered from their flurry

sufficiently to know, with any degree of clearness, what they had been

doing. The opposite party wholly neglected these precautions, and the

consequence was, that a great many ladies who were walking leisurely up

to the churchâfor it was a very hot dayâto vote for Spruggins, were

artfully decoyed into the coaches, and voted for Bung. The captainâs

arguments, too, had produced considerable effect: the attempted influence

of the vestry produced a greater. A threat of exclusive dealing was

clearly established against the vestry-clerkâa case of heartless and

profligate atrocity. It appeared that the delinquent had been in the

habit of purchasing six pennâorth of muffins, weekly, from an old woman

who rents a small house in the parish, and resides among the original

settlers; on her last weekly visit, a message was conveyed to her through

the medium of the cook, couched in mysterious terms, but indicating with

sufficient clearness, that the vestry-clerkâs appetite for muffins, in

future, depended entirely on her vote on the beadleship. This was

sufficient: the stream had been turning previously, and the impulse thus

administered directed its final course. The Bung party ordered one

shillingâs-worth of muffins weekly for the remainder of the old womanâs

natural life; the parishioners were loud in their exclamations; and the

fate of Spruggins was sealed.

It was in vain that the twins were exhibited in dresses of the same

pattern, and night-caps, to match, at the church door: the boy in Mrs.

Sprugginsâs right arm, and the girl in her leftâeven Mrs. Spruggins

herself failed to be an object of sympathy any longer. The majority

attained by Bung on the gross poll was four hundred and twenty-eight, and

the cause of the parishioners triumphed.

CHAPTER VâTHE BROKERâS MAN

The excitement of the late election has subsided, and our parish being

once again restored to a state of comparative tranquillity, we are

enabled to devote our attention to those parishioners who take little

share in our party contests or in the turmoil and bustle of public life.

And we feel sincere pleasure in acknowledging here, that in collecting

materials for this task we have been greatly assisted by Mr. Bung

himself, who has imposed on us a debt of obligation which we fear we can

never repay. The life of this gentleman has been one of a very chequered

description: he has undergone transitionsânot from grave to gay, for he

never was graveânot from lively to severe, for severity forms no part of

his disposition; his fluctuations have been between poverty in the

extreme, and poverty modified, or, to use his own emphatic language,

âbetween nothing to eat and just half enough.â He is not, as he forcibly

remarks, âone of those fortunate men who, if they were to dive under one

side of a barge stark-naked, would come up on the other with a new suit

of clothes on, and a ticket for soup in the waistcoat-pocket:â neither is

he one of those, whose spirit has been broken beyond redemption by

misfortune and want. He is just one of the careless, good-for-nothing,

happy fellows, who float, cork-like, on the surface, for the world to

play at hockey with: knocked here, and there, and everywhere: now to the

right, then to the left, again up in the air, and anon to the bottom, but

always reappearing and bounding with the stream buoyantly and merrily

along. Some few months before he was prevailed upon to stand a contested

election for the office of beadle, necessity attached him to the service

of a broker; and on the opportunities he here acquired of ascertaining

the condition of most of the poorer inhabitants of the parish, his

patron, the captain, first grounded his claims to public support. Chance

threw the man in our way a short time since. We were, in the first

instance, attracted by his prepossessing impudence at the election; we

were not surprised, on further acquaintance, to find him a shrewd,

knowing fellow, with no inconsiderable power of observation; and, after

conversing with him a little, were somewhat struck (as we dare say our

readers have frequently been in other cases) with the power some men seem

to have, not only of sympathising with, but to all appearance of

understanding feelings to which they themselves are entire strangers. We

had been expressing to the new functionary our surprise that he should

ever have served in the capacity to which we have just adverted, when we

gradually led him into one or two professional anecdotes. As we are

induced to think, on reflection, that they will tell better in nearly his

own words, than with any attempted embellishments of ours, we will at

once entitle them.

MR BUNGâS NARRATIVE

âItâs very true, as you say, sir,â Mr. Bung commenced, âthat a brokerâs

manâs is not a life to be envied; and in course you know as well as I do,

though you donât say it, that people hate and scout âem because theyâre

the ministers of wretchedness, like, to poor people. But what could I

do, sir? The thing was no worse because I did it, instead of somebody

else; and if putting me in possession of a house would put me in

possession of three and sixpence a day, and levying a distress on another

manâs goods would relieve my distress and that of my family, it canât be

expected but what Iâd take the job and go through with it. I never liked

it, God knows; I always looked out for something else, and the moment I

got other work to do, I left it. If there is anything wrong in being the

agent in such mattersânot the principal, mind youâIâm sure the business,

to a beginner like I was, at all events, carries its own punishment along

with it. I wished again and again that the people would only blow me up,

or pitch into meâthat I wouldnât have minded, itâs all in my way; but

itâs the being shut up by yourself in one room for five days, without so

much as an old newspaper to look at, or anything to see out oâ the winder

but the roofs and chimneys at the back of the house, or anything to

listen to, but the ticking, perhaps, of an old Dutch clock, the sobbing

of the missis, now and then, the low talking of friends in the next room,

who speak in whispers, lest âthe manâ should overhear them, or perhaps

the occasional opening of the door, as a child peeps in to look at you,

and then runs half-frightened awayâitâs all this, that makes you feel

sneaking somehow, and ashamed of yourself; and then, if itâs wintertime,

they just give you fire enough to make you think youâd like more, and

bring in your grub as if they wished it âud choke youâas I dare say they

do, for the matter of that, most heartily. If theyâre very civil, they

make you up a bed in the room at night, and if they donât, your master

sends one in for you; but there you are, without being washed or shaved

all the time, shunned by everybody, and spoken to by no one, unless some

one comes in at dinner-time, and asks you whether you want any more, in a

tone as much to say, âI hope you donât,â or, in the evening, to inquire

whether you wouldnât rather have a candle, after youâve been sitting in

the dark half the night. When I was left in this way, I used to sit,

think, think, thinking, till I felt as lonesome as a kitten in a

wash-house copper with the lid on; but I believe the old brokersâ men who

are regularly trained to it, never think at all. I have heard some on

âem say, indeed, that they donât know how!

âI put in a good many distresses in my time (continued Mr. Bung), and in

course I wasnât long in finding, that some people are not as much to be

pitied as others are, and that people with good incomes who get into

difficulties, which they keep patching up day after day and week after

week, get so used to these sort of things in time, that at last they come

scarcely to feel them at all. I remember the very first place I was put

in possession of, was a gentlemanâs house in this parish here, that

everybody would suppose couldnât help having money if he tried. I went

with old Fixem, my old master, âbout half arter eight in the morning;

rang the area-bell; servant in livery opened the door: âGovernor at

home?âââYes, he is,â says the man; âbut heâs breakfasting just now.â

âNever mind,â says Fixem, âjust you tell him thereâs a gentleman here, as

wants to speak to him partickler.â So the servant he opens his eyes, and

stares about him all waysâlooking for the gentleman, as it struck me, for

I donât think anybody but a man as was stone-blind would mistake Fixem

for one; and as for me, I was as seedy as a cheap cowcumber. Howsâever,

he turns round, and goes to the breakfast-parlour, which was a little

snug sort of room at the end of the passage, and Fixem (as we always did

in that profession), without waiting to be announced, walks in arter him,

and before the servant could get out, âPlease, sir, hereâs a man as wants

to speak to you,â looks in at the door as familiar and pleasant as may

be. âWho the devil are you, and how dare you walk into a gentlemanâs

house without leave?â says the master, as fierce as a bull in fits. âMy

name,â says Fixem, winking to the master to send the servant away, and

putting the warrant into his hands folded up like a note, âMy nameâs

Smith,â says he, âand I called from Johnsonâs about that business of

Thompsonâs.âââOh,â says the other, quite down on him directly, âHow \_is\_

Thompson?â says he; âPray sit down, Mr. Smith: John, leave the room.â

Out went the servant; and the gentleman and Fixem looked at one another

till they couldnât look any longer, and then they varied the amusements

by looking at me, who had been standing on the mat all this time.

âHundred and fifty pounds, I see,â said the gentleman at last. âHundred

and fifty pound,â said Fixem, âbesides cost of levy, sheriffâs poundage,

and all other incidental expenses.âââUm,â says the gentleman, âI shanât

be able to settle this before to-morrow afternoon.âââVery sorry; but I

shall be obliged to leave my man here till then,â replies Fixem,

pretending to look very miserable over it. âThatâs very unfortânate,â

says the gentleman, âfor I have got a large party here to-night, and Iâm

ruined if those fellows of mine get an inkling of the matterâjust step

here, Mr. Smith,â says he, after a short pause. So Fixem walks with him

up to the window, and after a good deal of whispering, and a little

chinking of suverins, and looking at me, he comes back and says, âBung,

youâre a handy fellow, and very honest I know. This gentleman wants an

assistant to clean the plate and wait at table to-day, and if youâre not

particularly engaged,â says old Fixem, grinning like mad, and shoving a

couple of suverins into my hand, âheâll be very glad to avail himself of

your services.â Well, I laughed: and the gentleman laughed, and we all

laughed; and I went home and cleaned myself, leaving Fixem there, and

when I went back, Fixem went away, and I polished up the plate, and

waited at table, and gammoned the servants, and nobody had the least idea

I was in possession, though it very nearly came out after all; for one of

the last gentlemen who remained, came down-stairs into the hall where I

was sitting pretty late at night, and putting half-a-crown into my hand,

says, âHere, my man,â says he, ârun and get me a coach, will you?â I

thought it was a do, to get me out of the house, and was just going to

say so, sulkily enough, when the gentleman (who was up to everything)

came running down-stairs, as if he was in great anxiety. âBung,â says

he, pretending to be in a consuming passion. âSir,â says I. âWhy the

devil anât you looking after that plate?âââI was just going to send him

for a coach for me,â says the other gentleman. âAnd I was just a-going

to say,â says IââAnybody else, my dear fellow,â interrupts the master of

the house, pushing me down the passage to get out of the wayââanybody

else; but I have put this man in possession of all the plate and

valuables, and I cannot allow him on any consideration whatever, to leave

the house. Bung, you scoundrel, go and count those forks in the

breakfast-parlour instantly.â You may be sure I went laughing pretty

hearty when I found it was all right. The money was paid next day, with

the addition of something else for myself, and that was the best job that

I (and I suspect old Fixem too) ever got in that line.

âBut this is the bright side of the picture, sir, after all,â resumed Mr.

Bung, laying aside the knowing look and flash air, with which he had

repeated the previous anecdoteââand Iâm sorry to say, itâs the side one

sees very, very seldom, in comparison with the dark one. The civility

which money will purchase, is rarely extended to those who have none; and

thereâs a consolation even in being able to patch up one difficulty, to

make way for another, to which very poor people are strangers. I was

once put into a house down Georgeâs-yardâthat little dirty court at the

back of the gas-works; and I never shall forget the misery of them

people, dear me! It was a distress for half a yearâs rentâtwo pound ten,

I think. There was only two rooms in the house, and as there was no

passage, the lodgers up-stairs always went through the room of the people

of the house, as they passed in and out; and every time they did

soâwhich, on the average, was about four times every quarter of an

hourâthey blowed up quite frightful: for their things had been seized

too, and included in the inventory. There was a little piece of enclosed

dust in front of the house, with a cinder-path leading up to the door,

and an open rain-water butt on one side. A dirty striped curtain, on a

very slack string, hung in the window, and a little triangular bit of

broken looking-glass rested on the sill inside. I suppose it was meant

for the peopleâs use, but their appearance was so wretched, and so

miserable, that Iâm certain they never could have plucked up courage to

look themselves in the face a second time, if they survived the fright of

doing so once. There was two or three chairs, that might have been

worth, in their best days, from eightpence to a shilling a-piece; a small

deal table, an old corner cupboard with nothing in it, and one of those

bedsteads which turn up half way, and leave the bottom legs sticking out

for you to knock your head against, or hang your hat upon; no bed, no

bedding. There was an old sack, by way of rug, before the fireplace, and

four or five children were grovelling about, among the sand on the floor.

The execution was only put in, to get âem out of the house, for there was

nothing to take to pay the expenses; and here I stopped for three days,

though that was a mere form too: for, in course, I knew, and we all knew,

they could never pay the money. In one of the chairs, by the side of the

place where the fire ought to have been, was an old âoomanâthe ugliest

and dirtiest I ever seeâwho sat rocking herself backwards and forwards,

backwards and forwards, without once stopping, except for an instant now

and then, to clasp together the withered hands which, with these

exceptions, she kept constantly rubbing upon her knees, just raising and

depressing her fingers convulsively, in time to the rocking of the chair.

On the other side sat the mother with an infant in her arms, which cried

till it cried itself to sleep, and when it âwoke, cried till it cried

itself off again. The old âoomanâs voice I never heard: she seemed

completely stupefied; and as to the motherâs, it would have been better

if she had been so too, for misery had changed her to a devil. If you

had heard how she cursed the little naked children as was rolling on the

floor, and seen how savagely she struck the infant when it cried with

hunger, youâd have shuddered as much as I did. There they remained all

the time: the children ate a morsel of bread once or twice, and I gave

âem best part of the dinners my missis brought me, but the woman ate

nothing; they never even laid on the bedstead, nor was the room swept or

cleaned all the time. The neighbours were all too poor themselves to

take any notice of âem, but from what I could make out from the abuse of

the woman up-stairs, it seemed the husband had been transported a few

weeks before. When the time was up, the landlord and old Fixem too, got

rather frightened about the family, and so they made a stir about it, and

had âem taken to the workhouse. They sent the sick couch for the old

âooman, and Simmons took the children away at night. The old âooman went

into the infirmary, and very soon died. The children are all in the

house to this day, and very comfortable they are in comparison. As to

the mother, there was no taming her at all. She had been a quiet,

hard-working woman, I believe, but her misery had actually drove her

wild; so after she had been sent to the house of correction half-a-dozen

times, for throwing inkstands at the overseers, blaspheming the

churchwardens, and smashing everybody as come near her, she burst a

blood-vessel one morninâ, and died too; and a happy release it was, both

for herself and the old paupers, male and female, which she used to tip

over in all directions, as if they were so many skittles, and she the

ball.

âNow this was bad enough,â resumed Mr. Bung, taking a half-step towards

the door, as if to intimate that he had nearly concluded. âThis was bad

enough, but there was a sort of quiet miseryâif you understand what I

mean by that, sirâabout a lady at one house I was put into, as touched me

a good deal more. It doesnât matter where it was exactly: indeed, Iâd

rather not say, but it was the same sort oâ job. I went with Fixem in

the usual wayâthere was a yearâs rent in arrear; a very small

servant-girl opened the door, and three or four fine-looking little

children was in the front parlour we were shown into, which was very

clean, but very scantily furnished, much like the children themselves.

âBung,â says Fixem to me, in a low voice, when we were left alone for a

minute, âI know something about this here family, and my opinion is, itâs

no go.â âDo you think they canât settle?â says I, quite anxiously; for I

liked the looks of them children. Fixem shook his head, and was just

about to reply, when the door opened, and in come a lady, as white as

ever I see any one in my days, except about the eyes, which were red with

crying. She walked in, as firm as I could have done; shut the door

carefully after her, and sat herself down with a face as composed as if

it was made of stone. âWhat is the matter, gentlemen?â says she, in a

surprisinâ steady voice. â\_Is\_ this an execution?â âIt is, mum,â says

Fixem. The lady looked at him as steady as ever: she didnât seem to have

understood him. âIt is, mum,â says Fixem again; âthis is my warrant of

distress, mum,â says he, handing it over as polite as if it was a

newspaper which had been bespoke arter the next gentleman.

âThe ladyâs lip trembled as she took the printed paper. She cast her eye

over it, and old Fixem began to explain the form, but saw she wasnât

reading it, plain enough, poor thing. âOh, my God!â says she, suddenly

a-bursting out crying, letting the warrant fall, and hiding her face in

her hands. âOh, my God! what will become of us!â The noise she made,

brought in a young lady of about nineteen or twenty, who, I suppose, had

been a-listening at the door, and who had got a little boy in her arms:

she sat him down in the ladyâs lap, without speaking, and she hugged the

poor little fellow to her bosom, and cried over him, till even old Fixem

put on his blue spectacles to hide the two tears, that was a-trickling

down, one on each side of his dirty face. âNow, dear ma,â says the young

lady, âyou know how much you have borne. For all our sakesâfor paâs

sake,â says she, âdonât give way to this!âââNo, no, I wonât!â says the

lady, gathering herself up, hastily, and drying her eyes; âI am very

foolish, but Iâm better nowâmuch better.â And then she roused herself

up, went with us into every room while we took the inventory, opened all

the drawers of her own accord, sorted the childrenâs little clothes to

make the work easier; and, except doing everything in a strange sort of

hurry, seemed as calm and composed as if nothing had happened. When we

came down-stairs again, she hesitated a minute or two, and at last says,

âGentlemen,â says she, âI am afraid I have done wrong, and perhaps it may

bring you into trouble. I secreted just now,â she says, âthe only

trinket I have left in the worldâhere it is.â So she lays down on the

table a little miniature mounted in gold. âItâs a miniature,â she says,

âof my poor dear father! I little thought once, that I should ever thank

God for depriving me of the original, but I do, and have done for years

back, most fervently. Take it away, sir,â she says, âitâs a face that

never turned from me in sickness and distress, and I can hardly bear to

turn from it now, when, God knows, I suffer both in no ordinary degree.â

I couldnât say nothing, but I raised my head from the inventory which I

was filling up, and looked at Fixem; the old fellow nodded to me

significantly, so I ran my pen through the â\_Mini\_â I had just written,

and left the miniature on the table.

âWell, sir, to make short of a long story, I was left in possession, and

in possession I remained; and though I was an ignorant man, and the

master of the house a clever one, I saw what he never did, but what he

would give worlds now (if he had âem) to have seen in time. I saw, sir,

that his wife was wasting away, beneath cares of which she never

complained, and griefs she never told. I saw that she was dying before

his eyes; I knew that one exertion from him might have saved her, but he

never made it. I donât blame him: I donât think he \_could\_ rouse

himself. She had so long anticipated all his wishes, and acted for him,

that he was a lost man when left to himself. I used to think when I

caught sight of her, in the clothes she used to wear, which looked shabby

even upon her, and would have been scarcely decent on any one else, that

if I was a gentleman it would wring my very heart to see the woman that

was a smart and merry girl when I courted her, so altered through her

love for me. Bitter cold and damp weather it was, yet, though her dress

was thin, and her shoes none of the best, during the whole three days,

from morning to night, she was out of doors running about to try and

raise the money. The money \_was\_ raised and the execution was paid out.

The whole family crowded into the room where I was, when the money

arrived. The father was quite happy as the inconvenience was removedâI

dare say he didnât know how; the children looked merry and cheerful

again; the eldest girl was bustling about, making preparations for the

first comfortable meal they had had since the distress was put in; and

the mother looked pleased to see them all so. But if ever I saw death in

a womanâs face, I saw it in hers that night.

âI was right, sir,â continued Mr. Bung, hurriedly passing his coat-sleeve

over his face; âthe family grew more prosperous, and good fortune

arrived. But it was too late. Those children are motherless now, and

their father would give up all he has since gainedâhouse, home, goods,

money: all that he has, or ever can have, to restore the wife he has

lost.â

CHAPTER VIâTHE LADIESâ SOCIETIES

Our Parish is very prolific in ladiesâ charitable institutions. In

winter, when wet feet are common, and colds not scarce, we have the

ladiesâ soup distribution society, the ladiesâ coal distribution society,

and the ladiesâ blanket distribution society; in summer, when stone

fruits flourish and stomach aches prevail, we have the ladiesâ

dispensary, and the ladiesâ sick visitation committee; and all the year

round we have the ladiesâ childâs examination society, the ladiesâ bible

and prayer-book circulation society, and the ladiesâ childbed-linen

monthly loan society. The two latter are decidedly the most important;

whether they are productive of more benefit than the rest, it is not for

us to say, but we can take upon ourselves to affirm, with the utmost

solemnity, that they create a greater stir and more bustle, than all the

others put together.

We should be disposed to affirm, on the first blush of the matter, that

the bible and prayer-book society is not so popular as the childbed-linen

society; the bible and prayer-book society has, however, considerably

increased in importance within the last year or two, having derived some

adventitious aid from the factious opposition of the childâs examination

society; which factious opposition originated in manner following:âWhen

the young curate was popular, and all the unmarried ladies in the parish

took a serious turn, the charity children all at once became objects of

peculiar and especial interest. The three Miss Browns (enthusiastic

admirers of the curate) taught, and exercised, and examined, and

re-examined the unfortunate children, until the boys grew pale, and the

girls consumptive with study and fatigue. The three Miss Browns stood it

out very well, because they relieved each other; but the children, having

no relief at all, exhibited decided symptoms of weariness and care. The

unthinking part of the parishioners laughed at all this, but the more

reflective portion of the inhabitants abstained from expressing any

opinion on the subject until that of the curate had been clearly

ascertained.

The opportunity was not long wanting. The curate preached a charity

sermon on behalf of the charity school, and in the charity sermon

aforesaid, expatiated in glowing terms on the praiseworthy and

indefatigable exertions of certain estimable individuals. Sobs were

heard to issue from the three Miss Brownsâ pew; the pew-opener of the

division was seen to hurry down the centre aisle to the vestry door, and

to return immediately, bearing a glass of water in her hand. A low

moaning ensued; two more pew-openers rushed to the spot, and the three

Miss Browns, each supported by a pew-opener, were led out of the church,

and led in again after the lapse of five minutes with white

pocket-handkerchiefs to their eyes, as if they had been attending a

funeral in the churchyard adjoining. If any doubt had for a moment

existed, as to whom the allusion was intended to apply, it was at once

removed. The wish to enlighten the charity children became universal,

and the three Miss Browns were unanimously besought to divide the school

into classes, and to assign each class to the superintendence of two

young ladies.

A little learning is a dangerous thing, but a little patronage is more

so; the three Miss Browns appointed all the old maids, and carefully

excluded the young ones. Maiden aunts triumphed, mammas were reduced to

the lowest depths of despair, and there is no telling in what act of

violence the general indignation against the three Miss Browns might have

vented itself, had not a perfectly providential occurrence changed the

tide of public feeling. Mrs. Johnson Parker, the mother of seven

extremely fine girlsâall unmarriedâhastily reported to several other

mammas of several other unmarried families, that five old men, six old

women, and children innumerable, in the free seats near her pew, were in

the habit of coming to church every Sunday, without either bible or

prayer-book. Was this to be borne in a civilised country? Could such

things be tolerated in a Christian land? Never! A ladiesâ bible and

prayer-book distribution society was instantly formed: president, Mrs.

Johnson Parker; treasurers, auditors, and secretary, the Misses Johnson

Parker: subscriptions were entered into, books were bought, all the

free-seat people provided therewith, and when the first lesson was given

out, on the first Sunday succeeding these events, there was such a

dropping of books, and rustling of leaves, that it was morally impossible

to hear one word of the service for five minutes afterwards.

The three Miss Browns, and their party, saw the approaching danger, and

endeavoured to avert it by ridicule and sarcasm. Neither the old men nor

the old women could read their books, now they had got them, said the

three Miss Browns. Never mind; they could learn, replied Mrs. Johnson

Parker. The children couldnât read either, suggested the three Miss

Browns. No matter; they could be taught, retorted Mrs. Johnson Parker.

A balance of parties took place. The Miss Browns publicly

examinedâpopular feeling inclined to the childâs examination society.

The Miss Johnson Parkers publicly distributedâa reaction took place in

favour of the prayer-book distribution. A feather would have turned the

scale, and a feather did turn it. A missionary returned from the West

Indies; he was to be presented to the Dissentersâ Missionary Society on

his marriage with a wealthy widow. Overtures were made to the Dissenters

by the Johnson Parkers. Their object was the same, and why not have a

joint meeting of the two societies? The proposition was accepted. The

meeting was duly heralded by public announcement, and the room was

crowded to suffocation. The Missionary appeared on the platform; he was

hailed with enthusiasm. He repeated a dialogue he had heard between two

negroes, behind a hedge, on the subject of distribution societies; the

approbation was tumultuous. He gave an imitation of the two negroes in

broken English; the roof was rent with applause. From that period we

date (with one trifling exception) a daily increase in the popularity of

the distribution society, and an increase of popularity, which the feeble

and impotent opposition of the examination party, has only tended to

augment.

Now, the great points about the childbed-linen monthly loan society are,

that it is less dependent on the fluctuations of public opinion than

either the distribution or the childâs examination; and that, come what

may, there is never any lack of objects on which to exercise its

benevolence. Our parish is a very populous one, and, if anything,

contributes, we should be disposed to say, rather more than its due share

to the aggregate amount of births in the metropolis and its environs.

The consequence is, that the monthly loan society flourishes, and invests

its members with a most enviable amount of bustling patronage. The

society (whose only notion of dividing time, would appear to be its

allotment into months) holds monthly tea-drinkings, at which the monthly

report is received, a secretary elected for the month ensuing, and such

of the monthly boxes as may not happen to be out on loan for the month,

carefully examined.

We were never present at one of these meetings, from all of which it is

scarcely necessary to say, gentlemen are carefully excluded; but Mr. Bung

has been called before the board once or twice, and we have his authority

for stating, that its proceedings are conducted with great order and

regularity: not more than four members being allowed to speak at one time

on any pretence whatever. The regular committee is composed exclusively

of married ladies, but a vast number of young unmarried ladies of from

eighteen to twenty-five years of age, respectively, are admitted as

honorary members, partly because they are very useful in replenishing the

boxes, and visiting the confined; partly because it is highly desirable

that they should be initiated, at an early period, into the more serious

and matronly duties of after-life; and partly, because prudent mammas

have not unfrequently been known to turn this circumstance to wonderfully

good account in matrimonial speculations.

In addition to the loan of the monthly boxes (which are always painted

blue, with the name of the society in large white letters on the lid),

the society dispense occasional grants of beef-tea, and a composition of

warm beer, spice, eggs, and sugar, commonly known by the name of

âcandle,â to its patients. And here again the services of the honorary

members are called into requisition, and most cheerfully conceded.

Deputations of twos or threes are sent out to visit the patients, and on

these occasions there is such a tasting of candle and beef-tea, such a

stirring about of little messes in tiny saucepans on the hob, such a

dressing and undressing of infants, such a tying, and folding, and

pinning; such a nursing and warming of little legs and feet before the

fire, such a delightful confusion of talking and cooking, bustle,

importance, and officiousness, as never can be enjoyed in its full extent

but on similar occasions.

In rivalry of these two institutions, and as a last expiring effort to

acquire parochial popularity, the childâs examination people determined,

the other day, on having a grand public examination of the pupils; and

the large school-room of the national seminary was, by and with the

consent of the parish authorities, devoted to the purpose. Invitation

circulars were forwarded to all the principal parishioners, including, of

course, the heads of the other two societies, for whose especial behoof

and edification the display was intended; and a large audience was

confidently anticipated on the occasion. The floor was carefully

scrubbed the day before, under the immediate superintendence of the three

Miss Browns; forms were placed across the room for the accommodation of

the visitors, specimens in writing were carefully selected, and as

carefully patched and touched up, until they astonished the children who

had written them, rather more than the company who read them; sums in

compound addition were rehearsed and re-rehearsed until all the children

had the totals by heart; and the preparations altogether were on the most

laborious and most comprehensive scale. The morning arrived: the

children were yellow-soaped and flannelled, and towelled, till their

faces shone again; every pupilâs hair was carefully combed into his or

her eyes, as the case might be; the girls were adorned with snow-white

tippets, and caps bound round the head by a single purple ribbon: the

necks of the elder boys were fixed into collars of startling dimensions.

The doors were thrown open, and the Misses Brown and Co. were discovered

in plain white muslin dresses, and caps of the sameâthe childâs

examination uniform. The room filled: the greetings of the company were

loud and cordial. The distributionists trembled, for their popularity

was at stake. The eldest boy fell forward, and delivered a propitiatory

address from behind his collar. It was from the pen of Mr. Henry Brown;

the applause was universal, and the Johnson Parkers were aghast. The

examination proceeded with success, and terminated in triumph. The

childâs examination society gained a momentary victory, and the Johnson

Parkers retreated in despair.

A secret council of the distributionists was held that night, with Mrs.

Johnson Parker in the chair, to consider of the best means of recovering

the ground they had lost in the favour of the parish. What could be

done? Another meeting! Alas! who was to attend it? The Missionary

would not do twice; and the slaves were emancipated. A bold step must be

taken. The parish must be astonished in some way or other; but no one

was able to suggest what the step should be. At length, a very old lady

was heard to mumble, in indistinct tones, âExeter Hall.â A sudden light

broke in upon the meeting. It was unanimously resolved, that a

deputation of old ladies should wait upon a celebrated orator, imploring

his assistance, and the favour of a speech; and the deputation should

also wait on two or three other imbecile old women, not resident in the

parish, and entreat their attendance. The application was successful,

the meeting was held; the orator (an Irishman) came. He talked of green

islesâother shoresâvast Atlanticâbosom of the deepâChristian

charityâblood and exterminationâmercy in heartsâarms in handsâaltars and

homesâhousehold gods. He wiped his eyes, he blew his nose, and he quoted

Latin. The effect was tremendousâthe Latin was a decided hit. Nobody

knew exactly what it was about, but everybody knew it must be affecting,

because even the orator was overcome. The popularity of the distribution

society among the ladies of our parish is unprecedented; and the childâs

examination is going fast to decay.

CHAPTER VIIâOUR NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOUR

We are very fond of speculating as we walk through a street, on the

character and pursuits of the people who inhabit it; and nothing so

materially assists us in these speculations as the appearance of the

house doors. The various expressions of the human countenance afford a

beautiful and interesting study; but there is something in the

physiognomy of street-door knockers, almost as characteristic, and nearly

as infallible. Whenever we visit a man for the first time, we

contemplate the features of his knocker with the greatest curiosity, for

we well know, that between the man and his knocker, there will inevitably

be a greater or less degree of resemblance and sympathy.

For instance, there is one description of knocker that used to be common

enough, but which is fast passing awayâa large round one, with the jolly

face of a convivial lion smiling blandly at you, as you twist the sides

of your hair into a curl or pull up your shirt-collar while you are

waiting for the door to be opened; we never saw that knocker on the door

of a churlish manâso far as our experience is concerned, it invariably

bespoke hospitality and another bottle.

No man ever saw this knocker on the door of a small attorney or

bill-broker; they always patronise the other lion; a heavy

ferocious-looking fellow, with a countenance expressive of savage

stupidityâa sort of grand master among the knockers, and a great

favourite with the selfish and brutal.

Then there is a little pert Egyptian knocker, with a long thin face, a

pinched-up nose, and a very sharp chin; he is most in vogue with your

government-office people, in light drabs and starched cravats; little

spare, priggish men, who are perfectly satisfied with their own opinions,

and consider themselves of paramount importance.

We were greatly troubled a few years ago, by the innovation of a new kind

of knocker, without any face at all, composed of a wreath depending from

a hand or small truncheon. A little trouble and attention, however,

enabled us to overcome this difficulty, and to reconcile the new system

to our favourite theory. You will invariably find this knocker on the

doors of cold and formal people, who always ask you why you \_donât\_ come,

and never say \_do\_.

Everybody knows the brass knocker is common to suburban villas, and

extensive boarding-schools; and having noticed this genus we have

recapitulated all the most prominent and strongly-defined species.

Some phrenologists affirm, that the agitation of a manâs brain by

different passions, produces corresponding developments in the form of

his skull. Do not let us be understood as pushing our theory to the full

length of asserting, that any alteration in a manâs disposition would

produce a visible effect on the feature of his knocker. Our position

merely is, that in such a case, the magnetism which must exist between a

man and his knocker, would induce the man to remove, and seek some

knocker more congenial to his altered feelings. If you ever find a man

changing his habitation without any reasonable pretext, depend upon it,

that, although he may not be aware of the fact himself, it is because he

and his knocker are at variance. This is a new theory, but we venture to

launch it, nevertheless, as being quite as ingenious and infallible as

many thousands of the learned speculations which are daily broached for

public good and private fortune-making.

Entertaining these feelings on the subject of knockers, it will be

readily imagined with what consternation we viewed the entire removal of

the knocker from the door of the next house to the one we lived in, some

time ago, and the substitution of a bell. This was a calamity we had

never anticipated. The bare idea of anybody being able to exist without

a knocker, appeared so wild and visionary, that it had never for one

instant entered our imagination.

We sauntered moodily from the spot, and bent our steps towards

Eaton-square, then just building. What was our astonishment and

indignation to find that bells were fast becoming the rule, and knockers

the exception! Our theory trembled beneath the shock. We hastened home;

and fancying we foresaw in the swift progress of events, its entire

abolition, resolved from that day forward to vent our speculations on our

next-door neighbours in person. The house adjoining ours on the left

hand was uninhabited, and we had, therefore, plenty of leisure to observe

our next-door neighbours on the other side.

The house without the knocker was in the occupation of a city clerk, and

there was a neatly-written bill in the parlour window intimating that

lodgings for a single gentleman were to be let within.

It was a neat, dull little house, on the shady side of the way, with new,

narrow floorcloth in the passage, and new, narrow stair-carpets up to the

first floor. The paper was new, and the paint was new, and the furniture

was new; and all three, paper, paint, and furniture, bespoke the limited

means of the tenant. There was a little red and black carpet in the

drawing-room, with a border of flooring all the way round; a few stained

chairs and a pembroke table. A pink shell was displayed on each of the

little sideboards, which, with the addition of a tea-tray and caddy, a

few more shells on the mantelpiece, and three peacockâs feathers

tastefully arranged above them, completed the decorative furniture of the

apartment.

This was the room destined for the reception of the single gentleman

during the day, and a little back room on the same floor was assigned as

his sleeping apartment by night.

The bill had not been long in the window, when a stout, good-humoured

looking gentleman, of about five-and-thirty, appeared as a candidate for

the tenancy. Terms were soon arranged, for the bill was taken down

immediately after his first visit. In a day or two the single gentleman

came in, and shortly afterwards his real character came out.

First of all, he displayed a most extraordinary partiality for sitting up

till three or four oâclock in the morning, drinking whiskey-and-water,

and smoking cigars; then he invited friends home, who used to come at ten

oâclock, and begin to get happy about the small hours, when they evinced

their perfect contentment by singing songs with half-a-dozen verses of

two lines each, and a chorus of ten, which chorus used to be shouted

forth by the whole strength of the company, in the most enthusiastic and

vociferous manner, to the great annoyance of the neighbours, and the

special discomfort of another single gentleman overhead.

Now, this was bad enough, occurring as it did three times a week on the

average, but this was not all; for when the company \_did\_ go away,

instead of walking quietly down the street, as anybody elseâs company

would have done, they amused themselves by making alarming and frightful

noises, and counterfeiting the shrieks of females in distress; and one

night, a red-faced gentleman in a white hat knocked in the most urgent

manner at the door of the powdered-headed old gentleman at No. 3, and

when the powdered-headed old gentleman, who thought one of his married

daughters must have been taken ill prematurely, had groped down-stairs,

and after a great deal of unbolting and key-turning, opened the street

door, the red-faced man in the white hat said he hoped heâd excuse his

giving him so much trouble, but heâd feel obliged if heâd favour him with

a glass of cold spring water, and the loan of a shilling for a cab to

take him home, on which the old gentleman slammed the door and went

up-stairs, and threw the contents of his water jug out of windowâvery

straight, only it went over the wrong man; and the whole street was

involved in confusion.

A jokeâs a joke; and even practical jests are very capital in their way,

if you can only get the other party to see the fun of them; but the

population of our street were so dull of apprehension, as to be quite

lost to a sense of the drollery of this proceeding: and the consequence

was, that our next-door neighbour was obliged to tell the single

gentleman, that unless he gave up entertaining his friends at home, he

really must be compelled to part with him.

The single gentleman received the remonstrance with great good-humour,

and promised from that time forward, to spend his evenings at a

coffee-houseâa determination which afforded general and unmixed

satisfaction.

The next night passed off very well, everybody being delighted with the

change; but on the next, the noises were renewed with greater spirit than

ever. The single gentlemanâs friends being unable to see him in his own

house every alternate night, had come to the determination of seeing him

home every night; and what with the discordant greetings of the friends

at parting, and the noise created by the single gentleman in his passage

up-stairs, and his subsequent struggles to get his boots off, the evil

was not to be borne. So, our next-door neighbour gave the single

gentleman, who was a very good lodger in other respects, notice to quit;

and the single gentleman went away, and entertained his friends in other

lodgings.

The next applicant for the vacant first floor, was of a very different

character from the troublesome single gentleman who had just quitted it.

He was a tall, thin, young gentleman, with a profusion of brown hair,

reddish whiskers, and very slightly developed moustaches. He wore a

braided surtout, with frogs behind, light grey trousers, and wash-leather

gloves, and had altogether rather a military appearance. So unlike the

roystering single gentleman. Such insinuating manners, and such a

delightful address! So seriously disposed, too! When he first came to

look at the lodgings, he inquired most particularly whether he was sure

to be able to get a seat in the parish church; and when he had agreed to

take them, he requested to have a list of the different local charities,

as he intended to subscribe his mite to the most deserving among them.

Our next-door neighbour was now perfectly happy. He had got a lodger at

last, of just his own way of thinkingâa serious, well-disposed man, who

abhorred gaiety, and loved retirement. He took down the bill with a

light heart, and pictured in imagination a long series of quiet Sundays,

on which he and his lodger would exchange mutual civilities and Sunday

papers.

The serious man arrived, and his luggage was to arrive from the country

next morning. He borrowed a clean shirt, and a prayer-book, from our

next-door neighbour, and retired to rest at an early hour, requesting

that he might be called punctually at ten oâclock next morningânot

before, as he was much fatigued.

He \_was\_ called, and did not answer: he was called again, but there was

no reply. Our next-door neighbour became alarmed, and burst the door

open. The serious man had left the house mysteriously; carrying with him

the shirt, the prayer-book, a teaspoon, and the bedclothes.

Whether this occurrence, coupled with the irregularities of his former

lodger, gave our next-door neighbour an aversion to single gentlemen, we

know not; we only know that the next bill which made its appearance in

the parlour window intimated generally, that there were furnished

apartments to let on the first floor. The bill was soon removed. The

new lodgers at first attracted our curiosity, and afterwards excited our

interest.

They were a young lad of eighteen or nineteen, and his mother, a lady of

about fifty, or it might be less. The mother wore a widowâs weeds, and

the boy was also clothed in deep mourning. They were poorâvery poor; for

their only means of support arose from the pittance the boy earned, by

copying writings, and translating for booksellers.

They had removed from some country place and settled in London; partly

because it afforded better chances of employment for the boy, and partly,

perhaps, with the natural desire to leave a place where they had been in

better circumstances, and where their poverty was known. They were proud

under their reverses, and above revealing their wants and privations to

strangers. How bitter those privations were, and how hard the boy worked

to remove them, no one ever knew but themselves. Night after night, two,

three, four hours after midnight, could we hear the occasional raking up

of the scanty fire, or the hollow and half-stifled cough, which indicated

his being still at work; and day after day, could we see more plainly

that nature had set that unearthly light in his plaintive face, which is

the beacon of her worst disease.

Actuated, we hope, by a higher feeling than mere curiosity, we contrived

to establish, first an acquaintance, and then a close intimacy, with the

poor strangers. Our worst fears were realised; the boy was sinking fast.

Through a part of the winter, and the whole of the following spring and

summer, his labours were unceasingly prolonged: and the mother attempted

to procure needle-work, embroideryâanything for bread.

A few shillings now and then, were all she could earn. The boy worked

steadily on; dying by minutes, but never once giving utterance to

complaint or murmur.

One beautiful autumn evening we went to pay our customary visit to the

invalid. His little remaining strength had been decreasing rapidly for

two or three days preceding, and he was lying on the sofa at the open

window, gazing at the setting sun. His mother had been reading the Bible

to him, for she closed the book as we entered, and advanced to meet us.

âI was telling William,â she said, âthat we must manage to take him into

the country somewhere, so that he may get quite well. He is not ill, you

know, but he is not very strong, and has exerted himself too much

lately.â Poor thing! The tears that streamed through her fingers, as

she turned aside, as if to adjust her close widowâs cap, too plainly

showed how fruitless was the attempt to deceive herself.

We sat down by the head of the sofa, but said nothing, for we saw the

breath of life was passing gently but rapidly from the young form before

us. At every respiration, his heart beat more slowly.

The boy placed one hand in ours, grasped his motherâs arm with the other,

drew her hastily towards him, and fervently kissed her cheek. There was

a pause. He sunk back upon his pillow, and looked long and earnestly in

his motherâs face.

âWilliam, William!â murmured the mother, after a long interval, âdonât

look at me soâspeak to me, dear!â

The boy smiled languidly, but an instant afterwards his features resolved

into the same cold, solemn gaze.

âWilliam, dear William! rouse yourself; donât look at me so, loveâpray

donât! Oh, my God! what shall I do!â cried the widow, clasping her hands

in agonyââmy dear boy! he is dying!â The boy raised himself by a violent

effort, and folded his hands togetherââMother! dear, dear mother, bury me

in the open fieldsâanywhere but in these dreadful streets. I should like

to be where you can see my grave, but not in these close crowded streets;

they have killed me; kiss me again, mother; put your arm round my neckââ

He fell back, and a strange expression stole upon his features; not of

pain or suffering, but an indescribable fixing of every line and muscle.

The boy was dead.

SCENES

CHAPTER IâTHE STREETSâMORNING

The appearance presented by the streets of London an hour before sunrise,

on a summerâs morning, is most striking even to the few whose unfortunate

pursuits of pleasure, or scarcely less unfortunate pursuits of business,

cause them to be well acquainted with the scene. There is an air of

cold, solitary desolation about the noiseless streets which we are

accustomed to see thronged at other times by a busy, eager crowd, and

over the quiet, closely-shut buildings, which throughout the day are

swarming with life and bustle, that is very impressive.

The last drunken man, who shall find his way home before sunlight, has

just staggered heavily along, roaring out the burden of the drinking song

of the previous night: the last houseless vagrant whom penury and police

have left in the streets, has coiled up his chilly limbs in some paved

comer, to dream of food and warmth. The drunken, the dissipated, and the

wretched have disappeared; the more sober and orderly part of the

population have not yet awakened to the labours of the day, and the

stillness of death is over the streets; its very hue seems to be imparted

to them, cold and lifeless as they look in the grey, sombre light of

daybreak. The coach-stands in the larger thoroughfares are deserted: the

night-houses are closed; and the chosen promenades of profligate misery

are empty.

An occasional policeman may alone be seen at the street corners,

listlessly gazing on the deserted prospect before him; and now and then a

rakish-looking cat runs stealthily across the road and descends his own

area with as much caution and slynessâbounding first on the water-butt,

then on the dust-hole, and then alighting on the flag-stonesâas if he

were conscious that his character depended on his gallantry of the

preceding night escaping public observation. A partially opened

bedroom-window here and there, bespeaks the heat of the weather, and the

uneasy slumbers of its occupant; and the dim scanty flicker of the

rushlight, through the window-blind, denotes the chamber of watching or

sickness. With these few exceptions, the streets present no signs of

life, nor the houses of habitation.

An hour wears away; the spires of the churches and roofs of the principal

buildings are faintly tinged with the light of the rising sun; and the

streets, by almost imperceptible degrees, begin to resume their bustle

and animation. Market-carts roll slowly along: the sleepy waggoner

impatiently urging on his tired horses, or vainly endeavouring to awaken

the boy, who, luxuriously stretched on the top of the fruit-baskets,

forgets, in happy oblivion, his long-cherished curiosity to behold the

wonders of London.

Rough, sleepy-looking animals of strange appearance, something between

ostlers and hackney-coachmen, begin to take down the shutters of early

public-houses; and little deal tables, with the ordinary preparations for

a street breakfast, make their appearance at the customary stations.

Numbers of men and women (principally the latter), carrying upon their

heads heavy baskets of fruit, toil down the park side of Piccadilly, on

their way to Covent-garden, and, following each other in rapid

succession, form a long straggling line from thence to the turn of the

road at Knightsbridge.

Here and there, a bricklayerâs labourer, with the dayâs dinner tied up in

a handkerchief, walks briskly to his work, and occasionally a little knot

of three or four schoolboys on a stolen bathing expedition rattle merrily

over the pavement, their boisterous mirth contrasting forcibly with the

demeanour of the little sweep, who, having knocked and rung till his arm

aches, and being interdicted by a merciful legislature from endangering

his lungs by calling out, sits patiently down on the door-step, until the

housemaid may happen to awake.

Covent-garden market, and the avenues leading to it, are thronged with

carts of all sorts, sizes, and descriptions, from the heavy lumbering

waggon, with its four stout horses, to the jingling costermongerâs cart,

with its consumptive donkey. The pavement is already strewed with

decayed cabbage-leaves, broken hay-bands, and all the indescribable

litter of a vegetable market; men are shouting, carts backing, horses

neighing, boys fighting, basket-women talking, piemen expatiating on the

excellence of their pastry, and donkeys braying. These and a hundred

other sounds form a compound discordant enough to a Londonerâs ears, and

remarkably disagreeable to those of country gentlemen who are sleeping at

the Hummums for the first time.

Another hour passes away, and the day begins in good earnest. The

servant of all work, who, under the plea of sleeping very soundly, has

utterly disregarded âMissisâsâ ringing for half an hour previously, is

warned by Master (whom Missis has sent up in his drapery to the

landing-place for that purpose), that itâs half-past six, whereupon she

awakes all of a sudden, with well-feigned astonishment, and goes

down-stairs very sulkily, wishing, while she strikes a light, that the

principle of spontaneous combustion would extend itself to coals and

kitchen range. When the fire is lighted, she opens the street-door to

take in the milk, when, by the most singular coincidence in the world,

she discovers that the servant next door has just taken in her milk too,

and that Mr. Toddâs young man over the way, is, by an equally

extraordinary chance, taking down his masterâs shutters. The inevitable

consequence is, that she just steps, milk-jug in hand, as far as next

door, just to say âgood morningâ to Betsy Clark, and that Mr. Toddâs

young man just steps over the way to say âgood morningâ to both of âem;

and as the aforesaid Mr. Toddâs young man is almost as good-looking and

fascinating as the baker himself, the conversation quickly becomes very

interesting, and probably would become more so, if Betsy Clarkâs Missis,

who always will be a-followinâ her about, didnât give an angry tap at her

bedroom window, on which Mr. Toddâs young man tries to whistle coolly, as

he goes back to his shop much faster than he came from it; and the two

girls run back to their respective places, and shut their street-doors

with surprising softness, each of them poking their heads out of the

front parlour window, a minute afterwards, however, ostensibly with the

view of looking at the mail which just then passes by, but really for the

purpose of catching another glimpse of Mr. Toddâs young man, who being

fond of mails, but more of females, takes a short look at the mails, and

a long look at the girls, much to the satisfaction of all parties

concerned.

The mail itself goes on to the coach-office in due course, and the

passengers who are going out by the early coach, stare with astonishment

at the passengers who are coming in by the early coach, who look blue and

dismal, and are evidently under the influence of that odd feeling

produced by travelling, which makes the events of yesterday morning seem

as if they had happened at least six months ago, and induces people to

wonder with considerable gravity whether the friends and relations they

took leave of a fortnight before, have altered much since they have left

them. The coach-office is all alive, and the coaches which are just

going out, are surrounded by the usual crowd of Jews and nondescripts,

who seem to consider, Heaven knows why, that it is quite impossible any

man can mount a coach without requiring at least sixpenny-worth of

oranges, a penknife, a pocket-book, a last yearâs annual, a pencil-case,

a piece of sponge, and a small series of caricatures.

Half an hour more, and the sun darts his bright rays cheerfully down the

still half-empty streets, and shines with sufficient force to rouse the

dismal laziness of the apprentice, who pauses every other minute from his

task of sweeping out the shop and watering the pavement in front of it,

to tell another apprentice similarly employed, how hot it will be to-day,

or to stand with his right hand shading his eyes, and his left resting on

the broom, gazing at the âWonder,â or the âTally-ho,â or the âNimrod,â or

some other fast coach, till it is out of sight, when he re-enters the

shop, envying the passengers on the outside of the fast coach, and

thinking of the old red brick house âdown in the country,â where he went

to school: the miseries of the milk and water, and thick bread and

scrapings, fading into nothing before the pleasant recollection of the

green field the boys used to play in, and the green pond he was caned for

presuming to fall into, and other schoolboy associations.

Cabs, with trunks and band-boxes between the driversâ legs and outside

the apron, rattle briskly up and down the streets on their way to the

coach-offices or steam-packet wharfs; and the cab-drivers and

hackney-coachmen who are on the stand polish up the ornamental part of

their dingy vehiclesâthe former wondering how people can prefer âthem

wild beast cariwans of homnibuses, to a riglar cab with a fast trotter,â

and the latter admiring how people can trust their necks into one of

âthem crazy cabs, when they can have a âspectable âackney cotche with a

pair of âorses as vonât run away with no vun;â a consolation

unquestionably founded on fact, seeing that a hackney-coach horse never

was known to run at all, âexcept,â as the smart cabman in front of the

rank observes, âexcept one, and \_he\_ run backâards.â

The shops are now completely opened, and apprentices and shopmen are

busily engaged in cleaning and decking the windows for the day. The

bakersâ shops in town are filled with servants and children waiting for

the drawing of the first batch of rollsâan operation which was performed

a full hour ago in the suburbs: for the early clerk population of Somers

and Camden towns, Islington, and Pentonville, are fast pouring into the

city, or directing their steps towards Chancery-lane and the Inns of

Court. Middle-aged men, whose salaries have by no means increased in the

same proportion as their families, plod steadily along, apparently with

no object in view but the counting-house; knowing by sight almost

everybody they meet or overtake, for they have seen them every morning

(Sunday excepted) during the last twenty years, but speaking to no one.

If they do happen to overtake a personal acquaintance, they just exchange

a hurried salutation, and keep walking on either by his side, or in front

of him, as his rate of walking may chance to be. As to stopping to shake

hands, or to take the friendâs arm, they seem to think that as it is not

included in their salary, they have no right to do it. Small office lads

in large hats, who are made men before they are boys, hurry along in

pairs, with their first coat carefully brushed, and the white trousers of

last Sunday plentifully besmeared with dust and ink. It evidently

requires a considerable mental struggle to avoid investing part of the

dayâs dinner-money in the purchase of the stale tarts so temptingly

exposed in dusty tins at the pastry-cooksâ doors; but a consciousness of

their own importance and the receipt of seven shillings a-week, with the

prospect of an early rise to eight, comes to their aid, and they

accordingly put their hats a little more on one side, and look under the

bonnets of all the millinersâ and stay-makersâ apprentices they meetâpoor

girls!âthe hardest worked, the worst paid, and too often, the worst used

class of the community.

Eleven oâclock, and a new set of people fill the streets. The goods in

the shop-windows are invitingly arranged; the shopmen in their white

neckerchiefs and spruce coats, look as it they couldnât clean a window if

their lives depended on it; the carts have disappeared from

Covent-garden; the waggoners have returned, and the costermongers

repaired to their ordinary âbeatsâ in the suburbs; clerks are at their

offices, and gigs, cabs, omnibuses, and saddle-horses, are conveying

their masters to the same destination. The streets are thronged with a

vast concourse of people, gay and shabby, rich and poor, idle and

industrious; and we come to the heat, bustle, and activity of NOON.

CHAPTER IIâTHE STREETSâNIGHT

But the streets of London, to be beheld in the very height of their

glory, should be seen on a dark, dull, murky winterâs night, when there

is just enough damp gently stealing down to make the pavement greasy,

without cleansing it of any of its impurities; and when the heavy lazy

mist, which hangs over every object, makes the gas-lamps look brighter,

and the brilliantly-lighted shops more splendid, from the contrast they

present to the darkness around. All the people who are at home on such a

night as this, seem disposed to make themselves as snug and comfortable

as possible; and the passengers in the streets have excellent reason to

envy the fortunate individuals who are seated by their own firesides.

In the larger and better kind of streets, dining parlour curtains are

closely drawn, kitchen fires blaze brightly up, and savoury steams of hot

dinners salute the nostrils of the hungry wayfarer, as he plods wearily

by the area railings. In the suburbs, the muffin boy rings his way down

the little street, much more slowly than he is wont to do; for Mrs.

Macklin, of No. 4, has no sooner opened her little street-door, and

screamed out âMuffins!â with all her might, than Mrs. Walker, at No. 5,

puts her head out of the parlour-window, and screams âMuffins!â too; and

Mrs. Walker has scarcely got the words out of her lips, than Mrs. Peplow,

over the way, lets loose Master Peplow, who darts down the street, with a

velocity which nothing but buttered muffins in perspective could possibly

inspire, and drags the boy back by main force, whereupon Mrs. Macklin and

Mrs. Walker, just to save the boy trouble, and to say a few neighbourly

words to Mrs. Peplow at the same time, run over the way and buy their

muffins at Mrs. Peplowâs door, when it appears from the voluntary

statement of Mrs. Walker, that her âkittleâs jist a-biling, and the cups

and sarsers ready laid,â and that, as it was such a wretched night out oâ

doors, sheâd made up her mind to have a nice, hot, comfortable cup oâ

teaâa determination at which, by the most singular coincidence, the other

two ladies had simultaneously arrived.

After a little conversation about the wretchedness of the weather and the

merits of tea, with a digression relative to the viciousness of boys as a

rule, and the amiability of Master Peplow as an exception, Mrs. Walker

sees her husband coming down the street; and as he must want his tea,

poor man, after his dirty walk from the Docks, she instantly runs across,

muffins in hand, and Mrs. Macklin does the same, and after a few words to

Mrs. Walker, they all pop into their little houses, and slam their little

street-doors, which are not opened again for the remainder of the

evening, except to the nine oâclock âbeer,â who comes round with a

lantern in front of his tray, and says, as he lends Mrs. Walker

âYesterdayâs âTiser,â that heâs blessed if he can hardly hold the pot,

much less feel the paper, for itâs one of the bitterest nights he ever

felt, âcept the night when the man was frozen to death in the

Brick-field.

After a little prophetic conversation with the policeman at the

street-corner, touching a probable change in the weather, and the

setting-in of a hard frost, the nine oâclock beer returns to his masterâs

house, and employs himself for the remainder of the evening, in

assiduously stirring the tap-room fire, and deferentially taking part in

the conversation of the worthies assembled round it.

The streets in the vicinity of the Marsh-gate and Victoria Theatre

present an appearance of dirt and discomfort on such a night, which the

groups who lounge about them in no degree tend to diminish. Even the

little block-tin temple sacred to baked potatoes, surmounted by a

splendid design in variegated lamps, looks less gay than usual, and as to

the kidney-pie stand, its glory has quite departed. The candle in the

transparent lamp, manufactured of oil-paper, embellished with

âcharacters,â has been blown out fifty times, so the kidney-pie merchant,

tired with running backwards and forwards to the next wine-vaults, to get

a light, has given up the idea of illumination in despair, and the only

signs of his âwhereabout,â are the bright sparks, of which a long

irregular train is whirled down the street every time he opens his

portable oven to hand a hot kidney-pie to a customer.

Flat-fish, oyster, and fruit vendors linger hopelessly in the kennel, in

vain endeavouring to attract customers; and the ragged boys who usually

disport themselves about the streets, stand crouched in little knots in

some projecting doorway, or under the canvas blind of a cheesemongerâs,

where great flaring gas-lights, unshaded by any glass, display huge piles

of blight red and pale yellow cheeses, mingled with little fivepenny dabs

of dingy bacon, various tubs of weekly Dorset, and cloudy rolls of âbest

fresh.â

Here they amuse themselves with theatrical converse, arising out of their

last half-price visit to the Victoria gallery, admire the terrific

combat, which is nightly encored, and expatiate on the inimitable manner

in which Bill Thompson can âcome the double monkey,â or go through the

mysterious involutions of a sailorâs hornpipe.

It is nearly eleven oâclock, and the cold thin rain which has been

drizzling so long, is beginning to pour down in good earnest; the

baked-potato man has departedâthe kidney-pie man has just walked away

with his warehouse on his armâthe cheesemonger has drawn in his blind,

and the boys have dispersed. The constant clicking of pattens on the

slippy and uneven pavement, and the rustling of umbrellas, as the wind

blows against the shop-windows, bear testimony to the inclemency of the

night; and the policeman, with his oilskin cape buttoned closely round

him, seems as he holds his hat on his head, and turns round to avoid the

gust of wind and rain which drives against him at the street-corner, to

be very far from congratulating himself on the prospect before him.

The little chandlerâs shop with the cracked bell behind the door, whose

melancholy tinkling has been regulated by the demand for quarterns of

sugar and half-ounces of coffee, is shutting up. The crowds which have

been passing to and fro during the whole day, are rapidly dwindling away;

and the noise of shouting and quarrelling which issues from the

public-houses, is almost the only sound that breaks the melancholy

stillness of the night.

There was another, but it has ceased. That wretched woman with the

infant in her arms, round whose meagre form the remnant of her own scanty

shawl is carefully wrapped, has been attempting to sing some popular

ballad, in the hope of wringing a few pence from the compassionate

passer-by. A brutal laugh at her weak voice is all she has gained. The

tears fall thick and fast down her own pale face; the child is cold and

hungry, and its low half-stifled wailing adds to the misery of its

wretched mother, as she moans aloud, and sinks despairingly down, on a

cold damp door-step.

Singing! How few of those who pass such a miserable creature as this,

think of the anguish of heart, the sinking of soul and spirit, which the

very effort of singing produces. Bitter mockery! Disease, neglect, and

starvation, faintly articulating the words of the joyous ditty, that has

enlivened your hours of feasting and merriment, God knows how often! It

is no subject of jeering. The weak tremulous voice tells a fearful tale

of want and famishing; and the feeble singer of this roaring song may

turn away, only to die of cold and hunger.

One oâclock! Parties returning from the different theatres foot it

through the muddy streets; cabs, hackney-coaches, carriages, and theatre

omnibuses, roll swiftly by; watermen with dim dirty lanterns in their

hands, and large brass plates upon their breasts, who have been shouting

and rushing about for the last two hours, retire to their

watering-houses, to solace themselves with the creature comforts of pipes

and purl; the half-price pit and box frequenters of the theatres throng

to the different houses of refreshment; and chops, kidneys, rabbits,

oysters, stout, cigars, and âgoesâ innumerable, are served up amidst a

noise and confusion of smoking, running, knife-clattering, and

waiter-chattering, perfectly indescribable.

The more musical portion of the play-going community betake themselves to

some harmonic meeting. As a matter of curiosity let us follow them

thither for a few moments.

In a lofty room of spacious dimensions, are seated some eighty or a

hundred guests knocking little pewter measures on the tables, and

hammering away, with the handles of their knives, as if they were so many

trunk-makers. They are applauding a glee, which has just been executed

by the three âprofessional gentlemenâ at the top of the centre table, one

of whom is in the chairâthe little pompous man with the bald head just

emerging from the collar of his green coat. The others are seated on

either side of himâthe stout man with the small voice, and the thin-faced

dark man in black. The little man in the chair is a most amusing

personage,âsuch condescending grandeur, and \_such\_ a voice!

âBass!â as the young gentleman near us with the blue stock forcibly

remarks to his companion, âbass! I bâlieve you; he can go down lower

than any man: so low sometimes that you canât hear him.â And so he does.

To hear him growling away, gradually lower and lower down, till he canât

get back again, is the most delightful thing in the world, and it is

quite impossible to witness unmoved the impressive solemnity with which

he pours forth his soul in âMy âartâs in the âighlands,â or âThe brave

old Hoak.â The stout man is also addicted to sentimentality, and warbles

âFly, fly from the world, my Bessy, with me,â or some such song, with

lady-like sweetness, and in the most seductive tones imaginable.

âPray give your orders, genâlâmânâpray give your orders,ââsays the

pale-faced man with the red head; and demands for âgoesâ of gin and

âgoesâ of brandy, and pints of stout, and cigars of peculiar mildness,

are vociferously made from all parts of the room. The âprofessional

gentlemenâ are in the very height of their glory, and bestow

condescending nods, or even a word or two of recognition, on the

better-known frequenters of the room, in the most bland and patronising

manner possible.

The little round-faced man, with the small brown surtout, white stockings

and shoes, is in the comic line; the mixed air of self-denial, and mental

consciousness of his own powers, with which he acknowledges the call of

the chair, is particularly gratifying. âGenâlâmen,â says the little

pompous man, accompanying the word with a knock of the presidentâs hammer

on the tableââGenâlâmen, allow me to claim your attentionâour friend, Mr.

Smuggins, will oblige.âââBravo!â shout the company; and Smuggins, after a

considerable quantity of coughing by way of symphony, and a most

facetious sniff or two, which afford general delight, sings a comic song,

with a fal-de-ralâtol-de-ral chorus at the end of every verse, much

longer than the verse itself. It is received with unbounded applause,

and after some aspiring genius has volunteered a recitation, and failed

dismally therein, the little pompous man gives another knock, and says

âGenâlâmen, we will attempt a glee, if you please.â This announcement

calls forth tumultuous applause, and the more energetic spirits express

the unqualified approbation it affords them, by knocking one or two stout

glasses off their legsâa humorous device; but one which frequently

occasions some slight altercation when the form of paying the damage is

proposed to be gone through by the waiter.

Scenes like these are continued until three or four oâclock in the

morning; and even when they close, fresh ones open to the inquisitive

novice. But as a description of all of them, however slight, would

require a volume, the contents of which, however instructive, would be by

no means pleasing, we make our bow, and drop the curtain.

CHAPTER IIIâSHOPS AND THEIR TENANTS

What inexhaustible food for speculation, do the streets of London afford!

We never were able to agree with Sterne in pitying the man who could

travel from Dan to Beersheba, and say that all was barren; we have not

the slightest commiseration for the man who can take up his hat and

stick, and walk from Covent-garden to St. Paulâs Churchyard, and back

into the bargain, without deriving some amusementâwe had almost said

instructionâfrom his perambulation. And yet there are such beings: we

meet them every day. Large black stocks and light waistcoats, jet canes

and discontented countenances, are the characteristics of the race; other

people brush quickly by you, steadily plodding on to business, or

cheerfully running after pleasure. These men linger listlessly past,

looking as happy and animated as a policeman on duty. Nothing seems to

make an impression on their minds: nothing short of being knocked down by

a porter, or run over by a cab, will disturb their equanimity. You will

meet them on a fine day in any of the leading thoroughfares: peep through

the window of a west-end cigar shop in the evening, if you can manage to

get a glimpse between the blue curtains which intercept the vulgar gaze,

and you see them in their only enjoyment of existence. There they are

lounging about, on round tubs and pipe boxes, in all the dignity of

whiskers, and gilt watch-guards; whispering soft nothings to the young

lady in amber, with the large ear-rings, who, as she sits behind the

counter in a blaze of adoration and gas-light, is the admiration of all

the female servants in the neighbourhood, and the envy of every

millinerâs apprentice within two miles round.

One of our principal amusements is to watch the gradual progressâthe rise

or fallâof particular shops. We have formed an intimate acquaintance

with several, in different parts of town, and are perfectly acquainted

with their whole history. We could name off-hand, twenty at least, which

we are quite sure have paid no taxes for the last six years. They are

never inhabited for more than two months consecutively, and, we verily

believe, have witnessed every retail trade in the directory.

There is one, whose history is a sample of the rest, in whose fate we

have taken especial interest, having had the pleasure of knowing it ever

since it has been a shop. It is on the Surrey side of the waterâa little

distance beyond the Marsh-gate. It was originally a substantial,

good-looking private house enough; the landlord got into difficulties,

the house got into Chancery, the tenant went away, and the house went to

ruin. At this period our acquaintance with it commenced; the paint was

all worn off; the windows were broken, the area was green with neglect

and the overflowings of the water-butt; the butt itself was without a

lid, and the street-door was the very picture of misery. The chief

pastime of the children in the vicinity had been to assemble in a body on

the steps, and to take it in turn to knock loud double knocks at the

door, to the great satisfaction of the neighbours generally, and

especially of the nervous old lady next door but one. Numerous

complaints were made, and several small basins of water discharged over

the offenders, but without effect. In this state of things, the

marine-store dealer at the corner of the street, in the most obliging

manner took the knocker off, and sold it: and the unfortunate house

looked more wretched than ever.

We deserted our friend for a few weeks. What was our surprise, on our

return, to find no trace of its existence! In its place was a handsome

shop, fast approaching to a state of completion, and on the shutters were

large bills, informing the public that it would shortly be opened with

âan extensive stock of linen-drapery and haberdashery.â It opened in due

course; there was the name of the proprietor âand Co.â in gilt letters,

almost too dazzling to look at. Such ribbons and shawls! and two such

elegant young men behind the counter, each in a clean collar and white

neckcloth, like the lover in a farce. As to the proprietor, he did

nothing but walk up and down the shop, and hand seats to the ladies, and

hold important conversations with the handsomest of the young men, who

was shrewdly suspected by the neighbours to be the âCo.â We saw all this

with sorrow; we felt a fatal presentiment that the shop was doomedâand so

it was. Its decay was slow, but sure. Tickets gradually appeared in the

windows; then rolls of flannel, with labels on them, were stuck outside

the door; then a bill was pasted on the street-door, intimating that the

first floor was to let unfurnished; then one of the young men disappeared

altogether, and the other took to a black neckerchief, and the proprietor

took to drinking. The shop became dirty, broken panes of glass remained

unmended, and the stock disappeared piecemeal. At last the companyâs man

came to cut off the water, and then the linen-draper cut off himself,

leaving the landlord his compliments and the key.

The next occupant was a fancy stationer. The shop was more modestly

painted than before, still it was neat; but somehow we always thought, as

we passed, that it looked like a poor and struggling concern. We wished

the man well, but we trembled for his success. He was a widower

evidently, and had employment elsewhere, for he passed us every morning

on his road to the city. The business was carried on by his eldest

daughter. Poor girl! she needed no assistance. We occasionally caught a

glimpse of two or three children, in mourning like herself, as they sat

in the little parlour behind the shop; and we never passed at night

without seeing the eldest girl at work, either for them, or in making

some elegant little trifle for sale. We often thought, as her pale face

looked more sad and pensive in the dim candle-light, that if those

thoughtless females who interfere with the miserable market of poor

creatures such as these, knew but one-half of the misery they suffer, and

the bitter privations they endure, in their honourable attempts to earn a

scanty subsistence, they would, perhaps, resign even opportunities for

the gratification of vanity, and an immodest love of self-display, rather

than drive them to a last dreadful resource, which it would shock the

delicate feelings of these \_charitable\_ ladies to hear named.

But we are forgetting the shop. Well, we continued to watch it, and

every day showed too clearly the increasing poverty of its inmates. The

children were clean, it is true, but their clothes were threadbare and

shabby; no tenant had been procured for the upper part of the house, from

the letting of which, a portion of the means of paying the rent was to

have been derived, and a slow, wasting consumption prevented the eldest

girl from continuing her exertions. Quarter-day arrived. The landlord

had suffered from the extravagance of his last tenant, and he had no

compassion for the struggles of his successor; he put in an execution.

As we passed one morning, the brokerâs men were removing the little

furniture there was in the house, and a newly-posted bill informed us it

was again âTo Let.â What became of the last tenant we never could learn;

we believe the girl is past all suffering, and beyond all sorrow. God

help her! We hope she is.

We were somewhat curious to ascertain what would be the next stageâfor

that the place had no chance of succeeding now, was perfectly clear. The

bill was soon taken down, and some alterations were being made in the

interior of the shop. We were in a fever of expectation; we exhausted

conjectureâwe imagined all possible trades, none of which were perfectly

reconcilable with our idea of the gradual decay of the tenement. It

opened, and we wondered why we had not guessed at the real state of the

case before. The shopânot a large one at the best of timesâhad been

converted into two: one was a bonnet-shape makerâs, the other was opened

by a tobacconist, who also dealt in walking-sticks and Sunday newspapers;

the two were separated by a thin partition, covered with tawdry striped

paper.

The tobacconist remained in possession longer than any tenant within our

recollection. He was a red-faced, impudent, good-for-nothing dog,

evidently accustomed to take things as they came, and to make the best of

a bad job. He sold as many cigars as he could, and smoked the rest. He

occupied the shop as long as he could make peace with the landlord, and

when he could no longer live in quiet, he very coolly locked the door,

and bolted himself. From this period, the two little dens have undergone

innumerable changes. The tobacconist was succeeded by a theatrical

hair-dresser, who ornamented the window with a great variety of

âcharacters,â and terrific combats. The bonnet-shape maker gave place to

a greengrocer, and the histrionic barber was succeeded, in his turn, by a

tailor. So numerous have been the changes, that we have of late done

little more than mark the peculiar but certain indications of a house

being poorly inhabited. It has been progressing by almost imperceptible

degrees. The occupiers of the shops have gradually given up room after

room, until they have only reserved the little parlour for themselves.

First there appeared a brass plate on the private door, with âLadiesâ

Schoolâ legibly engraved thereon; shortly afterwards we observed a second

brass plate, then a bell, and then another bell.

When we paused in front of our old friend, and observed these signs of

poverty, which are not to be mistaken, we thought as we turned away, that

the house had attained its lowest pitch of degradation. We were wrong.

When we last passed it, a âdairyâ was established in the area, and a

party of melancholy-looking fowls were amusing themselves by running in

at the front door, and out at the back one.

CHAPTER IVâSCOTLAND-YARD

Scotland-yard is a smallâa very small-tract of land, bounded on one side

by the river Thames, on the other by the gardens of Northumberland House:

abutting at one end on the bottom of Northumberland-street, at the other

on the back of Whitehall-place. When this territory was first

accidentally discovered by a country gentleman who lost his way in the

Strand, some years ago, the original settlers were found to be a tailor,

a publican, two eating-house keepers, and a fruit-pie maker; and it was

also found to contain a race of strong and bulky men, who repaired to the

wharfs in Scotland-yard regularly every morning, about five or six

oâclock, to fill heavy waggons with coal, with which they proceeded to

distant places up the country, and supplied the inhabitants with fuel.

When they had emptied their waggons, they again returned for a fresh

supply; and this trade was continued throughout the year.

As the settlers derived their subsistence from ministering to the wants

of these primitive traders, the articles exposed for sale, and the places

where they were sold, bore strong outward marks of being expressly

adapted to their tastes and wishes. The tailor displayed in his window a

Lilliputian pair of leather gaiters, and a diminutive round frock, while

each doorpost was appropriately garnished with a model of a coal-sack.

The two eating-house keepers exhibited joints of a magnitude, and

puddings of a solidity, which coalheavers alone could appreciate; and the

fruit-pie maker displayed on his well-scrubbed window-board large white

compositions of flour and dripping, ornamented with pink stains, giving

rich promise of the fruit within, which made their huge mouths water, as

they lingered past.

But the choicest spot in all Scotland-yard was the old public-house in

the corner. Here, in a dark wainscoted-room of ancient appearance,

cheered by the glow of a mighty fire, and decorated with an enormous

clock, whereof the face was white, and the figures black, sat the lusty

coalheavers, quaffing large draughts of Barclayâs best, and puffing forth

volumes of smoke, which wreathed heavily above their heads, and involved

the room in a thick dark cloud. From this apartment might their voices

be heard on a winterâs night, penetrating to the very bank of the river,

as they shouted out some sturdy chorus, or roared forth the burden of a

popular song; dwelling upon the last few words with a strength and length

of emphasis which made the very roof tremble above them.

Here, too, would they tell old legends of what the Thames was in ancient

times, when the Patent Shot Manufactory wasnât built, and Waterloo-bridge

had never been thought of; and then they would shake their heads with

portentous looks, to the deep edification of the rising generation of

heavers, who crowded round them, and wondered where all this would end;

whereat the tailor would take his pipe solemnly from his mouth, and say,

how that he hoped it might end well, but he very much doubted whether it

would or not, and couldnât rightly tell what to make of itâa mysterious

expression of opinion, delivered with a semi-prophetic air, which never

failed to elicit the fullest concurrence of the assembled company; and so

they would go on drinking and wondering till ten oâclock came, and with

it the tailorâs wife to fetch him home, when the little party broke up,

to meet again in the same room, and say and do precisely the same things,

on the following evening at the same hour.

About this time the barges that came up the river began to bring vague

rumours to Scotland-yard of somebody in the city having been heard to

say, that the Lord Mayor had threatened in so many words to pull down the

old London-bridge, and build up a new one. At first these rumours were

disregarded as idle tales, wholly destitute of foundation, for nobody in

Scotland-yard doubted that if the Lord Mayor contemplated any such dark

design, he would just be clapped up in the Tower for a week or two, and

then killed off for high treason.

By degrees, however, the reports grew stronger, and more frequent, and at

last a barge, laden with numerous chaldrons of the best Wallsend, brought

up the positive intelligence that several of the arches of the old bridge

were stopped, and that preparations were actually in progress for

constructing the new one. What an excitement was visible in the old

tap-room on that memorable night! Each man looked into his neighbourâs

face, pale with alarm and astonishment, and read therein an echo of the

sentiments which filled his own breast. The oldest heaver present proved

to demonstration, that the moment the piers were removed, all the water

in the Thames would run clean off, and leave a dry gully in its place.

What was to become of the coal-bargesâof the trade of Scotland-yardâof

the very existence of its population? The tailor shook his head more

sagely than usual, and grimly pointing to a knife on the table, bid them

wait and see what happened. He said nothingânot he; but if the Lord

Mayor didnât fall a victim to popular indignation, why he would be rather

astonished; that was all.

They did wait; barge after barge arrived, and still no tidings of the

assassination of the Lord Mayor. The first stone was laid: it was done

by a Dukeâthe Kingâs brother. Years passed away, and the bridge was

opened by the King himself. In course of time, the piers were removed;

and when the people in Scotland-yard got up next morning in the confident

expectation of being able to step over to Pedlarâs Acre without wetting

the soles of their shoes, they found to their unspeakable astonishment

that the water was just where it used to be.

A result so different from that which they had anticipated from this

first improvement, produced its full effect upon the inhabitants of

Scotland-yard. One of the eating-house keepers began to court public

opinion, and to look for customers among a new class of people. He

covered his little dining-tables with white cloths, and got a painterâs

apprentice to inscribe something about hot joints from twelve to two, in

one of the little panes of his shop-window. Improvement began to march

with rapid strides to the very threshold of Scotland-yard. A new market

sprung up at Hungerford, and the Police Commissioners established their

office in Whitehall-place. The traffic in Scotland-yard increased; fresh

Members were added to the House of Commons, the Metropolitan

Representatives found it a near cut, and many other foot passengers

followed their example.

We marked the advance of civilisation, and beheld it with a sigh. The

eating-house keeper who manfully resisted the innovation of table-cloths,

was losing ground every day, as his opponent gained it, and a deadly feud

sprung up between them. The genteel one no longer took his eveningâs

pint in Scotland-yard, but drank gin and water at a âparlourâ in

Parliament-street. The fruit-pie maker still continued to visit the old

room, but he took to smoking cigars, and began to call himself a

pastrycook, and to read the papers. The old heavers still assembled

round the ancient fireplace, but their talk was mournful: and the loud

song and the joyous shout were heard no more.

And what is Scotland-yard now? How have its old customs changed; and how

has the ancient simplicity of its inhabitants faded away! The old

tottering public-house is converted into a spacious and lofty

âwine-vaults;â gold leaf has been used in the construction of the letters

which emblazon its exterior, and the poetâs art has been called into

requisition, to intimate that if you drink a certain description of ale,

you must hold fast by the rail. The tailor exhibits in his window the

pattern of a foreign-looking brown surtout, with silk buttons, a fur

collar, and fur cuffs. He wears a stripe down the outside of each leg of

his trousers: and we have detected his assistants (for he has assistants

now) in the act of sitting on the shop-board in the same uniform.

At the other end of the little row of houses a boot-maker has established

himself in a brick box, with the additional innovation of a first floor;

and here he exposes for sale, bootsâreal Wellington bootsâan article

which a few years ago, none of the original inhabitants had ever seen or

heard of. It was but the other day, that a dress-maker opened another

little box in the middle of the row; and, when we thought that the spirit

of change could produce no alteration beyond that, a jeweller appeared,

and not content with exposing gilt rings and copper bracelets out of

number, put up an announcement, which still sticks in his window, that

âladiesâ ears may be pierced within.â The dress-maker employs a young

lady who wears pockets in her apron; and the tailor informs the public

that gentlemen may have their own materials made up.

Amidst all this change, and restlessness, and innovation, there remains

but one old man, who seems to mourn the downfall of this ancient place.

He holds no converse with human kind, but, seated on a wooden bench at

the angle of the wall which fronts the crossing from Whitehall-place,

watches in silence the gambols of his sleek and well-fed dogs. He is the

presiding genius of Scotland-yard. Years and years have rolled over his

head; but, in fine weather or in foul, hot or cold, wet or dry, hail,

rain, or snow, he is still in his accustomed spot. Misery and want are

depicted in his countenance; his form is bent by age, his head is grey

with length of trial, but there he sits from day to day, brooding over

the past; and thither he will continue to drag his feeble limbs, until

his eyes have closed upon Scotland-yard, and upon the world together.

A few years hence, and the antiquary of another generation looking into

some mouldy record of the strife and passions that agitated the world in

these times, may glance his eye over the pages we have just filled: and

not all his knowledge of the history of the past, not all his

black-letter lore, or his skill in book-collecting, not all the dry

studies of a long life, or the dusty volumes that have cost him a

fortune, may help him to the whereabouts, either of Scotland-yard, or of

any one of the landmarks we have mentioned in describing it.

CHAPTER VâSEVEN DIALS

We have always been of opinion that if Tom King and the Frenchman had not

immortalised Seven Dials, Seven Dials would have immortalised itself.

Seven Dials! the region of song and poetryâfirst effusions, and last

dying speeches: hallowed by the names of Catnach and of Pittsânames that

will entwine themselves with costermongers, and barrel-organs, when penny

magazines shall have superseded penny yards of song, and capital

punishment be unknown!

Look at the construction of the place. The Gordian knot was all very

well in its way: so was the maze of Hampton Court: so is the maze at the

Beulah Spa: so were the ties of stiff white neckcloths, when the

difficulty of getting one on, was only to be equalled by the apparent

impossibility of ever getting it off again. But what involutions can

compare with those of Seven Dials? Where is there such another maze of

streets, courts, lanes, and alleys? Where such a pure mixture of

Englishmen and Irishmen, as in this complicated part of London? We

boldly aver that we doubt the veracity of the legend to which we have

adverted. We \_can\_ suppose a man rash enough to inquire at randomâat a

house with lodgers tooâfor a Mr. Thompson, with all but the certainty

before his eyes, of finding at least two or three Thompsons in any house

of moderate dimensions; but a Frenchmanâa Frenchman in Seven Dials!

Pooh! He was an Irishman. Tom Kingâs education had been neglected in

his infancy, and as he couldnât understand half the man said, he took it

for granted he was talking French.

The stranger who finds himself in âThe Dialsâ for the first time, and

stands Belzoni-like, at the entrance of seven obscure passages, uncertain

which to take, will see enough around him to keep his curiosity and

attention awake for no inconsiderable time. From the irregular square

into which he has plunged, the streets and courts dart in all directions,

until they are lost in the unwholesome vapour which hangs over the

house-tops, and renders the dirty perspective uncertain and confined; and

lounging at every corner, as if they came there to take a few gasps of

such fresh air as has found its way so far, but is too much exhausted

already, to be enabled to force itself into the narrow alleys around, are

groups of people, whose appearance and dwellings would fill any mind but

a regular Londonerâs with astonishment.

On one side, a little crowd has collected round a couple of ladies, who

having imbibed the contents of various âthree-outsâ of gin and bitters in

the course of the morning, have at length differed on some point of

domestic arrangement, and are on the eve of settling the quarrel

satisfactorily, by an appeal to blows, greatly to the interest of other

ladies who live in the same house, and tenements adjoining, and who are

all partisans on one side or other.

âVy donât you pitch into her, Sarah?â exclaims one half-dressed matron,

by way of encouragement. âVy donât you? if \_my\_ âusband had treated her

with a drain last night, unbeknown to me, Iâd tear her precious eyes

outâa wixen!â

âWhatâs the matter, maâam?â inquires another old woman, who has just

bustled up to the spot.

âMatter!â replies the first speaker, talking \_at\_ the obnoxious

combatant, âmatter! Hereâs poor dear Mrs. Sulliwin, as has five blessed

children of her own, canât go out a charing for one arternoon, but what

hussies must be a cominâ, and âticing avay her ounâ âusband, as sheâs

been married to twelve year come next Easter Monday, for I see the

certificate ven I vas a drinkinâ a cup oâ tea vith her, only the werry

last blessed Venâsday as ever was sent. I âappenâd to say promiscuously,

âMrs. Sulliwin,â says Iââ

âWhat do you mean by hussies?â interrupts a champion of the other party,

who has evinced a strong inclination throughout to get up a branch fight

on her own account (âHooroar,â ejaculates a pot-boy in parenthesis, âput

the kye-bosk on her, Mary!â), âWhat do you mean by hussies?â reiterates

the champion.

âNiver mind,â replies the opposition expressively, âniver mind; \_you\_ go

home, and, ven youâre quite sober, mend your stockings.â

This somewhat personal allusion, not only to the ladyâs habits of

intemperance, but also to the state of her wardrobe, rouses her utmost

ire, and she accordingly complies with the urgent request of the

bystanders to âpitch in,â with considerable alacrity. The scuffle became

general, and terminates, in minor play-bill phraseology, with âarrival of

the policemen, interior of the station-house, and impressive

\_dÃ©nouement\_.â

In addition to the numerous groups who are idling about the gin-shops and

squabbling in the centre of the road, every post in the open space has

its occupant, who leans against it for hours, with listless perseverance.

It is odd enough that one class of men in London appear to have no

enjoyment beyond leaning against posts. We never saw a regular

bricklayerâs labourer take any other recreation, fighting excepted. Pass

through St. Gilesâs in the evening of a week-day, there they are in their

fustian dresses, spotted with brick-dust and whitewash, leaning against

posts. Walk through Seven Dials on Sunday morning: there they are again,

drab or light corduroy trousers, Blucher boots, blue coats, and great

yellow waistcoats, leaning against posts. The idea of a man dressing

himself in his best clothes, to lean against a post all day!

The peculiar character of these streets, and the close resemblance each

one bears to its neighbour, by no means tends to decrease the

bewilderment in which the unexperienced wayfarer through âthe Dialsâ

finds himself involved. He traverses streets of dirty, straggling

houses, with now and then an unexpected court composed of buildings as

ill-proportioned and deformed as the half-naked children that wallow in

the kennels. Here and there, a little dark chandlerâs shop, with a

cracked bell hung up behind the door to announce the entrance of a

customer, or betray the presence of some young gentleman in whom a

passion for shop tills has developed itself at an early age: others, as

if for support, against some handsome lofty building, which usurps the

place of a low dingy public-house; long rows of broken and patched

windows expose plants that may have flourished when âthe Dialsâ were

built, in vessels as dirty as âthe Dialsâ themselves; and shops for the

purchase of rags, bones, old iron, and kitchen-stuff, vie in cleanliness

with the bird-fanciers and rabbit-dealers, which one might fancy so many

arks, but for the irresistible conviction that no bird in its proper

senses, who was permitted to leave one of them, would ever come back

again. Brokersâ shops, which would seem to have been established by

humane individuals, as refuges for destitute bugs, interspersed with

announcements of day-schools, penny theatres, petition-writers, mangles,

and music for balls or routs, complete the âstill lifeâ of the subject;

and dirty men, filthy women, squalid children, fluttering shuttlecocks,

noisy battledores, reeking pipes, bad fruit, more than doubtful oysters,

attenuated cats, depressed dogs, and anatomical fowls, are its cheerful

accompaniments.

If the external appearance of the houses, or a glance at their

inhabitants, present but few attractions, a closer acquaintance with

either is little calculated to alter oneâs first impression. Every room

has its separate tenant, and every tenant is, by the same mysterious

dispensation which causes a country curate to âincrease and multiplyâ

most marvellously, generally the head of a numerous family.

The man in the shop, perhaps, is in the baked âjemmyâ line, or the

fire-wood and hearth-stone line, or any other line which requires a

floating capital of eighteen-pence or thereabouts: and he and his family

live in the shop, and the small back parlour behind it. Then there is an

Irish labourer and \_his\_ family in the back kitchen, and a jobbing

manâcarpet-beater and so forthâwith \_his\_ family in the front one. In

the front one-pair, thereâs another man with another wife and family, and

in the back one-pair, thereâs âa young âoman as takes in tambour-work,

and dresses quite genteel,â who talks a good deal about âmy friend,â and

canât âa-bear anything low.â The second floor front, and the rest of the

lodgers, are just a second edition of the people below, except a

shabby-genteel man in the back attic, who has his half-pint of coffee

every morning from the coffee-shop next door but one, which boasts a

little front den called a coffee-room, with a fireplace, over which is an

inscription, politely requesting that, âto prevent mistakes,â customers

will âplease to pay on delivery.â The shabby-genteel man is an object of

some mystery, but as he leads a life of seclusion, and never was known to

buy anything beyond an occasional pen, except half-pints of coffee, penny

loaves, and haâporths of ink, his fellow-lodgers very naturally suppose

him to be an author; and rumours are current in the Dials, that he writes

poems for Mr. Warren.

Now anybody who passed through the Dials on a hot summerâs evening, and

saw the different women of the house gossiping on the steps, would be apt

to think that all was harmony among them, and that a more primitive set

of people than the native Diallers could not be imagined. Alas! the man

in the shop ill-treats his family; the carpet-beater extends his

professional pursuits to his wife; the one-pair front has an undying feud

with the two-pair front, in consequence of the two-pair front persisting

in dancing over his (the one-pair frontâs) head, when he and his family

have retired for the night; the two-pair back will interfere with the

front kitchenâs children; the Irishman comes home drunk every other

night, and attacks everybody; and the one-pair back screams at

everything. Animosities spring up between floor and floor; the very

cellar asserts his equality. Mrs. A. âsmacksâ Mrs. B.âs child for

âmaking faces.â Mrs. B. forthwith throws cold water over Mrs. A.âs child

for âcalling names.â The husbands are embroiledâthe quarrel becomes

generalâan assault is the consequence, and a police-officer the result.

CHAPTER VIâMEDITATIONS IN MONMOUTH-STREET

We have always entertained a particular attachment towards

Monmouth-street, as the only true and real emporium for second-hand

wearing apparel. Monmouth-street is venerable from its antiquity, and

respectable from its usefulness. Holywell-street we despise; the

red-headed and red-whiskered Jews who forcibly haul you into their

squalid houses, and thrust you into a suit of clothes, whether you will

or not, we detest.

The inhabitants of Monmouth-street are a distinct class; a peaceable and

retiring race, who immure themselves for the most part in deep cellars,

or small back parlours, and who seldom come forth into the world, except

in the dusk and coolness of the evening, when they may be seen seated, in

chairs on the pavement, smoking their pipes, or watching the gambols of

their engaging children as they revel in the gutter, a happy troop of

infantine scavengers. Their countenances bear a thoughtful and a dirty

cast, certain indications of their love of traffic; and their habitations

are distinguished by that disregard of outward appearance and neglect of

personal comfort, so common among people who are constantly immersed in

profound speculations, and deeply engaged in sedentary pursuits.

We have hinted at the antiquity of our favourite spot. âA

Monmouth-street laced coatâ was a by-word a century ago; and still we

find Monmouth-street the same. Pilot great-coats with wooden buttons,

have usurped the place of the ponderous laced coats with full skirts;

embroidered waistcoats with large flaps, have yielded to double-breasted

checks with roll-collars; and three-cornered hats of quaint appearance,

have given place to the low crowns and broad brims of the coachman

school; but it is the times that have changed, not Monmouth-street.

Through every alteration and every change, Monmouth-street has still

remained the burial-place of the fashions; and such, to judge from all

present appearances, it will remain until there are no more fashions to

bury.

We love to walk among these extensive groves of the illustrious dead, and

to indulge in the speculations to which they give rise; now fitting a

deceased coat, then a dead pair of trousers, and anon the mortal remains

of a gaudy waistcoat, upon some being of our own conjuring up, and

endeavouring, from the shape and fashion of the garment itself, to bring

its former owner before our mindâs eye. We have gone on speculating in

this way, until whole rows of coats have started from their pegs, and

buttoned up, of their own accord, round the waists of imaginary wearers;

lines of trousers have jumped down to meet them; waistcoats have almost

burst with anxiety to put themselves on; and half an acre of shoes have

suddenly found feet to fit them, and gone stumping down the street with a

noise which has fairly awakened us from our pleasant reverie, and driven

us slowly away, with a bewildered stare, an object of astonishment to the

good people of Monmouth-street, and of no slight suspicion to the

policemen at the opposite street corner.

We were occupied in this manner the other day, endeavouring to fit a pair

of lace-up half-boots on an ideal personage, for whom, to say the truth,

they were full a couple of sizes too small, when our eyes happened to

alight on a few suits of clothes ranged outside a shop-window, which it

immediately struck us, must at different periods have all belonged to,

and been worn by, the same individual, and had now, by one of those

strange conjunctions of circumstances which will occur sometimes, come to

be exposed together for sale in the same shop. The idea seemed a

fantastic one, and we looked at the clothes again with a firm

determination not to be easily led away. No, we were right; the more we

looked, the more we were convinced of the accuracy of our previous

impression. There was the manâs whole life written as legibly on those

clothes, as if we had his autobiography engrossed on parchment before us.

The first was a patched and much-soiled skeleton suit; one of those

straight blue cloth cases in which small boys used to be confined, before

belts and tunics had come in, and old notions had gone out: an ingenious

contrivance for displaying the full symmetry of a boyâs figure, by

fastening him into a very tight jacket, with an ornamental row of buttons

over each shoulder, and then buttoning his trousers over it, so as to

give his legs the appearance of being hooked on, just under the armpits.

This was the boyâs dress. It had belonged to a town boy, we could see;

there was a shortness about the legs and arms of the suit; and a bagging

at the knees, peculiar to the rising youth of London streets. A small

day-school he had been at, evidently. If it had been a regular boysâ

school they wouldnât have let him play on the floor so much, and rub his

knees so white. He had an indulgent mother too, and plenty of halfpence,

as the numerous smears of some sticky substance about the pockets, and

just below the chin, which even the salesmanâs skill could not succeed in

disguising, sufficiently betokened. They were decent people, but not

overburdened with riches, or he would not have so far outgrown the suit

when he passed into those corduroys with the round jacket; in which he

went to a boysâ school, however, and learnt to writeâand in ink of pretty

tolerable blackness, too, if the place where he used to wipe his pen

might be taken as evidence.

A black suit and the jacket changed into a diminutive coat. His father

had died, and the mother had got the boy a message-ladâs place in some

office. A long-worn suit that one; rusty and threadbare before it was

laid aside, but clean and free from soil to the last. Poor woman! We

could imagine her assumed cheerfulness over the scanty meal, and the

refusal of her own small portion, that her hungry boy might have enough.

Her constant anxiety for his welfare, her pride in his growth mingled

sometimes with the thought, almost too acute to bear, that as he grew to

be a man his old affection might cool, old kindnesses fade from his mind,

and old promises be forgottenâthe sharp pain that even then a careless

word or a cold look would give herâall crowded on our thoughts as vividly

as if the very scene were passing before us.

These things happen every hour, and we all know it; and yet we felt as

much sorrow when we saw, or fancied we sawâit makes no difference

whichâthe change that began to take place now, as if we had just

conceived the bare possibility of such a thing for the first time. The

next suit, smart but slovenly; meant to be gay, and yet not half so

decent as the threadbare apparel; redolent of the idle lounge, and the

blackguard companions, told us, we thought, that the widowâs comfort had

rapidly faded away. We could imagine that coatâimagine! we could see it;

we \_had\_ seen it a hundred timesâsauntering in company with three or four

other coats of the same cut, about some place of profligate resort at

night.

We dressed, from the same shop-window in an instant, half a dozen boys of

from fifteen to twenty; and putting cigars into their mouths, and their

hands into their pockets, watched them as they sauntered down the street,

and lingered at the corner, with the obscene jest, and the oft-repeated

oath. We never lost sight of them, till they had cocked their hats a

little more on one side, and swaggered into the public-house; and then we

entered the desolate home, where the mother sat late in the night, alone;

we watched her, as she paced the room in feverish anxiety, and every now

and then opened the door, looked wistfully into the dark and empty

street, and again returned, to be again and again disappointed. We

beheld the look of patience with which she bore the brutish threat, nay,

even the drunken blow; and we heard the agony of tears that gushed from

her very heart, as she sank upon her knees in her solitary and wretched

apartment.

A long period had elapsed, and a greater change had taken place, by the

time of casting off the suit that hung above. It was that of a stout,

broad-shouldered, sturdy-chested man; and we knew at once, as anybody

would, who glanced at that broad-skirted green coat, with the large metal

buttons, that its wearer seldom walked forth without a dog at his heels,

and some idle ruffian, the very counterpart of himself, at his side. The

vices of the boy had grown with the man, and we fancied his home thenâif

such a place deserve the name.

We saw the bare and miserable room, destitute of furniture, crowded with

his wife and children, pale, hungry, and emaciated; the man cursing their

lamentations, staggering to the tap-room, from whence he had just

returned, followed by his wife and a sickly infant, clamouring for bread;

and heard the street-wrangle and noisy recrimination that his striking

her occasioned. And then imagination led us to some metropolitan

workhouse, situated in the midst of crowded streets and alleys, filled

with noxious vapours, and ringing with boisterous cries, where an old and

feeble woman, imploring pardon for her son, lay dying in a close dark

room, with no child to clasp her hand, and no pure air from heaven to fan

her brow. A stranger closed the eyes that settled into a cold unmeaning

glare, and strange ears received the words that murmured from the white

and half-closed lips.

A coarse round frock, with a worn cotton neckerchief, and other articles

of clothing of the commonest description, completed the history. A

prison, and the sentenceâbanishment or the gallows. What would the man

have given then, to be once again the contented humble drudge of his

boyish years; to have been restored to life, but for a week, a day, an

hour, a minute, only for so long a time as would enable him to say one

word of passionate regret to, and hear one sound of heartfelt forgiveness

from, the cold and ghastly form that lay rotting in the pauperâs grave!

The children wild in the streets, the mother a destitute widow; both

deeply tainted with the deep disgrace of the husband and fatherâs name,

and impelled by sheer necessity, down the precipice that had led him to a

lingering death, possibly of many yearsâ duration, thousands of miles

away. We had no clue to the end of the tale; but it was easy to guess

its termination.

We took a step or two further on, and by way of restoring the naturally

cheerful tone of our thoughts, began fitting visionary feet and legs into

a cellar-board full of boots and shoes, with a speed and accuracy that

would have astonished the most expert artist in leather, living. There

was one pair of boots in particularâa jolly, good-tempered,

hearty-looking pair of tops, that excited our warmest regard; and we had

got a fine, red-faced, jovial fellow of a market-gardener into them,

before we had made their acquaintance half a minute. They were just the

very thing for him. There was his huge fat legs bulging over the tops,

and fitting them too tight to admit of his tucking in the loops he had

pulled them on by; and his knee-cords with an interval of stocking; and

his blue apron tucked up round his waist; and his red neckerchief and

blue coat, and a white hat stuck on one side of his head; and there he

stood with a broad grin on his great red face, whistling away, as if any

other idea but that of being happy and comfortable had never entered his

brain.

This was the very man after our own heart; we knew all about him; we had

seen him coming up to Covent-garden in his green chaise-cart, with the

fat, tubby little horse, half a thousand times; and even while we cast an

affectionate look upon his boots, at that instant, the form of a

coquettish servant-maid suddenly sprung into a pair of Denmark satin

shoes that stood beside them, and we at once recognised the very girl who

accepted his offer of a ride, just on this side the Hammersmith

suspension-bridge, the very last Tuesday morning we rode into town from

Richmond.

A very smart female, in a showy bonnet, stepped into a pair of grey cloth

boots, with black fringe and binding, that were studiously pointing out

their toes on the other side of the top-boots, and seemed very anxious to

engage his attention, but we didnât observe that our friend the

market-gardener appeared at all captivated with these blandishments; for

beyond giving a knowing wink when they first began, as if to imply that

he quite understood their end and object, he took no further notice of

them. His indifference, however, was amply recompensed by the excessive

gallantry of a very old gentleman with a silver-headed stick, who

tottered into a pair of large list shoes, that were standing in one

corner of the board, and indulged in a variety of gestures expressive of

his admiration of the lady in the cloth boots, to the immeasurable

amusement of a young fellow we put into a pair of long-quartered pumps,

who we thought would have split the coat that slid down to meet him, with

laughing.

We had been looking on at this little pantomime with great satisfaction

for some time, when, to our unspeakable astonishment, we perceived that

the whole of the characters, including a numerous \_corps de ballet\_ of

boots and shoes in the background, into which we had been hastily

thrusting as many feet as we could press into the service, were arranging

themselves in order for dancing; and some music striking up at the

moment, to it they went without delay. It was perfectly delightful to

witness the agility of the market-gardener. Out went the boots, first on

one side, then on the other, then cutting, then shuffling, then setting

to the Denmark satins, then advancing, then retreating, then going round,

and then repeating the whole of the evolutions again, without appearing

to suffer in the least from the violence of the exercise.

Nor were the Denmark satins a bit behindhand, for they jumped and bounded

about, in all directions; and though they were neither so regular, nor so

true to the time as the cloth boots, still, as they seemed to do it from

the heart, and to enjoy it more, we candidly confess that we preferred

their style of dancing to the other. But the old gentleman in the list

shoes was the most amusing object in the whole party; for, besides his

grotesque attempts to appear youthful, and amorous, which were

sufficiently entertaining in themselves, the young fellow in the pumps

managed so artfully that every time the old gentleman advanced to salute

the lady in the cloth boots, he trod with his whole weight on the old

fellowâs toes, which made him roar with anguish, and rendered all the

others like to die of laughing.

We were in the full enjoyment of these festivities when we heard a

shrill, and by no means musical voice, exclaim, âHope youâll know me

agin, imperence!â and on looking intently forward to see from whence the

sound came, we found that it proceeded, not from the young lady in the

cloth boots, as we had at first been inclined to suppose, but from a

bulky lady of elderly appearance who was seated in a chair at the head of

the cellar-steps, apparently for the purpose of superintending the sale

of the articles arranged there.

A barrel-organ, which had been in full force close behind us, ceased

playing; the people we had been fitting into the shoes and boots took to

flight at the interruption; and as we were conscious that in the depth of

our meditations we might have been rudely staring at the old lady for

half an hour without knowing it, we took to flight too, and were soon

immersed in the deepest obscurity of the adjacent âDials.â

CHAPTER VIIâHACKNEY-COACH STANDS

We maintain that hackney-coaches, properly so called, belong solely to

the metropolis. We may be told, that there are hackney-coach stands in

Edinburgh; and not to go quite so far for a contradiction to our

position, we may be reminded that Liverpool, Manchester, âand other large

townsâ (as the Parliamentary phrase goes), have \_their\_ hackney-coach

stands. We readily concede to these places the possession of certain

vehicles, which may look almost as dirty, and even go almost as slowly,

as London hackney-coaches; but that they have the slightest claim to

compete with the metropolis, either in point of stands, drivers, or

cattle, we indignantly deny.

Take a regular, ponderous, rickety, London hackney-coach of the old

school, and let any man have the boldness to assert, if he can, that he

ever beheld any object on the face of the earth which at all resembles

it, unless, indeed, it were another hackney-coach of the same date. We

have recently observed on certain stands, and we say it with deep regret,

rather dapper green chariots, and coaches of polished yellow, with four

wheels of the same colour as the coach, whereas it is perfectly notorious

to every one who has studied the subject, that every wheel ought to be of

a different colour, and a different size. These are innovations, and,

like other miscalled improvements, awful signs of the restlessness of the

public mind, and the little respect paid to our time-honoured

institutions. Why should hackney-coaches be clean? Our ancestors found

them dirty, and left them so. Why should we, with a feverish wish to

âkeep moving,â desire to roll along at the rate of six miles an hour,

while they were content to rumble over the stones at four? These are

solemn considerations. Hackney-coaches are part and parcel of the law of

the land; they were settled by the Legislature; plated and numbered by

the wisdom of Parliament.

Then why have they been swamped by cabs and omnibuses? Or why should

people be allowed to ride quickly for eightpence a mile, after Parliament

had come to the solemn decision that they should pay a shilling a mile

for riding slowly? We pause for a reply;âand, having no chance of

getting one, begin a fresh paragraph.

Our acquaintance with hackney-coach stands is of long standing. We are a

walking book of fares, feeling ourselves, half bound, as it were, to be

always in the right on contested points. We know all the regular

watermen within three miles of Covent-garden by sight, and should be

almost tempted to believe that all the hackney-coach horses in that

district knew us by sight too, if one-half of them were not blind. We

take great interest in hackney-coaches, but we seldom drive, having a

knack of turning ourselves over when we attempt to do so. We are as

great friends to horses, hackney-coach and otherwise, as the renowned Mr.

Martin, of costermonger notoriety, and yet we never ride. We keep no

horse, but a clothes-horse; enjoy no saddle so much as a saddle of

mutton; and, following our own inclinations, have never followed the

hounds. Leaving these fleeter means of getting over the ground, or of

depositing oneself upon it, to those who like them, by hackney-coach

stands we take our stand.

There is a hackney-coach stand under the very window at which we are

writing; there is only one coach on it now, but it is a fair specimen of

the class of vehicles to which we have alludedâa great, lumbering, square

concern of a dingy yellow colour (like a bilious brunette), with very

small glasses, but very large frames; the panels are ornamented with a

faded coat of arms, in shape something like a dissected bat, the axletree

is red, and the majority of the wheels are green. The box is partially

covered by an old great-coat, with a multiplicity of capes, and some

extraordinary-looking clothes; and the straw, with which the canvas

cushion is stuffed, is sticking up in several places, as if in rivalry of

the hay, which is peeping through the chinks in the boot. The horses,

with drooping heads, and each with a mane and tail as scanty and

straggling as those of a worn-out rocking-horse, are standing patiently

on some damp straw, occasionally wincing, and rattling the harness; and

now and then, one of them lifts his mouth to the ear of his companion, as

if he were saying, in a whisper, that he should like to assassinate the

coachman. The coachman himself is in the watering-house; and the

waterman, with his hands forced into his pockets as far as they can

possibly go, is dancing the âdouble shuffle,â in front of the pump, to

keep his feet warm.

The servant-girl, with the pink ribbons, at No. 5, opposite, suddenly

opens the street-door, and four small children forthwith rush out, and

scream âCoach!â with all their might and main. The waterman darts from

the pump, seizes the horses by their respective bridles, and drags them,

and the coach too, round to the house, shouting all the time for the

coachman at the very top, or rather very bottom of his voice, for it is a

deep bass growl. A response is heard from the tap-room; the coachman, in

his wooden-soled shoes, makes the street echo again as he runs across it;

and then there is such a struggling, and backing, and grating of the

kennel, to get the coach-door opposite the house-door, that the children

are in perfect ecstasies of delight. What a commotion! The old lady,

who has been stopping there for the last month, is going back to the

country. Out comes box after box, and one side of the vehicle is filled

with luggage in no time; the children get into everybodyâs way, and the

youngest, who has upset himself in his attempts to carry an umbrella, is

borne off wounded and kicking. The youngsters disappear, and a short

pause ensues, during which the old lady is, no doubt, kissing them all

round in the back parlour. She appears at last, followed by her married

daughter, all the children, and both the servants, who, with the joint

assistance of the coachman and waterman, manage to get her safely into

the coach. A cloak is handed in, and a little basket, which we could

almost swear contains a small black bottle, and a paper of sandwiches.

Up go the steps, bang goes the door, âGolden-cross, Charing-cross, Tom,â

says the waterman; âGood-bye, grandma,â cry the children, off jingles the

coach at the rate of three miles an hour, and the mamma and children

retire into the house, with the exception of one little villain, who runs

up the street at the top of his speed, pursued by the servant; not

ill-pleased to have such an opportunity of displaying her attractions.

She brings him back, and, after casting two or three gracious glances

across the way, which are either intended for us or the potboy (we are

not quite certain which), shuts the door, and the hackney-coach stand is

again at a standstill.

We have been frequently amused with the intense delight with which âa

servant of all work,â who is sent for a coach, deposits herself inside;

and the unspeakable gratification which boys, who have been despatched on

a similar errand, appear to derive from mounting the box. But we never

recollect to have been more amused with a hackney-coach party, than one

we saw early the other morning in Tottenham-court-road. It was a

wedding-party, and emerged from one of the inferior streets near

Fitzroy-square. There were the bride, with a thin white dress, and a

great red face; and the bridesmaid, a little, dumpy, good-humoured young

woman, dressed, of course, in the same appropriate costume; and the

bridegroom and his chosen friend, in blue coats, yellow waist-coats,

white trousers, and Berlin gloves to match. They stopped at the corner

of the street, and called a coach with an air of indescribable dignity.

The moment they were in, the bridesmaid threw a red shawl, which she had,

no doubt, brought on purpose, negligently over the number on the door,

evidently to delude pedestrians into the belief that the hackney-coach

was a private carriage; and away they went, perfectly satisfied that the

imposition was successful, and quite unconscious that there was a great

staring number stuck up behind, on a plate as large as a schoolboyâs

slate. A shilling a mile!âthe ride was worth five, at least, to them.

What an interesting book a hackney-coach might produce, if it could carry

as much in its head as it does in its body! The autobiography of a

broken-down hackney-coach, would surely be as amusing as the

autobiography of a broken-down hackneyed dramatist; and it might tell as

much of its travels \_with\_ the pole, as others have of their expeditions

\_to\_ it. How many stories might be related of the different people it

had conveyed on matters of business or profitâpleasure or pain! And how

many melancholy tales of the same people at different periods! The

country-girlâthe showy, over-dressed womanâthe drunken prostitute! The

raw apprenticeâthe dissipated spendthriftâthe thief!

Talk of cabs! Cabs are all very well in cases of expedition, when itâs a

matter of neck or nothing, life or death, your temporary home or your

long one. But, besides a cabâs lacking that gravity of deportment which

so peculiarly distinguishes a hackney-coach, let it never be forgotten

that a cab is a thing of yesterday, and that he never was anything

better. A hackney-cab has always been a hackney-cab, from his first

entry into life; whereas a hackney-coach is a remnant of past gentility,

a victim to fashion, a hanger-on of an old English family, wearing their

arms, and, in days of yore, escorted by men wearing their livery,

stripped of his finery, and thrown upon the world, like a once-smart

footman when he is no longer sufficiently juvenile for his office,

progressing lower and lower in the scale of four-wheeled degradation,

until at last it comes toâ\_a stand\_!

CHAPTER VIIIâDOCTORSâ COMMONS

Walking without any definite object through St. Paulâs Churchyard, a

little while ago, we happened to turn down a street entitled

âPaulâs-chain,â and keeping straight forward for a few hundred yards,

found ourself, as a natural consequence, in Doctorsâ Commons. Now

Doctorsâ Commons being familiar by name to everybody, as the place where

they grant marriage-licenses to love-sick couples, and divorces to

unfaithful ones; register the wills of people who have any property to

leave, and punish hasty gentlemen who call ladies by unpleasant names, we

no sooner discovered that we were really within its precincts, than we

felt a laudable desire to become better acquainted therewith; and as the

first object of our curiosity was the Court, whose decrees can even

unloose the bonds of matrimony, we procured a direction to it; and bent

our steps thither without delay.

Crossing a quiet and shady court-yard, paved with stone, and frowned upon

by old red brick houses, on the doors of which were painted the names of

sundry learned civilians, we paused before a small, green-baized,

brass-headed-nailed door, which yielding to our gentle push, at once

admitted us into an old quaint-looking apartment, with sunken windows,

and black carved wainscoting, at the upper end of which, seated on a

raised platform, of semicircular shape, were about a dozen solemn-looking

gentlemen, in crimson gowns and wigs.

At a more elevated desk in the centre, sat a very fat and red-faced

gentleman, in tortoise-shell spectacles, whose dignified appearance

announced the judge; and round a long green-baized table below, something

like a billiard-table without the cushions and pockets, were a number of

very self-important-looking personages, in stiff neckcloths, and black

gowns with white fur collars, whom we at once set down as proctors. At

the lower end of the billiard-table was an individual in an arm-chair,

and a wig, whom we afterwards discovered to be the registrar; and seated

behind a little desk, near the door, were a respectable-looking man in

black, of about twenty-stone weight or thereabouts, and a fat-faced,

smirking, civil-looking body, in a black gown, black kid gloves, knee

shorts, and silks, with a shirt-frill in his bosom, curls on his head,

and a silver staff in his hand, whom we had no difficulty in recognising

as the officer of the Court. The latter, indeed, speedily set our mind

at rest upon this point, for, advancing to our elbow, and opening a

conversation forthwith, he had communicated to us, in less than five

minutes, that he was the apparitor, and the other the court-keeper; that

this was the Arches Court, and therefore the counsel wore red gowns, and

the proctors fur collars; and that when the other Courts sat there, they

didnât wear red gowns or fur collars either; with many other scraps of

intelligence equally interesting. Besides these two officers, there was

a little thin old man, with long grizzly hair, crouched in a remote

corner, whose duty, our communicative friend informed us, was to ring a

large hand-bell when the Court opened in the morning, and who, for aught

his appearance betokened to the contrary, might have been similarly

employed for the last two centuries at least.

The red-faced gentleman in the tortoise-shell spectacles had got all the

talk to himself just then, and very well he was doing it, too, only he

spoke very fast, but that was habit; and rather thick, but that was good

living. So we had plenty of time to look about us. There was one

individual who amused us mightily. This was one of the bewigged

gentlemen in the red robes, who was straddling before the fire in the

centre of the Court, in the attitude of the brazen Colossus, to the

complete exclusion of everybody else. He had gathered up his robe

behind, in much the same manner as a slovenly woman would her petticoats

on a very dirty day, in order that he might feel the full warmth of the

fire. His wig was put on all awry, with the tail straggling about his

neck; his scanty grey trousers and short black gaiters, made in the worst

possible style, imported an additional inelegant appearance to his

uncouth person; and his limp, badly-starched shirt-collar almost obscured

his eyes. We shall never be able to claim any credit as a physiognomist

again, for, after a careful scrutiny of this gentlemanâs countenance, we

had come to the conclusion that it bespoke nothing but conceit and

silliness, when our friend with the silver staff whispered in our ear

that he was no other than a doctor of civil law, and heaven knows what

besides. So of course we were mistaken, and he must be a very talented

man. He conceals it so well thoughâperhaps with the merciful view of not

astonishing ordinary people too muchâthat you would suppose him to be one

of the stupidest dogs alive.

The gentleman in the spectacles having concluded his judgment, and a few

minutes having been allowed to elapse, to afford time for the buzz of the

Court to subside, the registrar called on the next cause, which was âthe

office of the Judge promoted by Bumple against Sludberry.â A general

movement was visible in the Court, at this announcement, and the obliging

functionary with silver staff whispered us that âthere would be some fun

now, for this was a brawling case.â

We were not rendered much the wiser by this piece of information, till we

found by the opening speech of the counsel for the promoter, that, under

a half-obsolete statute of one of the Edwards, the court was empowered to

visit with the penalty of excommunication, any person who should be

proved guilty of the crime of âbrawling,â or âsmiting,â in any church, or

vestry adjoining thereto; and it appeared, by some eight-and-twenty

affidavits, which were duly referred to, that on a certain night, at a

certain vestry-meeting, in a certain parish particularly set forth,

Thomas Sludberry, the party appeared against in that suit, had made use

of, and applied to Michael Bumple, the promoter, the words âYou be

blowed;â and that, on the said Michael Bumple and others remonstrating

with the said Thomas Sludberry, on the impropriety of his conduct, the

said Thomas Sludberry repeated the aforesaid expression, âYou be blowed;â

and furthermore desired and requested to know, whether the said Michael

Bumple âwanted anything for himself;â adding, âthat if the said Michael

Bumple did want anything for himself, he, the said Thomas Sludberry, was

the man to give it him;â at the same time making use of other heinous and

sinful expressions, all of which, Bumple submitted, came within the

intent and meaning of the Act; and therefore he, for the soulâs health

and chastening of Sludberry, prayed for sentence of excommunication

against him accordingly.

Upon these facts a long argument was entered into, on both sides, to the

great edification of a number of persons interested in the parochial

squabbles, who crowded the court; and when some very long and grave

speeches had been made \_pro\_ and \_con\_, the red-faced gentleman in the

tortoise-shell spectacles took a review of the case, which occupied half

an hour more, and then pronounced upon Sludberry the awful sentence of

excommunication for a fortnight, and payment of the costs of the suit.

Upon this, Sludberry, who was a little, red-faced, sly-looking,

ginger-beer seller, addressed the court, and said, if theyâd be good

enough to take off the costs, and excommunicate him for the term of his

natural life instead, it would be much more convenient to him, for he

never went to church at all. To this appeal the gentleman in the

spectacles made no other reply than a look of virtuous indignation; and

Sludberry and his friends retired. As the man with the silver staff

informed us that the court was on the point of rising, we retired

tooâpondering, as we walked away, upon the beautiful spirit of these

ancient ecclesiastical laws, the kind and neighbourly feelings they are

calculated to awaken, and the strong attachment to religious institutions

which they cannot fail to engender.

We were so lost in these meditations, that we had turned into the street,

and run up against a door-post, before we recollected where we were

walking. On looking upwards to see what house we had stumbled upon, the

words âPrerogative-Office,â written in large characters, met our eye; and

as we were in a sight-seeing humour and the place was a public one, we

walked in.

The room into which we walked, was a long, busy-looking place,

partitioned off, on either side, into a variety of little boxes, in which

a few clerks were engaged in copying or examining deeds. Down the centre

of the room were several desks nearly breast high, at each of which,

three or four people were standing, poring over large volumes. As we

knew that they were searching for wills, they attracted our attention at

once.

It was curious to contrast the lazy indifference of the attorneysâ clerks

who were making a search for some legal purpose, with the air of

earnestness and interest which distinguished the strangers to the place,

who were looking up the will of some deceased relative; the former

pausing every now and then with an impatient yawn, or raising their heads

to look at the people who passed up and down the room; the latter

stooping over the book, and running down column after column of names in

the deepest abstraction.

There was one little dirty-faced man in a blue apron, who after a whole

morningâs search, extending some fifty years back, had just found the

will to which he wished to refer, which one of the officials was reading

to him in a low hurried voice from a thick vellum book with large clasps.

It was perfectly evident that the more the clerk read, the less the man

with the blue apron understood about the matter. When the volume was

first brought down, he took off his hat, smoothed down his hair, smiled

with great self-satisfaction, and looked up in the readerâs face with the

air of a man who had made up his mind to recollect every word he heard.

The first two or three lines were intelligible enough; but then the

technicalities began, and the little man began to look rather dubious.

Then came a whole string of complicated trusts, and he was regularly at

sea. As the reader proceeded, it was quite apparent that it was a

hopeless case, and the little man, with his mouth open and his eyes fixed

upon his face, looked on with an expression of bewilderment and

perplexity irresistibly ludicrous.

A little further on, a hard-featured old man with a deeply-wrinkled face,

was intently perusing a lengthy will with the aid of a pair of horn

spectacles: occasionally pausing from his task, and slily noting down

some brief memorandum of the bequests contained in it. Every wrinkle

about his toothless mouth, and sharp keen eyes, told of avarice and

cunning. His clothes were nearly threadbare, but it was easy to see that

he wore them from choice and not from necessity; all his looks and

gestures down to the very small pinches of snuff which he every now and

then took from a little tin canister, told of wealth, and penury, and

avarice.

As he leisurely closed the register, put up his spectacles, and folded

his scraps of paper in a large leathern pocket-book, we thought what a

nice hard bargain he was driving with some poverty-stricken legatee, who,

tired of waiting year after year, until some life-interest should fall

in, was selling his chance, just as it began to grow most valuable, for a

twelfth part of its worth. It was a good speculationâa very safe one.

The old man stowed his pocket-book carefully in the breast of his

great-coat, and hobbled away with a leer of triumph. That will had made

him ten years younger at the lowest computation.

Having commenced our observations, we should certainly have extended them

to another dozen of people at least, had not a sudden shutting up and

putting away of the worm-eaten old books, warned us that the time for

closing the office had arrived; and thus deprived us of a pleasure, and

spared our readers an infliction.

We naturally fell into a train of reflection as we walked homewards, upon

the curious old records of likings and dislikings; of jealousies and

revenges; of affection defying the power of death, and hatred pursued

beyond the grave, which these depositories contain; silent but striking

tokens, some of them, of excellence of heart, and nobleness of soul;

melancholy examples, others, of the worst passions of human nature. How

many men as they lay speechless and helpless on the bed of death, would

have given worlds but for the strength and power to blot out the silent

evidence of animosity and bitterness, which now stands registered against

them in Doctorsâ Commons!

CHAPTER IXâLONDON RECREATIONS

The wish of persons in the humbler classes of life, to ape the manners

and customs of those whom fortune has placed above them, is often the

subject of remark, and not unfrequently of complaint. The inclination

may, and no doubt does, exist to a great extent, among the small

gentilityâthe would-be aristocratsâof the middle classes. Tradesmen and

clerks, with fashionable novel-reading families, and

circulating-library-subscribing daughters, get up small assemblies in

humble imitation of Almackâs, and promenade the dingy âlarge roomâ of

some second-rate hotel with as much complacency as the enviable few who

are privileged to exhibit their magnificence in that exclusive haunt of

fashion and foolery. Aspiring young ladies, who read flaming accounts of

some âfancy fair in high life,â suddenly grow desperately charitable;

visions of admiration and matrimony float before their eyes; some

wonderfully meritorious institution, which, by the strangest accident in

the world, has never been heard of before, is discovered to be in a

languishing condition: Thomsonâs great room, or Johnsonâs nursery-ground,

is forthwith engaged, and the aforesaid young ladies, from mere charity,

exhibit themselves for three days, from twelve to four, for the small

charge of one shilling per head! With the exception of these classes of

society, however, and a few weak and insignificant persons, we do not

think the attempt at imitation to which we have alluded, prevails in any

great degree. The different character of the recreations of different

classes, has often afforded us amusement; and we have chosen it for the

subject of our present sketch, in the hope that it may possess some

amusement for our readers.

If the regular City man, who leaves Lloydâs at five oâclock, and drives

home to Hackney, Clapton, Stamford-hill, or elsewhere, can be said to

have any daily recreation beyond his dinner, it is his garden. He never

does anything to it with his own hands; but he takes great pride in it

notwithstanding; and if you are desirous of paying your addresses to the

youngest daughter, be sure to be in raptures with every flower and shrub

it contains. If your poverty of expression compel you to make any

distinction between the two, we would certainly recommend your bestowing

more admiration on his garden than his wine. He always takes a walk

round it, before he starts for town in the morning, and is particularly

anxious that the fish-pond should be kept specially neat. If you call on

him on Sunday in summer-time, about an hour before dinner, you will find

him sitting in an arm-chair, on the lawn behind the house, with a straw

hat on, reading a Sunday paper. A short distance from him you will most

likely observe a handsome paroquet in a large brass-wire cage; ten to one

but the two eldest girls are loitering in one of the side walks

accompanied by a couple of young gentlemen, who are holding parasols over

themâof course only to keep the sun offâwhile the younger children, with

the under nursery-maid, are strolling listlessly about, in the shade.

Beyond these occasions, his delight in his garden appears to arise more

from the consciousness of possession than actual enjoyment of it. When

he drives you down to dinner on a week-day, he is rather fatigued with

the occupations of the morning, and tolerably cross into the bargain; but

when the cloth is removed, and he has drank three or four glasses of his

favourite port, he orders the French windows of his dining-room (which of

course look into the garden) to be opened, and throwing a silk

handkerchief over his head, and leaning back in his arm-chair, descants

at considerable length upon its beauty, and the cost of maintaining it.

This is to impress youâwho are a young friend of the familyâwith a due

sense of the excellence of the garden, and the wealth of its owner; and

when he has exhausted the subject, he goes to sleep.

There is another and a very different class of men, whose recreation is

their garden. An individual of this class, resides some short distance

from townâsay in the Hampstead-road, or the Kilburn-road, or any other

road where the houses are small and neat, and have little slips of back

garden. He and his wifeâwho is as clean and compact a little body as

himselfâhave occupied the same house ever since he retired from business

twenty years ago. They have no family. They once had a son, who died at

about five years old. The childâs portrait hangs over the mantelpiece in

the best sitting-room, and a little cart he used to draw about, is

carefully preserved as a relic.

In fine weather the old gentleman is almost constantly in the garden; and

when it is too wet to go into it, he will look out of the window at it,

by the hour together. He has always something to do there, and you will

see him digging, and sweeping, and cutting, and planting, with manifest

delight. In spring-time, there is no end to the sowing of seeds, and

sticking little bits of wood over them, with labels, which look like

epitaphs to their memory; and in the evening, when the sun has gone down,

the perseverance with which he lugs a great watering-pot about is

perfectly astonishing. The only other recreation he has, is the

newspaper, which he peruses every day, from beginning to end, generally

reading the most interesting pieces of intelligence to his wife, during

breakfast. The old lady is very fond of flowers, as the hyacinth-glasses

in the parlour-window, and geranium-pots in the little front court,

testify. She takes great pride in the garden too: and when one of the

four fruit-trees produces rather a larger gooseberry than usual, it is

carefully preserved under a wine-glass on the sideboard, for the

edification of visitors, who are duly informed that Mr. So-and-so planted

the tree which produced it, with his own hands. On a summerâs evening,

when the large watering-pot has been filled and emptied some fourteen

times, and the old couple have quite exhausted themselves by trotting

about, you will see them sitting happily together in the little

summerhouse, enjoying the calm and peace of the twilight, and watching

the shadows as they fall upon the garden, and gradually growing thicker

and more sombre, obscure the tints of their gayest flowersâno bad emblem

of the years that have silently rolled over their heads, deadening in

their course the brightest hues of early hopes and feelings which have

long since faded away. These are their only recreations, and they

require no more. They have within themselves, the materials of comfort

and content; and the only anxiety of each, is to die before the other.

This is no ideal sketch. There \_used\_ to be many old people of this

description; their numbers may have diminished, and may decrease still

more. Whether the course female education has taken of late daysâwhether

the pursuit of giddy frivolities, and empty nothings, has tended to unfit

women for that quiet domestic life, in which they show far more

beautifully than in the most crowded assembly, is a question we should

feel little gratification in discussing: we hope not.

Let us turn now, to another portion of the London population, whose

recreations present about as strong a contrast as can well be

conceivedâwe mean the Sunday pleasurers; and let us beg our readers to

imagine themselves stationed by our side in some well-known rural

âTea-gardens.â

The heat is intense this afternoon, and the people, of whom there are

additional parties arriving every moment, look as warm as the tables

which have been recently painted, and have the appearance of being

red-hot. What a dust and noise! Men and womenâboys and

girlsâsweethearts and married peopleâbabies in arms, and children in

chaisesâpipes and shrimpsâcigars and periwinklesâtea and tobacco.

Gentlemen, in alarming waistcoats, and steel watch-guards, promenading

about, three abreast, with surprising dignity (or as the gentleman in the

next box facetiously observes, âcutting it uncommon fat!â)âladies, with

great, long, white pocket-handkerchiefs like small table-cloths, in their

hands, chasing one another on the grass in the most playful and

interesting manner, with the view of attracting the attention of the

aforesaid gentlemenâhusbands in perspective ordering bottles of

ginger-beer for the objects of their affections, with a lavish disregard

of expense; and the said objects washing down huge quantities of

âshrimpsâ and âwinkles,â with an equal disregard of their own bodily

health and subsequent comfortâboys, with great silk hats just balanced on

the top of their heads, smoking cigars, and trying to look as if they

liked themâgentlemen in pink shirts and blue waistcoats, occasionally

upsetting either themselves, or somebody else, with their own canes.

Some of the finery of these people provokes a smile, but they are all

clean, and happy, and disposed to be good-natured and sociable. Those

two motherly-looking women in the smart pelisses, who are chatting so

confidentially, inserting a âmaâamâ at every fourth word, scraped an

acquaintance about a quarter of an hour ago: it originated in admiration

of the little boy who belongs to one of themâthat diminutive specimen of

mortality in the three-cornered pink satin hat with black feathers. The

two men in the blue coats and drab trousers, who are walking up and down,

smoking their pipes, are their husbands. The party in the opposite box

are a pretty fair specimen of the generality of the visitors. These are

the father and mother, and old grandmother: a young man and woman, and an

individual addressed by the euphonious title of âUncle Bill,â who is

evidently the wit of the party. They have some half-dozen children with

them, but it is scarcely necessary to notice the fact, for that is a

matter of course here. Every woman in âthe gardens,â who has been

married for any length of time, must have had twins on two or three

occasions; it is impossible to account for the extent of juvenile

population in any other way.

Observe the inexpressible delight of the old grandmother, at Uncle Billâs

splendid joke of âtea for four: bread-and-butter for forty;â and the loud

explosion of mirth which follows his wafering a paper âpigtailâ on the

waiterâs collar. The young man is evidently âkeeping companyâ with Uncle

Billâs niece: and Uncle Billâs hintsâsuch as âDonât forget me at the

dinner, you know,â âI shall look out for the cake, Sally,â âIâll be

godfather to your firstâwager itâs a boy,â and so forth, are equally

embarrassing to the young people, and delightful to the elder ones. As

to the old grandmother, she is in perfect ecstasies, and does nothing but

laugh herself into fits of coughing, until they have finished the

âgin-and-water warm with,â of which Uncle Bill ordered âglasses roundâ

after tea, âjust to keep the night air out, and to do it up comfortable

and riglar arter sitch an as-tonishing hot day!â

It is getting dark, and the people begin to move. The field leading to

town is quite full of them; the little hand-chaises are dragged wearily

along, the children are tired, and amuse themselves and the company

generally by crying, or resort to the much more pleasant expedient of

going to sleepâthe mothers begin to wish they were at home

againâsweethearts grow more sentimental than ever, as the time for

parting arrivesâthe gardens look mournful enough, by the light of the two

lanterns which hang against the trees for the convenience of smokersâand

the waiters who have been running about incessantly for the last six

hours, think they feel a little tired, as they count their glasses and

their gains.

CHAPTER XâTHE RIVER

âAre you fond of the water?â is a question very frequently asked, in hot

summer weather, by amphibious-looking young men. âVery,â is the general

reply. âAnât you?âââHardly ever off it,â is the response, accompanied by

sundry adjectives, expressive of the speakerâs heartfelt admiration of

that element. Now, with all respect for the opinion of society in

general, and cutter clubs in particular, we humbly suggest that some of

the most painful reminiscences in the mind of every individual who has

occasionally disported himself on the Thames, must be connected with his

aquatic recreations. Who ever heard of a successful water-party?âor to

put the question in a still more intelligible form, who ever saw one? We

have been on water excursions out of number, but we solemnly declare that

we cannot call to mind one single occasion of the kind, which was not

marked by more miseries than any one would suppose could be reasonably

crowded into the space of some eight or nine hours. Something has always

gone wrong. Either the cork of the salad-dressing has come out, or the

most anxiously expected member of the party has not come out, or the most

disagreeable man in company would come out, or a child or two have fallen

into the water, or the gentleman who undertook to steer has endangered

everybodyâs life all the way, or the gentlemen who volunteered to row

have been âout of practice,â and performed very alarming evolutions,

putting their oars down into the water and not being able to get them up

again, or taking terrific pulls without putting them in at all; in either

case, pitching over on the backs of their heads with startling violence,

and exhibiting the soles of their pumps to the âsittersâ in the boat, in

a very humiliating manner.

We grant that the banks of the Thames are very beautiful at Richmond and

Twickenham, and other distant havens, often sought though seldom reached;

but from the âRed-usâ back to Blackfriars-bridge, the scene is

wonderfully changed. The Penitentiary is a noble building, no doubt, and

the sportive youths who âgo inâ at that particular part of the river, on

a summerâs evening, may be all very well in perspective; but when you are

obliged to keep in shore coming home, and the young ladies will colour

up, and look perseveringly the other way, while the married dittos cough

slightly, and stare very hard at the water, you feel awkwardâespecially

if you happen to have been attempting the most distant approach to

sentimentality, for an hour or two previously.

Although experience and suffering have produced in our minds the result

we have just stated, we are by no means blind to a proper sense of the

fun which a looker-on may extract from the amateurs of boating. What can

be more amusing than Searleâs yard on a fine Sunday morning? Itâs a

Richmond tide, and some dozen boats are preparing for the reception of

the parties who have engaged them. Two or three fellows in great rough

trousers and Guernsey shirts, are getting them ready by easy stages; now

coming down the yard with a pair of sculls and a cushionâthen having a

chat with the âJack,â who, like all his tribe, seems to be wholly

incapable of doing anything but lounging aboutâthen going back again, and

returning with a rudder-line and a stretcherâthen solacing themselves

with another chatâand then wondering, with their hands in their capacious

pockets, âwhere them gentlemenâs got to as ordered the six.â One of

these, the head man, with the legs of his trousers carefully tucked up at

the bottom, to admit the water, we presumeâfor it is an element in which

he is infinitely more at home than on landâis quite a character, and

shares with the defunct oyster-swallower the celebrated name of âDando.â

Watch him, as taking a few minutesâ respite from his toils, he

negligently seats himself on the edge of a boat, and fans his broad bushy

chest with a cap scarcely half so furry. Look at his magnificent, though

reddish whiskers, and mark the somewhat native humour with which he

âchaffsâ the boys and âprentices, or cunningly gammons the genâlmân into

the gift of a glass of gin, of which we verily believe he swallows in one

day as much as any six ordinary men, without ever being one atom the

worse for it.

But the party arrives, and Dando, relieved from his state of uncertainty,

starts up into activity. They approach in full aquatic costume, with

round blue jackets, striped shirts, and caps of all sizes and patterns,

from the velvet skull-cap of French manufacture, to the easy head-dress

familiar to the students of the old spelling-books, as having, on the

authority of the portrait, formed part of the costume of the Reverend Mr.

Dilworth.

This is the most amusing time to observe a regular Sunday water-party.

There has evidently been up to this period no inconsiderable degree of

boasting on everybodyâs part relative to his knowledge of navigation; the

sight of the water rapidly cools their courage, and the air of

self-denial with which each of them insists on somebody elseâs taking an

oar, is perfectly delightful. At length, after a great deal of changing

and fidgeting, consequent upon the election of a stroke-oar: the

inability of one gentleman to pull on this side, of another to pull on

that, and of a third to pull at all, the boatâs crew are seated. âShove

her off!â cries the cockswain, who looks as easy and comfortable as if he

were steering in the Bay of Biscay. The order is obeyed; the boat is

immediately turned completely round, and proceeds towards

Westminster-bridge, amidst such a splashing and struggling as never was

seen before, except when the Royal George went down. âBack waâater,

sir,â shouts Dando, âBack waâater, you sir, aft;â upon which everybody

thinking he must be the individual referred to, they all back water, and

back comes the boat, stern first, to the spot whence it started. âBack

water, you sir, aft; pull round, you sir, forâad, canât you?â shouts

Dando, in a frenzy of excitement. âPull round, Tom, canât you?â

re-echoes one of the party. âTom anât forâad,â replies another. âYes,

he is,â cries a third; and the unfortunate young man, at the imminent

risk of breaking a blood-vessel, pulls and pulls, until the head of the

boat fairly lies in the direction of Vauxhall-bridge. âThatâs rightânow

pull all on you!â shouts Dando again, adding, in an under-tone, to

somebody by him, âBlowed if hever I see sich a set of muffs!â and away

jogs the boat in a zigzag direction, every one of the six oars dipping

into the water at a different time; and the yard is once more clear,

until the arrival of the next party.

A well-contested rowing-match on the Thames, is a very lively and

interesting scene. The water is studded with boats of all sorts, kinds,

and descriptions; places in the coal-barges at the different wharfs are

let to crowds of spectators, beer and tobacco flow freely about; men,

women, and children wait for the start in breathless expectation; cutters

of six and eight oars glide gently up and down, waiting to accompany

their \_protÃ©gÃ©s\_ during the race; bands of music add to the animation, if

not to the harmony of the scene; groups of watermen are assembled at the

different stairs, discussing the merits of the respective candidates; and

the prize wherry, which is rowed slowly about by a pair of sculls, is an

object of general interest.

Two oâclock strikes, and everybody looks anxiously in the direction of

the bridge through which the candidates for the prize will comeâhalf-past

two, and the general attention which has been preserved so long begins to

flag, when suddenly a gun is heard, and a noise of distant hurraâing

along each bank of the riverâevery head is bent forwardâthe noise draws

nearer and nearerâthe boats which have been waiting at the bridge start

briskly up the river, and a well-manned galley shoots through the arch,

the sitters cheering on the boats behind them, which are not yet visible.

âHere they are,â is the general cryâand through darts the first boat, the

men in her, stripped to the skin, and exerting every muscle to preserve

the advantage they have gainedâfour other boats follow close astern;

there are not two boatsâ length between themâthe shouting is tremendous,

and the interest intense. âGo on, PinkâââGive it her, RedâââSulliwin for

everâââBravo! GeorgeâââNow, Tom, nowânowânowâwhy donât your partner

stretch out?âââTwo pots to a pint on Yellow,â &c., &c. Every little

public-house fires its gun, and hoists its flag; and the men who win the

heat, come in, amidst a splashing and shouting, and banging and

confusion, which no one can imagine who has not witnessed it, and of

which any description would convey a very faint idea.

One of the most amusing places we know is the steam-wharf of the London

Bridge, or St. Katharineâs Dock Company, on a Saturday morning in summer,

when the Gravesend and Margate steamers are usually crowded to excess;

and as we have just taken a glance at the river above bridge, we hope our

readers will not object to accompany us on board a Gravesend packet.

Coaches are every moment setting down at the entrance to the wharf, and

the stare of bewildered astonishment with which the âfaresâ resign

themselves and their luggage into the hands of the porters, who seize all

the packages at once as a matter of course, and run away with them,

heaven knows where, is laughable in the extreme. A Margate boat lies

alongside the wharf, the Gravesend boat (which starts first) lies

alongside that again; and as a temporary communication is formed between

the two, by means of a plank and hand-rail, the natural confusion of the

scene is by no means diminished.

âGravesend?â inquires a stout father of a stout family, who follow him,

under the guidance of their mother, and a servant, at the no small risk

of two or three of them being left behind in the confusion. âGravesend?â

âPass on, if you please, sir,â replies the attendantââother boat, sir.â

Hereupon the stout father, being rather mystified, and the stout mother

rather distracted by maternal anxiety, the whole party deposit themselves

in the Margate boat, and after having congratulated himself on having

secured very comfortable seats, the stout father sallies to the chimney

to look for his luggage, which he has a faint recollection of having

given some man, something, to take somewhere. No luggage, however,

bearing the most remote resemblance to his own, in shape or form, is to

be discovered; on which the stout father calls very loudly for an

officer, to whom he states the case, in the presence of another father of

another familyâa little thin manâwho entirely concurs with him (the stout

father) in thinking that itâs high time something was done with these

steam companies, and that as the Corporation Bill failed to do it,

something else must; for really peopleâs property is not to be sacrificed

in this way; and that if the luggage isnât restored without delay, he

will take care it shall be put in the papers, for the public is not to be

the victim of these great monopolies. To this, the officer, in his turn,

replies, that that company, ever since it has been St. Katârineâs Dock

Company, has protected life and property; that if it had been the London

Bridge Wharf Company, indeed, he shouldnât have wondered, seeing that the

morality of that company (they being the opposition) canât be answered

for, by no one; but as it is, heâs convinced there must be some mistake,

and he wouldnât mind making a solemn oath afore a magistrate that the

gentlemanâll find his luggage afore he gets to Margate.

Here the stout father, thinking he is making a capital point, replies,

that as it happens, he is not going to Margate at all, and that

âPassenger to Gravesendâ was on the luggage, in letters of full two

inches long; on which the officer rapidly explains the mistake, and the

stout mother, and the stout children, and the servant, are hurried with

all possible despatch on board the Gravesend boat, which they reached

just in time to discover that their luggage is there, and that their

comfortable seats are not. Then the bell, which is the signal for the

Gravesend boat starting, begins to ring most furiously: and people keep

time to the bell, by running in and out of our boat at a double-quick

pace. The bell stops; the boat starts: people who have been taking leave

of their friends on board, are carried away against their will; and

people who have been taking leave of their friends on shore, find that

they have performed a very needless ceremony, in consequence of their not

being carried away at all. The regular passengers, who have season

tickets, go below to breakfast; people who have purchased morning papers,

compose themselves to read them; and people who have not been down the

river before, think that both the shipping and the water, look a great

deal better at a distance.

When we get down about as far as Blackwall, and begin to move at a

quicker rate, the spirits of the passengers appear to rise in proportion.

Old women who have brought large wicker hand-baskets with them, set

seriously to work at the demolition of heavy sandwiches, and pass round a

wine-glass, which is frequently replenished from a flat bottle like a

stomach-warmer, with considerable glee: handing it first to the gentleman

in the foraging-cap, who plays the harpâpartly as an expression of

satisfaction with his previous exertions, and partly to induce him to

play âDumbledumbdeary,â for âAlickâ to dance to; which being done, Alick,

who is a damp earthy child in red worsted socks, takes certain small

jumps upon the deck, to the unspeakable satisfaction of his family

circle. Girls who have brought the first volume of some new novel in

their reticule, become extremely plaintive, and expatiate to Mr. Brown,

or young Mr. OâBrien, who has been looking over them, on the blueness of

the sky, and brightness of the water; on which Mr. Brown or Mr. OâBrien,

as the case may be, remarks in a low voice that he has been quite

insensible of late to the beauties of nature, that his whole thoughts and

wishes have centred in one object aloneâwhereupon the young lady looks

up, and failing in her attempt to appear unconscious, looks down again;

and turns over the next leaf with great difficulty, in order to afford

opportunity for a lengthened pressure of the hand.

Telescopes, sandwiches, and glasses of brandy-and-water cold without,

begin to be in great requisition; and bashful men who have been looking

down the hatchway at the engine, find, to their great relief, a subject

on which they can converse with one anotherâand a copious one tooâSteam.

âWonderful thing steam, sir.â âAh! (a deep-drawn sigh) it is indeed,

sir.â âGreat power, sir.â âImmenseâimmense!â âGreat deal done by

steam, sir.â âAh! (another sigh at the immensity of the subject, and a

knowing shake of the head) you may say that, sir.â âStill in its

infancy, they say, sir.â Novel remarks of this kind, are generally the

commencement of a conversation which is prolonged until the conclusion of

the trip, and, perhaps, lays the foundation of a speaking acquaintance

between half-a-dozen gentlemen, who, having their families at Gravesend,

take season tickets for the boat, and dine on board regularly every

afternoon.

CHAPTER XIâASTLEYâS

We never see any very large, staring, black Roman capitals, in a book, or

shop-window, or placarded on a wall, without their immediately recalling

to our mind an indistinct and confused recollection of the time when we

were first initiated in the mysteries of the alphabet. We almost fancy

we see the pinâs point following the letter, to impress its form more

strongly on our bewildered imagination; and wince involuntarily, as we

remember the hard knuckles with which the reverend old lady who instilled

into our mind the first principles of education for ninepence per week,

or ten and sixpence per quarter, was wont to poke our juvenile head

occasionally, by way of adjusting the confusion of ideas in which we were

generally involved. The same kind of feeling pursues us in many other

instances, but there is no place which recalls so strongly our

recollections of childhood as Astleyâs. It was not a âRoyal

Amphitheatreâ in those days, nor had Ducrow arisen to shed the light of

classic taste and portable gas over the sawdust of the circus; but the

whole character of the place was the same, the pieces were the same, the

clownâs jokes were the same, the riding-masters were equally grand, the

comic performers equally witty, the tragedians equally hoarse, and the

âhighly-trained chargersâ equally spirited. Astleyâs has altered for the

betterâwe have changed for the worse. Our histrionic taste is gone, and

with shame we confess, that we are far more delighted and amused with the

audience, than with the pageantry we once so highly appreciated.

We like to watch a regular Astleyâs party in the Easter or Midsummer

holidaysâpa and ma, and nine or ten children, varying from five foot six

to two foot eleven: from fourteen years of age to four. We had just

taken our seat in one of the boxes, in the centre of the house, the other

night, when the next was occupied by just such a party as we should have

attempted to describe, had we depicted our \_beau idÃ©al\_ of a group of

Astleyâs visitors.

First of all, there came three little boys and a little girl, who, in

pursuance of paâs directions, issued in a very audible voice from the

box-door, occupied the front row; then two more little girls were ushered

in by a young lady, evidently the governess. Then came three more little

boys, dressed like the first, in blue jackets and trousers, with lay-down

shirt-collars: then a child in a braided frock and high state of

astonishment, with very large round eyes, opened to their utmost width,

was lifted over the seatsâa process which occasioned a considerable

display of little pink legsâthen came ma and pa, and then the eldest son,

a boy of fourteen years old, who was evidently trying to look as if he

did not belong to the family.

The first five minutes were occupied in taking the shawls off the little

girls, and adjusting the bows which ornamented their hair; then it was

providentially discovered that one of the little boys was seated behind a

pillar and could not see, so the governess was stuck behind the pillar,

and the boy lifted into her place. Then pa drilled the boys, and

directed the stowing away of their pocket-handkerchiefs, and ma having

first nodded and winked to the governess to pull the girlsâ frocks a

little more off their shoulders, stood up to review the little troopâan

inspection which appeared to terminate much to her own satisfaction, for

she looked with a complacent air at pa, who was standing up at the

further end of the seat. Pa returned the glance, and blew his nose very

emphatically; and the poor governess peeped out from behind the pillar,

and timidly tried to catch maâs eye, with a look expressive of her high

admiration of the whole family. Then two of the little boys who had been

discussing the point whether Astleyâs was more than twice as large as

Drury Lane, agreed to refer it to âGeorgeâ for his decision; at which

âGeorge,â who was no other than the young gentleman before noticed, waxed

indignant, and remonstrated in no very gentle terms on the gross

impropriety of having his name repeated in so loud a voice at a public

place, on which all the children laughed very heartily, and one of the

little boys wound up by expressing his opinion, that âGeorge began to

think himself quite a man now,â whereupon both pa and ma laughed too; and

George (who carried a dress cane and was cultivating whiskers) muttered

that âWilliam always was encouraged in his impertinence;â and assumed a

look of profound contempt, which lasted the whole evening.

The play began, and the interest of the little boys knew no bounds. Pa

was clearly interested too, although he very unsuccessfully endeavoured

to look as if he wasnât. As for ma, she was perfectly overcome by the

drollery of the principal comedian, and laughed till every one of the

immense bows on her ample cap trembled, at which the governess peeped out

from behind the pillar again, and whenever she could catch maâs eye, put

her handkerchief to her mouth, and appeared, as in duty bound, to be in

convulsions of laughter also. Then when the man in the splendid armour

vowed to rescue the lady or perish in the attempt, the little boys

applauded vehemently, especially one little fellow who was apparently on

a visit to the family, and had been carrying on a childâs flirtation, the

whole evening, with a small coquette of twelve years old, who looked like

a model of her mamma on a reduced scale; and who, in common with the

other little girls (who generally speaking have even more coquettishness

about them than much older ones), looked very properly shocked, when the

knightâs squire kissed the princessâs confidential chambermaid.

When the scenes in the circle commenced, the children were more delighted

than ever; and the wish to see what was going forward, completely

conquering paâs dignity, he stood up in the box, and applauded as loudly

as any of them. Between each feat of horsemanship, the governess leant

across to ma, and retailed the clever remarks of the children on that

which had preceded: and ma, in the openness of her heart, offered the

governess an acidulated drop, and the governess, gratified to be taken

notice of, retired behind her pillar again with a brighter countenance:

and the whole party seemed quite happy, except the exquisite in the back

of the box, who, being too grand to take any interest in the children,

and too insignificant to be taken notice of by anybody else, occupied

himself, from time to time, in rubbing the place where the whiskers ought

to be, and was completely alone in his glory.

We defy any one who has been to Astleyâs two or three times, and is

consequently capable of appreciating the perseverance with which

precisely the same jokes are repeated night after night, and season after

season, not to be amused with one part of the performances at leastâwe

mean the scenes in the circle. For ourself, we know that when the hoop,

composed of jets of gas, is let down, the curtain drawn up for the

convenience of the half-price on their ejectment from the ring, the

orange-peel cleared away, and the sawdust shaken, with mathematical

precision, into a complete circle, we feel as much enlivened as the

youngest child present; and actually join in the laugh which follows the

clownâs shrill shout of âHere we are!â just for old acquaintanceâ sake.

Nor can we quite divest ourself of our old feeling of reverence for the

riding-master, who follows the clown with a long whip in his hand, and

bows to the audience with graceful dignity. He is none of your

second-rate riding-masters in nankeen dressing-gowns, with brown frogs,

but the regular gentleman-attendant on the principal riders, who always

wears a military uniform with a table-cloth inside the breast of the

coat, in which costume he forcibly reminds one of a fowl trussed for

roasting. He isâbut why should we attempt to describe that of which no

description can convey an adequate idea? Everybody knows the man, and

everybody remembers his polished boots, his graceful demeanour, stiff, as

some misjudging persons have in their jealousy considered it, and the

splendid head of black hair, parted high on the forehead, to impart to

the countenance an appearance of deep thought and poetic melancholy. His

soft and pleasing voice, too, is in perfect unison with his noble

bearing, as he humours the clown by indulging in a little badinage; and

the striking recollection of his own dignity, with which he exclaims,

âNow, sir, if you please, inquire for Miss Woolford, sir,â can never be

forgotten. The graceful air, too, with which he introduces Miss Woolford

into the arena, and, after assisting her to the saddle, follows her fairy

courser round the circle, can never fail to create a deep impression in

the bosom of every female servant present.

When Miss Woolford, and the horse, and the orchestra, all stop together

to take breath, he urbanely takes part in some such dialogue as the

following (commenced by the clown): âI say, sir!âââWell, sir?â (itâs

always conducted in the politest manner.)ââDid you ever happen to hear I

was in the army, sir?âââNo, sir.âââOh, yes, sirâI can go through my

exercise, sir.âââIndeed, sir!âââShall I do it now, sir?âââIf you please,

sir; come, sirâmake hasteâ (a cut with the long whip, and âHaâ done nowâI

donât like it,â from the clown). Here the clown throws himself on the

ground, and goes through a variety of gymnastic convulsions, doubling

himself up, and untying himself again, and making himself look very like

a man in the most hopeless extreme of human agony, to the vociferous

delight of the gallery, until he is interrupted by a second cut from the

long whip, and a request to see âwhat Miss Woolfordâs stopping for?â On

which, to the inexpressible mirth of the gallery, he exclaims, âNow, Miss

Woolford, what can I come for to go, for to fetch, for to bring, for to

carry, for to do, for you, maâam?â On the ladyâs announcing with a sweet

smile that she wants the two flags, they are, with sundry grimaces,

procured and handed up; the clown facetiously observing after the

performance of the latter ceremonyââHe, he, oh! I say, sir, Miss

Woolford knows me; she smiled at me.â Another cut from the whip, a burst

from the orchestra, a start from the horse, and round goes Miss Woolford

again on her graceful performance, to the delight of every member of the

audience, young or old. The next pause affords an opportunity for

similar witticisms, the only additional fun being that of the clown

making ludicrous grimaces at the riding-master every time his back is

turned; and finally quitting the circle by jumping over his head, having

previously directed his attention another way.

Did any of our readers ever notice the class of people, who hang about

the stage-doors of our minor theatres in the daytime? You will rarely

pass one of these entrances without seeing a group of three or four men

conversing on the pavement, with an indescribable public-house-parlour

swagger, and a kind of conscious air, peculiar to people of this

description. They always seem to think they are exhibiting; the lamps

are ever before them. That young fellow in the faded brown coat, and

very full light green trousers, pulls down the wristbands of his check

shirt, as ostentatiously as if it were of the finest linen, and cocks the

white hat of the summer-before-last as knowingly over his right eye, as

if it were a purchase of yesterday. Look at the dirty white Berlin

gloves, and the cheap silk handkerchief stuck in the bosom of his

threadbare coat. Is it possible to see him for an instant, and not come

to the conclusion that he is the walking gentleman who wears a blue

surtout, clean collar, and white trousers, for half an hour, and then

shrinks into his worn-out scanty clothes: who has to boast night after

night of his splendid fortune, with the painful consciousness of a pound

a-week and his boots to find; to talk of his fatherâs mansion in the

country, with a dreary recollection of his own two-pair back, in the New

Cut; and to be envied and flattered as the favoured lover of a rich

heiress, remembering all the while that the ex-dancer at home is in the

family way, and out of an engagement?

Next to him, perhaps, you will see a thin pale man, with a very long

face, in a suit of shining black, thoughtfully knocking that part of his

boot which once had a heel, with an ash stick. He is the man who does

the heavy business, such as prosy fathers, virtuous servants, curates,

landlords, and so forth.

By the way, talking of fathers, we should very much like to see some

piece in which all the dramatis personae were orphans. Fathers are

invariably great nuisances on the stage, and always have to give the hero

or heroine a long explanation of what was done before the curtain rose,

usually commencing with âIt is now nineteen years, my dear child, since

your blessed mother (here the old villainâs voice falters) confided you

to my charge. You were then an infant,â &c., &c. Or else they have to

discover, all of a sudden, that somebody whom they have been in constant

communication with, during three long acts, without the slightest

suspicion, is their own child: in which case they exclaim, âAh! what do I

see? This bracelet! That smile! These documents! Those eyes! Can I

believe my senses?âIt must be!âYesâit is, it is my child!âââMy father!â

exclaims the child; and they fall into each otherâs arms, and look over

each otherâs shoulders, and the audience give three rounds of applause.

To return from this digression, we were about to say, that these are the

sort of people whom you see talking, and attitudinising, outside the

stage-doors of our minor theatres. At Astleyâs they are always more

numerous than at any other place. There is generally a groom or two,

sitting on the window-sill, and two or three dirty shabby-genteel men in

checked neckerchiefs, and sallow linen, lounging about, and carrying,

perhaps, under one arm, a pair of stage shoes badly wrapped up in a piece

of old newspaper. Some years ago we used to stand looking, open-mouthed,

at these men, with a feeling of mysterious curiosity, the very

recollection of which provokes a smile at the moment we are writing. We

could not believe that the beings of light and elegance, in milk-white

tunics, salmon-coloured legs, and blue scarfs, who flitted on sleek

cream-coloured horses before our eyes at night, with all the aid of

lights, music, and artificial flowers, could be the pale,

dissipated-looking creatures we beheld by day.

We can hardly believe it now. Of the lower class of actors we have seen

something, and it requires no great exercise of imagination to identify

the walking gentleman with the âdirty swell,â the comic singer with the

public-house chairman, or the leading tragedian with drunkenness and

distress; but these other men are mysterious beings, never seen out of

the ring, never beheld but in the costume of gods and sylphs. With the

exception of Ducrow, who can scarcely be classed among them, who ever

knew a rider at Astleyâs, or saw him but on horseback? Can our friend in

the military uniform ever appear in threadbare attire, or descend to the

comparatively un-wadded costume of every-day life? Impossible! We

cannotâwe will notâbelieve it.

CHAPTER XIIâGREENWICH FAIR

If the Parks be âthe lungs of London,â we wonder what Greenwich Fair isâa

periodical breaking out, we suppose, a sort of spring-rash: a three daysâ

fever, which cools the blood for six months afterwards, and at the

expiration of which London is restored to its old habits of plodding

industry, as suddenly and completely as if nothing had ever happened to

disturb them.

In our earlier days, we were a constant frequenter of Greenwich Fair, for

years. We have proceeded to, and returned from it, in almost every

description of vehicle. We cannot conscientiously deny the charge of

having once made the passage in a spring-van, accompanied by thirteen

gentlemen, fourteen ladies, an unlimited number of children, and a barrel

of beer; and we have a vague recollection of having, in later days, found

ourself the eighth outside, on the top of a hackney-coach, at something

past four oâclock in the morning, with a rather confused idea of our own

name, or place of residence. We have grown older since then, and quiet,

and steady: liking nothing better than to spend our Easter, and all our

other holidays, in some quiet nook, with people of whom we shall never

tire; but we think we still remember something of Greenwich Fair, and of

those who resort to it. At all events we will try.

The road to Greenwich during the whole of Easter Monday, is in a state of

perpetual bustle and noise. Cabs, hackney-coaches, âshayâ carts,

coal-waggons, stages, omnibuses, sociables, gigs, donkey-chaisesâall

crammed with people (for the question never is, what the horse can draw,

but what the vehicle will hold), roll along at their utmost speed; the

dust flies in clouds, ginger-beer corks go off in volleys, the balcony of

every public-house is crowded with people, smoking and drinking, half the

private houses are turned into tea-shops, fiddles are in great request,

every little fruit-shop displays its stall of gilt gingerbread and penny

toys; turnpike men are in despair; horses wonât go on, and wheels will

come off; ladies in âcarawansâ scream with fright at every fresh

concussion, and their admirers find it necessary to sit remarkably close

to them, by way of encouragement; servants-of-all-work, who are not

allowed to have followers, and have got a holiday for the day, make the

most of their time with the faithful admirer who waits for a stolen

interview at the corner of the street every night, when they go to fetch

the beerâapprentices grow sentimental, and straw-bonnet makers kind.

Everybody is anxious to get on, and actuated by the common wish to be at

the fair, or in the park, as soon as possible.

Pedestrians linger in groups at the roadside, unable to resist the

allurements of the stout proprietress of the âJack-in-the-box, three

shies a penny,â or the more splendid offers of the man with three

thimbles and a pea on a little round board, who astonishes the bewildered

crowd with some such address as, âHereâs the sort oâ game to make you

laugh seven years arter youâre dead, and turn evâry air on your ed gray

vith delight! Three thimbles and vun little peaâwith a vun, two, three,

and a two, three, vun: catch him who can, look on, keep your eyes open,

and niver say die! niver mind the change, and the expense: all fair and

above board: them as donât play canât vin, and luck attend the ryal

sportsman! Bet any genâlmân any sum of money, from harf-a-crown up to a

suverin, as he doesnât name the thimble as kivers the pea!â Here some

greenhorn whispers his friend that he distinctly saw the pea roll under

the middle thimbleâan impression which is immediately confirmed by a

gentleman in top-boots, who is standing by, and who, in a low tone,

regrets his own inability to bet, in consequence of having unfortunately

left his purse at home, but strongly urges the stranger not to neglect

such a golden opportunity. The âplantâ is successful, the bet is made,

the stranger of course loses: and the gentleman with the thimbles

consoles him, as he pockets the money, with an assurance that itâs âall

the fortin of war! this time I vin, next time you vin: niver mind the

loss of two bob and a bender! Do it up in a small parcel, and break out

in a fresh place. Hereâs the sort oâ game,â &c.âand the eloquent

harangue, with such variations as the speakerâs exuberant fancy suggests,

is again repeated to the gaping crowd, reinforced by the accession of

several new-comers.

The chief place of resort in the daytime, after the public-houses, is the

park, in which the principal amusement is to drag young ladies up the

steep hill which leads to the Observatory, and then drag them down again,

at the very top of their speed, greatly to the derangement of their curls

and bonnet-caps, and much to the edification of lookers-on from below.

âKiss in the Ring,â and âThreading my Grandmotherâs Needle,â too, are

sports which receive their full share of patronage. Love-sick swains,

under the influence of gin-and-water, and the tender passion, become

violently affectionate: and the fair objects of their regard enhance the

value of stolen kisses, by a vast deal of struggling, and holding down of

heads, and cries of âOh! Haâ done, then, GeorgeâOh, do tickle him for

me, MaryâWell, I never!â and similar Lucretian ejaculations. Little old

men and women, with a small basket under one arm, and a wine-glass,

without a foot, in the other hand, tender âa drop oâ the right sortâ to

the different groups; and young ladies, who are persuaded to indulge in a

drop of the aforesaid right sort, display a pleasing degree of reluctance

to taste it, and cough afterwards with great propriety.

The old pensioners, who, for the moderate charge of a penny, exhibit the

mast-house, the Thames and shipping, the place where the men used to hang

in chains, and other interesting sights, through a telescope, are asked

questions about objects within the range of the glass, which it would

puzzle a Solomon to answer; and requested to find out particular houses

in particular streets, which it would have been a task of some difficulty

for Mr. Horner (not the young gentleman who ate mince-pies with his

thumb, but the man of Colosseum notoriety) to discover. Here and there,

where some three or four couple are sitting on the grass together, you

will see a sun-burnt woman in a red cloak âtelling fortunesâ and

prophesying husbands, which it requires no extraordinary observation to

describe, for the originals are before her. Thereupon, the lady

concerned laughs and blushes, and ultimately buries her face in an

imitation cambric handkerchief, and the gentleman described looks

extremely foolish, and squeezes her hand, and fees the gipsy liberally;

and the gipsy goes away, perfectly satisfied herself, and leaving those

behind her perfectly satisfied also: and the prophecy, like many other

prophecies of greater importance, fulfils itself in time.

But it grows dark: the crowd has gradually dispersed, and only a few

stragglers are left behind. The light in the direction of the church

shows that the fair is illuminated; and the distant noise proves it to be

filling fast. The spot, which half an hour ago was ringing with the

shouts of boisterous mirth, is as calm and quiet as if nothing could ever

disturb its serenity: the fine old trees, the majestic building at their

feet, with the noble river beyond, glistening in the moonlight, appear in

all their beauty, and under their most favourable aspect; the voices of

the boys, singing their evening hymn, are borne gently on the air; and

the humblest mechanic who has been lingering on the grass so pleasant to

the feet that beat the same dull round from week to week in the paved

streets of London, feels proud to think as he surveys the scene before

him, that he belongs to the country which has selected such a spot as a

retreat for its oldest and best defenders in the decline of their lives.

Five minutesâ walking brings you to the fair; a scene calculated to

awaken very different feelings. The entrance is occupied on either side

by the vendors of gingerbread and toys: the stalls are gaily lighted up,

the most attractive goods profusely disposed, and unbonneted young

ladies, in their zeal for the interest of their employers, seize you by

the coat, and use all the blandishments of âDo, dearâââThereâs a

loveâââDonât be cross, now,â &c., to induce you to purchase half a pound

of the real spice nuts, of which the majority of the regular fair-goers

carry a pound or two as a present supply, tied up in a cotton

pocket-handkerchief. Occasionally you pass a deal table, on which are

exposed penâorths of pickled salmon (fennel included), in little white

saucers: oysters, with shells as large as cheese-plates, and divers

specimens of a species of snail (\_wilks\_, we think they are called),

floating in a somewhat bilious-looking green liquid. Cigars, too, are in

great demand; gentlemen must smoke, of course, and here they are, two a

penny, in a regular authentic cigar-box, with a lighted tallow candle in

the centre.

Imagine yourself in an extremely dense crowd, which swings you to and

fro, and in and out, and every way but the right one; add to this the

screams of women, the shouts of boys, the clanging of gongs, the firing

of pistols, the ringing of bells, the bellowings of speaking-trumpets,

the squeaking of penny dittos, the noise of a dozen bands, with three

drums in each, all playing different tunes at the same time, the

hallooing of showmen, and an occasional roar from the wild-beast shows;

and you are in the very centre and heart of the fair.

This immense booth, with the large stage in front, so brightly

illuminated with variegated lamps, and pots of burning fat, is

âRichardsonâs,â where you have a melodrama (with three murders and a

ghost), a pantomime, a comic song, an overture, and some incidental

music, all done in five-and-twenty minutes.

The company are now promenading outside in all the dignity of wigs,

spangles, red-ochre, and whitening. See with what a ferocious air the

gentleman who personates the Mexican chief, paces up and down, and with

what an eye of calm dignity the principal tragedian gazes on the crowd

below, or converses confidentially with the harlequin! The four clowns,

who are engaged in a mock broadsword combat, may be all very well for the

low-minded holiday-makers; but these are the people for the reflective

portion of the community. They look so noble in those Roman dresses,

with their yellow legs and arms, long black curly heads, bushy eyebrows,

and scowl expressive of assassination, and vengeance, and everything else

that is grand and solemn. Then, the ladiesâwere there ever such innocent

and awful-looking beings; as they walk up and down the platform in twos

and threes, with their arms round each otherâs waists, or leaning for

support on one of those majestic men! Their spangled muslin dresses and

blue satin shoes and sandals (a \_leetle\_ the worse for wear) are the

admiration of all beholders; and the playful manner in which they check

the advances of the clown, is perfectly enchanting.

âJust a-going to begin! Pray come forâerd, come forâerd,â exclaims the

man in the countrymanâs dress, for the seventieth time: and people force

their way up the steps in crowds. The band suddenly strikes up, the

harlequin and columbine set the example, reels are formed in less than no

time, the Roman heroes place their arms a-kimbo, and dance with

considerable agility; and the leading tragic actress, and the gentleman

who enacts the âswellâ in the pantomime, foot it to perfection. âAll in

to begin,â shouts the manager, when no more people can be induced to

âcome forâerd,â and away rush the leading members of the company to do

the dreadful in the first piece.

A change of performance takes place every day during the fair, but the

story of the tragedy is always pretty much the same. There is a rightful

heir, who loves a young lady, and is beloved by her; and a wrongful heir,

who loves her too, and isnât beloved by her; and the wrongful heir gets

hold of the rightful heir, and throws him into a dungeon, just to kill

him off when convenient, for which purpose he hires a couple of

assassinsâa good one and a bad oneâwho, the moment they are left alone,

get up a little murder on their own account, the good one killing the bad

one, and the bad one wounding the good one. Then the rightful heir is

discovered in prison, carefully holding a long chain in his hands, and

seated despondingly in a large arm-chair; and the young lady comes in to

two bars of soft music, and embraces the rightful heir; and then the

wrongful heir comes in to two bars of quick music (technically called âa

hurryâ), and goes on in the most shocking manner, throwing the young lady

about as if she was nobody, and calling the rightful heir

âAr-recreantâar-wretch!â in a very loud voice, which answers the double

purpose of displaying his passion, and preventing the sound being

deadened by the sawdust. The interest becomes intense; the wrongful heir

draws his sword, and rushes on the rightful heir; a blue smoke is seen, a

gong is heard, and a tall white figure (who has been all this time,

behind the arm-chair, covered over with a table-cloth), slowly rises to

the tune of âOft in the stilly night.â This is no other than the ghost

of the rightful heirâs father, who was killed by the wrongful heirâs

father, at sight of which the wrongful heir becomes apoplectic, and is

literally âstruck all of a heap,â the stage not being large enough to

admit of his falling down at full length. Then the good assassin

staggers in, and says he was hired in conjunction with the bad assassin,

by the wrongful heir, to kill the rightful heir; and heâs killed a good

many people in his time, but heâs very sorry for it, and wonât do so any

moreâa promise which he immediately redeems, by dying off hand without

any nonsense about it. Then the rightful heir throws down his chain; and

then two men, a sailor, and a young woman (the tenantry of the rightful

heir) come in, and the ghost makes dumb motions to them, which they, by

supernatural interference, understandâfor no one else can; and the ghost

(who canât do anything without blue fire) blesses the rightful heir and

the young lady, by half suffocating them with smoke: and then a

muffin-bell rings, and the curtain drops.

The exhibitions next in popularity to these itinerant theatres are the

travelling menageries, or, to speak more intelligibly, the âWild-beast

shows,â where a military band in beef-eaterâs costume, with leopard-skin

caps, play incessantly; and where large highly-coloured representations

of tigers tearing menâs heads open, and a lion being burnt with red-hot

irons to induce him to drop his victim, are hung up outside, by way of

attracting visitors.

The principal officer at these places is generally a very tall, hoarse

man, in a scarlet coat, with a cane in his hand, with which he

occasionally raps the pictures we have just noticed, by way of

illustrating his descriptionâsomething in this way. âHere, here, here;

the lion, the lion (tap), exactly as he is represented on the canvas

outside (three taps): no waiting, remember; no deception. The

fe-ro-cious lion (tap, tap) who bit off the gentlemanâs head last

Cambervel vos a twelvemonth, and has killed on the awerage three keepers

a-year ever since he arrived at matoority. No extra charge on this

account recollect; the price of admission is only sixpence.â This

address never fails to produce a considerable sensation, and sixpences

flow into the treasury with wonderful rapidity.

The dwarfs are also objects of great curiosity, and as a dwarf, a

giantess, a living skeleton, a wild Indian, âa young lady of singular

beauty, with perfectly white hair and pink eyes,â and two or three other

natural curiosities, are usually exhibited together for the small charge

of a penny, they attract very numerous audiences. The best thing about a

dwarf is, that he has always a little box, about two feet six inches

high, into which, by long practice, he can just manage to get, by

doubling himself up like a boot-jack; this box is painted outside like a

six-roomed house, and as the crowd see him ring a bell, or fire a pistol

out of the first-floor window, they verily believe that it is his

ordinary town residence, divided like other mansions into drawing-rooms,

dining-parlour, and bedchambers. Shut up in this case, the unfortunate

little object is brought out to delight the throng by holding a facetious

dialogue with the proprietor: in the course of which, the dwarf (who is

always particularly drunk) pledges himself to sing a comic song inside,

and pays various compliments to the ladies, which induce them to âcome

forâerdâ with great alacrity. As a giant is not so easily moved, a pair

of indescribables of most capacious dimensions, and a huge shoe, are

usually brought out, into which two or three stout men get all at once,

to the enthusiastic delight of the crowd, who are quite satisfied with

the solemn assurance that these habiliments form part of the giantâs

everyday costume.

The grandest and most numerously-frequented booth in the whole fair,

however, is âThe Crown and Anchorââa temporary ball-roomâwe forget how

many hundred feet long, the price of admission to which is one shilling.

Immediately on your right hand as you enter, after paying your money, is

a refreshment place, at which cold beef, roast and boiled, French rolls,

stout, wine, tongue, ham, even fowls, if we recollect right, are

displayed in tempting array. There is a raised orchestra, and the place

is boarded all the way down, in patches, just wide enough for a country

dance.

There is no master of the ceremonies in this artificial Edenâall is

primitive, unreserved, and unstudied. The dust is blinding, the heat

insupportable, the company somewhat noisy, and in the highest spirits

possible: the ladies, in the height of their innocent animation, dancing

in the gentlemenâs hats, and the gentlemen promenading âthe gay and

festive sceneâ in the ladiesâ bonnets, or with the more expensive

ornaments of false noses, and low-crowned, tinder-box-looking hats:

playing childrenâs drums, and accompanied by ladies on the penny trumpet.

The noise of these various instruments, the orchestra, the shouting, the

âscratchers,â and the dancing, is perfectly bewildering. The dancing,

itself, beggars descriptionâevery figure lasts about an hour, and the

ladies bounce up and down the middle, with a degree of spirit which is

quite indescribable. As to the gentlemen, they stamp their feet against

the ground, every time âhands four roundâ begins, go down the middle and

up again, with cigars in their mouths, and silk handkerchiefs in their

hands, and whirl their partners round, nothing loth, scrambling and

falling, and embracing, and knocking up against the other couples, until

they are fairly tired out, and can move no longer. The same scene is

repeated again and again (slightly varied by an occasional ârowâ) until a

late hour at night: and a great many clerks and âprentices find

themselves next morning with aching heads, empty pockets, damaged hats,

and a very imperfect recollection of how it was they did \_not\_ get home.

CHAPTER XIIIâPRIVATE THEATRES

âRICHARD THE THIRD.âDUKE OF GLOâSTER 2\_l.\_; EARL OF RICHMOND, 1\_l\_;

DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM, 15\_s.\_; CATESBY, 12\_s.\_; TRESSEL, 10\_s.\_ 6\_d.\_;

LORD STANLEY, 5\_s.\_; LORD MAYOR OF LONDON, 2\_s.\_ 6\_d.\_â

Such are the written placards wafered up in the gentlemenâs

dressing-room, or the green-room (where there is any), at a private

theatre; and such are the sums extracted from the shop-till, or

overcharged in the office expenditure, by the donkeys who are prevailed

upon to pay for permission to exhibit their lamentable ignorance and

boobyism on the stage of a private theatre. This they do, in proportion

to the scope afforded by the character for the display of their

imbecility. For instance, the Duke of Gloâster is well worth two pounds,

because he has it all to himself; he must wear a real sword, and what is

better still, he must draw it, several times in the course of the piece.

The soliloquies alone are well worth fifteen shillings; then there is the

stabbing King Henryâdecidedly cheap at three-and-sixpence, thatâs

eighteen-and-sixpence; bullying the coffin-bearersâsay eighteen-pence,

though itâs worth much moreâthatâs a pound. Then the love scene with

Lady Ann, and the bustle of the fourth act canât be dear at ten shillings

moreâthatâs only one pound ten, including the âoff with his head!ââwhich

is sure to bring down the applause, and it is very easy to doââOrf with

his edâ (very quick and loud;âthen slow and sneeringly)ââSo much for

Bu-u-u-uckingham!â Lay the emphasis on the âuck;â get yourself gradually

into a corner, and work with your right hand, while youâre saying it, as

if you were feeling your way, and itâs sure to do. The tent scene is

confessedly worth half-a-sovereign, and so you have the fight in, gratis,

and everybody knows what an effect may be produced by a good combat.

Oneâtwoâthreeâfourâover; then, oneâtwoâthreeâfourâunder; then thrust;

then dodge and slide about; then fall down on one knee; then fight upon

it, and then get up again and stagger. You may keep on doing this, as

long as it seems to takeâsay ten minutesâand then fall down (backwards,

if you can manage it without hurting yourself), and die game: nothing

like it for producing an effect. They always do it at Astleyâs and

Sadlerâs Wells, and if they donât know how to do this sort of thing, who

in the world does? A small child, or a female in white, increases the

interest of a combat materiallyâindeed, we are not aware that a regular

legitimate terrific broadsword combat could be done without; but it would

be rather difficult, and somewhat unusual, to introduce this effect in

the last scene of Richard the Third, so the only thing to be done, is,

just to make the best of a bad bargain, and be as long as possible

fighting it out.

The principal patrons of private theatres are dirty boys, low

copying-clerks, in attorneysâ offices, capacious-headed youths from city

counting-houses, Jews whose business, as lenders of fancy dresses, is a

sure passport to the amateur stage, shop-boys who now and then mistake

their mastersâ money for their own; and a choice miscellany of idle

vagabonds. The proprietor of a private theatre may be an

ex-scene-painter, a low coffee-house-keeper, a disappointed eighth-rate

actor, a retired smuggler, or uncertificated bankrupt. The theatre

itself may be in Catherine-street, Strand, the purlieus of the city, the

neighbourhood of Grayâs-inn-lane, or the vicinity of Sadlerâs Wells; or

it may, perhaps, form the chief nuisance of some shabby street, on the

Surrey side of Waterloo-bridge.

The lady performers pay nothing for their characters, and it is needless

to add, are usually selected from one class of society; the audiences are

necessarily of much the same character as the performers, who receive, in

return for their contributions to the management, tickets to the amount

of the money they pay.

All the minor theatres in London, especially the lowest, constitute the

centre of a little stage-struck neighbourhood. Each of them has an

audience exclusively its own; and at any you will see dropping into the

pit at half-price, or swaggering into the back of a box, if the price of

admission be a reduced one, divers boys of from fifteen to twenty-one

years of age, who throw back their coat and turn up their wristbands,

after the portraits of Count DâOrsay, hum tunes and whistle when the

curtain is down, by way of persuading the people near them, that they are

not at all anxious to have it up again, and speak familiarly of the

inferior performers as Bill Such-a-one, and Ned So-and-so, or tell each

other how a new piece called \_The Unknown Bandit of the Invisible

Cavern\_, is in rehearsal; how Mister Palmer is to play \_The Unknown

Bandit\_; how Charley Scarton is to take the part of an English sailor,

and fight a broadsword combat with six unknown bandits, at one and the

same time (one theatrical sailor is always equal to half a dozen men at

least); how Mister Palmer and Charley Scarton are to go through a double

hornpipe in fetters in the second act; how the interior of the invisible

cavern is to occupy the whole extent of the stage; and other

town-surprising theatrical announcements. These gentlemen are the

amateursâthe \_Richards\_, \_Shylocks\_, \_Beverleys\_, and \_Othellos\_âthe

\_Young Dorntons\_, \_Rovers\_, \_Captain Absolutes\_, and \_Charles Surfaces\_âa

private theatre.

See them at the neighbouring public-house or the theatrical coffee-shop!

They are the kings of the place, supposing no real performers to be

present; and roll about, hats on one side, and arms a-kimbo, as if they

had actually come into possession of eighteen shillings a-week, and a

share of a ticket night. If one of them does but know an Astleyâs

supernumerary he is a happy fellow. The mingled air of envy and

admiration with which his companions will regard him, as he converses

familiarly with some mouldy-looking man in a fancy neckerchief, whose

partially corked eyebrows, and half-rouged face, testify to the fact of

his having just left the stage or the circle, sufficiently shows in what

high admiration these public characters are held.

With the double view of guarding against the discovery of friends or

employers, and enhancing the interest of an assumed character, by

attaching a high-sounding name to its representative, these geniuses

assume fictitious names, which are not the least amusing part of the

play-bill of a private theatre. Belville, Melville, Treville, Berkeley,

Randolph, Byron, St. Clair, and so forth, are among the humblest; and the

less imposing titles of Jenkins, Walker, Thomson, Barker, Solomons, &c.,

are completely laid aside. There is something imposing in this, and it

is an excellent apology for shabbiness into the bargain. A shrunken,

faded coat, a decayed hat, a patched and soiled pair of trousersânay,

even a very dirty shirt (and none of these appearances are very uncommon

among the members of the \_corps dramatique\_), may be worn for the purpose

of disguise, and to prevent the remotest chance of recognition. Then it

prevents any troublesome inquiries or explanations about employment and

pursuits; everybody is a gentleman at large, for the occasion, and there

are none of those unpleasant and unnecessary distinctions to which even

genius must occasionally succumb elsewhere. As to the ladies (God bless

them), they are quite above any formal absurdities; the mere circumstance

of your being behind the scenes is a sufficient introduction to their

societyâfor of course they know that none but strictly respectable

persons would be admitted into that close fellowship with them, which

acting engenders. They place implicit reliance on the manager, no doubt;

and as to the manager, he is all affability when he knows you well,âor,

in other words, when he has pocketed your money once, and entertains

confident hopes of doing so again.

A quarter before eightâthere will be a full house to-nightâsix parties in

the boxes, already; four little boys and a woman in the pit; and two

fiddles and a flute in the orchestra, who have got through five overtures

since seven oâclock (the hour fixed for the commencement of the

performances), and have just begun the sixth. There will be plenty of

it, though, when it does begin, for there is enough in the bill to last

six hours at least.

That gentleman in the white hat and checked shirt, brown coat and brass

buttons, lounging behind the stage-box on the O. P. side, is Mr. Horatio

St. Julien, alias Jem Larkins. His line is genteel comedyâhis fatherâs,

coal and potato. He \_does\_ Alfred Highflier in the last piece, and very

well heâll do itâat the price. The party of gentlemen in the opposite

box, to whom he has just nodded, are friends and supporters of Mr.

Beverley (otherwise Loggins), the \_Macbeth\_ of the night. You observe

their attempts to appear easy and gentlemanly, each member of the party,

with his feet cocked upon the cushion in front of the box! They let them

do these things here, upon the same humane principle which permits poor

peopleâs children to knock double knocks at the door of an empty

houseâbecause they canât do it anywhere else. The two stout men in the

centre box, with an opera-glass ostentatiously placed before them, are

friends of the proprietorâopulent country managers, as he confidentially

informs every individual among the crew behind the curtainâopulent

country managers looking out for recruits; a representation which Mr.

Nathan, the dresser, who is in the managerâs interest, and has just

arrived with the costumes, offers to confirm upon oath if

requiredâcorroborative evidence, however, is quite unnecessary, for the

gulls believe it at once.

The stout Jewess who has just entered, is the mother of the pale, bony

little girl, with the necklace of blue glass beads, sitting by her; she

is being brought up to âthe profession.â Pantomime is to be her line,

and she is coming out to-night, in a hornpipe after the tragedy. The

short thin man beside Mr. St. Julien, whose white face is so deeply

seared with the small-pox, and whose dirty shirt-front is inlaid with

open-work, and embossed with coral studs like ladybirds, is the low

comedian and comic singer of the establishment. The remainder of the

audienceâa tolerably numerous one by this timeâare a motley group of

dupes and blackguards.

The foot-lights have just made their appearance: the wicks of the six

little oil lamps round the only tier of boxes, are being turned up, and

the additional light thus afforded serves to show the presence of dirt,

and absence of paint, which forms a prominent feature in the audience

part of the house. As these preparations, however, announce the speedy

commencement of the play, let us take a peep âbehind,â previous to the

ringing-up.

The little narrow passages beneath the stage are neither especially clean

nor too brilliantly lighted; and the absence of any flooring, together

with the damp mildewy smell which pervades the place, does not conduce in

any great degree to their comfortable appearance. Donât fall over this

plate basketâitâs one of the âpropertiesââthe caldron for the witchesâ

cave; and the three uncouth-looking figures, with broken clothes-props in

their hands, who are drinking gin-and-water out of a pint pot, are the

weird sisters. This miserable room, lighted by candles in sconces placed

at lengthened intervals round the wall, is the dressing-room, common to

the gentlemen performers, and the square hole in the ceiling is \_the\_

trap-door of the stage above. You will observe that the ceiling is

ornamented with the beams that support the boards, and tastefully hung

with cobwebs.

The characters in the tragedy are all dressed, and their own clothes are

scattered in hurried confusion over the wooden dresser which surrounds

the room. That snuff-shop-looking figure, in front of the glass, is

\_Banquo\_: and the young lady with the liberal display of legs, who is

kindly painting his face with a hareâs foot, is dressed for \_Fleance\_.

The large woman, who is consulting the stage directions in Cumberlandâs

edition of \_Macbeth\_, is the \_Lady Macbeth\_ of the night; she is always

selected to play the part, because she is tall and stout, and \_looks\_ a

little like Mrs. Siddonsâat a considerable distance. That stupid-looking

milksop, with light hair and bow legsâa kind of man whom you can warrant

town-madeâis fresh caught; he plays \_Malcolm\_ to-night, just to accustom

himself to an audience. He will get on better by degrees; he will play

\_Othello\_ in a month, and in a month more, will very probably be

apprehended on a charge of embezzlement. The black-eyed female with whom

he is talking so earnestly, is dressed for the âgentlewoman.â It is

\_her\_ first appearance, tooâin that character. The boy of fourteen who

is having his eyebrows smeared with soap and whitening, is \_Duncan\_, King

of Scotland; and the two dirty men with the corked countenances, in very

old green tunics, and dirty drab boots, are the âarmy.â

âLook sharp below there, gents,â exclaims the dresser, a red-headed and

red-whiskered Jew, calling through the trap, âtheyâre a-going to ring up.

The flute says heâll be blowed if he plays any more, and theyâre getting

precious noisy in front.â A general rush immediately takes place to the

half-dozen little steep steps leading to the stage, and the heterogeneous

group are soon assembled at the side scenes, in breathless anxiety and

motley confusion.

âNow,â cries the manager, consulting the written list which hangs behind

the first P. S, wing, âScene 1, open countryâlamps downâthunder and

lightningâall ready, White?â [This is addressed to one of the army.]

âAll ready.âââVery well. Scene 2, front chamber. Is the front chamber

down?âââYes.âââVery well.âââJonesâ [to the other army who is up in the

flies]. âHallo!âââWind up the open country when we ring up.âââIâll take

care.âââScene 3, back perspective with practical bridge. Bridge ready,

White? Got the tressels there?âââAll right.â

âVery well. Clear the stage,â cries the manager, hastily packing every

member of the company into the little space there is between the wings

and the wall, and one wing and another. âPlaces, places. Now then,

WitchesâDuncanâMalcolmâbleeding officerâwhereâs the bleeding

officer?âââHere!â replies the officer, who has been rose-pinking for the

character. âGet ready, then; now, White, ring the second music-bell.â

The actors who are to be discovered, are hastily arranged, and the actors

who are not to be discovered place themselves, in their anxiety to peep

at the house, just where the audience can see them. The bell rings, and

the orchestra, in acknowledgment of the call, play three distinct chords.

The bell ringsâthe tragedy (!) opensâand our description closes.

CHAPTER XIVâVAUXHALL-GARDENS BY DAY

There was a time when if a man ventured to wonder how Vauxhall-gardens

would look by day, he was hailed with a shout of derision at the

absurdity of the idea. Vauxhall by daylight! A porter-pot without

porter, the House of Commons without the Speaker, a gas-lamp without the

gasâpooh, nonsense, the thing was not to be thought of. It was rumoured,

too, in those times, that Vauxhall-gardens by day, were the scene of

secret and hidden experiments; that there, carvers were exercised in the

mystic art of cutting a moderate-sized ham into slices thin enough to

pave the whole of the grounds; that beneath the shade of the tall trees,

studious men were constantly engaged in chemical experiments, with the

view of discovering how much water a bowl of negus could possibly bear;

and that in some retired nooks, appropriated to the study of ornithology,

other sage and learned men were, by a process known only to themselves,

incessantly employed in reducing fowls to a mere combination of skin and

bone.

Vague rumours of this kind, together with many others of a similar

nature, cast over Vauxhall-gardens an air of deep mystery; and as there

is a great deal in the mysterious, there is no doubt that to a good many

people, at all events, the pleasure they afforded was not a little

enhanced by this very circumstance.

Of this class of people we confess to having made one. We loved to

wander among these illuminated groves, thinking of the patient and

laborious researches which had been carried on there during the day, and

witnessing their results in the suppers which were served up beneath the

light of lamps and to the sound of music at night. The temples and

saloons and cosmoramas and fountains glittered and sparkled before our

eyes; the beauty of the lady singers and the elegant deportment of the

gentlemen, captivated our hearts; a few hundred thousand of additional

lamps dazzled our senses; a bowl or two of punch bewildered our brains;

and we were happy.

In an evil hour, the proprietors of Vauxhall-gardens took to opening them

by day. We regretted this, as rudely and harshly disturbing that veil of

mystery which had hung about the property for many years, and which none

but the noonday sun, and the late Mr. Simpson, had ever penetrated. We

shrunk from going; at this moment we scarcely know why. Perhaps a morbid

consciousness of approaching disappointmentâperhaps a fatal

presentimentâperhaps the weather; whatever it was, we did \_not\_ go until

the second or third announcement of a race between two balloons tempted

us, and we went.

We paid our shilling at the gate, and then we saw for the first time,

that the entrance, if there had been any magic about it at all, was now

decidedly disenchanted, being, in fact, nothing more nor less than a

combination of very roughly-painted boards and sawdust. We glanced at

the orchestra and supper-room as we hurried pastâwe just recognised them,

and that was all. We bent our steps to the firework-ground; there, at

least, we should not be disappointed. We reached it, and stood rooted to

the spot with mortification and astonishment. \_That\_ the Moorish

towerâthat wooden shed with a door in the centre, and daubs of crimson

and yellow all round, like a gigantic watch-case! \_That\_ the place where

night after night we had beheld the undaunted Mr. Blackmore make his

terrific ascent, surrounded by flames of fire, and peals of artillery,

and where the white garments of Madame Somebody (we forget even her name

now), who nobly devoted her life to the manufacture of fireworks, had so

often been seen fluttering in the wind, as she called up a red, blue, or

party-coloured light to illumine her temple! \_That\_ theâbut at this

moment the bell rung; the people scampered away, pell-mell, to the spot

from whence the sound proceeded; and we, from the mere force of habit,

found ourself running among the first, as if for very life.

It was for the concert in the orchestra. A small party of dismal men in

cocked hats were âexecutingâ the overture to \_Tancredi\_, and a numerous

assemblage of ladies and gentlemen, with their families, had rushed from

their half-emptied stout mugs in the supper boxes, and crowded to the

spot. Intense was the low murmur of admiration when a particularly small

gentleman, in a dress coat, led on a particularly tall lady in a blue

sarcenet pelisse and bonnet of the same, ornamented with large white

feathers, and forthwith commenced a plaintive duet.

We knew the small gentleman well; we had seen a lithographed semblance of

him, on many a piece of music, with his mouth wide open as if in the act

of singing; a wine-glass in his hand; and a table with two decanters and

four pine-apples on it in the background. The tall lady, too, we had

gazed on, lost in raptures of admiration, many and many a timeâhow

different people \_do\_ look by daylight, and without punch, to be sure!

It was a beautiful duet: first the small gentleman asked a question, and

then the tall lady answered it; then the small gentleman and the tall

lady sang together most melodiously; then the small gentleman went

through a little piece of vehemence by himself, and got very tenor

indeed, in the excitement of his feelings, to which the tall lady

responded in a similar manner; then the small gentleman had a shake or

two, after which the tall lady had the same, and then they both merged

imperceptibly into the original air: and the band wound themselves up to

a pitch of fury, and the small gentleman handed the tall lady out, and

the applause was rapturous.

The comic singer, however, was the especial favourite; we really thought

that a gentleman, with his dinner in a pocket-handkerchief, who stood

near us, would have fainted with excess of joy. A marvellously facetious

gentleman that comic singer is; his distinguishing characteristics are, a

wig approaching to the flaxen, and an aged countenance, and he bears the

name of one of the English counties, if we recollect right. He sang a

very good song about the seven ages, the first half-hour of which

afforded the assembly the purest delight; of the rest we can make no

report, as we did not stay to hear any more.

We walked about, and met with a disappointment at every turn; our

favourite views were mere patches of paint; the fountain that had

sparkled so showily by lamp-light, presented very much the appearance of

a water-pipe that had burst; all the ornaments were dingy, and all the

walks gloomy. There was a spectral attempt at rope-dancing in the little

open theatre. The sun shone upon the spangled dresses of the performers,

and their evolutions were about as inspiriting and appropriate as a

country-dance in a family vault. So we retraced our steps to the

firework-ground, and mingled with the little crowd of people who were

contemplating Mr. Green.

Some half-dozen men were restraining the impetuosity of one of the

balloons, which was completely filled, and had the car already attached;

and as rumours had gone abroad that a Lord was âgoing up,â the crowd were

more than usually anxious and talkative. There was one little man in

faded black, with a dirty face and a rusty black neckerchief with a red

border, tied in a narrow wisp round his neck, who entered into

conversation with everybody, and had something to say upon every remark

that was made within his hearing. He was standing with his arms folded,

staring up at the balloon, and every now and then vented his feelings of

reverence for the aÃ«ronaut, by saying, as he looked round to catch

somebodyâs eye, âHeâs a rum âun is Green; think oâ this here being

upâards of his two hundredth ascent; ecod, the man as is ekal to Green

never had the toothache yet, nor wonât have within this hundred year, and

thatâs all about it. When you meets with real talent, and native, too,

encourage it, thatâs what I say;â and when he had delivered himself to

this effect, he would fold his arms with more determination than ever,

and stare at the balloon with a sort of admiring defiance of any other

man alive, beyond himself and Green, that impressed the crowd with the

opinion that he was an oracle.

âAh, youâre very right, sir,â said another gentleman, with his wife, and

children, and mother, and wifeâs sister, and a host of female friends, in

all the gentility of white pocket-handkerchiefs, frills, and spencers,

âMr. Green is a steady hand, sir, and thereâs no fear about him.â

âFear!â said the little man: âisnât it a lovely thing to see him and his

wife a going up in one balloon, and his own son and \_his\_ wife a jostling

up against them in another, and all of them going twenty or thirty mile

in three hours or so, and then coming back in pochayses? I donât know

where this here science is to stop, mind you; thatâs what bothers me.â

Here there was a considerable talking among the females in the spencers.

âWhatâs the ladies a laughing at, sir?â inquired the little man,

condescendingly.

âItâs only my sister Mary,â said one of the girls, âas says she hopes his

lordship wonât be frightened when heâs in the car, and want to come out

again.â

âMake yourself easy about that there, my dear,â replied the little man.

âIf he was so much as to move a inch without leave, Green would jist

fetch him a crack over the head with the telescope, as would send him

into the bottom of the basket in no time, and stun him till they come

down again.â

âWould he, though?â inquired the other man.

âYes, would he,â replied the little one, âand think nothing of it,

neither, if he was the king himself. Greenâs presence of mind is

wonderful.â

Just at this moment all eyes were directed to the preparations which were

being made for starting. The car was attached to the second balloon, the

two were brought pretty close together, and a military band commenced

playing, with a zeal and fervour which would render the most timid man in

existence but too happy to accept any means of quitting that particular

spot of earth on which they were stationed. Then Mr. Green, sen., and

his noble companion entered one car, and Mr. Green, jun., and \_his\_

companion the other; and then the balloons went up, and the aÃ«rial

travellers stood up, and the crowd outside roared with delight, and the

two gentlemen who had never ascended before, tried to wave their flags,

as if they were not nervous, but held on very fast all the while; and the

balloons were wafted gently away, our little friend solemnly protesting,

long after they were reduced to mere specks in the air, that he could

still distinguish the white hat of Mr. Green. The gardens disgorged

their multitudes, boys ran up and down screaming âbal-loon;â and in all

the crowded thoroughfares people rushed out of their shops into the

middle of the road, and having stared up in the air at two little black

objects till they almost dislocated their necks, walked slowly in again,

perfectly satisfied.

The next day there was a grand account of the ascent in the morning

papers, and the public were informed how it was the finest day but four

in Mr. Greenâs remembrance; how they retained sight of the earth till

they lost it behind the clouds; and how the reflection of the balloon on

the undulating masses of vapour was gorgeously picturesque; together with

a little science about the refraction of the sunâs rays, and some

mysterious hints respecting atmospheric heat and eddying currents of air.

There was also an interesting account how a man in a boat was distinctly

heard by Mr. Green, jun., to exclaim, âMy eye!â which Mr. Green, jun.,

attributed to his voice rising to the balloon, and the sound being thrown

back from its surface into the car; and the whole concluded with a slight

allusion to another ascent next Wednesday, all of which was very

instructive and very amusing, as our readers will see if they look to the

papers. If we have forgotten to mention the date, they have only to wait

till next summer, and take the account of the first ascent, and it will

answer the purpose equally well.

CHAPTER XVâEARLY COACHES

We have often wondered how many monthsâ incessant travelling in a

post-chaise it would take to kill a man; and wondering by analogy, we

should very much like to know how many months of constant travelling in a

succession of early coaches, an unfortunate mortal could endure.

Breaking a man alive upon the wheel, would be nothing to breaking his

rest, his peace, his heartâeverything but his fastâupon four; and the

punishment of Ixion (the only practical person, by-the-bye, who has

discovered the secret of the perpetual motion) would sink into utter

insignificance before the one we have suggested. If we had been a

powerful churchman in those good times when blood was shed as freely as

water, and men were mowed down like grass, in the sacred cause of

religion, we would have lain by very quietly till we got hold of some

especially obstinate miscreant, who positively refused to be converted to

our faith, and then we would have booked him for an inside place in a

small coach, which travelled day and night: and securing the remainder of

the places for stout men with a slight tendency to coughing and spitting,

we would have started him forth on his last travels: leaving him

mercilessly to all the tortures which the waiters, landlords, coachmen,

guards, boots, chambermaids, and other familiars on his line of road,

might think proper to inflict.

Who has not experienced the miseries inevitably consequent upon a summons

to undertake a hasty journey? You receive an intimation from your place

of businessâwherever that may be, or whatever you may beâthat it will be

necessary to leave town without delay. You and your family are forthwith

thrown into a state of tremendous excitement; an express is immediately

dispatched to the washerwomanâs; everybody is in a bustle; and you,

yourself, with a feeling of dignity which you cannot altogether conceal,

sally forth to the booking-office to secure your place. Here a painful

consciousness of your own unimportance first rushes on your mindâthe

people are as cool and collected as if nobody were going out of town, or

as if a journey of a hundred odd miles were a mere nothing. You enter a

mouldy-looking room, ornamented with large posting-bills; the greater

part of the place enclosed behind a huge, lumbering, rough counter, and

fitted up with recesses that look like the dens of the smaller animals in

a travelling menagerie, without the bars. Some half-dozen people are

âbookingâ brown-paper parcels, which one of the clerks flings into the

aforesaid recesses with an air of recklessness which you, remembering the

new carpet-bag you bought in the morning, feel considerably annoyed at;

porters, looking like so many Atlases, keep rushing in and out, with

large packages on their shoulders; and while you are waiting to make the

necessary inquiries, you wonder what on earth the booking-office clerks

can have been before they were booking-office clerks; one of them with

his pen behind his ear, and his hands behind him, is standing in front of

the fire, like a full-length portrait of Napoleon; the other with his hat

half off his head, enters the passengersâ names in the books with a

coolness which is inexpressibly provoking; and the villain

whistlesâactually whistlesâwhile a man asks him what the fare is outside,

all the way to Holyhead!âin frosty weather, too! They are clearly an

isolated race, evidently possessing no sympathies or feelings in common

with the rest of mankind. Your turn comes at last, and having paid the

fare, you tremblingly inquireââWhat time will it be necessary for me to

be here in the morning?âââSix oâclock,â replies the whistler, carelessly

pitching the sovereign you have just parted with, into a wooden bowl on

the desk. âRather before than arter,â adds the man with the semi-roasted

unmentionables, with just as much ease and complacency as if the whole

world got out of bed at five. You turn into the street, ruminating as

you bend your steps homewards on the extent to which men become hardened

in cruelty, by custom.

If there be one thing in existence more miserable than another, it most

unquestionably is the being compelled to rise by candlelight. If you

have ever doubted the fact, you are painfully convinced of your error, on

the morning of your departure. You left strict orders, overnight, to be

called at half-past four, and you have done nothing all night but doze

for five minutes at a time, and start up suddenly from a terrific dream

of a large church-clock with the small hand running round, with

astonishing rapidity, to every figure on the dial-plate. At last,

completely exhausted, you fall gradually into a refreshing sleepâyour

thoughts grow confusedâthe stage-coaches, which have been âgoing offâ

before your eyes all night, become less and less distinct, until they go

off altogether; one moment you are driving with all the skill and

smartness of an experienced whipâthe next you are exhibiting \_Ã  la\_

Ducrow, on the off-leader; anon you are closely muffled up, inside, and

have just recognised in the person of the guard an old schoolfellow,

whose funeral, even in your dream, you remember to have attended eighteen

years ago. At last you fall into a state of complete oblivion, from

which you are aroused, as if into a new state of existence, by a singular

illusion. You are apprenticed to a trunk-maker; how, or why, or when, or

wherefore, you donât take the trouble to inquire; but there you are,

pasting the lining in the lid of a portmanteau. Confound that other

apprentice in the back shop, how he is hammering!ârap, rap, rapâwhat an

industrious fellow he must be! you have heard him at work for half an

hour past, and he has been hammering incessantly the whole time. Rap,

rap, rap, againâheâs talking nowâwhatâs that he said? Five oâclock! You

make a violent exertion, and start up in bed. The vision is at once

dispelled; the trunk-makerâs shop is your own bedroom, and the other

apprentice your shivering servant, who has been vainly endeavouring to

wake you for the last quarter of an hour, at the imminent risk of

breaking either his own knuckles or the panels of the door.

You proceed to dress yourself, with all possible dispatch. The flaring

flat candle with the long snuff, gives light enough to show that the

things you want, are not where they ought to be, and you undergo a

trifling delay in consequence of having carefully packed up one of your

boots in your over-anxiety of the preceding night. You soon complete

your toilet, however, for you are not particular on such an occasion, and

you shaved yesterday evening; so mounting your Petersham great-coat, and

green travelling shawl, and grasping your carpet-bag in your right hand,

you walk lightly down-stairs, lest you should awaken any of the family,

and after pausing in the common sitting-room for one moment, just to have

a cup of coffee (the said common sitting-room looking remarkably

comfortable, with everything out of its place, and strewed with the

crumbs of last nightâs supper), you undo the chain and bolts of the

street-door, and find yourself fairly in the street.

A thaw, by all that is miserable! The frost is completely broken up. You

look down the long perspective of Oxford-street, the gas-lights

mournfully reflected on the wet pavement, and can discern no speck in the

road to encourage the belief that there is a cab or a coach to be hadâthe

very coachmen have gone home in despair. The cold sleet is drizzling

down with that gentle regularity, which betokens a duration of

four-and-twenty hours at least; the damp hangs upon the house-tops and

lamp-posts, and clings to you like an invisible cloak. The water is

âcoming inâ in every area, the pipes have burst, the water-butts are

running over; the kennels seem to be doing matches against time,

pump-handles descend of their own accord, horses in market-carts fall

down, and thereâs no one to help them up again, policemen look as if they

had been carefully sprinkled with powdered glass; here and there a

milk-woman trudges slowly along, with a bit of list round each foot to

keep her from slipping; boys who âdonât sleep in the house,â and are not

allowed much sleep out of it, canât wake their masters by thundering at

the shop-door, and cry with the coldâthe compound of ice, snow, and water

on the pavement, is a couple of inches thickânobody ventures to walk fast

to keep himself warm, and nobody could succeed in keeping himself warm if

he did.

It strikes a quarter past five as you trudge down Waterloo-place on your

way to the Golden Cross, and you discover, for the first time, that you

were called about an hour too early. You have not time to go back; there

is no place open to go into, and you have, therefore, no resource but to

go forward, which you do, feeling remarkably satisfied with yourself, and

everything about you. You arrive at the office, and look wistfully up

the yard for the Birmingham High-flier, which, for aught you can see, may

have flown away altogether, for preparations appear to be on foot for the

departure of any vehicle in the shape of a coach. You wander into the

booking-office, which with the gas-lights and blazing fire, looks quite

comfortable by contrastâthat is to say, if any place \_can\_ look

comfortable at half-past five on a winterâs morning. There stands the

identical book-keeper in the same position as if he had not moved since

you saw him yesterday. As he informs you, that the coach is up the yard,

and will be brought round in about a quarter of an hour, you leave your

bag, and repair to âThe Tapâânot with any absurd idea of warming

yourself, because you feel such a result to be utterly hopeless, but for

the purpose of procuring some hot brandy-and-water, which you do,âwhen

the kettle boils! an event which occurs exactly two minutes and a half

before the time fixed for the starting of the coach.

The first stroke of six, peals from St. Martinâs church steeple, just as

you take the first sip of the boiling liquid. You find yourself at the

booking-office in two seconds, and the tap-waiter finds himself much

comforted by your brandy-and-water, in about the same period. The coach

is out; the horses are in, and the guard and two or three porters, are

stowing the luggage away, and running up the steps of the booking-office,

and down the steps of the booking-office, with breathless rapidity. The

place, which a few minutes ago was so still and quiet, is now all bustle;

the early vendors of the morning papers have arrived, and you are

assailed on all sides with shouts of â\_Times\_, genâlmân, \_Times\_,â

âHereâs \_ChronâChronâChron\_,â â\_Herald\_, maâam,â âHighly interesting

murder, genâlmân,â âCurious case oâ breach oâ promise, ladies.â The

inside passengers are already in their dens, and the outsides, with the

exception of yourself, are pacing up and down the pavement to keep

themselves warm; they consist of two young men with very long hair, to

which the sleet has communicated the appearance of crystallised ratsâ

tails; one thin young woman cold and peevish, one old gentleman ditto

ditto, and something in a cloak and cap, intended to represent a military

officer; every member of the party, with a large stiff shawl over his

chin, looking exactly as if he were playing a set of Panâs pipes.

âTake off the cloths, Bob,â says the coachman, who now appears for the

first time, in a rough blue great-coat, of which the buttons behind are

so far apart, that you canât see them both at the same time. âNow,

genâlmân,â cries the guard, with the waybill in his hand. âFive minutes

behind time already!â Up jump the passengersâthe two young men smoking

like lime-kilns, and the old gentleman grumbling audibly. The thin young

woman is got upon the roof, by dint of a great deal of pulling, and

pushing, and helping and trouble, and she repays it by expressing her

solemn conviction that she will never be able to get down again.

âAll right,â sings out the guard at last, jumping up as the coach starts,

and blowing his horn directly afterwards, in proof of the soundness of

his wind. âLet âem go, Harry, give âem their heads,â cries the

coachmanâand off we start as briskly as if the morning were âall right,â

as well as the coach: and looking forward as anxiously to the termination

of our journey, as we fear our readers will have done, long since, to the

conclusion of our paper.

CHAPTER XVIâOMNIBUSES

It is very generally allowed that public conveyances afford an extensive

field for amusement and observation. Of all the public conveyances that

have been constructed since the days of the Arkâwe think that is the

earliest on recordâto the present time, commend us to an omnibus. A long

stage is not to be despised, but there you have only six insides, and the

chances are, that the same people go all the way with youâthere is no

change, no variety. Besides, after the first twelve hours or so, people

get cross and sleepy, and when you have seen a man in his nightcap, you

lose all respect for him; at least, that is the case with us. Then on

smooth roads people frequently get prosy, and tell long stories, and even

those who donât talk, may have very unpleasant predilections. We once

travelled four hundred miles, inside a stage-coach, with a stout man, who

had a glass of rum-and-water, warm, handed in at the window at every

place where we changed horses. This was decidedly unpleasant. We have

also travelled occasionally, with a small boy of a pale aspect, with

light hair, and no perceptible neck, coming up to town from school under

the protection of the guard, and directed to be left at the Cross Keys

till called for. This is, perhaps, even worse than rum-and-water in a

close atmosphere. Then there is the whole train of evils consequent on a

change of the coachman; and the misery of the discoveryâwhich the guard

is sure to make the moment you begin to dozeâthat he wants a brown-paper

parcel, which he distinctly remembers to have deposited under the seat on

which you are reposing. A great deal of bustle and groping takes place,

and when you are thoroughly awakened, and severely cramped, by holding

your legs up by an almost supernatural exertion, while he is looking

behind them, it suddenly occurs to him that he put it in the fore-boot.

Bang goes the door; the parcel is immediately found; off starts the coach

again; and the guard plays the key-bugle as loud as he can play it, as if

in mockery of your wretchedness.

Now, you meet with none of these afflictions in an omnibus; sameness

there can never be. The passengers change as often in the course of one

journey as the figures in a kaleidoscope, and though not so glittering,

are far more amusing. We believe there is no instance on record, of a

manâs having gone to sleep in one of these vehicles. As to long stories,

would any man venture to tell a long story in an omnibus? and even if he

did, where would be the harm? nobody could possibly hear what he was

talking about. Again; children, though occasionally, are not often to be

found in an omnibus; and even when they are, if the vehicle be full, as

is generally the case, somebody sits upon them, and we are unconscious of

their presence. Yes, after mature reflection, and considerable

experience, we are decidedly of opinion, that of all known vehicles, from

the glass-coach in which we were taken to be christened, to that sombre

caravan in which we must one day make our last earthly journey, there is

nothing like an omnibus.

We will back the machine in which we make our daily peregrination from

the top of Oxford-street to the city, against any âbussâ on the road,

whether it be for the gaudiness of its exterior, the perfect simplicity

of its interior, or the native coolness of its cad. This young gentleman

is a singular instance of self-devotion; his somewhat intemperate zeal on

behalf of his employers, is constantly getting him into trouble, and

occasionally into the house of correction. He is no sooner emancipated,

however, than he resumes the duties of his profession with unabated

ardour. His principal distinction is his activity. His great boast is,

âthat he can chuck an old genâlmân into the buss, shut him in, and rattle

off, afore he knows where itâs a-going toââa feat which he frequently

performs, to the infinite amusement of every one but the old gentleman

concerned, who, somehow or other, never can see the joke of the thing.

We are not aware that it has ever been precisely ascertained, how many

passengers our omnibus will contain. The impression on the cadâs mind

evidently is, that it is amply sufficient for the accommodation of any

number of persons that can be enticed into it. âAny room?â cries a hot

pedestrian. âPlenty oâ room, sir,â replies the conductor, gradually

opening the door, and not disclosing the real state of the case, until

the wretched man is on the steps. âWhere?â inquires the entrapped

individual, with an attempt to back out again. âEither side, sir,â

rejoins the cad, shoving him in, and slamming the door. âAll right,

Bill.â Retreat is impossible; the new-comer rolls about, till he falls

down somewhere, and there he stops.

As we get into the city a little before ten, four or five of our party

are regular passengers. We always take them up at the same places, and

they generally occupy the same seats; they are always dressed in the same

manner, and invariably discuss the same topicsâthe increasing rapidity of

cabs, and the disregard of moral obligations evinced by omnibus men.

There is a little testy old man, with a powdered head, who always sits on

the right-hand side of the door as you enter, with his hands folded on

the top of his umbrella. He is extremely impatient, and sits there for

the purpose of keeping a sharp eye on the cad, with whom he generally

holds a running dialogue. He is very officious in helping people in and

out, and always volunteers to give the cad a poke with his umbrella, when

any one wants to alight. He usually recommends ladies to have sixpence

ready, to prevent delay; and if anybody puts a window down, that he can

reach, he immediately puts it up again.

âNow, what are you stopping for?â says the little man every morning, the

moment there is the slightest indication of âpulling upâ at the corner of

Regent-street, when some such dialogue as the following takes place

between him and the cad:

âWhat are you stopping for?â

Here the cad whistles, and affects not to hear the question.

âI say [a poke], what are you stopping for?â

âFor passengers, sir. Baânk.âTy.â

âI know youâre stopping for passengers; but youâve no business to do so.

\_Why\_ are you stopping?â

âVy, sir, thatâs a difficult question. I think it is because we perfer

stopping here to going on.â

âNow mind,â exclaims the little old man, with great vehemence, âIâll pull

you up to-morrow; Iâve often threatened to do it; now I will.â

âThankee, sir,â replies the cad, touching his hat with a mock expression

of gratitude;ââwerry much obliged to you indeed, sir.â Here the young

men in the omnibus laugh very heartily, and the old gentleman gets very

red in the face, and seems highly exasperated.

The stout gentleman in the white neckcloth, at the other end of the

vehicle, looks very prophetic, and says that something must shortly be

done with these fellows, or thereâs no saying where all this will end;

and the shabby-genteel man with the green bag, expresses his entire

concurrence in the opinion, as he has done regularly every morning for

the last six months.

A second omnibus now comes up, and stops immediately behind us. Another

old gentleman elevates his cane in the air, and runs with all his might

towards our omnibus; we watch his progress with great interest; the door

is opened to receive him, he suddenly disappearsâhe has been spirited

away by the opposition. Hereupon the driver of the opposition taunts our

people with his having âregularly done âem out of that old swell,â and

the voice of the âold swellâ is heard, vainly protesting against this

unlawful detention. We rattle off, the other omnibus rattles after us,

and every time we stop to take up a passenger, they stop to take him too;

sometimes we get him; sometimes they get him; but whoever donât get him,

say they ought to have had him, and the cads of the respective vehicles

abuse one another accordingly.

As we arrive in the vicinity of Lincolnâs-inn-fields, Bedford-row, and

other legal haunts, we drop a great many of our original passengers, and

take up fresh ones, who meet with a very sulky reception. It is rather

remarkable, that the people already in an omnibus, always look at

newcomers, as if they entertained some undefined idea that they have no

business to come in at all. We are quite persuaded the little old man

has some notion of this kind, and that he considers their entry as a sort

of negative impertinence.

Conversation is now entirely dropped; each person gazes vacantly through

the window in front of him, and everybody thinks that his opposite

neighbour is staring at him. If one man gets out at Shoe-lane, and

another at the corner of Farringdon-street, the little old gentleman

grumbles, and suggests to the latter, that if he had got out at Shoe-lane

too, he would have saved them the delay of another stoppage; whereupon

the young men laugh again, and the old gentleman looks very solemn, and

says nothing more till he gets to the Bank, when he trots off as fast as

he can, leaving us to do the same, and to wish, as we walk away, that we

could impart to others any portion of the amusement we have gained for

ourselves.

CHAPTER XVIIâTHE LAST CAB-DRIVER, AND THE FIRST OMNIBUS CAD

Of all the cabriolet-drivers whom we have ever had the honour and

gratification of knowing by sightâand our acquaintance in this way has

been most extensiveâthere is one who made an impression on our mind which

can never be effaced, and who awakened in our bosom a feeling of

admiration and respect, which we entertain a fatal presentiment will

never be called forth again by any human being. He was a man of most

simple and prepossessing appearance. He was a brown-whiskered,

white-hatted, no-coated cabman; his nose was generally red, and his

bright blue eye not unfrequently stood out in bold relief against a black

border of artificial workmanship; his boots were of the Wellington form,

pulled up to meet his corduroy knee-smalls, or at least to approach as

near them as their dimensions would admit of; and his neck was usually

garnished with a bright yellow handkerchief. In summer he carried in his

mouth a flower; in winter, a strawâslight, but, to a contemplative mind,

certain indications of a love of nature, and a taste for botany.

His cabriolet was gorgeously paintedâa bright red; and wherever we went,

City or West End, Paddington or Holloway, North, East, West, or South,

there was the red cab, bumping up against the posts at the street

corners, and turning in and out, among hackney-coaches, and drays, and

carts, and waggons, and omnibuses, and contriving by some strange means

or other, to get out of places which no other vehicle but the red cab

could ever by any possibility have contrived to get into at all. Our

fondness for that red cab was unbounded. How we should have liked to

have seen it in the circle at Astleyâs! Our life upon it, that it should

have performed such evolutions as would have put the whole company to

shameâIndian chiefs, knights, Swiss peasants, and all.

Some people object to the exertion of getting into cabs, and others

object to the difficulty of getting out of them; we think both these are

objections which take their rise in perverse and ill-conditioned minds.

The getting into a cab is a very pretty and graceful process, which, when

well performed, is essentially melodramatic. First, there is the

expressive pantomime of every one of the eighteen cabmen on the stand,

the moment you raise your eyes from the ground. Then there is your own

pantomime in replyâquite a little ballet. Four cabs immediately leave

the stand, for your especial accommodation; and the evolutions of the

animals who draw them, are beautiful in the extreme, as they grate the

wheels of the cabs against the curb-stones, and sport playfully in the

kennel. You single out a particular cab, and dart swiftly towards it.

One bound, and you are on the first step; turn your body lightly round to

the right, and you are on the second; bend gracefully beneath the reins,

working round to the left at the same time, and you are in the cab.

There is no difficulty in finding a seat: the apron knocks you

comfortably into it at once, and off you go.

The getting out of a cab is, perhaps, rather more complicated in its

theory, and a shade more difficult in its execution. We have studied the

subject a great deal, and we think the best way is, to throw yourself

out, and trust to chance for alighting on your feet. If you make the

driver alight first, and then throw yourself upon him, you will find that

he breaks your fall materially. In the event of your contemplating an

offer of eightpence, on no account make the tender, or show the money,

until you are safely on the pavement. It is very bad policy attempting

to save the fourpence. You are very much in the power of a cabman, and

he considers it a kind of fee not to do you any wilful damage. Any

instruction, however, in the art of getting out of a cab, is wholly

unnecessary if you are going any distance, because the probability is,

that you will be shot lightly out before you have completed the third

mile.

We are not aware of any instance on record in which a cab-horse has

performed three consecutive miles without going down once. What of that?

It is all excitement. And in these days of derangement of the nervous

system and universal lassitude, people are content to pay handsomely for

excitement; where can it be procured at a cheaper rate?

But to return to the red cab; it was omnipresent. You had but to walk

down Holborn, or Fleet-street, or any of the principal thoroughfares in

which there is a great deal of traffic, and judge for yourself. You had

hardly turned into the street, when you saw a trunk or two, lying on the

ground: an uprooted post, a hat-box, a portmanteau, and a carpet-bag,

strewed about in a very picturesque manner: a horse in a cab standing by,

looking about him with great unconcern; and a crowd, shouting and

screaming with delight, cooling their flushed faces against the glass

windows of a chemistâs shop.ââWhatâs the matter here, can you tell

me?âââOâny a cab, sir.âââAnybody hurt, do you know?âââOâny the fare, sir.

I see him a turninâ the corner, and I ses to another genâlmân âthatâs a

regâlar little oss that, and heâs a cominâ along rayther sweet, anât

he?âââHe just is,â ses the other genâlmân, ven bump they cums agin the

post, and out flies the fare like bricks.â Need we say it was the red

cab; or that the gentleman with the straw in his mouth, who emerged so

coolly from the chemistâs shop and philosophically climbing into the

little dickey, started off at full gallop, was the red cabâs licensed

driver?

The ubiquity of this red cab, and the influence it exercised over the

risible muscles of justice itself, was perfectly astonishing. You walked

into the justice-room of the Mansion-house; the whole court resounded

with merriment. The Lord Mayor threw himself back in his chair, in a

state of frantic delight at his own joke; every vein in Mr. Hoblerâs

countenance was swollen with laughter, partly at the Lord Mayorâs

facetiousness, but more at his own; the constables and police-officers

were (as in duty bound) in ecstasies at Mr. Hobler and the Lord Mayor

combined; and the very paupers, glancing respectfully at the beadleâs

countenance, tried to smile, as even he relaxed. A tall, weazen-faced

man, with an impediment in his speech, would be endeavouring to state a

case of imposition against the red cabâs driver; and the red cabâs

driver, and the Lord Mayor, and Mr. Hobler, would be having a little fun

among themselves, to the inordinate delight of everybody but the

complainant. In the end, justice would be so tickled with the red

cab-driverâs native humour, that the fine would be mitigated, and he

would go away full gallop, in the red cab, to impose on somebody else

without loss of time.

The driver of the red cab, confident in the strength of his own moral

principles, like many other philosophers, was wont to set the feelings

and opinions of society at complete defiance. Generally speaking,

perhaps, he would as soon carry a fare safely to his destination, as he

would upset himâsooner, perhaps, because in that case he not only got the

money, but had the additional amusement of running a longer heat against

some smart rival. But society made war upon him in the shape of

penalties, and he must make war upon society in his own way. This was

the reasoning of the red cab-driver. So, he bestowed a searching look

upon the fare, as he put his hand in his waistcoat pocket, when he had

gone half the mile, to get the money ready; and if he brought forth

eightpence, out he went.

The last time we saw our friend was one wet evening in

Tottenham-court-road, when he was engaged in a very warm and somewhat

personal altercation with a loquacious little gentleman in a green coat.

Poor fellow! there were great excuses to be made for him: he had not

received above eighteenpence more than his fare, and consequently

laboured under a great deal of very natural indignation. The dispute had

attained a pretty considerable height, when at last the loquacious little

gentleman, making a mental calculation of the distance, and finding that

he had already paid more than he ought, avowed his unalterable

determination to âpull upâ the cabman in the morning.

âNow, just mark this, young man,â said the little gentleman, âIâll pull

you up to-morrow morning.â

âNo! will you though?â said our friend, with a sneer.

âI will,â replied the little gentleman, âmark my words, thatâs all. If I

live till to-morrow morning, you shall repent this.â

There was a steadiness of purpose, and indignation of speech, about the

little gentleman, as he took an angry pinch of snuff, after this last

declaration, which made a visible impression on the mind of the red

cab-driver. He appeared to hesitate for an instant. It was only for an

instant; his resolve was soon taken.

âYouâll pull me up, will you?â said our friend.

âI will,â rejoined the little gentleman, with even greater vehemence an

before.

âVery well,â said our friend, tucking up his shirt sleeves very calmly.

âThereâll be three veeks for that. Wery good; thatâll bring me up to the

middle oâ next month. Three veeks more would carry me on to my birthday,

and then Iâve got ten pound to draw. I may as well get board, lodginâ,

and washinâ, till then, out of the county, as pay for it myself;

consequently here goes!â

So, without more ado, the red cab-driver knocked the little gentleman

down, and then called the police to take himself into custody, with all

the civility in the world.

A story is nothing without the sequel; and therefore, we may state, that

to our certain knowledge, the board, lodging, and washing were all

provided in due course. We happen to know the fact, for it came to our

knowledge thus: We went over the House of Correction for the county of

Middlesex shortly after, to witness the operation of the silent system;

and looked on all the âwheelsâ with the greatest anxiety, in search of

our long-lost friend. He was nowhere to be seen, however, and we began

to think that the little gentleman in the green coat must have relented,

when, as we were traversing the kitchen-garden, which lies in a

sequestered part of the prison, we were startled by hearing a voice,

which apparently proceeded from the wall, pouring forth its soul in the

plaintive air of âAll round my hat,â which was then just beginning to

form a recognised portion of our national music.

We started.ââWhat voice is that?â said we. The Governor shook his head.

âSad fellow,â he replied, âvery sad. He positively refused to work on

the wheel; so, after many trials, I was compelled to order him into

solitary confinement. He says he likes it very much though, and I am

afraid he does, for he lies on his back on the floor, and sings comic

songs all day!â

Shall we add, that our heart had not deceived us and that the comic

singer was no other than our eagerly-sought friend, the red cab-driver?

We have never seen him since, but we have strong reason to suspect that

this noble individual was a distant relative of a waterman of our

acquaintance, who, on one occasion, when we were passing the coach-stand

over which he presides, after standing very quietly to see a tall man

struggle into a cab, ran up very briskly when it was all over (as his

brethren invariably do), and, touching his hat, asked, as a matter of

course, for âa copper for the waterman.â Now, the fare was by no means a

handsome man; and, waxing very indignant at the demand, he

repliedââMoney! What for? Coming up and looking at me, I

suppose!âââVell, sir,â rejoined the waterman, with a smile of immovable

complacency, â\_thatâs\_ worth twopence.â

The identical waterman afterwards attained a very prominent station in

society; and as we know something of his life, and have often thought of

telling what we \_do\_ know, perhaps we shall never have a better

opportunity than the present.

Mr. William Barker, then, for that was the gentlemanâs name, Mr. William

Barker was bornâbut why need we relate where Mr. William Barker was born,

or when? Why scrutinise the entries in parochial ledgers, or seek to

penetrate the Lucinian mysteries of lying-in hospitals? Mr. William

Barker \_was\_ born, or he had never been. There is a sonâthere was a

father. There is an effectâthere was a cause. Surely this is sufficient

information for the most Fatima-like curiosity; and, if it be not, we

regret our inability to supply any further evidence on the point. Can

there be a more satisfactory, or more strictly parliamentary course?

Impossible.

We at once avow a similar inability to record at what precise period, or

by what particular process, this gentlemanâs patronymic, of William

Barker, became corrupted into âBill Boorker.â Mr. Barker acquired a high

standing, and no inconsiderable reputation, among the members of that

profession to which he more peculiarly devoted his energies; and to them

he was generally known, either by the familiar appellation of âBill

Boorker,â or the flattering designation of âAggerawatin Bill,â the latter

being a playful and expressive \_sobriquet\_, illustrative of Mr. Barkerâs

great talent in âaggerawatinâ and rendering wild such subjects of her

Majesty as are conveyed from place to place, through the instrumentality

of omnibuses. Of the early life of Mr. Barker little is known, and even

that little is involved in considerable doubt and obscurity. A want of

application, a restlessness of purpose, a thirsting after porter, a love

of all that is roving and cadger-like in nature, shared in common with

many other great geniuses, appear to have been his leading

characteristics. The busy hum of a parochial free-school, and the shady

repose of a county gaol, were alike inefficacious in producing the

slightest alteration in Mr. Barkerâs disposition. His feverish

attachment to change and variety nothing could repress; his native daring

no punishment could subdue.

If Mr. Barker can be fairly said to have had any weakness in his earlier

years, it was an amiable oneâlove; love in its most comprehensive formâa

love of ladies, liquids, and pocket-handkerchiefs. It was no selfish

feeling; it was not confined to his own possessions, which but too many

men regard with exclusive complacency. No; it was a nobler loveâa

general principle. It extended itself with equal force to the property

of other people.

There is something very affecting in this. It is still more affecting to

know, that such philanthropy is but imperfectly rewarded. Bow-street,

Newgate, and Millbank, are a poor return for general benevolence,

evincing itself in an irrepressible love for all created objects. Mr.

Barker felt it so. After a lengthened interview with the highest legal

authorities, he quitted his ungrateful country, with the consent, and at

the expense, of its Government; proceeded to a distant shore; and there

employed himself, like another Cincinnatus, in clearing and cultivating

the soilâa peaceful pursuit, in which a term of seven years glided almost

imperceptibly away.

Whether, at the expiration of the period we have just mentioned, the

British Government required Mr. Barkerâs presence here, or did not

require his residence abroad, we have no distinct means of ascertaining.

We should be inclined, however, to favour the latter position, inasmuch

as we do not find that he was advanced to any other public post on his

return, than the post at the corner of the Haymarket, where he officiated

as assistant-waterman to the hackney-coach stand. Seated, in this

capacity, on a couple of tubs near the curbstone, with a brass plate and

number suspended round his neck by a massive chain, and his ankles

curiously enveloped in haybands, he is supposed to have made those

observations on human nature which exercised so material an influence

over all his proceedings in later life.

Mr. Barker had not officiated for many months in this capacity, when the

appearance of the first omnibus caused the public mind to go in a new

direction, and prevented a great many hackney-coaches from going in any

direction at all. The genius of Mr. Barker at once perceived the whole

extent of the injury that would be eventually inflicted on cab and coach

stands, and, by consequence, on watermen also, by the progress of the

system of which the first omnibus was a part. He saw, too, the necessity

of adopting some more profitable profession; and his active mind at once

perceived how much might be done in the way of enticing the youthful and

unwary, and shoving the old and helpless, into the wrong buss, and

carrying them off, until, reduced to despair, they ransomed themselves by

the payment of sixpence a-head, or, to adopt his own figurative

expression in all its native beauty, âtill they was rigâlarly done over,

and forked out the stumpy.â

An opportunity for realising his fondest anticipations, soon presented

itself. Rumours were rife on the hackney-coach stands, that a buss was

building, to run from Lisson-grove to the Bank, down Oxford-street and

Holborn; and the rapid increase of busses on the Paddington-road,

encouraged the idea. Mr. Barker secretly and cautiously inquired in the

proper quarters. The report was correct; the âRoyal Williamâ was to make

its first journey on the following Monday. It was a crack affair

altogether. An enterprising young cabman, of established reputation as a

dashing whipâfor he had compromised with the parents of three scrunched

children, and just âworked outâ his fine for knocking down an old

ladyâwas the driver; and the spirited proprietor, knowing Mr. Barkerâs

qualifications, appointed him to the vacant office of cad on the very

first application. The buss began to run, and Mr. Barker entered into a

new suit of clothes, and on a new sphere of action.

To recapitulate all the improvements introduced by this extraordinary man

into the omnibus systemâgradually, indeed, but surelyâwould occupy a far

greater space than we are enabled to devote to this imperfect memoir. To

him is universally assigned the original suggestion of the practice which

afterwards became so generalâof the driver of a second buss keeping

constantly behind the first one, and driving the pole of his vehicle

either into the door of the other, every time it was opened, or through

the body of any lady or gentleman who might make an attempt to get into

it; a humorous and pleasant invention, exhibiting all that originality of

idea, and fine, bold flow of spirits, so conspicuous in every action of

this great man.

Mr. Barker had opponents of course; what man in public life has not? But

even his worst enemies cannot deny that he has taken more old ladies and

gentlemen to Paddington who wanted to go to the Bank, and more old ladies

and gentlemen to the Bank who wanted to go to Paddington, than any six

men on the road; and however much malevolent spirits may pretend to doubt

the accuracy of the statement, they well know it to be an established

fact, that he has forcibly conveyed a variety of ancient persons of

either sex, to both places, who had not the slightest or most distant

intention of going anywhere at all.

Mr. Barker was the identical cad who nobly distinguished himself, some

time since, by keeping a tradesman on the stepâthe omnibus going at full

speed all the timeâtill he had thrashed him to his entire satisfaction,

and finally throwing him away, when he had quite done with him. Mr.

Barker it \_ought\_ to have been, who honestly indignant at being

ignominiously ejected from a house of public entertainment, kicked the

landlord in the knee, and thereby caused his death. We say it \_ought\_ to

have been Mr. Barker, because the action was not a common one, and could

have emanated from no ordinary mind.

It has now become matter of history; it is recorded in the Newgate

Calendar; and we wish we could attribute this piece of daring heroism to

Mr. Barker. We regret being compelled to state that it was not performed

by him. Would, for the family credit we could add, that it was achieved

by his brother!

It was in the exercise of the nicer details of his profession, that Mr.

Barkerâs knowledge of human nature was beautifully displayed. He could

tell at a glance where a passenger wanted to go to, and would shout the

name of the place accordingly, without the slightest reference to the

real destination of the vehicle. He knew exactly the kind of old lady

that would be too much flurried by the process of pushing in and pulling

out of the caravan, to discover where she had been put down, until too

late; had an intuitive perception of what was passing in a passengerâs

mind when he inwardly resolved to âpull that cad up to-morrow morning;â

and never failed to make himself agreeable to female servants, whom he

would place next the door, and talk to all the way.

Human judgment is never infallible, and it would occasionally happen that

Mr. Barker experimentalised with the timidity or forbearance of the wrong

person, in which case a summons to a Police-office, was, on more than one

occasion, followed by a committal to prison. It was not in the power of

trifles such as these, however, to subdue the freedom of his spirit. As

soon as they passed away, he resumed the duties of his profession with

unabated ardour.

We have spoken of Mr. Barker and of the red cab-driver, in the past

tense. Alas! Mr. Barker has again become an absentee; and the class of

men to which they both belonged is fast disappearing. Improvement has

peered beneath the aprons of our cabs, and penetrated to the very

innermost recesses of our omnibuses. Dirt and fustian will vanish before

cleanliness and livery. Slang will be forgotten when civility becomes

general: and that enlightened, eloquent, sage, and profound body, the

Magistracy of London, will be deprived of half their amusement, and half

their occupation.

CHAPTER XVIIIâA PARLIAMENTARY SKETCH

We hope our readers will not be alarmed at this rather ominous title. We

assure them that we are not about to become political, neither have we

the slightest intention of being more prosy than usualâif we can help it.

It has occurred to us that a slight sketch of the general aspect of âthe

House,â and the crowds that resort to it on the night of an important

debate, would be productive of some amusement: and as we have made some

few calls at the aforesaid house in our timeâhave visited it quite often

enough for our purpose, and a great deal too often for our personal peace

and comfortâwe have determined to attempt the description. Dismissing

from our minds, therefore, all that feeling of awe, which vague ideas of

breaches of privilege, Serjeant-at-Arms, heavy denunciations, and still

heavier fees, are calculated to awaken, we enter at once into the

building, and upon our subject.

Half-past four oâclockâand at five the mover of the Address will be âon

his legs,â as the newspapers announce sometimes by way of novelty, as if

speakers were occasionally in the habit of standing on their heads. The

members are pouring in, one after the other, in shoals. The few

spectators who can obtain standing-room in the passages, scrutinise them

as they pass, with the utmost interest, and the man who can identify a

member occasionally, becomes a person of great importance. Every now and

then you hear earnest whispers of âThatâs Sir John Thomson.â âWhich? him

with the gilt order round his neck?â âNo, no; thatâs one of the

messengersâthat other with the yellow gloves, is Sir John Thomson.â

âHereâs Mr. Smith.â âLor!â âYes, how dâye do, sir?â(He is our new

member)âHow do you do, sir?â Mr. Smith stops: turns round with an air of

enchanting urbanity (for the rumour of an intended dissolution has been

very extensively circulated this morning); seizes both the hands of his

gratified constituent, and, after greeting him with the most enthusiastic

warmth, darts into the lobby with an extraordinary display of ardour in

the public cause, leaving an immense impression in his favour on the mind

of his âfellow-townsman.â

The arrivals increase in number, and the heat and noise increase in very

unpleasant proportion. The livery servants form a complete lane on

either side of the passage, and you reduce yourself into the smallest

possible space to avoid being turned out. You see that stout man with

the hoarse voice, in the blue coat, queer-crowned, broad-brimmed hat,

white corduroy breeches, and great boots, who has been talking

incessantly for half an hour past, and whose importance has occasioned no

small quantity of mirth among the strangers. That is the great

conservator of the peace of Westminster. You cannot fail to have

remarked the grace with which he saluted the noble Lord who passed just

now, or the excessive dignity of his air, as he expostulates with the

crowd. He is rather out of temper now, in consequence of the very

irreverent behaviour of those two young fellows behind him, who have done

nothing but laugh all the time they have been here.

âWill they divide to-night, do you think, Mr. ---â timidly inquires a

little thin man in the crowd, hoping to conciliate the man of office.

âHow \_can\_ you ask such questions, sir?â replies the functionary, in an

incredibly loud key, and pettishly grasping the thick stick he carries in

his right hand. âPray do not, sir. I beg of you; pray do not, sir.â

The little man looks remarkably out of his element, and the uninitiated

part of the throng are in positive convulsions of laughter.

Just at this moment some unfortunate individual appears, with a very

smirking air, at the bottom of the long passage. He has managed to elude

the vigilance of the special constable downstairs, and is evidently

congratulating himself on having made his way so far.

âGo back, sirâyou must \_not\_ come here,â shouts the hoarse one, with

tremendous emphasis of voice and gesture, the moment the offender catches

his eye.

The stranger pauses.

âDo you hear, sirâwill you go back?â continues the official dignitary,

gently pushing the intruder some half-dozen yards.

âCome, donât push me,â replies the stranger, turning angrily round.

âI will, sir.â

âYou wonât, sir.â

âGo out, sir.â

âTake your hands off me, sir.â

âGo out of the passage, sir.â

âYouâre a Jack-in-office, sir.â

âA what?â ejaculates he of the boots.

âA Jack-in-office, sir, and a very insolent fellow,â reiterates the

stranger, now completely in a passion.

âPray do not force me to put you out, sir,â retorts the otherââpray do

notâmy instructions are to keep this passage clearâitâs the Speakerâs

orders, sir.â

âD-n the Speaker, sir!â shouts the intruder.

âHere, Wilson!âCollins!â gasps the officer, actually paralysed at this

insulting expression, which in his mind is all but high treason; âtake

this man outâtake him out, I say! How dare you, sir?â and down goes the

unfortunate man five stairs at a time, turning round at every stoppage,

to come back again, and denouncing bitter vengeance against the

commander-in-chief, and all his supernumeraries.

âMake way, gentlemen,âpray make way for the Members, I beg of you!â

shouts the zealous officer, turning back, and preceding a whole string of

the liberal and independent.

You see this ferocious-looking gentleman, with a complexion almost as

sallow as his linen, and whose large black moustache would give him the

appearance of a figure in a hairdresserâs window, if his countenance

possessed the thought which is communicated to those waxen caricatures of

the human face divine. He is a militia-officer, and the most amusing

person in the House. Can anything be more exquisitely absurd than the

burlesque grandeur of his air, as he strides up to the lobby, his eyes

rolling like those of a Turkâs head in a cheap Dutch clock? He never

appears without that bundle of dirty papers which he carries under his

left arm, and which are generally supposed to be the miscellaneous

estimates for 1804, or some equally important documents. He is very

punctual in his attendance at the House, and his self-satisfied

âHe-ar-He-ar,â is not unfrequently the signal for a general titter.

This is the gentleman who once actually sent a messenger up to the

Strangersâ gallery in the old House of Commons, to inquire the name of an

individual who was using an eye-glass, in order that he might complain to

the Speaker that the person in question was quizzing him! On another

occasion, he is reported to have repaired to Bellamyâs kitchenâa

refreshment-room, where persons who are not Members are admitted on

sufferance, as it wereâand perceiving two or three gentlemen at supper,

who, he was aware, were not Members, and could not, in that place, very

well resent his behaviour, he indulged in the pleasantry of sitting with

his booted leg on the table at which they were supping! He is generally

harmless, though, and always amusing.

By dint of patience, and some little interest with our friend the

constable, we have contrived to make our way to the Lobby, and you can

just manage to catch an occasional glimpse of the House, as the door is

opened for the admission of Members. It is tolerably full already, and

little groups of Members are congregated together here, discussing the

interesting topics of the day.

That smart-looking fellow in the black coat with velvet facings and

cuffs, who wears his \_DâOrsay\_ hat so rakishly, is âHonest Tom,â a

metropolitan representative; and the large man in the cloak with the

white liningânot the man by the pillar; the other with the light hair

hanging over his coat collar behindâis his colleague. The quiet

gentlemanly-looking man in the blue surtout, gray trousers, white

neckerchief and gloves, whose closely-buttoned coat displays his manly

figure and broad chest to great advantage, is a very well-known

character. He has fought a great many battles in his time, and conquered

like the heroes of old, with no other arms than those the gods gave him.

The old hard-featured man who is standing near him, is really a good

specimen of a class of men, now nearly extinct. He is a county Member,

and has been from time whereof the memory of man is not to the contrary.

Look at his loose, wide, brown coat, with capacious pockets on each side;

the knee-breeches and boots, the immensely long waistcoat, and silver

watch-chain dangling below it, the wide-brimmed brown hat, and the white

handkerchief tied in a great bow, with straggling ends sticking out

beyond his shirt-frill. It is a costume one seldom sees nowadays, and

when the few who wear it have died off, it will be quite extinct. He can

tell you long stories of Fox, Pitt, Sheridan, and Canning, and how much

better the House was managed in those times, when they used to get up at

eight or nine oâclock, except on regular field-days, of which everybody

was apprised beforehand. He has a great contempt for all young Members

of Parliament, and thinks it quite impossible that a man can say anything

worth hearing, unless he has sat in the House for fifteen years at least,

without saying anything at all. He is of opinion that âthat young

Macaulayâ was a regular impostor; he allows, that Lord Stanley may do

something one of these days, but âheâs too young, sirâtoo young.â He is

an excellent authority on points of precedent, and when he grows

talkative, after his wine, will tell you how Sir Somebody Something, when

he was whipper-in for the Government, brought four men out of their beds

to vote in the majority, three of whom died on their way home again; how

the House once divided on the question, that fresh candles be now brought

in; how the Speaker was once upon a time left in the chair by accident,

at the conclusion of business, and was obliged to sit in the House by

himself for three hours, till some Member could be knocked up and brought

back again, to move the adjournment; and a great many other anecdotes of

a similar description.

There he stands, leaning on his stick; looking at the throng of

Exquisites around him with most profound contempt; and conjuring up,

before his mindâs eye, the scenes he beheld in the old House, in days

gone by, when his own feelings were fresher and brighter, and when, as he

imagines, wit, talent, and patriotism flourished more brightly too.

You are curious to know who that young man in the rough great-coat is,

who has accosted every Member who has entered the House since we have

been standing here. He is not a Member; he is only an âhereditary

bondsman,â or, in other words, an Irish correspondent of an Irish

newspaper, who has just procured his forty-second frank from a Member

whom he never saw in his life before. There he goes againâanother!

Bless the man, he has his hat and pockets full already.

We will try our fortune at the Strangersâ gallery, though the nature of

the debate encourages very little hope of success. What on earth are you

about? Holding up your order as if it were a talisman at whose command

the wicket would fly open? Nonsense. Just preserve the order for an

autograph, if it be worth keeping at all, and make your appearance at the

door with your thumb and forefinger expressively inserted in your

waistcoat-pocket. This tall stout man in black is the door-keeper. âAny

room?â âNot an inchâtwo or three dozen gentlemen waiting down-stairs on

the chance of somebodyâs going out.â Pull out your purseââAre you

\_quite\_ sure thereâs no room?âââIâll go and look,â replies the

door-keeper, with a wistful glance at your purse, âbut Iâm afraid thereâs

not.â He returns, and with real feeling assures you that it is morally

impossible to get near the gallery. It is of no use waiting. When you

are refused admission into the Strangersâ gallery at the House of

Commons, under such circumstances, you may return home thoroughly

satisfied that the place must be remarkably full indeed. {122}

Retracing our steps through the long passage, descending the stairs, and

crossing Palace-yard, we halt at a small temporary doorway adjoining the

Kingâs entrance to the House of Lords. The order of the serjeant-at-arms

will admit you into the Reportersâ gallery, from whence you can obtain a

tolerably good view of the House. Take care of the stairs, they are none

of the best; through this little wicketâthere. As soon as your eyes

become a little used to the mist of the place, and the glare of the

chandeliers below you, you will see that some unimportant personage on

the Ministerial side of the House (to your right hand) is speaking,

amidst a hum of voices and confusion which would rival Babel, but for the

circumstance of its being all in one language.

The âhear, hear,â which occasioned that laugh, proceeded from our warlike

friend with the moustache; he is sitting on the back seat against the

wall, behind the Member who is speaking, looking as ferocious and

intellectual as usual. Take one look around you, and retire! The body

of the House and the side galleries are full of Members; some, with their

legs on the back of the opposite seat; some, with theirs stretched out to

their utmost length on the floor; some going out, others coming in; all

talking, laughing, lounging, coughing, oh-ing, questioning, or groaning;

presenting a conglomeration of noise and confusion, to be met with in no

other place in existence, not even excepting Smithfield on a market-day,

or a cock-pit in its glory.

But let us not omit to notice Bellamyâs kitchen, or, in other words, the

refreshment-room, common to both Houses of Parliament, where

Ministerialists and Oppositionists, Whigs and Tories, Radicals, Peers,

and Destructives, strangers from the gallery, and the more favoured

strangers from below the bar, are alike at liberty to resort; where

divers honourable members prove their perfect independence by remaining

during the whole of a heavy debate, solacing themselves with the creature

comforts; and whence they are summoned by whippers-in, when the House is

on the point of dividing; either to give their âconscientious votesâ on

questions of which they are conscientiously innocent of knowing anything

whatever, or to find a vent for the playful exuberance of their

wine-inspired fancies, in boisterous shouts of âDivide,â occasionally

varied with a little howling, barking, crowing, or other ebullitions of

senatorial pleasantry.

When you have ascended the narrow staircase which, in the present

temporary House of Commons, leads to the place we are describing, you

will probably observe a couple of rooms on your right hand, with tables

spread for dining. Neither of these is the kitchen, although they are

both devoted to the same purpose; the kitchen is further on to our left,

up these half-dozen stairs. Before we ascend the staircase, however, we

must request you to pause in front of this little bar-place with the

sash-windows; and beg your particular attention to the steady,

honest-looking old fellow in black, who is its sole occupant. Nicholas

(we do not mind mentioning the old fellowâs name, for if Nicholas be not

a public man, who is?âand public menâs names are public

property)âNicholas is the butler of Bellamyâs, and has held the same

place, dressed exactly in the same manner, and said precisely the same

things, ever since the oldest of its present visitors can remember. An

excellent servant Nicholas isâan unrivalled compounder of

salad-dressingâan admirable preparer of soda-water and lemonâa special

mixer of cold grog and punchâand, above all, an unequalled judge of

cheese. If the old man have such a thing as vanity in his composition,

this is certainly his pride; and if it be possible to imagine that

anything in this world could disturb his impenetrable calmness, we should

say it would be the doubting his judgment on this important point.

We neednât tell you all this, however, for if you have an atom of

observation, one glance at his sleek, knowing-looking head and faceâhis

prim white neckerchief, with the wooden tie into which it has been

regularly folded for twenty years past, merging by imperceptible degrees

into a small-plaited shirt-frillâand his comfortable-looking form encased

in a well-brushed suit of blackâwould give you a better idea of his real

character than a column of our poor description could convey.

Nicholas is rather out of his element now; he cannot see the kitchen as

he used to in the old House; there, one window of his glass-case opened

into the room, and then, for the edification and behoof of more juvenile

questioners, he would stand for an hour together, answering deferential

questions about Sheridan, and Percival, and Castlereagh, and Heaven knows

who beside, with manifest delight, always inserting a âMisterâ before

every commonerâs name.

Nicholas, like all men of his age and standing, has a great idea of the

degeneracy of the times. He seldom expresses any political opinions, but

we managed to ascertain, just before the passing of the Reform Bill, that

Nicholas was a thorough Reformer. What was our astonishment to discover

shortly after the meeting of the first reformed Parliament, that he was a

most inveterate and decided Tory! It was very odd: some men change their

opinions from necessity, others from expediency, others from inspiration;

but that Nicholas should undergo any change in any respect, was an event

we had never contemplated, and should have considered impossible. His

strong opinion against the clause which empowered the metropolitan

districts to return Members to Parliament, too, was perfectly

unaccountable.

We discovered the secret at last; the metropolitan Members always dined

at home. The rascals! As for giving additional Members to Ireland, it

was even worseâdecidedly unconstitutional. Why, sir, an Irish Member

would go up there, and eat more dinner than three English Members put

together. He took no wine; drank table-beer by the half-gallon; and went

home to Manchester-buildings, or Millbank-street, for his

whiskey-and-water. And what was the consequence? Why, the concern

lostâactually lost, sirâby his patronage. A queer old fellow is

Nicholas, and as completely a part of the building as the house itself.

We wonder he ever left the old place, and fully expected to see in the

papers, the morning after the fire, a pathetic account of an old

gentleman in black, of decent appearance, who was seen at one of the

upper windows when the flames were at their height, and declared his

resolute intention of falling with the floor. He must have been got out

by force. However, he was got outâhere he is again, looking as he always

does, as if he had been in a bandbox ever since the last session. There

he is, at his old post every night, just as we have described him: and,

as characters are scarce, and faithful servants scarcer, long may he be

there, say we!

Now, when you have taken your seat in the kitchen, and duly noticed the

large fire and roasting-jack at one end of the roomâthe little table for

washing glasses and draining jugs at the otherâthe clock over the window

opposite St. Margaretâs Churchâthe deal tables and wax candlesâthe damask

table-cloths and bare floorâthe plate and china on the tables, and the

gridiron on the fire; and a few other anomalies peculiar to the placeâwe

will point out to your notice two or three of the people present, whose

station or absurdities render them the most worthy of remark.

It is half-past twelve oâclock, and as the division is not expected for

an hour or two, a few Members are lounging away the time here in

preference to standing at the bar of the House, or sleeping in one of the

side galleries. That singularly awkward and ungainly-looking man, in the

brownish-white hat, with the straggling black trousers which reach about

half-way down the leg of his boots, who is leaning against the

meat-screen, apparently deluding himself into the belief that he is

thinking about something, is a splendid sample of a Member of the House

of Commons concentrating in his own person the wisdom of a constituency.

Observe the wig, of a dark hue but indescribable colour, for if it be

naturally brown, it has acquired a black tint by long service, and if it

be naturally black, the same cause has imparted to it a tinge of rusty

brown; and remark how very materially the great blinker-like spectacles

assist the expression of that most intelligent face. Seriously speaking,

did you ever see a countenance so expressive of the most hopeless extreme

of heavy dulness, or behold a form so strangely put together? He is no

great speaker: but when he \_does\_ address the House, the effect is

absolutely irresistible.

The small gentleman with the sharp nose, who has just saluted him, is a

Member of Parliament, an ex-Alderman, and a sort of amateur fireman. He,

and the celebrated firemanâs dog, were observed to be remarkably active

at the conflagration of the two Houses of Parliamentâthey both ran up and

down, and in and out, getting under peopleâs feet, and into everybodyâs

way, fully impressed with the belief that they were doing a great deal of

good, and barking tremendously. The dog went quietly back to his kennel

with the engine, but the gentleman kept up such an incessant noise for

some weeks after the occurrence, that he became a positive nuisance. As

no more parliamentary fires have occurred, however, and as he has

consequently had no more opportunities of writing to the newspapers to

relate how, by way of preserving pictures he cut them out of their

frames, and performed other great national services, he has gradually

relapsed into his old state of calmness.

That female in blackânot the one whom the Lordâs-Day-Bill Baronet has

just chucked under the chin; the shorter of the twoâis âJane:â the Hebe

of Bellamyâs. Jane is as great a character as Nicholas, in her way. Her

leading features are a thorough contempt for the great majority of her

visitors; her predominant quality, love of admiration, as you cannot fail

to observe, if you mark the glee with which she listens to something the

young Member near her mutters somewhat unintelligibly in her ear (for his

speech is rather thick from some cause or other), and how playfully she

digs the handle of a fork into the arm with which he detains her, by way

of reply.

Jane is no bad hand at repartees, and showers them about, with a degree

of liberality and total absence of reserve or constraint, which

occasionally excites no small amazement in the minds of strangers. She

cuts jokes with Nicholas, too, but looks up to him with a great deal of

respectâthe immovable stolidity with which Nicholas receives the

aforesaid jokes, and looks on, at certain pastoral friskings and rompings

(Janeâs only recreations, and they are very innocent too) which

occasionally take place in the passage, is not the least amusing part of

his character.

The two persons who are seated at the table in the corner, at the farther

end of the room, have been constant guests here, for many years past; and

one of them has feasted within these walls, many a time, with the most

brilliant characters of a brilliant period. He has gone up to the other

House since then; the greater part of his boon companions have shared

Yorickâs fate, and his visits to Bellamyâs are comparatively few.

If he really be eating his supper now, at what hour can he possibly have

dined! A second solid mass of rump-steak has disappeared, and he eat the

first in four minutes and three quarters, by the clock over the window.

Was there ever such a personification of Falstaff! Mark the air with

which he gloats over that Stilton, as he removes the napkin which has

been placed beneath his chin to catch the superfluous gravy of the steak,

and with what gusto he imbibes the porter which has been fetched,

expressly for him, in the pewter pot. Listen to the hoarse sound of that

voice, kept down as it is by layers of solids, and deep draughts of rich

wine, and tell us if you ever saw such a perfect picture of a regular

\_gourmand\_; and whether he is not exactly the man whom you would pitch

upon as having been the partner of Sheridanâs parliamentary carouses, the

volunteer driver of the hackney-coach that took him home, and the

involuntary upsetter of the whole party?

What an amusing contrast between his voice and appearance, and that of

the spare, squeaking old man, who sits at the same table, and who,

elevating a little cracked bantam sort of voice to its highest pitch,

invokes damnation upon his own eyes or somebody elseâs at the

commencement of every sentence he utters. âThe Captain,â as they call

him, is a very old frequenter of Bellamyâs; much addicted to stopping

âafter the House is upâ (an inexpiable crime in Janeâs eyes), and a

complete walking reservoir of spirits and water.

The old Peerâor rather, the old manâfor his peerage is of comparatively

recent dateâhas a huge tumbler of hot punch brought him; and the other

damns and drinks, and drinks and damns, and smokes. Members arrive every

moment in a great bustle to report that âThe Chancellor of the

Exchequerâs up,â and to get glasses of brandy-and-water to sustain them

during the division; people who have ordered supper, countermand it, and

prepare to go down-stairs, when suddenly a bell is heard to ring with

tremendous violence, and a cry of âDi-vi-sion!â is heard in the passage.

This is enough; away rush the members pell-mell. The room is cleared in

an instant; the noise rapidly dies away; you hear the creaking of the

last boot on the last stair, and are left alone with the leviathan of

rump-steaks.

CHAPTER XIXâPUBLIC DINNERS

All public dinners in London, from the Lord Mayorâs annual banquet at

Guildhall, to the Chimney-sweepersâ anniversary at White Conduit House;

from the Goldsmithsâ to the Butchersâ, from the Sheriffsâ to the Licensed

Victuallersâ; are amusing scenes. Of all entertainments of this

description, however, we think the annual dinner of some public charity

is the most amusing. At a Companyâs dinner, the people are nearly all

alikeâregular old stagers, who make it a matter of business, and a thing

not to be laughed at. At a political dinner, everybody is disagreeable,

and inclined to speechifyâmuch the same thing, by-the-bye; but at a

charity dinner you see people of all sorts, kinds, and descriptions. The

wine may not be remarkably special, to be sure, and we have heard some

hardhearted monsters grumble at the collection; but we really think the

amusement to be derived from the occasion, sufficient to counterbalance

even these disadvantages.

Let us suppose you are induced to attend a dinner of this

descriptionââIndigent Orphansâ Friendsâ Benevolent Institution,â we think

it is. The name of the charity is a line or two longer, but never mind

the rest. You have a distinct recollection, however, that you purchased

a ticket at the solicitation of some charitable friend: and you deposit

yourself in a hackney-coach, the driver of whichâno doubt that you may do

the thing in styleâturns a deaf ear to your earnest entreaties to be set

down at the corner of Great Queen-street, and persists in carrying you to

the very door of the Freemasonsâ, round which a crowd of people are

assembled to witness the entrance of the indigent orphansâ friends. You

hear great speculations as you pay the fare, on the possibility of your

being the noble Lord who is announced to fill the chair on the occasion,

and are highly gratified to hear it eventually decided that you are only

a âwocalist.â

The first thing that strikes you, on your entrance, is the astonishing

importance of the committee. You observe a door on the first landing,

carefully guarded by two waiters, in and out of which stout gentlemen

with very red faces keep running, with a degree of speed highly

unbecoming the gravity of persons of their years and corpulency. You

pause, quite alarmed at the bustle, and thinking, in your innocence, that

two or three people must have been carried out of the dining-room in

fits, at least. You are immediately undeceived by the waiterââUp-stairs,

if you please, sir; this is the committee-room.â Up-stairs you go,

accordingly; wondering, as you mount, what the duties of the committee

can be, and whether they ever do anything beyond confusing each other,

and running over the waiters.

Having deposited your hat and cloak, and received a remarkably small

scrap of pasteboard in exchange (which, as a matter of course, you lose,

before you require it again), you enter the hall, down which there are

three long tables for the less distinguished guests, with a cross table

on a raised platform at the upper end for the reception of the very

particular friends of the indigent orphans. Being fortunate enough to

find a plate without anybodyâs card in it, you wisely seat yourself at

once, and have a little leisure to look about you. Waiters, with

wine-baskets in their hands, are placing decanters of sherry down the

tables, at very respectable distances; melancholy-looking salt-cellars,

and decayed vinegar-cruets, which might have belonged to the parents of

the indigent orphans in their time, are scattered at distant intervals on

the cloth; and the knives and forks look as if they had done duty at

every public dinner in London since the accession of George the First.

The musicians are scraping and grating and screwing tremendouslyâplaying

no notes but notes of preparation; and several gentlemen are gliding

along the sides of the tables, looking into plate after plate with

frantic eagerness, the expression of their countenances growing more and

more dismal as they meet with everybodyâs card but their own.

You turn round to take a look at the table behind you, andânot being in

the habit of attending public dinnersâare somewhat struck by the

appearance of the party on which your eyes rest. One of its principal

members appears to be a little man, with a long and rather inflamed face,

and gray hair brushed bolt upright in front; he wears a wisp of black

silk round his neck, without any stiffener, as an apology for a

neckerchief, and is addressed by his companions by the familiar

appellation of âFitz,â or some such monosyllable. Near him is a stout

man in a white neckerchief and buff waistcoat, with shining dark hair,

cut very short in front, and a great, round, healthy-looking face, on

which he studiously preserves a half sentimental simper. Next him,

again, is a large-headed man, with black hair and bushy whiskers; and

opposite them are two or three others, one of whom is a little

round-faced person, in a dress-stock and blue under-waistcoat. There is

something peculiar in their air and manner, though you could hardly

describe what it is; you cannot divest yourself of the idea that they

have come for some other purpose than mere eating and drinking. You have

no time to debate the matter, however, for the waiters (who have been

arranged in lines down the room, placing the dishes on table) retire to

the lower end; the dark man in the blue coat and bright buttons, who has

the direction of the music, looks up to the gallery, and calls out âbandâ

in a very loud voice; out burst the orchestra, up rise the visitors, in

march fourteen stewards, each with a long wand in his hand, like the evil

genius in a pantomime; then the chairman, then the titled visitors; they

all make their way up the room, as fast as they can, bowing, and smiling,

and smirking, and looking remarkably amiable. The applause ceases, grace

is said, the clatter of plates and dishes begins; and every one appears

highly gratified, either with the presence of the distinguished visitors,

or the commencement of the anxiously-expected dinner.

As to the dinner itselfâthe mere dinnerâit goes off much the same

everywhere. Tureens of soup are emptied with awful rapidityâwaiters take

plates of turbot away, to get lobster-sauce, and bring back plates of

lobster-sauce without turbot; people who can carve poultry, are great

fools if they own it, and people who canât have no wish to learn. The

knives and forks form a pleasing accompaniment to Auberâs music, and

Auberâs music would form a pleasing accompaniment to the dinner, if you

could hear anything besides the cymbals. The substantials

disappearâmoulds of jelly vanish like lightningâhearty eaters wipe their

foreheads, and appear rather overcome by their recent exertionsâpeople

who have looked very cross hitherto, become remarkably bland, and ask you

to take wine in the most friendly manner possibleâold gentlemen direct

your attention to the ladiesâ gallery, and take great pains to impress

you with the fact that the charity is always peculiarly favoured in this

respectâevery one appears disposed to become talkativeâand the hum of

conversation is loud and general.

âPray, silence, gentlemen, if you please, for \_Non nobis\_!â shouts the

toast-master with stentorian lungsâa toast-masterâs shirt-front,

waistcoat, and neckerchief, by-the-bye, always exhibit three distinct

shades of cloudy-white.ââPray, silence, gentlemen, for \_Non nobis\_!â The

singers, whom you discover to be no other than the very party that

excited your curiosity at first, after âpitchingâ their voices

immediately begin \_too-too\_ing most dismally, on which the regular old

stagers burst into occasional cries ofââShâShâwaiters!âSilence,

waitersâstand still, waitersâkeep back, waiters,â and other exorcisms,

delivered in a tone of indignant remonstrance. The grace is soon

concluded, and the company resume their seats. The uninitiated portion

of the guests applaud \_Non nobis\_ as vehemently as if it were a capital

comic song, greatly to the scandal and indignation of the regular diners,

who immediately attempt to quell this sacrilegious approbation, by cries

of âHush, hush!â whereupon the others, mistaking these sounds for hisses,

applaud more tumultuously than before, and, by way of placing their

approval beyond the possibility of doubt, shout â\_Encore\_!â most

vociferously.

The moment the noise ceases, up starts the toast-master:ââGentlemen,

charge your glasses, if you please!â Decanters having been handed about,

and glasses filled, the toast-master proceeds, in a regular ascending

scale:ââGentlemenâ\_air\_âyouâall charged? Prayâsilenceâgentlemenâforâthe

cha-i-r!â The chairman rises, and, after stating that he feels it quite

unnecessary to preface the toast he is about to propose, with any

observations whatever, wanders into a maze of sentences, and flounders

about in the most extraordinary manner, presenting a lamentable spectacle

of mystified humanity, until he arrives at the words, âconstitutional

sovereign of these realms,â at which elderly gentlemen exclaim âBravo!â

and hammer the table tremendously with their knife-handles. âUnder any

circumstances, it would give him the greatest pride, it would give him

the greatest pleasureâhe might almost say, it would afford him

satisfaction [cheers] to propose that toast. What must be his feelings,

then, when he has the gratification of announcing, that he has received

her Majestyâs commands to apply to the Treasurer of her Majestyâs

Household, for her Majestyâs annual donation of 25\_l.\_ in aid of the

funds of this charity!â This announcement (which has been regularly made

by every chairman, since the first foundation of the charity, forty-two

years ago) calls forth the most vociferous applause; the toast is drunk

with a great deal of cheering and knocking; and âGod save the Queenâ is

sung by the âprofessional gentlemen;â the unprofessional gentlemen

joining in the chorus, and giving the national anthem an effect which the

newspapers, with great justice, describe as âperfectly electrical.â

The other âloyal and patrioticâ toasts having been drunk with all due

enthusiasm, a comic song having been well sung by the gentleman with the

small neckerchief, and a sentimental one by the second of the party, we

come to the most important toast of the eveningââProsperity to the

charity.â Here again we are compelled to adopt newspaper phraseology,

and to express our regret at being âprecluded from giving even the

substance of the noble lordâs observations.â Suffice it to say, that the

speech, which is somewhat of the longest, is rapturously received; and

the toast having been drunk, the stewards (looking more important than

ever) leave the room, and presently return, heading a procession of

indigent orphans, boys and girls, who walk round the room, curtseying,

and bowing, and treading on each otherâs heels, and looking very much as

if they would like a glass of wine apiece, to the high gratification of

the company generally, and especially of the lady patronesses in the

gallery. \_Exeunt\_ children, and re-enter stewards, each with a blue

plate in his hand. The band plays a lively air; the majority of the

company put their hands in their pockets and look rather serious; and the

noise of sovereigns, rattling on crockery, is heard from all parts of the

room.

After a short interval, occupied in singing and toasting, the secretary

puts on his spectacles, and proceeds to read the report and list of

subscriptions, the latter being listened to with great attention. âMr.

Smith, one guineaâMr. Tompkins, one guineaâMr. Wilson, one guineaâMr.

Hickson, one guineaâMr. Nixon, one guineaâMr. Charles Nixon, one

guineaâ[hear, hear!]âMr. James Nixon, one guineaâMr. Thomas Nixon, one

pound one [tremendous applause]. Lord Fitz Binkle, the chairman of the

day, in addition to an annual donation of fifteen poundsâthirty guineas

[prolonged knocking: several gentlemen knock the stems off their

wine-glasses, in the vehemence of their approbation]. Lady, Fitz Binkle,

in addition to an annual donation of ten poundâtwenty poundâ [protracted

knocking and shouts of âBravo!â] The list being at length concluded, the

chairman rises, and proposes the health of the secretary, than whom he

knows no more zealous or estimable individual. The secretary, in

returning thanks, observes that \_he\_ knows no more excellent individual

than the chairmanâexcept the senior officer of the charity, whose health

\_he\_ begs to propose. The senior officer, in returning thanks, observes

that \_he\_ knows no more worthy man than the secretaryâexcept Mr. Walker,

the auditor, whose health \_he\_ begs to propose. Mr. Walker, in returning

thanks, discovers some other estimable individual, to whom alone the

senior officer is inferiorâand so they go on toasting and lauding and

thanking: the only other toast of importance being âThe Lady Patronesses

now present!â on which all the gentlemen turn their faces towards the

ladiesâ gallery, shouting tremendously; and little priggish men, who have

imbibed more wine than usual, kiss their hands and exhibit distressing

contortions of visage.

We have protracted our dinner to so great a length, that we have hardly

time to add one word by way of grace. We can only entreat our readers

not to imagine, because we have attempted to extract some amusement from

a charity dinner, that we are at all disposed to underrate, either the

excellence of the benevolent institutions with which London abounds, or

the estimable motives of those who support them.

CHAPTER XXâTHE FIRST OF MAY

âNow ladies, up in the sky-parlour: only once a year, if you please!â

YOUNG LADY WITH BRASS LADLE.

âSweepâsweepâsw-e-ep!â

ILLEGAL WATCHWORD.

The first of May! There is a merry freshness in the sound, calling to

our minds a thousand thoughts of all that is pleasant in nature and

beautiful in her most delightful form. What man is there, over whose

mind a bright spring morning does not exercise a magic influenceâcarrying

him back to the days of his childish sports, and conjuring up before him

the old green field with its gently-waving trees, where the birds sang as

he has never heard them sinceâwhere the butterfly fluttered far more

gaily than he ever sees him now, in all his ramblingsâwhere the sky

seemed bluer, and the sun shone more brightlyâwhere the air blew more

freshly over greener grass, and sweeter-smelling flowersâwhere everything

wore a richer and more brilliant hue than it is ever dressed in now!

Such are the deep feelings of childhood, and such are the impressions

which every lovely object stamps upon its heart! The hardy traveller

wanders through the maze of thick and pathless woods, where the sunâs

rays never shone, and heavenâs pure air never played; he stands on the

brink of the roaring waterfall, and, giddy and bewildered, watches the

foaming mass as it leaps from stone to stone, and from crag to crag; he

lingers in the fertile plains of a land of perpetual sunshine, and revels

in the luxury of their balmy breath. But what are the deep forests, or

the thundering waters, or the richest landscapes that bounteous nature

ever spread, to charm the eyes, and captivate the senses of man, compared

with the recollection of the old scenes of his early youth? Magic scenes

indeed; for the fancies of childhood dressed them in colours brighter

than the rainbow, and almost as fleeting!

In former times, spring brought with it not only such associations as

these, connected with the past, but sports and games for the

presentâmerry dances round rustic pillars, adorned with emblems of the

season, and reared in honour of its coming. Where are they now! Pillars

we have, but they are no longer rustic ones; and as to dancers, they are

used to rooms, and lights, and would not show well in the open air.

Think of the immorality, too! What would your sabbath enthusiasts say,

to an aristocratic ring encircling the Duke of Yorkâs column in

Carlton-terraceâa grand \_poussette\_ of the middle classes, round Alderman

Waithmanâs monument in Fleet-street,âor a general hands-four-round of

ten-pound householders, at the foot of the Obelisk in St.

Georgeâs-fields? Alas! romance can make no head against the riot act;

and pastoral simplicity is not understood by the police.

Well; many years ago we began to be a steady and matter-of-fact sort of

people, and dancing in spring being beneath our dignity, we gave it up,

and in course of time it descended to the sweepsâa fall certainly,

because, though sweeps are very good fellows in their way, and moreover

very useful in a civilised community, they are not exactly the sort of

people to give the tone to the little elegances of society. The sweeps,

however, got the dancing to themselves, and they kept it up, and handed

it down. This was a severe blow to the romance of spring-time, but, it

did not entirely destroy it, either; for a portion of it descended to the

sweeps with the dancing, and rendered them objects of great interest. A

mystery hung over the sweeps in those days. Legends were in existence of

wealthy gentlemen who had lost children, and who, after many years of

sorrow and suffering, had found them in the character of sweeps. Stories

were related of a young boy who, having been stolen from his parents in

his infancy, and devoted to the occupation of chimney-sweeping, was sent,

in the course of his professional career, to sweep the chimney of his

motherâs bedroom; and how, being hot and tired when he came out of the

chimney, he got into the bed he had so often slept in as an infant, and

was discovered and recognised therein by his mother, who once every year

of her life, thereafter, requested the pleasure of the company of every

London sweep, at half-past one oâclock, to roast beef, plum-pudding,

porter, and sixpence.

Such stories as these, and there were many such, threw an air of mystery

round the sweeps, and produced for them some of those good effects which

animals derive from the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. No one

(except the masters) thought of ill-treating a sweep, because no one knew

who he might be, or what noblemanâs or gentlemanâs son he might turn out.

Chimney-sweeping was, by many believers in the marvellous, considered as

a sort of probationary term, at an earlier or later period of which,

divers young noblemen were to come into possession of their rank and

titles: and the profession was held by them in great respect accordingly.

We remember, in our young days, a little sweep about our own age, with

curly hair and white teeth, whom we devoutly and sincerely believed to be

the lost son and heir of some illustrious personageâan impression which

was resolved into an unchangeable conviction on our infant mind, by the

subject of our speculations informing us, one day, in reply to our

question, propounded a few moments before his ascent to the summit of the

kitchen chimney, âthat he believed heâd been born in the vurkis, but heâd

never knowâd his father.â We felt certain, from that time forth, that he

would one day be owned by a lord: and we never heard the church-bells

ring, or saw a flag hoisted in the neighbourhood, without thinking that

the happy event had at last occurred, and that his long-lost parent had

arrived in a coach and six, to take him home to Grosvenor-square. He

never came, however; and, at the present moment, the young gentleman in

question is settled down as a master sweep in the neighbourhood of

Battle-bridge, his distinguishing characteristics being a decided

antipathy to washing himself, and the possession of a pair of legs very

inadequate to the support of his unwieldy and corpulent body.

The romance of spring having gone out before our time, we were fain to

console ourselves as we best could with the uncertainty that enveloped

the birth and parentage of its attendant dancers, the sweeps; and we

\_did\_ console ourselves with it, for many years. But, even this wicked

source of comfort received a shock from which it has never recoveredâa

shock which has been in reality its death-blow. We could not disguise

from ourselves the fact that whole families of sweeps were regularly born

of sweeps, in the rural districts of Somers Town and Camden Townâthat the

eldest son succeeded to the fatherâs business, that the other branches

assisted him therein, and commenced on their own account; that their

children again, were educated to the profession; and that about their

identity there could be no mistake whatever. We could not be blind, we

say, to this melancholy truth, but we could not bring ourselves to admit

it, nevertheless, and we lived on for some years in a state of voluntary

ignorance. We were roused from our pleasant slumber by certain dark

insinuations thrown out by a friend of ours, to the effect that children

in the lower ranks of life were beginning to \_choose\_ chimney-sweeping as

their particular walk; that applications had been made by various boys to

the constituted authorities, to allow them to pursue the object of their

ambition with the full concurrence and sanction of the law; that the

affair, in short, was becoming one of mere legal contract. We turned a

deaf ear to these rumours at first, but slowly and surely they stole upon

us. Month after month, week after week, nay, day after day, at last, did

we meet with accounts of similar applications. The veil was removed, all

mystery was at an end, and chimney-sweeping had become a favourite and

chosen pursuit. There is no longer any occasion to steal boys; for boys

flock in crowds to bind themselves. The romance of the trade has fled,

and the chimney-sweeper of the present day, is no more like unto him of

thirty years ago, than is a Fleet-street pickpocket to a Spanish brigand,

or Paul Pry to Caleb Williams.

This gradual decay and disuse of the practice of leading noble youths

into captivity, and compelling them to ascend chimneys, was a severe

blow, if we may so speak, to the romance of chimney-sweeping, and to the

romance of spring at the same time. But even this was not all, for some

few years ago the dancing on May-day began to decline; small sweeps were

observed to congregate in twos or threes, unsupported by a âgreen,â with

no âMy Lordâ to act as master of the ceremonies, and no âMy Ladyâ to

preside over the exchequer. Even in companies where there was a âgreenâ

it was an absolute nothingâa mere sproutâand the instrumental

accompaniments rarely extended beyond the shovels and a set of Panpipes,

better known to the many, as a âmouth-organ.â

These were signs of the times, portentous omens of a coming change; and

what was the result which they shadowed forth? Why, the master sweeps,

influenced by a restless spirit of innovation, actually interposed their

authority, in opposition to the dancing, and substituted a dinnerâan

anniversary dinner at White Conduit Houseâwhere clean faces appeared in

lieu of black ones smeared with rose pink; and knee cords and tops

superseded nankeen drawers and rosetted shoes.

Gentlemen who were in the habit of riding shy horses; and steady-going

people who have no vagrancy in their souls, lauded this alteration to the

skies, and the conduct of the master sweeps was described beyond the

reach of praise. But how stands the real fact? Let any man deny, if he

can, that when the cloth had been removed, fresh pots and pipes laid upon

the table, and the customary loyal and patriotic toasts proposed, the

celebrated Mr. Sluffen, of Adam-and-Eve-court, whose authority not the

most malignant of our opponents can call in question, expressed himself

in a manner following: âThat now heâd cotcht the cheermanâs hi, he vished

he might be jolly vell blessed, if he wornât a goinâ to have his innings,

vich he vould say these here obserwashunsâthat how some mischeevus coves

as knowâd nuffin about the consarn, had tried to sit people agin the

masâr swips, and take the shine out oâ their bisânes, and the bread out

oâ the traps oâ their preshus kids, by a makinâ oâ this here remark, as

chimblies could be as vell svept by âsheenery as by boys; and that the

makinâ use oâ boys for that there purpuss vos barbareous; vereas, he âad

been a chummyâhe begged the cheermanâs parding for usinâ such a wulgar

hexpressionâmore nor thirty yearâhe might say heâd been born in a

chimbleyâand he knowâd uncommon vell as âsheenery vos vus nor oâ no use:

and as to kerhewelty to the boys, everybody in the chimbley line knowâd

as vell as he did, that they liked the climbinâ better nor nuffin as

vos.â From this day, we date the total fall of the last lingering

remnant of May-day dancing, among the \_Ã©lite\_ of the profession: and from

this period we commence a new era in that portion of our spring

associations which relates to the first of May.

We are aware that the unthinking part of the population will meet us

here, with the assertion, that dancing on May-day still continuesâthat

âgreensâ are annually seen to roll along the streetsâthat youths in the

garb of clowns, precede them, giving vent to the ebullitions of their

sportive fancies; and that lords and ladies follow in their wake.

Granted. We are ready to acknowledge that in outward show, these

processions have greatly improved: we do not deny the introduction of

solos on the drum; we will even go so far as to admit an occasional

fantasia on the triangle, but here our admissions end. We positively

deny that the sweeps have art or part in these proceedings. We

distinctly charge the dustmen with throwing what they ought to clear

away, into the eyes of the public. We accuse scavengers, brickmakers,

and gentlemen who devote their energies to the costermongering line, with

obtaining money once a-year, under false pretences. We cling with

peculiar fondness to the custom of days gone by, and have shut out

conviction as long as we could, but it has forced itself upon us; and we

now proclaim to a deluded public, that the May-day dancers are \_not\_

sweeps. The size of them, alone, is sufficient to repudiate the idea.

It is a notorious fact that the widely-spread taste for register-stoves

has materially increased the demand for small boys; whereas the men, who,

under a fictitious character, dance about the streets on the first of May

nowadays, would be a tight fit in a kitchen flue, to say nothing of the

parlour. This is strong presumptive evidence, but we have positive

proofâthe evidence of our own senses. And here is our testimony.

Upon the morning of the second of the merry month of May, in the year of

our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty-six, we went out for a

stroll, with a kind of forlorn hope of seeing something or other which

might induce us to believe that it was really spring, and not Christmas.

After wandering as far as Copenhagen House, without meeting anything

calculated to dispel our impression that there was a mistake in the

almanacks, we turned back down Maidenlane, with the intention of passing

through the extensive colony lying between it and Battle-bridge, which is

inhabited by proprietors of donkey-carts, boilers of horse-flesh, makers

of tiles, and sifters of cinders; through which colony we should have

passed, without stoppage or interruption, if a little crowd gathered

round a shed had not attracted our attention, and induced us to pause.

When we say a âshed,â we do not mean the conservatory sort of building,

which, according to the old song, Love tenanted when he was a young man,

but a wooden house with windows stuffed with rags and paper, and a small

yard at the side, with one dust-cart, two baskets, a few shovels, and

little heaps of cinders, and fragments of china and tiles, scattered

about it. Before this inviting spot we paused; and the longer we looked,

the more we wondered what exciting circumstance it could be, that induced

the foremost members of the crowd to flatten their noses against the

parlour window, in the vain hope of catching a glimpse of what was going

on inside. After staring vacantly about us for some minutes, we

appealed, touching the cause of this assemblage, to a gentleman in a suit

of tarpaulin, who was smoking his pipe on our right hand; but as the only

answer we obtained was a playful inquiry whether our mother had disposed

of her mangle, we determined to await the issue in silence.

Judge of our virtuous indignation, when the street-door of the shed

opened, and a party emerged therefrom, clad in the costume and emulating

the appearance, of May-day sweeps!

The first person who appeared was âmy lord,â habited in a blue coat and

bright buttons, with gilt paper tacked over the seams, yellow

knee-breeches, pink cotton stockings, and shoes; a cocked hat, ornamented

with shreds of various-coloured paper, on his head, a \_bouquet\_ the size

of a prize cauliflower in his button-hole, a long Belcher handkerchief in

his right hand, and a thin cane in his left. A murmur of applause ran

through the crowd (which was chiefly composed of his lordshipâs personal

friends), when this graceful figure made his appearance, which swelled

into a burst of applause as his fair partner in the dance bounded forth

to join him. Her ladyship was attired in pink crape over bed-furniture,

with a low body and short sleeves. The symmetry of her ankles was

partially concealed by a very perceptible pair of frilled trousers; and

the inconvenience which might have resulted from the circumstance of her

white satin shoes being a few sizes too large, was obviated by their

being firmly attached to her legs with strong tape sandals.

Her head was ornamented with a profusion of artificial flowers; and in

her hand she bore a large brass ladle, wherein to receive what she

figuratively denominated âthe tin.â The other characters were a young

gentleman in girlâs clothes and a widowâs cap; two clowns who walked upon

their hands in the mud, to the immeasurable delight of all the

spectators; a man with a drum; another man with a flageolet; a dirty

woman in a large shawl, with a box under her arm for the money,âand last,

though not least, the âgreen,â animated by no less a personage than our

identical friend in the tarpaulin suit.

The man hammered away at the drum, the flageolet squeaked, the shovels

rattled, the âgreenâ rolled about, pitching first on one side and then on

the other; my lady threw her right foot over her left ankle, and her left

foot over her right ankle, alternately; my lord ran a few paces forward,

and butted at the âgreen,â and then a few paces backward upon the toes of

the crowd, and then went to the right, and then to the left, and then

dodged my lady round the âgreen;â and finally drew her arm through his,

and called upon the boys to shout, which they did lustilyâfor this was

the dancing.

We passed the same group, accidentally, in the evening. We never saw a

âgreenâ so drunk, a lord so quarrelsome (no: not even in the house of

peers after dinner), a pair of clowns so melancholy, a lady so muddy, or

a party so miserable.

How has May-day decayed!

CHAPTER XXIâBROKERSâ AND MARINE-STORE SHOPS

When we affirm that brokersâ shops are strange places, and that if an

authentic history of their contents could be procured, it would furnish

many a page of amusement, and many a melancholy tale, it is necessary to

explain the class of shops to which we allude. Perhaps when we make use

of the term âBrokersâ Shop,â the minds of our readers will at once

picture large, handsome warehouses, exhibiting a long perspective of

French-polished dining-tables, rosewood chiffoniers, and mahogany

wash-hand-stands, with an occasional vista of a four-post bedstead and

hangings, and an appropriate foreground of dining-room chairs. Perhaps

they will imagine that we mean an humble class of second-hand furniture

repositories. Their imagination will then naturally lead them to that

street at the back of Long-acre, which is composed almost entirely of

brokersâ shops; where you walk through groves of deceitful, showy-looking

furniture, and where the prospect is occasionally enlivened by a bright

red, blue, and yellow hearth-rug, embellished with the pleasing device of

a mail-coach at full speed, or a strange animal, supposed to have been

originally intended for a dog, with a mass of worsted-work in his mouth,

which conjecture has likened to a basket of flowers.

This, by-the-bye, is a tempting article to young wives in the humbler

ranks of life, who have a first-floor front to furnishâthey are lost in

admiration, and hardly know which to admire most. The dog is very

beautiful, but they have a dog already on the best tea-tray, and two more

on the mantel-piece. Then, there is something so genteel about that

mail-coach; and the passengers outside (who are all hat) give it such an

air of reality!

The goods here are adapted to the taste, or rather to the means, of cheap

purchasers. There are some of the most beautiful \_looking\_ Pembroke

tables that were ever beheld: the wood as green as the trees in the Park,

and the leaves almost as certain to fall off in the course of a year.

There is also a most extensive assortment of tent and turn-up bedsteads,

made of stained wood, and innumerable specimens of that base imposition

on societyâa sofa bedstead.

A turn-up bedstead is a blunt, honest piece of furniture; it may be

slightly disguised with a sham drawer; and sometimes a mad attempt is

even made to pass it off for a book-case; ornament it as you will,

however, the turn-up bedstead seems to defy disguise, and to insist on

having it distinctly understood that he is a turn-up bedstead, and

nothing elseâthat he is indispensably necessary, and that being so

useful, he disdains to be ornamental.

How different is the demeanour of a sofa bedstead! Ashamed of its real

use, it strives to appear an article of luxury and gentilityâan attempt

in which it miserably fails. It has neither the respectability of a

sofa, nor the virtues of a bed; every man who keeps a sofa bedstead in

his house, becomes a party to a wilful and designing fraudâwe question

whether you could insult him more, than by insinuating that you entertain

the least suspicion of its real use.

To return from this digression, we beg to say, that neither of these

classes of brokersâ shops, forms the subject of this sketch. The shops

to which we advert, are immeasurably inferior to those on whose outward

appearance we have slightly touched. Our readers must often have

observed in some by-street, in a poor neighbourhood, a small dirty shop,

exposing for sale the most extraordinary and confused jumble of old,

worn-out, wretched articles, that can well be imagined. Our wonder at

their ever having been bought, is only to be equalled by our astonishment

at the idea of their ever being sold again. On a board, at the side of

the door, are placed about twenty booksâall odd volumes; and as many

wine-glassesâall different patterns; several locks, an old earthenware

pan, full of rusty keys; two or three gaudy chimney-ornamentsâcracked, of

course; the remains of a lustre, without any drops; a round frame like a

capital O, which has once held a mirror; a flute, complete with the

exception of the middle joint; a pair of curling-irons; and a tinder-box.

In front of the shop-window, are ranged some half-dozen high-backed

chairs, with spinal complaints and wasted legs; a corner cupboard; two or

three very dark mahogany tables with flaps like mathematical problems;

some pickle-jars, some surgeonsâ ditto, with gilt labels and without

stoppers; an unframed portrait of some lady who flourished about the

beginning of the thirteenth century, by an artist who never flourished at

all; an incalculable host of miscellanies of every description, including

bottles and cabinets, rags and bones, fenders and street-door knockers,

fire-irons, wearing apparel and bedding, a hall-lamp, and a room-door.

Imagine, in addition to this incongruous mass, a black doll in a white

frock, with two facesâone looking up the street, and the other looking

down, swinging over the door; a board with the squeezed-up inscription

âDealer in marine stores,â in lanky white letters, whose height is

strangely out of proportion to their width; and you have before you

precisely the kind of shop to which we wish to direct your attention.

Although the same heterogeneous mixture of things will be found at all

these places, it is curious to observe how truly and accurately some of

the minor articles which are exposed for saleâarticles of wearing

apparel, for instanceâmark the character of the neighbourhood. Take

Drury-Lane and Covent-garden for example.

This is essentially a theatrical neighbourhood. There is not a potboy in

the vicinity who is not, to a greater or less extent, a dramatic

character. The errand-boys and chandlerâs-shop-keepersâ sons, are all

stage-struck: they âgets upâ plays in back kitchens hired for the

purpose, and will stand before a shop-window for hours, contemplating a

great staring portrait of Mr. Somebody or other, of the Royal Coburg

Theatre, âas he appeared in the character of Tongo the Denounced.â The

consequence is, that there is not a marine-store shop in the

neighbourhood, which does not exhibit for sale some faded articles of

dramatic finery, such as three or four pairs of soiled buff boots with

turn-over red tops, heretofore worn by a âfourth robber,â or âfifth mob;â

a pair of rusty broadswords, a few gauntlets, and certain resplendent

ornaments, which, if they were yellow instead of white, might be taken

for insurance plates of the Sun Fire-office. There are several of these

shops in the narrow streets and dirty courts, of which there are so many

near the national theatres, and they all have tempting goods of this

description, with the addition, perhaps, of a ladyâs pink dress covered

with spangles; white wreaths, stage shoes, and a tiara like a tin lamp

reflector. They have been purchased of some wretched supernumeraries, or

sixth-rate actors, and are now offered for the benefit of the rising

generation, who, on condition of making certain weekly payments,

amounting in the whole to about ten times their value, may avail

themselves of such desirable bargains.

Let us take a very different quarter, and apply it to the same test.

Look at a marine-store dealerâs, in that reservoir of dirt, drunkenness,

and drabs: thieves, oysters, baked potatoes, and pickled

salmonâRatcliff-highway. Here, the wearing apparel is all nautical.

Rough blue jackets, with mother-of-pearl buttons, oil-skin hats, coarse

checked shirts, and large canvas trousers that look as if they were made

for a pair of bodies instead of a pair of legs, are the staple

commodities. Then, there are large bunches of cotton

pocket-handkerchiefs, in colour and pattern unlike any one ever saw

before, with the exception of those on the backs of the three young

ladies without bonnets who passed just now. The furniture is much the

same as elsewhere, with the addition of one or two models of ships, and

some old prints of naval engagements in still older frames. In the

window, are a few compasses, a small tray containing silver watches in

clumsy thick cases; and tobacco-boxes, the lid of each ornamented with a

ship, or an anchor, or some such trophy. A sailor generally pawns or

sells all he has before he has been long ashore, and if he does not, some

favoured companion kindly saves him the trouble. In either case, it is

an even chance that he afterwards unconsciously repurchases the same

things at a higher price than he gave for them at first.

Again: pay a visit with a similar object, to a part of London, as unlike

both of these as they are to each other. Cross over to the Surrey side,

and look at such shops of this description as are to be found near the

Kingâs Bench prison, and in âthe Rules.â How different, and how

strikingly illustrative of the decay of some of the unfortunate residents

in this part of the metropolis! Imprisonment and neglect have done their

work. There is contamination in the profligate denizens of a debtorâs

prison; old friends have fallen off; the recollection of former

prosperity has passed away; and with it all thoughts for the past, all

care for the future. First, watches and rings, then cloaks, coats, and

all the more expensive articles of dress, have found their way to the

pawnbrokerâs. That miserable resource has failed at last, and the sale

of some trifling article at one of these shops, has been the only mode

left of raising a shilling or two, to meet the urgent demands of the

moment. Dressing-cases and writing-desks, too old to pawn but too good

to keep; guns, fishing-rods, musical instruments, all in the same

condition; have first been sold, and the sacrifice has been but slightly

felt. But hunger must be allayed, and what has already become a habit,

is easily resorted to, when an emergency arises. Light articles of

clothing, first of the ruined man, then of his wife, at last of their

children, even of the youngest, have been parted with, piecemeal. There

they are, thrown carelessly together until a purchaser presents himself,

old, and patched and repaired, it is true; but the make and materials

tell of better days; and the older they are, the greater the misery and

destitution of those whom they once adorned.

CHAPTER XXIIâGIN-SHOPS

It is a remarkable circumstance, that different trades appear to partake

of the disease to which elephants and dogs are especially liable, and to

run stark, staring, raving mad, periodically. The great distinction

between the animals and the trades, is, that the former run mad with a

certain degree of proprietyâthey are very regular in their

irregularities. We know the period at which the emergency will arise,

and provide against it accordingly. If an elephant run mad, we are all

ready for himâkill or cureâpills or bullets, calomel in conserve of

roses, or lead in a musket-barrel. If a dog happen to look unpleasantly

warm in the summer months, and to trot about the shady side of the

streets with a quarter of a yard of tongue hanging out of his mouth, a

thick leather muzzle, which has been previously prepared in compliance

with the thoughtful injunctions of the Legislature, is instantly clapped

over his head, by way of making him cooler, and he either looks

remarkably unhappy for the next six weeks, or becomes legally insane, and

goes mad, as it were, by Act of Parliament. But these trades are as

eccentric as comets; nay, worse, for no one can calculate on the

recurrence of the strange appearances which betoken the disease.

Moreover, the contagion is general, and the quickness with which it

diffuses itself, almost incredible.

We will cite two or three cases in illustration of our meaning. Six or

eight years ago, the epidemic began to display itself among the

linen-drapers and haberdashers. The primary symptoms were an inordinate

love of plate-glass, and a passion for gas-lights and gilding. The

disease gradually progressed, and at last attained a fearful height.

Quiet, dusty old shops in different parts of town, were pulled down;

spacious premises with stuccoed fronts and gold letters, were erected

instead; floors were covered with Turkey carpets; roofs supported by

massive pillars; doors knocked into windows; a dozen squares of glass

into one; one shopman into a dozen; and there is no knowing what would

have been done, if it had not been fortunately discovered, just in time,

that the Commissioners of Bankruptcy were as competent to decide such

cases as the Commissioners of Lunacy, and that a little confinement and

gentle examination did wonders. The disease abated. It died away. A

year or two of comparative tranquillity ensued. Suddenly it burst out

again amongst the chemists; the symptoms were the same, with the addition

of a strong desire to stick the royal arms over the shop-door, and a

great rage for mahogany, varnish, and expensive floor-cloth. Then, the

hosiers were infected, and began to pull down their shop-fronts with

frantic recklessness. The mania again died away, and the public began to

congratulate themselves on its entire disappearance, when it burst forth

with tenfold violence among the publicans, and keepers of âwine vaults.â

From that moment it has spread among them with unprecedented rapidity,

exhibiting a concatenation of all the previous symptoms; onward it has

rushed to every part of town, knocking down all the old public-houses,

and depositing splendid mansions, stone balustrades, rosewood fittings,

immense lamps, and illuminated clocks, at the corner of every street.

The extensive scale on which these places are established, and the

ostentatious manner in which the business of even the smallest among them

is divided into branches, is amusing. A handsome plate of ground glass

in one door directs you âTo the Counting-house;â another to the âBottle

Department; a third to the âWholesale Department;â a fourth to âThe Wine

Promenade;â and so forth, until we are in daily expectation of meeting

with a âBrandy Bell,â or a âWhiskey Entrance.â Then, ingenuity is

exhausted in devising attractive titles for the different descriptions of

gin; and the dram-drinking portion of the community as they gaze upon the

gigantic black and white announcements, which are only to be equalled in

size by the figures beneath them, are left in a state of pleasing

hesitation between âThe Cream of the Valley,â âThe Out and Out,â âThe No

Mistake,â âThe Good for Mixing,â âThe real Knock-me-down,â âThe

celebrated Butter Gin,â âThe regular Flare-up,â and a dozen other,

equally inviting and wholesome \_liqueurs\_. Although places of this

description are to be met with in every second street, they are

invariably numerous and splendid in precise proportion to the dirt and

poverty of the surrounding neighbourhood. The gin-shops in and near

Drury-Lane, Holborn, St. Gilesâs, Covent-garden, and Clare-market, are

the handsomest in London. There is more of filth and squalid misery near

those great thorough-fares than in any part of this mighty city.

We will endeavour to sketch the bar of a large gin-shop, and its ordinary

customers, for the edification of such of our readers as may not have had

opportunities of observing such scenes; and on the chance of finding one

well suited to our purpose, we will make for Drury-Lane, through the

narrow streets and dirty courts which divide it from Oxford-street, and

that classical spot adjoining the brewery at the bottom of

Tottenham-court-road, best known to the initiated as the âRookery.â

The filthy and miserable appearance of this part of London can hardly be

imagined by those (and there are many such) who have not witnessed it.

Wretched houses with broken windows patched with rags and paper: every

room let out to a different family, and in many instances to two or even

threeâfruit and âsweet-stuffâ manufacturers in the cellars, barbers and

red-herring vendors in the front parlours, cobblers in the back; a

bird-fancier in the first floor, three families on the second, starvation

in the attics, Irishmen in the passage, a âmusicianâ in the front

kitchen, and a charwoman and five hungry children in the back oneâfilth

everywhereâa gutter before the houses and a drain behindâclothes drying

and slops emptying, from the windows; girls of fourteen or fifteen, with

matted hair, walking about barefoot, and in white great-coats, almost

their only covering; boys of all ages, in coats of all sizes and no coats

at all; men and women, in every variety of scanty and dirty apparel,

lounging, scolding, drinking, smoking, squabbling, fighting, and

swearing.

You turn the corner. What a change! All is light and brilliancy. The

hum of many voices issues from that splendid gin-shop which forms the

commencement of the two streets opposite; and the gay building with the

fantastically ornamented parapet, the illuminated clock, the plate-glass

windows surrounded by stucco rosettes, and its profusion of gas-lights in

richly-gilt burners, is perfectly dazzling when contrasted with the

darkness and dirt we have just left. The interior is even gayer than the

exterior. A bar of French-polished mahogany, elegantly carved, extends

the whole width of the place; and there are two side-aisles of great

casks, painted green and gold, enclosed within a light brass rail, and

bearing such inscriptions, as âOld Tom, 549;â âYoung Tom, 360;â âSamson,

1421ââthe figures agreeing, we presume, with âgallons,â understood.

Beyond the bar is a lofty and spacious saloon, full of the same enticing

vessels, with a gallery running round it, equally well furnished. On the

counter, in addition to the usual spirit apparatus, are two or three

little baskets of cakes and biscuits, which are carefully secured at top

with wicker-work, to prevent their contents being unlawfully abstracted.

Behind it, are two showily-dressed damsels with large necklaces,

dispensing the spirits and âcompounds.â They are assisted by the

ostensible proprietor of the concern, a stout, coarse fellow in a fur

cap, put on very much on one side to give him a knowing air, and to

display his sandy whiskers to the best advantage.

The two old washerwomen, who are seated on the little bench to the left

of the bar, are rather overcome by the head-dresses and haughty demeanour

of the young ladies who officiate. They receive their half-quartern of

gin and peppermint, with considerable deference, prefacing a request for

âone of them soft biscuits,â with a âJist be good enough, maâam.â They

are quite astonished at the impudent air of the young fellow in a brown

coat and bright buttons, who, ushering in his two companions, and walking

up to the bar in as careless a manner as if he had been used to green and

gold ornaments all his life, winks at one of the young ladies with

singular coolness, and calls for a âkervorten and a three-out-glass,â

just as if the place were his own. âGin for you, sir?â says the young

lady when she has drawn it: carefully looking every way but the right

one, to show that the wink had no effect upon her. âFor me, Mary, my

dear,â replies the gentleman in brown. âMy name anât Mary as it

happens,â says the young girl, rather relaxing as she delivers the

change. âWell, if it anât, it ought to be,â responds the irresistible

one; âall the Marys as ever \_I\_ see, was handsome gals.â Here the young

lady, not precisely remembering how blushes are managed in such cases,

abruptly ends the flirtation by addressing the female in the faded

feathers who has just entered, and who, after stating explicitly, to

prevent any subsequent misunderstanding, that âthis gentleman pays,â

calls for âa glass of port wine and a bit of sugar.â

Those two old men who came in âjust to have a drain,â finished their

third quartern a few seconds ago; they have made themselves crying drunk;

and the fat comfortable-looking elderly women, who had âa glass of

rum-srubâ each, having chimed in with their complaints on the hardness of

the times, one of the women has agreed to stand a glass round, jocularly

observing that âgrief never mended no broken bones, and as good peopleâs

wery scarce, what I says is, make the most on âem, and thatâs all about

it!â a sentiment which appears to afford unlimited satisfaction to those

who have nothing to pay.

It is growing late, and the throng of men, women, and children, who have

been constantly going in and out, dwindles down to two or three

occasional stragglersâcold, wretched-looking creatures, in the last stage

of emaciation and disease. The knot of Irish labourers at the lower end

of the place, who have been alternately shaking hands with, and

threatening the life of each other, for the last hour, become furious in

their disputes, and finding it impossible to silence one man, who is

particularly anxious to adjust the difference, they resort to the

expedient of knocking him down and jumping on him afterwards. The man in

the fur cap, and the potboy rush out; a scene of riot and confusion

ensues; half the Irishmen get shut out, and the other half get shut in;

the potboy is knocked among the tubs in no time; the landlord hits

everybody, and everybody hits the landlord; the barmaids scream; the

police come in; the rest is a confused mixture of arms, legs, staves,

torn coats, shouting, and struggling. Some of the party are borne off to

the station-house, and the remainder slink home to beat their wives for

complaining, and kick the children for daring to be hungry.

We have sketched this subject very slightly, not only because our limits

compel us to do so, but because, if it were pursued farther, it would be

painful and repulsive. Well-disposed gentlemen, and charitable ladies,

would alike turn with coldness and disgust from a description of the

drunken besotted men, and wretched broken-down miserable women, who form

no inconsiderable portion of the frequenters of these haunts; forgetting,

in the pleasant consciousness of their own rectitude, the poverty of the

one, and the temptation of the other. Gin-drinking is a great vice in

England, but wretchedness and dirt are a greater; and until you improve

the homes of the poor, or persuade a half-famished wretch not to seek

relief in the temporary oblivion of his own misery, with the pittance

which, divided among his family, would furnish a morsel of bread for

each, gin-shops will increase in number and splendour. If Temperance

Societies would suggest an antidote against hunger, filth, and foul air,

or could establish dispensaries for the gratuitous distribution of

bottles of Lethe-water, gin-palaces would be numbered among the things

that were.

CHAPTER XXIIIâTHE PAWNBROKERâS SHOP

Of the numerous receptacles for misery and distress with which the

streets of London unhappily abound, there are, perhaps, none which

present such striking scenes as the pawnbrokersâ shops. The very nature

and description of these places occasions their being but little known,

except to the unfortunate beings whose profligacy or misfortune drives

them to seek the temporary relief they offer. The subject may appear, at

first sight, to be anything but an inviting one, but we venture on it

nevertheless, in the hope that, as far as the limits of our present paper

are concerned, it will present nothing to disgust even the most

fastidious reader.

There are some pawnbrokersâ shops of a very superior description. There

are grades in pawning as in everything else, and distinctions must be

observed even in poverty. The aristocratic Spanish cloak and the

plebeian calico shirt, the silver fork and the flat iron, the muslin

cravat and the Belcher neckerchief, would but ill assort together; so,

the better sort of pawnbroker calls himself a silver-smith, and decorates

his shop with handsome trinkets and expensive jewellery, while the more

humble money-lender boldly advertises his calling, and invites

observation. It is with pawnbrokersâ shops of the latter class, that we

have to do. We have selected one for our purpose, and will endeavour to

describe it.

The pawnbrokerâs shop is situated near Drury-Lane, at the corner of a

court, which affords a side entrance for the accommodation of such

customers as may be desirous of avoiding the observation of the

passers-by, or the chance of recognition in the public street. It is a

low, dirty-looking, dusty shop, the door of which stands always

doubtfully, a little way open: half inviting, half repelling the

hesitating visitor, who, if he be as yet uninitiated, examines one of the

old garnet brooches in the window for a minute or two with affected

eagerness, as if he contemplated making a purchase; and then looking

cautiously round to ascertain that no one watches him, hastily slinks in:

the door closing of itself after him, to just its former width. The shop

front and the window-frames bear evident marks of having been once

painted; but, what the colour was originally, or at what date it was

probably laid on, are at this remote period questions which may be asked,

but cannot be answered. Tradition states that the transparency in the

front door, which displays at night three red balls on a blue ground,

once bore also, inscribed in graceful waves, the words âMoney advanced on

plate, jewels, wearing apparel, and every description of property,â but a

few illegible hieroglyphics are all that now remain to attest the fact.

The plate and jewels would seem to have disappeared, together with the

announcement, for the articles of stock, which are displayed in some

profusion in the window, do not include any very valuable luxuries of

either kind. A few old china cups; some modern vases, adorned with

paltry paintings of three Spanish cavaliers playing three Spanish

guitars; or a party of boors carousing: each boor with one leg painfully

elevated in the air, by way of expressing his perfect freedom and gaiety;

several sets of chessmen, two or three flutes, a few fiddles, a

round-eyed portrait staring in astonishment from a very dark ground; some

gaudily-bound prayer-books and testaments, two rows of silver watches

quite as clumsy and almost as large as Fergusonâs first; numerous

old-fashioned table and tea spoons, displayed, fan-like, in half-dozens;

strings of coral with great broad gilt snaps; cards of rings and

brooches, fastened and labelled separately, like the insects in the

British Museum; cheap silver penholders and snuff-boxes, with a masonic

star, complete the jewellery department; while five or six beds in smeary

clouded ticks, strings of blankets and sheets, silk and cotton

handkerchiefs, and wearing apparel of every description, form the more

useful, though even less ornamental, part, of the articles exposed for

sale. An extensive collection of planes, chisels, saws, and other

carpentersâ tools, which have been pledged, and never redeemed, form the

foreground of the picture; while the large frames full of ticketed

bundles, which are dimly seen through the dirty casement up-stairsâthe

squalid neighbourhoodâthe adjoining houses, straggling, shrunken, and

rotten, with one or two filthy, unwholesome-looking heads thrust out of

every window, and old red pans and stunted plants exposed on the

tottering parapets, to the manifest hazard of the heads of the

passers-byâthe noisy men loitering under the archway at the corner of the

court, or about the gin-shop next doorâand their wives patiently standing

on the curb-stone, with large baskets of cheap vegetables slung round

them for sale, are its immediate auxiliaries.

If the outside of the pawnbrokerâs shop be calculated to attract the

attention, or excite the interest, of the speculative pedestrian, its

interior cannot fail to produce the same effect in an increased degree.

The front door, which we have before noticed, opens into the common shop,

which is the resort of all those customers whose habitual acquaintance

with such scenes renders them indifferent to the observation of their

companions in poverty. The side door opens into a small passage from

which some half-dozen doors (which may be secured on the inside by bolts)

open into a corresponding number of little dens, or closets, which face

the counter. Here, the more timid or respectable portion of the crowd

shroud themselves from the notice of the remainder, and patiently wait

until the gentleman behind the counter, with the curly black hair,

diamond ring, and double silver watch-guard, shall feel disposed to

favour them with his noticeâa consummation which depends considerably on

the temper of the aforesaid gentleman for the time being.

At the present moment, this elegantly-attired individual is in the act of

entering the duplicate he has just made out, in a thick book: a process

from which he is diverted occasionally, by a conversation he is carrying

on with another young man similarly employed at a little distance from

him, whose allusions to âthat last bottle of soda-water last night,â and

âhow regularly round my hat he felt himself when the young âooman gave

âem in charge,â would appear to refer to the consequences of some stolen

joviality of the preceding evening. The customers generally, however,

seem unable to participate in the amusement derivable from this source,

for an old sallow-looking woman, who has been leaning with both arms on

the counter with a small bundle before her, for half an hour previously,

suddenly interrupts the conversation by addressing the jewelled

shopmanââNow, Mr. Henry, do make haste, thereâs a good soul, for my two

grandchildrenâs locked up at home, and Iâm afeerâd of the fire.â The

shopman slightly raises his head, with an air of deep abstraction, and

resumes his entry with as much deliberation as if he were engraving.

âYouâre in a hurry, Mrs. Tatham, this evâninâ, anât you?â is the only

notice he deigns to take, after the lapse of five minutes or so. âYes, I

am indeed, Mr. Henry; now, do serve me next, thereâs a good creetur. I

wouldnât worry you, only itâs all along oâ them botherinâ children.â

âWhat have you got here?â inquires the shopman, unpinning the bundleââold

concern, I supposeâpair oâ stays and a petticut. You must look up

somethinâ else, old âooman; I canât lend you anything more upon them;

theyâre completely worn out by this time, if itâs only by putting in, and

taking out again, three times a week.â âOh! youâre a rum un, you are,â

replies the old woman, laughing extremely, as in duty bound; âI wish Iâd

got the gift of the gab like you; see if Iâd be up the spout so often

then! No, no; it anât the petticut; itâs a childâs frock and a beautiful

silk ankecher, as belongs to my husband. He gave four shillinâ for it,

the werry same blessed day as he broke his arm.âââWhat do you want upon

these?â inquires Mr. Henry, slightly glancing at the articles, which in

all probability are old acquaintances. âWhat do you want upon

these?âââEighteenpence.âââLend you ninepence.âââOh, make it a shillinâ;

thereâs a dearâdo now?âââNot another farden.âââWell, I suppose I must

take it.â The duplicate is made out, one ticket pinned on the parcel,

the other given to the old woman; the parcel is flung carelessly down

into a corner, and some other customer prefers his claim to be served

without further delay.

The choice falls on an unshaven, dirty, sottish-looking fellow, whose

tarnished paper-cap, stuck negligently over one eye, communicates an

additionally repulsive expression to his very uninviting countenance. He

was enjoying a little relaxation from his sedentary pursuits a quarter of

an hour ago, in kicking his wife up the court. He has come to redeem

some tools:âprobably to complete a job with, on account of which he has

already received some money, if his inflamed countenance and drunken

staggers may be taken as evidence of the fact. Having waited some little

time, he makes his presence known by venting his ill-humour on a ragged

urchin, who, being unable to bring his face on a level with the counter

by any other process, has employed himself in climbing up, and then

hooking himself on with his elbowsâan uneasy perch, from which he has

fallen at intervals, generally alighting on the toes of the person in his

immediate vicinity. In the present case, the unfortunate little wretch

has received a cuff which sends him reeling to this door; and the donor

of the blow is immediately the object of general indignation.

âWhat do you strike the boy for, you brute?â exclaims a slipshod woman,

with two flat irons in a little basket. âDo you think heâs your wife,

you willin?â âGo and hang yourself!â replies the gentleman addressed,

with a drunken look of savage stupidity, aiming at the same time a blow

at the woman which fortunately misses its object. âGo and hang yourself;

and wait till I come and cut you down.âââCut you down,â rejoins the

woman, âI wish I had the cutting of you up, you wagabond! (loud.) Oh!

you precious wagabond! (rather louder.) Whereâs your wife, you willin?

(louder still; women of this class are always sympathetic, and work

themselves into a tremendous passion on the shortest notice.) Your poor

dear wife as you uses worser nor a dogâstrike a womanâyou a man! (very

shrill;) I wish I had youâIâd murder you, I would, if I died for

it!âââNow be civil,â retorts the man fiercely. âBe civil, you wiper!â

ejaculates the woman contemptuously. âAnât it shocking?â she continues,

turning round, and appealing to an old woman who is peeping out of one of

the little closets we have before described, and who has not the

slightest objection to join in the attack, possessing, as she does, the

comfortable conviction that she is bolted in. âAinât it shocking, maâam?

(Dreadful! says the old woman in a parenthesis, not exactly knowing what

the question refers to.) Heâs got a wife, maâam, as takes in mangling,

and is as âdustrious and hard-working a young âooman as can be, (very

fast) as lives in the back parlour of our âous, which my husband and me

lives in the front one (with great rapidity)âand we hears him a beatenâ

on her sometimes when he comes home drunk, the whole night through, and

not only a beatenâ her, but beatenâ his own child too, to make her more

miserableâugh, you beast! and she, poor creater, wonât swear the peace

agin him, nor do nothinâ, because she likes the wretch arter allâworse

luck!â Here, as the woman has completely run herself out of breath, the

pawnbroker himself, who has just appeared behind the counter in a gray

dressing-gown, embraces the favourable opportunity of putting in a

word:ââNow I wonât have none of this sort of thing on my premises!â he

interposes with an air of authority. âMrs. Mackin, keep yourself to

yourself, or you donât get fourpence for a flat iron here; and Jinkins,

you leave your ticket here till youâre sober, and send your wife for them

two planes, for I wonât have you in my shop at no price; so make yourself

scarce, before I make you scarcer.â

This eloquent address produces anything but the effect desired; the women

rail in concert; the man hits about him in all directions, and is in the

act of establishing an indisputable claim to gratuitous lodgings for the

night, when the entrance of his wife, a wretched, worn-out woman,

apparently in the last stage of consumption, whose face bears evident

marks of recent ill-usage, and whose strength seems hardly equal to the

burdenâlight enough, God knows!âof the thin, sickly child she carries in

her arms, turns his cowardly rage in a safer direction. âCome home,

dear,â cries the miserable creature, in an imploring tone; â\_do\_ come

home, thereâs a good fellow, and go to bed.âââGo home yourself,â rejoins

the furious ruffian. âDo come home quietly,â repeats the wife, bursting

into tears. âGo home yourself,â retorts the husband again, enforcing his

argument by a blow which sends the poor creature flying out of the shop.

Her ânatural protectorâ follows her up the court, alternately venting his

rage in accelerating her progress, and in knocking the little scanty blue

bonnet of the unfortunate child over its still more scanty and

faded-looking face.

In the last box, which is situated in the darkest and most obscure corner

of the shop, considerably removed from either of the gas-lights, are a

young delicate girl of about twenty, and an elderly female, evidently her

mother from the resemblance between them, who stand at some distance

back, as if to avoid the observation even of the shopman. It is not

their first visit to a pawnbrokerâs shop, for they answer without a

momentâs hesitation the usual questions, put in a rather respectful

manner, and in a much lower tone than usual, of âWhat name shall I

say?âYour own property, of course?âWhere do you live?âHousekeeper or

lodger?â They bargain, too, for a higher loan than the shopman is at

first inclined to offer, which a perfect stranger would be little

disposed to do; and the elder female urges her daughter on, in scarcely

audible whispers, to exert her utmost powers of persuasion to obtain an

advance of the sum, and expatiate on the value of the articles they have

brought to raise a present supply upon. They are a small gold chain and

a âForget me notâ ring: the girlâs property, for they are both too small

for the mother; given her in better times; prized, perhaps, once, for the

giverâs sake, but parted with now without a struggle; for want has

hardened the mother, and her example has hardened the girl, and the

prospect of receiving money, coupled with a recollection of the misery

they have both endured from the want of itâthe coldness of old

friendsâthe stern refusal of some, and the still more galling compassion

of othersâappears to have obliterated the consciousness of

self-humiliation, which the idea of their present situation would once

have aroused.

In the next box, is a young female, whose attire, miserably poor, but

extremely gaudy, wretchedly cold, but extravagantly fine, too plainly

bespeaks her station. The rich satin gown with its faded trimmings, the

worn-out thin shoes, and pink silk stockings, the summer bonnet in

winter, and the sunken face, where a daub of rouge only serves as an

index to the ravages of squandered health never to be regained, and lost

happiness never to be restored, and where the practised smile is a

wretched mockery of the misery of the heart, cannot be mistaken. There

is something in the glimpse she has just caught of her young neighbour,

and in the sight of the little trinkets she has offered in pawn, that

seems to have awakened in this womanâs mind some slumbering recollection,

and to have changed, for an instant, her whole demeanour. Her first

hasty impulse was to bend forward as if to scan more minutely the

appearance of her half-concealed companions; her next, on seeing them

involuntarily shrink from her, to retreat to the back of the box, cover

her face with her hands, and burst into tears.

There are strange chords in the human heart, which will lie dormant

through years of depravity and wickedness, but which will vibrate at last

to some slight circumstance apparently trivial in itself, but connected

by some undefined and indistinct association, with past days that can

never be recalled, and with bitter recollections from which the most

degraded creature in existence cannot escape.

There has been another spectator, in the person of a woman in the common

shop; the lowest of the low; dirty, unbonneted, flaunting, and slovenly.

Her curiosity was at first attracted by the little she could see of the

group; then her attention. The half-intoxicated leer changed to an

expression of something like interest, and a feeling similar to that we

have described, appeared for a moment, and only a moment, to extend

itself even to her bosom.

Who shall say how soon these women may change places? The last has but

two more stagesâthe hospital and the grave. How many females situated as

her two companions are, and as she may have been once, have terminated

the same wretched course, in the same wretched manner! One is already

tracing her footsteps with frightful rapidity. How soon may the other

follow her example! How many have done the same!

CHAPTER XXIVâCRIMINAL COURTS

We shall never forget the mingled feelings of awe and respect with which

we used to gaze on the exterior of Newgate in our schoolboy days. How

dreadful its rough heavy walls, and low massive doors, appeared to usâthe

latter looking as if they were made for the express purpose of letting

people in, and never letting them out again. Then the fetters over the

debtorsâ door, which we used to think were a \_bonÃ¢ fide\_ set of irons,

just hung up there, for convenienceâ sake, ready to be taken down at a

momentâs notice, and riveted on the limbs of some refractory felon! We

were never tired of wondering how the hackney-coachmen on the opposite

stand could cut jokes in the presence of such horrors, and drink pots of

half-and-half so near the last drop.

Often have we strayed here, in sessions time, to catch a glimpse of the

whipping-place, and that dark building on one side of the yard, in which

is kept the gibbet with all its dreadful apparatus, and on the door of

which we half expected to see a brass plate, with the inscription âMr.

Ketch;â for we never imagined that the distinguished functionary could by

possibility live anywhere else! The days of these childish dreams have

passed away, and with them many other boyish ideas of a gayer nature.

But we still retain so much of our original feeling, that to this hour we

never pass the building without something like a shudder.

What London pedestrian is there who has not, at some time or other, cast

a hurried glance through the wicket at which prisoners are admitted into

this gloomy mansion, and surveyed the few objects he could discern, with

an indescribable feeling of curiosity? The thick door, plated with iron

and mounted with spikes, just low enough to enable you to see, leaning

over them, an ill-looking fellow, in a broad-brimmed hat, Belcher

handkerchief and top-boots: with a brown coat, something between a

great-coat and a âsportingâ jacket, on his back, and an immense key in

his left hand. Perhaps you are lucky enough to pass, just as the gate is

being opened; then, you see on the other side of the lodge, another gate,

the image of its predecessor, and two or three more turnkeys, who look

like multiplications of the first one, seated round a fire which just

lights up the whitewashed apartment sufficiently to enable you to catch a

hasty glimpse of these different objects. We have a great respect for

Mrs. Fry, but she certainly ought to have written more romances than Mrs.

Radcliffe.

We were walking leisurely down the Old Bailey, some time ago, when, as we

passed this identical gate, it was opened by the officiating turnkey. We

turned quickly round, as a matter of course, and saw two persons

descending the steps. We could not help stopping and observing them.

They were an elderly woman, of decent appearance, though evidently poor,

and a boy of about fourteen or fifteen. The woman was crying bitterly;

she carried a small bundle in her hand, and the boy followed at a short

distance behind her. Their little history was obvious. The boy was her

son, to whose early comfort she had perhaps sacrificed her ownâfor whose

sake she had borne misery without repining, and poverty without a

murmurâlooking steadily forward to the time, when he who had so long

witnessed her struggles for himself, might be enabled to make some

exertions for their joint support. He had formed dissolute connexions;

idleness had led to crime; and he had been committed to take his trial

for some petty theft. He had been long in prison, and, after receiving

some trifling additional punishment, had been ordered to be discharged

that morning. It was his first offence, and his poor old mother, still

hoping to reclaim him, had been waiting at the gate to implore him to

return home.

We cannot forget the boy; he descended the steps with a dogged look,

shaking his head with an air of bravado and obstinate determination.

They walked a few paces, and paused. The woman put her hand upon his

shoulder in an agony of entreaty, and the boy sullenly raised his head as

if in refusal. It was a brilliant morning, and every object looked fresh

and happy in the broad, gay sunlight; he gazed round him for a few

moments, bewildered with the brightness of the scene, for it was long

since he had beheld anything save the gloomy walls of a prison. Perhaps

the wretchedness of his mother made some impression on the boyâs heart;

perhaps some undefined recollection of the time when he was a happy

child, and she his only friend, and best companion, crowded on himâhe

burst into tears; and covering his face with one hand, and hurriedly

placing the other in his motherâs, walked away with her.

Curiosity has occasionally led us into both Courts at the Old Bailey.

Nothing is so likely to strike the person who enters them for the first

time, as the calm indifference with which the proceedings are conducted;

every trial seems a mere matter of business. There is a great deal of

form, but no compassion; considerable interest, but no sympathy. Take

the Old Court for example. There sit the judges, with whose great

dignity everybody is acquainted, and of whom therefore we need say no

more. Then, there is the Lord Mayor in the centre, looking as cool as a

Lord Mayor \_can\_ look, with an immense \_bouquet\_ before him, and habited

in all the splendour of his office. Then, there are the Sheriffs, who

are almost as dignified as the Lord Mayor himself; and the Barristers,

who are quite dignified enough in their own opinion; and the spectators,

who having paid for their admission, look upon the whole scene as if it

were got up especially for their amusement. Look upon the whole group in

the body of the Courtâsome wholly engrossed in the morning papers, others

carelessly conversing in low whispers, and others, again, quietly dozing

away an hourâand you can scarcely believe that the result of the trial is

a matter of life or death to one wretched being present. But turn your

eyes to the dock; watch the prisoner attentively for a few moments; and

the fact is before you, in all its painful reality. Mark how restlessly

he has been engaged for the last ten minutes, in forming all sorts of

fantastic figures with the herbs which are strewed upon the ledge before

him; observe the ashy paleness of his face when a particular witness

appears, and how he changes his position and wipes his clammy forehead,

and feverish hands, when the case for the prosecution is closed, as if it

were a relief to him to feel that the jury knew the worst.

The defence is concluded; the judge proceeds to sum up the evidence; and

the prisoner watches the countenances of the jury, as a dying man,

clinging to life to the very last, vainly looks in the face of his

physician for a slight ray of hope. They turn round to consult; you can

almost hear the manâs heart beat, as he bites the stalk of rosemary, with

a desperate effort to appear composed. They resume their placesâa dead

silence prevails as the foreman delivers in the verdictââGuilty!â A

shriek bursts from a female in the gallery; the prisoner casts one look

at the quarter from whence the noise proceeded; and is immediately

hurried from the dock by the gaoler. The clerk directs one of the

officers of the Court to âtake the woman out,â and fresh business is

proceeded with, as if nothing had occurred.

No imaginary contrast to a case like this, could be as complete as that

which is constantly presented in the New Court, the gravity of which is

frequently disturbed in no small degree, by the cunning and pertinacity

of juvenile offenders. A boy of thirteen is tried, say for picking the

pocket of some subject of her Majesty, and the offence is about as

clearly proved as an offence can be. He is called upon for his defence,

and contents himself with a little declamation about the jurymen and his

countryâasserts that all the witnesses have committed perjury, and hints

that the police force generally have entered into a conspiracy âagainâ

him. However probable this statement may be, it fails to convince the

Court, and some such scene as the following then takes place:

\_Court\_: Have you any witnesses to speak to your character, boy?

\_Boy\_: Yes, my Lord; fifteen genâlmân is a vaten outside, and vos a vaten

all day yesterday, vich they told me the night afore my trial vos a

cominâ on.

\_Court\_. Inquire for these witnesses.

Here, a stout beadle runs out, and vociferates for the witnesses at the

very top of his voice; for you hear his cry grow fainter and fainter as

he descends the steps into the court-yard below. After an absence of

five minutes, he returns, very warm and hoarse, and informs the Court of

what it knew perfectly well beforeânamely, that there are no such

witnesses in attendance. Hereupon, the boy sets up a most awful howling;

screws the lower part of the palms of his hands into the corners of his

eyes; and endeavours to look the picture of injured innocence. The jury

at once find him âguilty,â and his endeavours to squeeze out a tear or

two are redoubled. The governor of the gaol then states, in reply to an

inquiry from the bench, that the prisoner has been under his care twice

before. This the urchin resolutely denies in some such terms asââSâelp

me, genâlmân, I never vos in trouble aforeâindeed, my Lord, I never vos.

Itâs all a howen to my having a twin brother, vich has wrongfully got

into trouble, and vich is so exactly like me, that no vun ever knows the

difference atween us.â

This representation, like the defence, fails in producing the desired

effect, and the boy is sentenced, perhaps, to seven yearsâ

transportation. Finding it impossible to excite compassion, he gives

vent to his feelings in an imprecation bearing reference to the eyes of

âold big vig!â and as he declines to take the trouble of walking from the

dock, is forthwith carried out, congratulating himself on having

succeeded in giving everybody as much trouble as possible.

CHAPTER XXVâA VISIT TO NEWGATE

âThe force of habitâ is a trite phrase in everybodyâs mouth; and it is

not a little remarkable that those who use it most as applied to others,

unconsciously afford in their own persons singular examples of the power

which habit and custom exercise over the minds of men, and of the little

reflection they are apt to bestow on subjects with which every dayâs

experience has rendered them familiar. If Bedlam could be suddenly

removed like another Aladdinâs palace, and set down on the space now

occupied by Newgate, scarcely one man out of a hundred, whose road to

business every morning lies through Newgate-street, or the Old Bailey,

would pass the building without bestowing a hasty glance on its small,

grated windows, and a transient thought upon the condition of the unhappy

beings immured in its dismal cells; and yet these same men, day by day,

and hour by hour, pass and repass this gloomy depository of the guilt and

misery of London, in one perpetual stream of life and bustle, utterly

unmindful of the throng of wretched creatures pent up within itânay, not

even knowing, or if they do, not heeding, the fact, that as they pass one

particular angle of the massive wall with a light laugh or a merry

whistle, they stand within one yard of a fellow-creature, bound and

helpless, whose hours are numbered, from whom the last feeble ray of hope

has fled for ever, and whose miserable career will shortly terminate in a

violent and shameful death. Contact with death even in its least

terrible shape, is solemn and appalling. How much more awful is it to

reflect on this near vicinity to the dyingâto men in full health and

vigour, in the flower of youth or the prime of life, with all their

faculties and perceptions as acute and perfect as your own; but dying,

neverthelessâdying as surelyâwith the hand of death imprinted upon them

as indeliblyâas if mortal disease had wasted their frames to shadows, and

corruption had already begun!

It was with some such thoughts as these that we determined, not many

weeks since, to visit the interior of Newgateâin an amateur capacity, of

course; and, having carried our intention into effect, we proceed to lay

its results before our readers, in the hopeâfounded more upon the nature

of the subject, than on any presumptuous confidence in our own

descriptive powersâthat this paper may not be found wholly devoid of

interest. We have only to premise, that we do not intend to fatigue the

reader with any statistical accounts of the prison; they will be found at

length in numerous reports of numerous committees, and a variety of

authorities of equal weight. We took no notes, made no memoranda,

measured none of the yards, ascertained the exact number of inches in no

particular room: are unable even to report of how many apartments the

gaol is composed.

We saw the prison, and saw the prisoners; and what we did see, and what

we thought, we will tell at once in our own way.

Having delivered our credentials to the servant who answered our knock at

the door of the governorâs house, we were ushered into the âoffice;â a

little room, on the right-hand side as you enter, with two windows

looking into the Old Bailey: fitted up like an ordinary attorneyâs

office, or merchantâs counting-house, with the usual fixturesâa

wainscoted partition, a shelf or two, a desk, a couple of stools, a pair

of clerks, an almanack, a clock, and a few maps. After a little delay,

occasioned by sending into the interior of the prison for the officer

whose duty it was to conduct us, that functionary arrived; a

respectable-looking man of about two or three and fifty, in a

broad-brimmed hat, and full suit of black, who, but for his keys, would

have looked quite as much like a clergyman as a turnkey. We were

disappointed; he had not even top-boots on. Following our conductor by a

door opposite to that at which we had entered, we arrived at a small

room, without any other furniture than a little desk, with a book for

visitorsâ autographs, and a shelf, on which were a few boxes for papers,

and casts of the heads and faces of the two notorious murderers, Bishop

and Williams; the former, in particular, exhibiting a style of head and

set of features, which might have afforded sufficient moral grounds for

his instant execution at any time, even had there been no other evidence

against him. Leaving this room also, by an opposite door, we found

ourself in the lodge which opens on the Old Bailey; one side of which is

plentifully garnished with a choice collection of heavy sets of irons,

including those worn by the redoubtable Jack Sheppardâgenuine; and those

\_said\_ to have been graced by the sturdy limbs of the no less celebrated

Dick Turpinâdoubtful. From this lodge, a heavy oaken gate, bound with

iron, studded with nails of the same material, and guarded by another

turnkey, opens on a few steps, if we remember right, which terminate in a

narrow and dismal stone passage, running parallel with the Old Bailey,

and leading to the different yards, through a number of tortuous and

intricate windings, guarded in their turn by huge gates and gratings,

whose appearance is sufficient to dispel at once the slightest hope of

escape that any new-comer may have entertained; and the very recollection

of which, on eventually traversing the place again, involves one in a

maze of confusion.

It is necessary to explain here, that the buildings in the prison, or in

other words the different wardsâform a square, of which the four sides

abut respectively on the Old Bailey, the old College of Physicians (now

forming a part of Newgate-market), the Sessions-house, and

Newgate-street. The intermediate space is divided into several paved

yards, in which the prisoners take such air and exercise as can be had in

such a place. These yards, with the exception of that in which prisoners

under sentence of death are confined (of which we shall presently give a

more detailed description), run parallel with Newgate-street, and

consequently from the Old Bailey, as it were, to Newgate-market. The

womenâs side is in the right wing of the prison nearest the

Sessions-house. As we were introduced into this part of the building

first, we will adopt the same order, and introduce our readers to it

also.

Turning to the right, then, down the passage to which we just now

adverted, omitting any mention of intervening gatesâfor if we noticed

every gate that was unlocked for us to pass through, and locked again as

soon as we had passed, we should require a gate at every commaâwe came to

a door composed of thick bars of wood, through which were discernible,

passing to and fro in a narrow yard, some twenty women: the majority of

whom, however, as soon as they were aware of the presence of strangers,

retreated to their wards. One side of this yard is railed off at a

considerable distance, and formed into a kind of iron cage, about five

feet ten inches in height, roofed at the top, and defended in front by

iron bars, from which the friends of the female prisoners communicate

with them. In one corner of this singular-looking den, was a yellow,

haggard, decrepit old woman, in a tattered gown that had once been black,

and the remains of an old straw bonnet, with faded ribbon of the same

hue, in earnest conversation with a young girlâa prisoner, of courseâof

about two-and-twenty. It is impossible to imagine a more

poverty-stricken object, or a creature so borne down in soul and body, by

excess of misery and destitution, as the old woman. The girl was a

good-looking, robust female, with a profusion of hair streaming about in

the windâfor she had no bonnet onâand a manâs silk pocket-handkerchief

loosely thrown over a most ample pair of shoulders. The old woman was

talking in that low, stifled tone of voice which tells so forcibly of

mental anguish; and every now and then burst into an irrepressible sharp,

abrupt cry of grief, the most distressing sound that ears can hear. The

girl was perfectly unmoved. Hardened beyond all hope of redemption, she

listened doggedly to her motherâs entreaties, whatever they were: and,

beyond inquiring after âJem,â and eagerly catching at the few halfpence

her miserable parent had brought her, took no more apparent interest in

the conversation than the most unconcerned spectators. Heaven knows

there were enough of them, in the persons of the other prisoners in the

yard, who were no more concerned by what was passing before their eyes,

and within their hearing, than if they were blind and deaf. Why should

they be? Inside the prison, and out, such scenes were too familiar to

them, to excite even a passing thought, unless of ridicule or contempt

for feelings which they had long since forgotten.

A little farther on, a squalid-looking woman in a slovenly,

thick-bordered cap, with her arms muffled in a large red shawl, the

fringed ends of which straggled nearly to the bottom of a dirty white

apron, was communicating some instructions to \_her\_ visitorâher daughter

evidently. The girl was thinly clad, and shaking with the cold. Some

ordinary word of recognition passed between her and her mother when she

appeared at the grating, but neither hope, condolence, regret, nor

affection was expressed on either side. The mother whispered her

instructions, and the girl received them with her pinched-up,

half-starved features twisted into an expression of careful cunning. It

was some scheme for the womanâs defence that she was disclosing, perhaps;

and a sullen smile came over the girlâs face for an instant, as if she

were pleased: not so much at the probability of her motherâs liberation,

as at the chance of her âgetting offâ in spite of her prosecutors. The

dialogue was soon concluded; and with the same careless indifference with

which they had approached each other, the mother turned towards the inner

end of the yard, and the girl to the gate at which she had entered.

The girl belonged to a classâunhappily but too extensiveâthe very

existence of which, should make menâs hearts bleed. Barely past her

childhood, it required but a glance to discover that she was one of those

children, born and bred in neglect and vice, who have never known what

childhood is: who have never been taught to love and court a parentâs

smile, or to dread a parentâs frown. The thousand nameless endearments

of childhood, its gaiety and its innocence, are alike unknown to them.

They have entered at once upon the stern realities and miseries of life,

and to their better nature it is almost hopeless to appeal in

after-times, by any of the references which will awaken, if it be only

for a moment, some good feeling in ordinary bosoms, however corrupt they

may have become. Talk to \_them\_ of parental solicitude, the happy days

of childhood, and the merry games of infancy! Tell them of hunger and

the streets, beggary and stripes, the gin-shop, the station-house, and

the pawnbrokerâs, and they will understand you.

Two or three women were standing at different parts of the grating,

conversing with their friends, but a very large proportion of the

prisoners appeared to have no friends at all, beyond such of their old

companions as might happen to be within the walls. So, passing hastily

down the yard, and pausing only for an instant to notice the little

incidents we have just recorded, we were conducted up a clean and

well-lighted flight of stone stairs to one of the wards. There are

several in this part of the building, but a description of one is a

description of the whole.

It was a spacious, bare, whitewashed apartment, lighted, of course, by

windows looking into the interior of the prison, but far more light and

airy than one could reasonably expect to find in such a situation. There

was a large fire with a deal table before it, round which ten or a dozen

women were seated on wooden forms at dinner. Along both sides of the

room ran a shelf; below it, at regular intervals, a row of large hooks

were fixed in the wall, on each of which was hung the sleeping mat of a

prisoner: her rug and blanket being folded up, and placed on the shelf

above. At night, these mats are placed on the floor, each beneath the

hook on which it hangs during the day; and the ward is thus made to

answer the purposes both of a day-room and sleeping apartment. Over the

fireplace, was a large sheet of pasteboard, on which were displayed a

variety of texts from Scripture, which were also scattered about the room

in scraps about the size and shape of the copy-slips which are used in

schools. On the table was a sufficient provision of a kind of stewed

beef and brown bread, in pewter dishes, which are kept perfectly bright,

and displayed on shelves in great order and regularity when they are not

in use.

The women rose hastily, on our entrance, and retired in a hurried manner

to either side of the fireplace. They were all cleanlyâmany of them

decentlyâattired, and there was nothing peculiar, either in their

appearance or demeanour. One or two resumed the needlework which they

had probably laid aside at the commencement of their meal; others gazed

at the visitors with listless curiosity; and a few retired behind their

companions to the very end of the room, as if desirous to avoid even the

casual observation of the strangers. Some old Irish women, both in this

and other wards, to whom the thing was no novelty, appeared perfectly

indifferent to our presence, and remained standing close to the seats

from which they had just risen; but the general feeling among the females

seemed to be one of uneasiness during the period of our stay among them:

which was very brief. Not a word was uttered during the time of our

remaining, unless, indeed, by the wardswoman in reply to some question

which we put to the turnkey who accompanied us. In every ward on the

female side, a wardswoman is appointed to preserve order, and a similar

regulation is adopted among the males. The wardsmen and wardswomen are

all prisoners, selected for good conduct. They alone are allowed the

privilege of sleeping on bedsteads; a small stump bedstead being placed

in every ward for that purpose. On both sides of the gaol, is a small

receiving-room, to which prisoners are conducted on their first

reception, and whence they cannot be removed until they have been

examined by the surgeon of the prison. {161}

Retracing our steps to the dismal passage in which we found ourselves at

first (and which, by-the-bye, contains three or four dark cells for the

accommodation of refractory prisoners), we were led through a narrow yard

to the âschoolââa portion of the prison set apart for boys under fourteen

years of age. In a tolerable-sized room, in which were writing-materials

and some copy-books, was the schoolmaster, with a couple of his pupils;

the remainder having been fetched from an adjoining apartment, the whole

were drawn up in line for our inspection. There were fourteen of them in

all, some with shoes, some without; some in pinafores without jackets,

others in jackets without pinafores, and one in scarce anything at all.

The whole number, without an exception we believe, had been committed for

trial on charges of pocket-picking; and fourteen such terrible little

faces we never beheld.âThere was not one redeeming feature among themânot

a glance of honestyânot a wink expressive of anything but the gallows and

the hulks, in the whole collection. As to anything like shame or

contrition, that was entirely out of the question. They were evidently

quite gratified at being thought worth the trouble of looking at; their

idea appeared to be, that we had come to see Newgate as a grand affair,

and that they were an indispensable part of the show; and every boy as he

âfell inâ to the line, actually seemed as pleased and important as if he

had done something excessively meritorious in getting there at all. We

never looked upon a more disagreeable sight, because we never saw

fourteen such hopeless creatures of neglect, before.

On either side of the school-yard is a yard for men, in one of whichâthat

towards Newgate-streetâprisoners of the more respectable class are

confined. Of the other, we have little description to offer, as the

different wards necessarily partake of the same character. They are

provided, like the wards on the womenâs side, with mats and rugs, which

are disposed of in the same manner during the day; the only very striking

difference between their appearance and that of the wards inhabited by

the females, is the utter absence of any employment. Huddled together on

two opposite forms, by the fireside, sit twenty men perhaps; here, a boy

in livery; there, a man in a rough great-coat and top-boots; farther on,

a desperate-looking fellow in his shirt-sleeves, with an old Scotch cap

upon his shaggy head; near him again, a tall ruffian, in a smock-frock;

next to him, a miserable being of distressed appearance, with his head

resting on his hand;âall alike in one respect, all idle and listless.

When they do leave the fire, sauntering moodily about, lounging in the

window, or leaning against the wall, vacantly swinging their bodies to

and fro. With the exception of a man reading an old newspaper, in two or

three instances, this was the case in every ward we entered.

The only communication these men have with their friends, is through two

close iron gratings, with an intermediate space of about a yard in width

between the two, so that nothing can be handed across, nor can the

prisoner have any communication by touch with the person who visits him.

The married men have a separate grating, at which to see their wives, but

its construction is the same.

The prison chapel is situated at the back of the governorâs house: the

latter having no windows looking into the interior of the prison.

Whether the associations connected with the placeâthe knowledge that here

a portion of the burial service is, on some dreadful occasions, performed

over the quick and not upon the deadâcast over it a still more gloomy and

sombre air than art has imparted to it, we know not, but its appearance

is very striking. There is something in a silent and deserted place of

worship, solemn and impressive at any time; and the very dissimilarity of

this one from any we have been accustomed to, only enhances the

impression. The meanness of its appointmentsâthe bare and scanty pulpit,

with the paltry painted pillars on either sideâthe womenâs gallery with

its great heavy curtainâthe menâs with its unpainted benches and dingy

frontâthe tottering little table at the altar, with the commandments on

the wall above it, scarcely legible through lack of paint, and dust and

dampâso unlike the velvet and gilding, the marble and wood, of a modern

churchâare strange and striking. There is one object, too, which rivets

the attention and fascinates the gaze, and from which we may turn

horror-stricken in vain, for the recollection of it will haunt us, waking

and sleeping, for a long time afterwards. Immediately below the

reading-desk, on the floor of the chapel, and forming the most

conspicuous object in its little area, is \_the condemned pew\_; a huge

black pen, in which the wretched people, who are singled out for death,

are placed on the Sunday preceding their execution, in sight of all their

fellow-prisoners, from many of whom they may have been separated but a

week before, to hear prayers for their own souls, to join in the

responses of their own burial service, and to listen to an address,

warning their recent companions to take example by their fate, and urging

themselves, while there is yet timeânearly four-and-twenty hoursâto

âturn, and flee from the wrath to come!â Imagine what have been the

feelings of the men whom that fearful pew has enclosed, and of whom,

between the gallows and the knife, no mortal remnant may now remain!

Think of the hopeless clinging to life to the last, and the wild despair,

far exceeding in anguish the felonâs death itself, by which they have

heard the certainty of their speedy transmission to another world, with

all their crimes upon their heads, rung into their ears by the

officiating clergyman!

At one timeâand at no distant period eitherâthe coffins of the men about

to be executed, were placed in that pew, upon the seat by their side,

during the whole service. It may seem incredible, but it is true. Let

us hope that the increased spirit of civilisation and humanity which

abolished this frightful and degrading custom, may extend itself to other

usages equally barbarous; usages which have not even the plea of utility

in their defence, as every yearâs experience has shown them to be more

and more inefficacious.

Leaving the chapel, descending to the passage so frequently alluded to,

and crossing the yard before noticed as being allotted to prisoners of a

more respectable description than the generality of men confined here,

the visitor arrives at a thick iron gate of great size and strength.

Having been admitted through it by the turnkey on duty, he turns sharp

round to the left, and pauses before another gate; and, having passed

this last barrier, he stands in the most terrible part of this gloomy

buildingâthe condemned ward.

The press-yard, well known by name to newspaper readers, from its

frequent mention in accounts of executions, is at the corner of the

building, and next to the ordinaryâs house, in Newgate-street: running

from Newgate-street, towards the centre of the prison, parallel with

Newgate-market. It is a long, narrow court, of which a portion of the

wall in Newgate-street forms one end, and the gate the other. At the

upper end, on the left handâthat is, adjoining the wall in

Newgate-streetâis a cistern of water, and at the bottom a double grating

(of which the gate itself forms a part) similar to that before described.

Through these grates the prisoners are allowed to see their friends; a

turnkey always remaining in the vacant space between, during the whole

interview. Immediately on the right as you enter, is a building

containing the press-room, day-room, and cells; the yard is on every side

surrounded by lofty walls guarded by \_chevaux de frise\_; and the whole is

under the constant inspection of vigilant and experienced turnkeys.

In the first apartment into which we were conductedâwhich was at the top

of a staircase, and immediately over the press-roomâwere five-and-twenty

or thirty prisoners, all under sentence of death, awaiting the result of

the recorderâs reportâmen of all ages and appearances, from a hardened

old offender with swarthy face and grizzly beard of three daysâ growth,

to a handsome boy, not fourteen years old, and of singularly youthful

appearance even for that age, who had been condemned for burglary. There

was nothing remarkable in the appearance of these prisoners. One or two

decently-dressed men were brooding with a dejected air over the fire;

several little groups of two or three had been engaged in conversation at

the upper end of the room, or in the windows; and the remainder were

crowded round a young man seated at a table, who appeared to be engaged

in teaching the younger ones to write. The room was large, airy, and

clean. There was very little anxiety or mental suffering depicted in the

countenance of any of the men;âthey had all been sentenced to death, it

is true, and the recorderâs report had not yet been made; but, we

question whether there was a man among them, notwithstanding, who did not

\_know\_ that although he had undergone the ceremony, it never was intended

that his life should be sacrificed. On the table lay a Testament, but

there were no tokens of its having been in recent use.

In the press-room below, were three men, the nature of whose offence

rendered it necessary to separate them, even from their companions in

guilt. It is a long, sombre room, with two windows sunk into the stone

wall, and here the wretched men are pinioned on the morning of their

execution, before moving towards the scaffold. The fate of one of these

prisoners was uncertain; some mitigatory circumstances having come to

light since his trial, which had been humanely represented in the proper

quarter. The other two had nothing to expect from the mercy of the

crown; their doom was sealed; no plea could be urged in extenuation of

their crime, and they well knew that for them there was no hope in this

world. âThe two short ones,â the turnkey whispered, âwere dead men.â

The man to whom we have alluded as entertaining some hopes of escape, was

lounging, at the greatest distance he could place between himself and his

companions, in the window nearest to the door. He was probably aware of

our approach, and had assumed an air of courageous indifference; his face

was purposely averted towards the window, and he stirred not an inch

while we were present. The other two men were at the upper end of the

room. One of them, who was imperfectly seen in the dim light, had his

back towards us, and was stooping over the fire, with his right arm on

the mantel-piece, and his head sunk upon it. The other was leaning on

the sill of the farthest window. The light fell full upon him, and

communicated to his pale, haggard face, and disordered hair, an

appearance which, at that distance, was ghastly. His cheek rested upon

his hand; and, with his face a little raised, and his eyes wildly staring

before him, he seemed to be unconsciously intent on counting the chinks

in the opposite wall. We passed this room again afterwards. The first

man was pacing up and down the court with a firm military stepâhe had

been a soldier in the foot-guardsâand a cloth cap jauntily thrown on one

side of his head. He bowed respectfully to our conductor, and the salute

was returned. The other two still remained in the positions we have

described, and were as motionless as statues. {165}

A few paces up the yard, and forming a continuation of the building, in

which are the two rooms we have just quitted, lie the condemned cells.

The entrance is by a narrow and obscure stair-case leading to a dark

passage, in which a charcoal stove casts a lurid tint over the objects in

its immediate vicinity, and diffuses something like warmth around. From

the left-hand side of this passage, the massive door of every cell on the

story opens; and from it alone can they be approached. There are three

of these passages, and three of these ranges of cells, one above the

other; but in size, furniture and appearance, they are all precisely

alike. Prior to the recorderâs report being made, all the prisoners

under sentence of death are removed from the day-room at five oâclock in

the afternoon, and locked up in these cells, where they are allowed a

candle until ten oâclock; and here they remain until seven next morning.

When the warrant for a prisonerâs execution arrives, he is removed to the

cells and confined in one of them until he leaves it for the scaffold.

He is at liberty to walk in the yard; but, both in his walks and in his

cell, he is constantly attended by a turnkey who never leaves him on any

pretence.

We entered the first cell. It was a stone dungeon, eight feet long by

six wide, with a bench at the upper end, under which were a common rug, a

bible, and prayer-book. An iron candlestick was fixed into the wall at

the side; and a small high window in the back admitted as much air and

light as could struggle in between a double row of heavy, crossed iron

bars. It contained no other furniture of any description.

Conceive the situation of a man, spending his last night on earth in this

cell. Buoyed up with some vague and undefined hope of reprieve, he knew

not whyâindulging in some wild and visionary idea of escaping, he knew

not howâhour after hour of the three preceding days allowed him for

preparation, has fled with a speed which no man living would deem

possible, for none but this dying man can know. He has wearied his

friends with entreaties, exhausted the attendants with importunities,

neglected in his feverish restlessness the timely warnings of his

spiritual consoler; and, now that the illusion is at last dispelled, now

that eternity is before him and guilt behind, now that his fears of death

amount almost to madness, and an overwhelming sense of his helpless,

hopeless state rushes upon him, he is lost and stupefied, and has neither

thoughts to turn to, nor power to call upon, the Almighty Being, from

whom alone he can seek mercy and forgiveness, and before whom his

repentance can alone avail.

Hours have glided by, and still he sits upon the same stone bench with

folded arms, heedless alike of the fast decreasing time before him, and

the urgent entreaties of the good man at his side. The feeble light is

wasting gradually, and the deathlike stillness of the street without,

broken only by the rumbling of some passing vehicle which echoes

mournfully through the empty yards, warns him that the night is waning

fast away. The deep bell of St. Paulâs strikesâone! He heard it; it has

roused him. Seven hours left! He paces the narrow limits of his cell

with rapid strides, cold drops of terror starting on his forehead, and

every muscle of his frame quivering with agony. Seven hours! He suffers

himself to be led to his seat, mechanically takes the bible which is

placed in his hand, and tries to read and listen. No: his thoughts will

wander. The book is torn and soiled by useâand like the book he read his

lessons in, at school, just forty years ago! He has never bestowed a

thought upon it, perhaps, since he left it as a child: and yet the place,

the time, the roomânay, the very boys he played with, crowd as vividly

before him as if they were scenes of yesterday; and some forgotten

phrase, some childish word, rings in his ears like the echo of one

uttered but a minute since. The voice of the clergyman recalls him to

himself. He is reading from the sacred book its solemn promises of

pardon for repentance, and its awful denunciation of obdurate men. He

falls upon his knees and clasps his hands to pray. Hush! what sound was

that? He starts upon his feet. It cannot be two yet. Hark! Two

quarters have struck;âthe thirdâthe fourth. It is! Six hours left.

Tell him not of repentance! Six hoursâ repentance for eight times six

years of guilt and sin! He buries his face in his hands, and throws

himself on the bench.

Worn with watching and excitement, he sleeps, and the same unsettled

state of mind pursues him in his dreams. An insupportable load is taken

from his breast; he is walking with his wife in a pleasant field, with

the bright sky above them, and a fresh and boundless prospect on every

sideâhow different from the stone walls of Newgate! She is lookingânot

as she did when he saw her for the last time in that dreadful place, but

as she used when he loved herâlong, long ago, before misery and

ill-treatment had altered her looks, and vice had changed his nature, and

she is leaning upon his arm, and looking up into his face with tenderness

and affectionâand he does \_not\_ strike her now, nor rudely shake her from

him. And oh! how glad he is to tell her all he had forgotten in that

last hurried interview, and to fall on his knees before her and fervently

beseech her pardon for all the unkindness and cruelty that wasted her

form and broke her heart! The scene suddenly changes. He is on his

trial again: there are the judge and jury, and prosecutors, and

witnesses, just as they were before. How full the court isâwhat a sea of

headsâwith a gallows, too, and a scaffoldâand how all those people stare

at \_him\_! Verdict, âGuilty.â No matter; he will escape.

The night is dark and cold, the gates have been left open, and in an

instant he is in the street, flying from the scene of his imprisonment

like the wind. The streets are cleared, the open fields are gained and

the broad, wide country lies before him. Onward he dashes in the midst

of darkness, over hedge and ditch, through mud and pool, bounding from

spot to spot with a speed and lightness, astonishing even to himself. At

length he pauses; he must be safe from pursuit now; he will stretch

himself on that bank and sleep till sunrise.

A period of unconsciousness succeeds. He wakes, cold and wretched. The

dull, gray light of morning is stealing into the cell, and falls upon the

form of the attendant turnkey. Confused by his dreams, he starts from

his uneasy bed in momentary uncertainty. It is but momentary. Every

object in the narrow cell is too frightfully real to admit of doubt or

mistake. He is the condemned felon again, guilty and despairing; and in

two hours more will be dead.

CHARACTERS

CHAPTER IâTHOUGHTS ABOUT PEOPLE

It is strange with how little notice, good, bad, or indifferent, a man

may live and die in London. He awakens no sympathy in the breast of any

single person; his existence is a matter of interest to no one save

himself; he cannot be said to be forgotten when he dies, for no one

remembered him when he was alive. There is a numerous class of people in

this great metropolis who seem not to possess a single friend, and whom

nobody appears to care for. Urged by imperative necessity in the first

instance, they have resorted to London in search of employment, and the

means of subsistence. It is hard, we know, to break the ties which bind

us to our homes and friends, and harder still to efface the thousand

recollections of happy days and old times, which have been slumbering in

our bosoms for years, and only rush upon the mind, to bring before it

associations connected with the friends we have left, the scenes we have

beheld too probably for the last time, and the hopes we once cherished,

but may entertain no more. These men, however, happily for themselves,

have long forgotten such thoughts. Old country friends have died or

emigrated; former correspondents have become lost, like themselves, in

the crowd and turmoil of some busy city; and they have gradually settled

down into mere passive creatures of habit and endurance.

We were seated in the enclosure of St. Jamesâs Park the other day, when

our attention was attracted by a man whom we immediately put down in our

own mind as one of this class. He was a tall, thin, pale person, in a

black coat, scanty gray trousers, little pinched-up gaiters, and brown

beaver gloves. He had an umbrella in his handânot for use, for the day

was fineâbut, evidently, because he always carried one to the office in

the morning. He walked up and down before the little patch of grass on

which the chairs are placed for hire, not as if he were doing it for

pleasure or recreation, but as if it were a matter of compulsion, just as

he would walk to the office every morning from the back settlements of

Islington. It was Monday; he had escaped for four-and-twenty hours from

the thraldom of the desk; and was walking here for exercise and

amusementâperhaps for the first time in his life. We were inclined to

think he had never had a holiday before, and that he did not know what to

do with himself. Children were playing on the grass; groups of people

were loitering about, chatting and laughing; but the man walked steadily

up and down, unheeding and unheeded his spare, pale face looking as if it

were incapable of bearing the expression of curiosity or interest.

There was something in the manâs manner and appearance which told us, we

fancied, his whole life, or rather his whole day, for a man of this sort

has no variety of days. We thought we almost saw the dingy little back

office into which he walks every morning, hanging his hat on the same

peg, and placing his legs beneath the same desk: first, taking off that

black coat which lasts the year through, and putting on the one which did

duty last year, and which he keeps in his desk to save the other. There

he sits till five oâclock, working on, all day, as regularly as the dial

over the mantel-piece, whose loud ticking is as monotonous as his whole

existence: only raising his head when some one enters the counting-house,

or when, in the midst of some difficult calculation, he looks up to the

ceiling as if there were inspiration in the dusty skylight with a green

knot in the centre of every pane of glass. About five, or half-past, he

slowly dismounts from his accustomed stool, and again changing his coat,

proceeds to his usual dining-place, somewhere near Bucklersbury. The

waiter recites the bill of fare in a rather confidential mannerâfor he is

a regular customerâand after inquiring âWhatâs in the best cut?â and

âWhat was up last?â he orders a small plate of roast beef, with greens,

and half-a-pint of porter. He has a small plate to-day, because greens

are a penny more than potatoes, and he had âtwo breadsâ yesterday, with

the additional enormity of âa cheeseâ the day before. This important

point settled, he hangs up his hatâhe took it off the moment he sat

downâand bespeaks the paper after the next gentleman. If he can get it

while he is at dinner, he eats with much greater zest; balancing it

against the water-bottle, and eating a bit of beef, and reading a line or

two, alternately. Exactly at five minutes before the hour is up, he

produces a shilling, pays the reckoning, carefully deposits the change in

his waistcoat-pocket (first deducting a penny for the waiter), and

returns to the office, from which, if it is not foreign post night, he

again sallies forth, in about half an hour. He then walks home, at his

usual pace, to his little back room at Islington, where he has his tea;

perhaps solacing himself during the meal with the conversation of his

landladyâs little boy, whom he occasionally rewards with a penny, for

solving problems in simple addition. Sometimes, there is a letter or two

to take up to his employerâs, in Russell-square; and then, the wealthy

man of business, hearing his voice, calls out from the

dining-parlour,ââCome in, Mr. Smith:â and Mr. Smith, putting his hat at

the feet of one of the hall chairs, walks timidly in, and being

condescendingly desired to sit down, carefully tucks his legs under his

chair, and sits at a considerable distance from the table while he drinks

the glass of sherry which is poured out for him by the eldest boy, and

after drinking which, he backs and slides out of the room, in a state of

nervous agitation from which he does not perfectly recover, until he

finds himself once more in the Islington-road. Poor, harmless creatures

such men are; contented but not happy; broken-spirited and humbled, they

may feel no pain, but they never know pleasure.

Compare these men with another class of beings who, like them, have

neither friend nor companion, but whose position in society is the result

of their own choice. These are generally old fellows with white heads

and red faces, addicted to port wine and Hessian boots, who from some

cause, real or imaginaryâgenerally the former, the excellent reason being

that they are rich, and their relations poorâgrow suspicious of

everybody, and do the misanthropical in chambers, taking great delight in

thinking themselves unhappy, and making everybody they come near,

miserable. You may see such men as these, anywhere; you will know them

at coffee-houses by their discontented exclamations and the luxury of

their dinners; at theatres, by their always sitting in the same place and

looking with a jaundiced eye on all the young people near them; at

church, by the pomposity with which they enter, and the loud tone in

which they repeat the responses; at parties, by their getting cross at

whist and hating music. An old fellow of this kind will have his

chambers splendidly furnished, and collect books, plate, and pictures

about him in profusion; not so much for his own gratification, as to be

superior to those who have the desire, but not the means, to compete with

him. He belongs to two or three clubs, and is envied, and flattered, and

hated by the members of them all. Sometimes he will be appealed to by a

poor relationâa married nephew perhapsâfor some little assistance: and

then he will declaim with honest indignation on the improvidence of young

married people, the worthlessness of a wife, the insolence of having a

family, the atrocity of getting into debt with a hundred and twenty-five

pounds a year, and other unpardonable crimes; winding up his exhortations

with a complacent review of his own conduct, and a delicate allusion to

parochial relief. He dies, some day after dinner, of apoplexy, having

bequeathed his property to a Public Society, and the Institution erects a

tablet to his memory, expressive of their admiration of his Christian

conduct in this world, and their comfortable conviction of his happiness

in the next.

But, next to our very particular friends, hackney-coachmen, cabmen and

cads, whom we admire in proportion to the extent of their cool impudence

and perfect self-possession, there is no class of people who amuse us

more than London apprentices. They are no longer an organised body,

bound down by solemn compact to terrify his Majestyâs subjects whenever

it pleases them to take offence in their heads and staves in their hands.

They are only bound, now, by indentures, and, as to their valour, it is

easily restrained by the wholesome dread of the New Police, and a

perspective view of a damp station-house, terminating in a police-office

and a reprimand. They are still, however, a peculiar class, and not the

less pleasant for being inoffensive. Can any one fail to have noticed

them in the streets on Sunday? And were there ever such harmless efforts

at the grand and magnificent as the young fellows display! We walked

down the Strand, a Sunday or two ago, behind a little group; and they

furnished food for our amusement the whole way. They had come out of

some part of the city; it was between three and four oâclock in the

afternoon; and they were on their way to the Park. There were four of

them, all arm-in-arm, with white kid gloves like so many bridegrooms,

light trousers of unprecedented patterns, and coats for which the English

language has yet no nameâa kind of cross between a great-coat and a

surtout, with the collar of the one, the skirts of the other, and pockets

peculiar to themselves.

Each of the gentlemen carried a thick stick, with a large tassel at the

top, which he occasionally twirled gracefully round; and the whole four,

by way of looking easy and unconcerned, were walking with a paralytic

swagger irresistibly ludicrous. One of the party had a watch about the

size and shape of a reasonable Ribstone pippin, jammed into his

waistcoat-pocket, which he carefully compared with the clocks at St.

Clementâs and the New Church, the illuminated clock at Exeter âChange,

the clock of St. Martinâs Church, and the clock of the Horse Guards.

When they at last arrived in St. Jamesâs Park, the member of the party

who had the best-made boots on, hired a second chair expressly for his

feet, and flung himself on this two-pennyworth of sylvan luxury with an

air which levelled all distinctions between Brookesâs and Snooksâs,

Crockfordâs and Bagnigge Wells.

We may smile at such people, but they can never excite our anger. They

are usually on the best terms with themselves, and it follows almost as a

matter of course, in good humour with every one about them. Besides,

they are always the faint reflection of higher lights; and, if they do

display a little occasional foolery in their own proper persons, it is

surely more tolerable than precocious puppyism in the Quadrant, whiskered

dandyism in Regent-street and Pall-mall, or gallantry in its dotage

anywhere.

CHAPTER IIâA CHRISTMAS DINNER

Christmas time! That man must be a misanthrope indeed, in whose breast

something like a jovial feeling is not rousedâin whose mind some pleasant

associations are not awakenedâby the recurrence of Christmas. There are

people who will tell you that Christmas is not to them what it used to

be; that each succeeding Christmas has found some cherished hope, or

happy prospect, of the year before, dimmed or passed away; that the

present only serves to remind them of reduced circumstances and

straitened incomesâof the feasts they once bestowed on hollow friends,

and of the cold looks that meet them now, in adversity and misfortune.

Never heed such dismal reminiscences. There are few men who have lived

long enough in the world, who cannot call up such thoughts any day in the

year. Then do not select the merriest of the three hundred and

sixty-five for your doleful recollections, but draw your chair nearer the

blazing fireâfill the glass and send round the songâand if your room be

smaller than it was a dozen years ago, or if your glass be filled with

reeking punch, instead of sparkling wine, put a good face on the matter,

and empty it off-hand, and fill another, and troll off the old ditty you

used to sing, and thank God itâs no worse. Look on the merry faces of

your children (if you have any) as they sit round the fire. One little

seat may be empty; one slight form that gladdened the fatherâs heart, and

roused the motherâs pride to look upon, may not be there. Dwell not upon

the past; think not that one short year ago, the fair child now resolving

into dust, sat before you, with the bloom of health upon its cheek, and

the gaiety of infancy in its joyous eye. Reflect upon your present

blessingsâof which every man has manyânot on your past misfortunes, of

which all men have some. Fill your glass again, with a merry face and

contented heart. Our life on it, but your Christmas shall be merry, and

your new year a happy one!

Who can be insensible to the outpourings of good feeling, and the honest

interchange of affectionate attachment, which abound at this season of

the year? A Christmas family-party! We know nothing in nature more

delightful! There seems a magic in the very name of Christmas. Petty

jealousies and discords are forgotten; social feelings are awakened, in

bosoms to which they have long been strangers; father and son, or brother

and sister, who have met and passed with averted gaze, or a look of cold

recognition, for months before, proffer and return the cordial embrace,

and bury their past animosities in their present happiness. Kindly

hearts that have yearned towards each other, but have been withheld by

false notions of pride and self-dignity, are again reunited, and all is

kindness and benevolence! Would that Christmas lasted the whole year

through (as it ought), and that the prejudices and passions which deform

our better nature, were never called into action among those to whom they

should ever be strangers!

The Christmas family-party that we mean, is not a mere assemblage of

relations, got up at a week or twoâs notice, originating this year,

having no family precedent in the last, and not likely to be repeated in

the next. No. It is an annual gathering of all the accessible members

of the family, young or old, rich or poor; and all the children look

forward to it, for two months beforehand, in a fever of anticipation.

Formerly, it was held at grandpapaâs; but grandpapa getting old, and

grandmamma getting old too, and rather infirm, they have given up

house-keeping, and domesticated themselves with uncle George; so, the

party always takes place at uncle Georgeâs house, but grandmamma sends in

most of the good things, and grandpapa always \_will\_ toddle down, all the

way to Newgate-market, to buy the turkey, which he engages a porter to

bring home behind him in triumph, always insisting on the manâs being

rewarded with a glass of spirits, over and above his hire, to drink âa

merry Christmas and a happy new yearâ to aunt George. As to grandmamma,

she is very secret and mysterious for two or three days beforehand, but

not sufficiently so, to prevent rumours getting afloat that she has

purchased a beautiful new cap with pink ribbons for each of the servants,

together with sundry books, and pen-knives, and pencil-cases, for the

younger branches; to say nothing of divers secret additions to the order

originally given by aunt George at the pastry-cookâs, such as another

dozen of mince-pies for the dinner, and a large plum-cake for the

children.

On Christmas-eve, grandmamma is always in excellent spirits, and after

employing all the children, during the day, in stoning the plums, and all

that, insists, regularly every year, on uncle George coming down into the

kitchen, taking off his coat, and stirring the pudding for half an hour

or so, which uncle George good-humouredly does, to the vociferous delight

of the children and servants. The evening concludes with a glorious game

of blind-manâs-buff, in an early stage of which grandpapa takes great

care to be caught, in order that he may have an opportunity of displaying

his dexterity.

On the following morning, the old couple, with as many of the children as

the pew will hold, go to church in great state: leaving aunt George at

home dusting decanters and filling casters, and uncle George carrying

bottles into the dining-parlour, and calling for corkscrews, and getting

into everybodyâs way.

When the church-party return to lunch, grandpapa produces a small sprig

of mistletoe from his pocket, and tempts the boys to kiss their little

cousins under itâa proceeding which affords both the boys and the old

gentleman unlimited satisfaction, but which rather outrages grandmammaâs

ideas of decorum, until grandpapa says, that when he was just thirteen

years and three months old, \_he\_ kissed grandmamma under a mistletoe too,

on which the children clap their hands, and laugh very heartily, as do

aunt George and uncle George; and grandmamma looks pleased, and says,

with a benevolent smile, that grandpapa was an impudent young dog, on

which the children laugh very heartily again, and grandpapa more heartily

than any of them.

But all these diversions are nothing to the subsequent excitement when

grandmamma in a high cap, and slate-coloured silk gown; and grandpapa

with a beautifully plaited shirt-frill, and white neckerchief; seat

themselves on one side of the drawing-room fire, with uncle Georgeâs

children and little cousins innumerable, seated in the front, waiting the

arrival of the expected visitors. Suddenly a hackney-coach is heard to

stop, and uncle George, who has been looking out of the window, exclaims

âHereâs Jane!â on which the children rush to the door, and helter-skelter

down-stairs; and uncle Robert and aunt Jane, and the dear little baby,

and the nurse, and the whole party, are ushered up-stairs amidst

tumultuous shouts of âOh, my!â from the children, and frequently repeated

warnings not to hurt baby from the nurse. And grandpapa takes the child,

and grandmamma kisses her daughter, and the confusion of this first entry

has scarcely subsided, when some other aunts and uncles with more cousins

arrive, and the grown-up cousins flirt with each other, and so do the

little cousins too, for that matter, and nothing is to be heard but a

confused din of talking, laughing, and merriment.

A hesitating double knock at the street-door, heard during a momentary

pause in the conversation, excites a general inquiry of âWhoâs that?â and

two or three children, who have been standing at the window, announce in

a low voice, that itâs âpoor aunt Margaret.â Upon which, aunt George

leaves the room to welcome the new-comer; and grandmamma draws herself

up, rather stiff and stately; for Margaret married a poor man without her

consent, and poverty not being a sufficiently weighty punishment for her

offence, has been discarded by her friends, and debarred the society of

her dearest relatives. But Christmas has come round, and the unkind

feelings that have struggled against better dispositions during the year,

have melted away before its genial influence, like half-formed ice

beneath the morning sun. It is not difficult in a moment of angry

feeling for a parent to denounce a disobedient child; but, to banish her

at a period of general good-will and hilarity, from the hearth, round

which she has sat on so many anniversaries of the same day, expanding by

slow degrees from infancy to girlhood, and then bursting, almost

imperceptibly, into a woman, is widely different. The air of conscious

rectitude, and cold forgiveness, which the old lady has assumed, sits ill

upon her; and when the poor girl is led in by her sister, pale in looks

and broken in hopeânot from poverty, for that she could bear, but from

the consciousness of undeserved neglect, and unmerited unkindnessâit is

easy to see how much of it is assumed. A momentary pause succeeds; the

girl breaks suddenly from her sister and throws herself, sobbing, on her

motherâs neck. The father steps hastily forward, and takes her husbandâs

hand. Friends crowd round to offer their hearty congratulations, and

happiness and harmony again prevail.

As to the dinner, itâs perfectly delightfulânothing goes wrong, and

everybody is in the very best of spirits, and disposed to please and be

pleased. Grandpapa relates a circumstantial account of the purchase of

the turkey, with a slight digression relative to the purchase of previous

turkeys, on former Christmas-days, which grandmamma corroborates in the

minutest particular. Uncle George tells stories, and carves poultry, and

takes wine, and jokes with the children at the side-table, and winks at

the cousins that are making love, or being made love to, and exhilarates

everybody with his good humour and hospitality; and when, at last, a

stout servant staggers in with a gigantic pudding, with a sprig of holly

in the top, there is such a laughing, and shouting, and clapping of

little chubby hands, and kicking up of fat dumpy legs, as can only be

equalled by the applause with which the astonishing feat of pouring

lighted brandy into mince-pies, is received by the younger visitors.

Then the dessert!âand the wine!âand the fun! Such beautiful speeches,

and \_such\_ songs, from aunt Margaretâs husband, who turns out to be such

a nice man, and \_so\_ attentive to grandmamma! Even grandpapa not only

sings his annual song with unprecedented vigour, but on being honoured

with an unanimous \_encore\_, according to annual custom, actually comes

out with a new one which nobody but grandmamma ever heard before; and a

young scapegrace of a cousin, who has been in some disgrace with the old

people, for certain heinous sins of omission and commissionâneglecting to

call, and persisting in drinking Burton Aleâastonishes everybody into

convulsions of laughter by volunteering the most extraordinary comic

songs that ever were heard. And thus the evening passes, in a strain of

rational good-will and cheerfulness, doing more to awaken the sympathies

of every member of the party in behalf of his neighbour, and to

perpetuate their good feeling during the ensuing year, than half the

homilies that have ever been written, by half the Divines that have ever

lived.

CHAPTER IIIâTHE NEW YEAR

Next to Christmas-day, the most pleasant annual epoch in existence is the

advent of the New Year. There are a lachrymose set of people who usher

in the New Year with watching and fasting, as if they were bound to

attend as chief mourners at the obsequies of the old one. Now, we cannot

but think it a great deal more complimentary, both to the old year that

has rolled away, and to the New Year that is just beginning to dawn upon

us, to see the old fellow out, and the new one in, with gaiety and glee.

There must have been some few occurrences in the past year to which we

can look back, with a smile of cheerful recollection, if not with a

feeling of heartfelt thankfulness. And we are bound by every rule of

justice and equity to give the New Year credit for being a good one,

until he proves himself unworthy the confidence we repose in him.

This is our view of the matter; and entertaining it, notwithstanding our

respect for the old year, one of the few remaining moments of whose

existence passes away with every word we write, here we are, seated by

our fireside on this last night of the old year, one thousand eight

hundred and thirty-six, penning this article with as jovial a face as if

nothing extraordinary had happened, or was about to happen, to disturb

our good humour.

Hackney-coaches and carriages keep rattling up the street and down the

street in rapid succession, conveying, doubtless, smartly-dressed

coachfuls to crowded parties; loud and repeated double knocks at the

house with green blinds, opposite, announce to the whole neighbourhood

that thereâs one large party in the street at all events; and we saw

through the window, and through the fog too, till it grew so thick that

we rung for candles, and drew our curtains, pastry-cooksâ men with green

boxes on their heads, and rout-furniture-warehouse-carts, with cane seats

and French lamps, hurrying to the numerous houses where an annual

festival is held in honour of the occasion.

We can fancy one of these parties, we think, as well as if we were duly

dress-coated and pumped, and had just been announced at the drawing-room

door.

Take the house with the green blinds for instance. We know it is a

quadrille party, because we saw some men taking up the front drawing-room

carpet while we sat at breakfast this morning, and if further evidence be

required, and we must tell the truth, we just now saw one of the young

ladies âdoingâ another of the young ladiesâ hair, near one of the bedroom

windows, in an unusual style of splendour, which nothing else but a

quadrille party could possibly justify.

The master of the house with the green blinds is in a public office; we

know the fact by the cut of his coat, the tie of his neckcloth, and the

self-satisfaction of his gaitâthe very green blinds themselves have a

Somerset House air about them.

Hark!âa cab! Thatâs a junior clerk in the same office; a tidy sort of

young man, with a tendency to cold and corns, who comes in a pair of

boots with black cloth fronts, and brings his shoes in his coat-pocket,

which shoes he is at this very moment putting on in the hall. Now he is

announced by the man in the passage to another man in a blue coat, who is

a disguised messenger from the office.

The man on the first landing precedes him to the drawing-room door. âMr.

Tupple!â shouts the messenger. âHow \_are\_ you, Tupple?â says the master

of the house, advancing from the fire, before which he has been talking

politics and airing himself. âMy dear, this is Mr. Tupple (a courteous

salute from the lady of the house); Tupple, my eldest daughter; Julia, my

dear, Mr. Tupple; Tupple, my other daughters; my son, sir;â Tupple rubs

his hands very hard, and smiles as if it were all capital fun, and keeps

constantly bowing and turning himself round, till the whole family have

been introduced, when he glides into a chair at the corner of the sofa,

and opens a miscellaneous conversation with the young ladies upon the

weather, and the theatres, and the old year, and the last new murder, and

the balloon, and the ladiesâ sleeves, and the festivities of the season,

and a great many other topics of small talk.

More double knocks! what an extensive party! what an incessant hum of

conversation and general sipping of coffee! We see Tupple now, in our

mindâs eye, in the height of his glory. He has just handed that stout

old ladyâs cup to the servant; and now, he dives among the crowd of young

men by the door, to intercept the other servant, and secure the

muffin-plate for the old ladyâs daughter, before he leaves the room; and

now, as he passes the sofa on his way back, he bestows a glance of

recognition and patronage upon the young ladies as condescending and

familiar as if he had known them from infancy.

Charming person Mr. Tuppleâperfect ladiesâ manâsuch a delightful

companion, too! Laugh!ânobody ever understood papaâs jokes half so well

as Mr. Tupple, who laughs himself into convulsions at every fresh burst

of facetiousness. Most delightful partner! talks through the whole set!

and although he does seem at first rather gay and frivolous, so romantic

and with so \_much\_ feeling! Quite a love. No great favourite with the

young men, certainly, who sneer at, and affect to despise him; but

everybody knows thatâs only envy, and they neednât give themselves the

trouble to depreciate his merits at any rate, for Ma says he shall be

asked to every future dinner-party, if itâs only to talk to people

between the courses, and distract their attention when thereâs any

unexpected delay in the kitchen.

At supper, Mr. Tupple shows to still greater advantage than he has done

throughout the evening, and when Pa requests every one to fill their

glasses for the purpose of drinking happiness throughout the year, Mr.

Tupple is \_so\_ droll: insisting on all the young ladies having their

glasses filled, notwithstanding their repeated assurances that they never

can, by any possibility, think of emptying them and subsequently begging

permission to say a few words on the sentiment which has just been

uttered by Paâwhen he makes one of the most brilliant and poetical

speeches that can possibly be imagined, about the old year and the new

one. After the toast has been drunk, and when the ladies have retired,

Mr. Tupple requests that every gentleman will do him the favour of

filling his glass, for he has a toast to propose: on which all the

gentlemen cry âHear! hear!â and pass the decanters accordingly: and Mr.

Tupple being informed by the master of the house that they are all

charged, and waiting for his toast, rises, and begs to remind the

gentlemen present, how much they have been delighted by the dazzling

array of elegance and beauty which the drawing-room has exhibited that

night, and how their senses have been charmed, and their hearts

captivated, by the bewitching concentration of female loveliness which

that very room has so recently displayed. (Loud cries of âHear!â) Much

as he (Tupple) would be disposed to deplore the absence of the ladies, on

other grounds, he cannot but derive some consolation from the reflection

that the very circumstance of their not being present, enables him to

propose a toast, which he would have otherwise been prevented from

givingâthat toast he begs to say isââThe Ladies!â (Great applause.) The

Ladies! among whom the fascinating daughters of their excellent host, are

alike conspicuous for their beauty, their accomplishments, and their

elegance. He begs them to drain a bumper to âThe Ladies, and a happy new

year to them!â (Prolonged approbation; above which the noise of the

ladies dancing the Spanish dance among themselves, overhead, is

distinctly audible.)

The applause consequent on this toast, has scarcely subsided, when a

young gentleman in a pink under-waistcoat, sitting towards the bottom of

the table, is observed to grow very restless and fidgety, and to evince

strong indications of some latent desire to give vent to his feelings in

a speech, which the wary Tupple at once perceiving, determines to

forestall by speaking himself. He, therefore, rises again, with an air

of solemn importance, and trusts he may be permitted to propose another

toast (unqualified approbation, and Mr. Tupple proceeds). He is sure

they must all be deeply impressed with the hospitalityâhe may say the

splendourâwith which they have been that night received by their worthy

host and hostess. (Unbounded applause.) Although this is the first

occasion on which he has had the pleasure and delight of sitting at that

board, he has known his friend Dobble long and intimately; he has been

connected with him in businessâhe wishes everybody present knew Dobble as

well as he does. (A cough from the host.) He (Tupple) can lay his hand

upon his (Tuppleâs) heart, and declare his confident belief that a better

man, a better husband, a better father, a better brother, a better son, a

better relation in any relation of life, than Dobble, never existed.

(Loud cries of âHear!â) They have seen him to-night in the peaceful

bosom of his family; they should see him in the morning, in the trying

duties of his office. Calm in the perusal of the morning papers,

uncompromising in the signature of his name, dignified in his replies to

the inquiries of stranger applicants, deferential in his behaviour to his

superiors, majestic in his deportment to the messengers. (Cheers.) When

he bears this merited testimony to the excellent qualities of his friend

Dobble, what can he say in approaching such a subject as Mrs. Dobble? Is

it requisite for him to expatiate on the qualities of that amiable woman?

No; he will spare his friend Dobbleâs feelings; he will spare the

feelings of his friendâif he will allow him to have the honour of calling

him soâMr. Dobble, junior. (Here Mr. Dobble, junior, who has been

previously distending his mouth to a considerable width, by thrusting a

particularly fine orange into that feature, suspends operations, and

assumes a proper appearance of intense melancholy). He will simply

sayâand he is quite certain it is a sentiment in which all who hear him

will readily concurâthat his friend Dobble is as superior to any man he

ever knew, as Mrs. Dobble is far beyond any woman he ever saw (except her

daughters); and he will conclude by proposing their worthy âHost and

Hostess, and may they live to enjoy many more new years!â

The toast is drunk with acclamation; Dobble returns thanks, and the whole

party rejoin the ladies in the drawing-room. Young men who were too

bashful to dance before supper, find tongues and partners; the musicians

exhibit unequivocal symptoms of having drunk the new year in, while the

company were out; and dancing is kept up, until far in the first morning

of the new year.

We have scarcely written the last word of the previous sentence, when the

first stroke of twelve, peals from the neighbouring churches. There

certainlyâwe must confess it nowâis something awful in the sound.

Strictly speaking, it may not be more impressive now, than at any other

time; for the hours steal as swiftly on, at other periods, and their

flight is little heeded. But, we measure manâs life by years, and it is

a solemn knell that warns us we have passed another of the landmarks

which stands between us and the grave. Disguise it as we may, the

reflection will force itself on our minds, that when the next bell

announces the arrival of a new year, we may be insensible alike of the

timely warning we have so often neglected, and of all the warm feelings

that glow within us now.

CHAPTER IVâMISS EVANS AND THE EAGLE

Mr. Samuel Wilkins was a carpenter, a journeyman carpenter of small

dimensions, decidedly below the middle sizeâbordering, perhaps, upon the

dwarfish. His face was round and shining, and his hair carefully twisted

into the outer corner of each eye, till it formed a variety of that

description of semi-curls, usually known as âaggerawators.â His earnings

were all-sufficient for his wants, varying from eighteen shillings to one

pound five, weeklyâhis manner undeniableâhis sabbath waistcoats dazzling.

No wonder that, with these qualifications, Samuel Wilkins found favour in

the eyes of the other sex: many women have been captivated by far less

substantial qualifications. But, Samuel was proof against their

blandishments, until at length his eyes rested on those of a Being for

whom, from that time forth, he felt fate had destined him. He came, and

conqueredâproposed, and was acceptedâloved, and was beloved. Mr. Wilkins

âkept companyâ with Jemima Evans.

Miss Evans (or Ivins, to adopt the pronunciation most in vogue with her

circle of acquaintance) had adopted in early life the useful pursuit of

shoe-binding, to which she had afterwards superadded the occupation of a

straw-bonnet maker. Herself, her maternal parent, and two sisters,

formed an harmonious quartett in the most secluded portion of

Camden-town; and here it was that Mr. Wilkins presented himself, one

Monday afternoon, in his best attire, with his face more shining and his

waistcoat more bright than either had ever appeared before. The family

were just going to tea, and were \_so\_ glad to see him. It was quite a

little feast; two ounces of seven-and-sixpenny green, and a quarter of a

pound of the best fresh; and Mr. Wilkins had brought a pint of shrimps,

neatly folded up in a clean belcher, to give a zest to the meal, and

propitiate Mrs. Ivins. Jemima was âcleaning herselfâ up-stairs; so Mr.

Samuel Wilkins sat down and talked domestic economy with Mrs. Ivins,

whilst the two youngest Miss Ivinses poked bits of lighted brown paper

between the bars under the kettle, to make the water boil for tea.

âI wos a thinking,â said Mr. Samuel Wilkins, during a pause in the

conversationââI wos a thinking of taking Jâmima to the Eagle

to-night.âââO my!â exclaimed Mrs. Ivins. âLor! how nice!â said the

youngest Miss Ivins. âWell, I declare!â added the youngest Miss Ivins

but one. âTell Jâmima to put on her white muslin, Tilly,â screamed Mrs.

Ivins, with motherly anxiety; and down came Jâmima herself soon

afterwards in a white muslin gown carefully hooked and eyed, a little red

shawl, plentifully pinned, a white straw bonnet trimmed with red ribbons,

a small necklace, a large pair of bracelets, Denmark satin shoes, and

open-worked stockings; white cotton gloves on her fingers, and a cambric

pocket-handkerchief, carefully folded up, in her handâall quite genteel

and ladylike. And away went Miss Jâmima Ivins and Mr. Samuel Wilkins,

and a dress-cane, with a gilt knob at the top, to the admiration and envy

of the street in general, and to the high gratification of Mrs. Ivins,

and the two youngest Miss Ivinses in particular. They had no sooner

turned into the Pancras-road, than who should Miss Jâmima Ivins stumble

upon, by the most fortunate accident in the world, but a young lady as

she knew, with \_her\_ young man!âAnd it is so strange how things do turn

out sometimesâthey were actually going to the Eagle too. So Mr. Samuel

Wilkins was introduced to Miss Jâmima Ivinsâs friendâs young man, and

they all walked on together, talking, and laughing, and joking away like

anything; and when they got as far as Pentonville, Miss Ivinsâs friendâs

young man \_would\_ have the ladies go into the Crown, to taste some shrub,

which, after a great blushing and giggling, and hiding of faces in

elaborate pocket-handkerchiefs, they consented to do. Having tasted it

once, they were easily prevailed upon to taste it again; and they sat out

in the garden tasting shrub, and looking at the Busses alternately, till

it was just the proper time to go to the Eagle; and then they resumed

their journey, and walked very fast, for fear they should lose the

beginning of the concert in the Rotunda.

âHow evânly!â said Miss Jâmima Ivins, and Miss Jâmima Ivinsâs friend,

both at once, when they had passed the gate and were fairly inside the

gardens. There were the walks, beautifully gravelled and plantedâand the

refreshment-boxes, painted and ornamented like so many snuff-boxesâand

the variegated lamps shedding their rich light upon the companyâs

headsâand the place for dancing ready chalked for the companyâs feetâand

a Moorish band playing at one end of the gardensâand an opposition

military band playing away at the other. Then, the waiters were rushing

to and fro with glasses of negus, and glasses of brandy-and-water, and

bottles of ale, and bottles of stout; and ginger-beer was going off in

one place, and practical jokes were going on in another; and people were

crowding to the door of the Rotunda; and in short the whole scene was, as

Miss Jâmima Ivins, inspired by the novelty, or the shrub, or both,

observedââone of dazzling excitement.â As to the concert-room, never was

anything half so splendid. There was an orchestra for the singers, all

paint, gilding, and plate-glass; and such an organ! Miss Jâmima Ivinsâs

friendâs young man whispered it had cost âfour hundred pound,â which Mr.

Samuel Wilkins said was ânot dear neither;â an opinion in which the

ladies perfectly coincided. The audience were seated on elevated benches

round the room, and crowded into every part of it; and everybody was

eating and drinking as comfortably as possible. Just before the concert

commenced, Mr. Samuel Wilkins ordered two glasses of rum-and-water âwarm

withââ and two slices of lemon, for himself and the other young man,

together with âa pint oâ sherry wine for the ladies, and some sweet

carraway-seed biscuits;â and they would have been quite comfortable and

happy, only a strange gentleman with large whiskers \_would\_ stare at Miss

Jâmima Ivins, and another gentleman in a plaid waistcoat \_would\_ wink at

Miss Jâmima Ivinsâs friend; on which Miss Jemima Ivinsâs friendâs young

man exhibited symptoms of boiling over, and began to mutter about

âpeopleâs imperence,â and âswells out oâ luck;â and to intimate, in

oblique terms, a vague intention of knocking somebodyâs head off; which

he was only prevented from announcing more emphatically, by both Miss

Jâmima Ivins and her friend threatening to faint away on the spot if he

said another word.

The concert commencedâoverture on the organ. âHow solemn!â exclaimed

Miss Jâmima Ivins, glancing, perhaps unconsciously, at the gentleman with

the whiskers. Mr. Samuel Wilkins, who had been muttering apart for some

time past, as if he were holding a confidential conversation with the

gilt knob of the dress-cane, breathed hard-breathing vengeance,

perhaps,âbut said nothing. âThe soldier tired,â Miss Somebody in white

satin. âAncore!â cried Miss Jâmima Ivinsâs friend. âAncore!â shouted

the gentleman in the plaid waistcoat immediately, hammering the table

with a stout-bottle. Miss Jâmima Ivinsâs friendâs young man eyed the man

behind the waistcoat from head to foot, and cast a look of interrogative

contempt towards Mr. Samuel Wilkins. Comic song, accompanied on the

organ. Miss Jâmima Ivins was convulsed with laughterâso was the man with

the whiskers. Everything the ladies did, the plaid waistcoat and

whiskers did, by way of expressing unity of sentiment and congeniality of

soul; and Miss Jâmima Ivins, and Miss Jâmima Ivinsâs friend, grew lively

and talkative, as Mr. Samuel Wilkins, and Miss Jâmima Ivinsâs friendâs

young man, grew morose and surly in inverse proportion.

Now, if the matter had ended here, the little party might soon have

recovered their former equanimity; but Mr. Samuel Wilkins and his friend

began to throw looks of defiance upon the waistcoat and whiskers. And

the waistcoat and whiskers, by way of intimating the slight degree in

which they were affected by the looks aforesaid, bestowed glances of

increased admiration upon Miss Jâmima Ivins and friend. The concert and

vaudeville concluded, they promenaded the gardens. The waistcoat and

whiskers did the same; and made divers remarks complimentary to the

ankles of Miss Jâmima Ivins and friend, in an audible tone. At length,

not satisfied with these numerous atrocities, they actually came up and

asked Miss Jâmima Ivins, and Miss Jâmima Ivinsâs friend, to dance,

without taking no more notice of Mr. Samuel Wilkins, and Miss Jâmima

Ivinsâs friendâs young man, than if they was nobody!

âWhat do you mean by that, scoundrel!â exclaimed Mr. Samuel Wilkins,

grasping the gilt-knobbed dress-cane firmly in his right hand. âWhatâs

the matter with \_you\_, you little humbug?â replied the whiskers. âHow

dare you insult me and my friend?â inquired the friendâs young man. âYou

and your friend be hanged!â responded the waistcoat. âTake that,â

exclaimed Mr. Samuel Wilkins. The ferrule of the gilt-knobbed dress-cane

was visible for an instant, and then the light of the variegated lamps

shone brightly upon it as it whirled into the air, cane and all. âGive

it him,â said the waistcoat. âHorficer!â screamed the ladies. Miss

Jâmima Ivinsâs beau, and the friendâs young man, lay gasping on the

gravel, and the waistcoat and whiskers were seen no more.

Miss Jâmima Ivins and friend being conscious that the affray was in no

slight degree attributable to themselves, of course went into hysterics

forthwith; declared themselves the most injured of women; exclaimed, in

incoherent ravings, that they had been suspectedâwrongfully suspectedâoh!

that they should ever have lived to see the dayâand so forth; suffered a

relapse every time they opened their eyes and saw their unfortunate

little admirers; and were carried to their respective abodes in a

hackney-coach, and a state of insensibility, compounded of shrub, sherry,

and excitement.

CHAPTER VâTHE PARLOUR ORATOR

We had been lounging one evening, down Oxford-street, Holborn, Cheapside,

Coleman-street, Finsbury-square, and so on, with the intention of

returning westward, by Pentonville and the New-road, when we began to

feel rather thirsty, and disposed to rest for five or ten minutes. So,

we turned back towards an old, quiet, decent public-house, which we

remembered to have passed but a moment before (it was not far from the

City-road), for the purpose of solacing ourself with a glass of ale. The

house was none of your stuccoed, French-polished, illuminated palaces,

but a modest public-house of the old school, with a little old bar, and a

little old landlord, who, with a wife and daughter of the same pattern,

was comfortably seated in the bar aforesaidâa snug little room with a

cheerful fire, protected by a large screen: from behind which the young

lady emerged on our representing our inclination for a glass of ale.

âWonât you walk into the parlour, sir?â said the young lady, in seductive

tones.

âYou had better walk into the parlour, sir,â said the little old

landlord, throwing his chair back, and looking round one side of the

screen, to survey our appearance.

âYou had much better step into the parlour, sir,â said the little old

lady, popping out her head, on the other side of the screen.

We cast a slight glance around, as if to express our ignorance of the

locality so much recommended. The little old landlord observed it;

bustled out of the small door of the small bar; and forthwith ushered us

into the parlour itself.

It was an ancient, dark-looking room, with oaken wainscoting, a sanded

floor, and a high mantel-piece. The walls were ornamented with three or

four old coloured prints in black frames, each print representing a naval

engagement, with a couple of men-of-war banging away at each other most

vigorously, while another vessel or two were blowing up in the distance,

and the foreground presented a miscellaneous collection of broken masts

and blue legs sticking up out of the water. Depending from the ceiling

in the centre of the room, were a gas-light and bell-pull; on each side

were three or four long narrow tables, behind which was a thickly-planted

row of those slippery, shiny-looking wooden chairs, peculiar to

hostelries of this description. The monotonous appearance of the sanded

boards was relieved by an occasional spittoon; and a triangular pile of

those useful articles adorned the two upper corners of the apartment.

At the furthest table, nearest the fire, with his face towards the door

at the bottom of the room, sat a stoutish man of about forty, whose

short, stiff, black hair curled closely round a broad high forehead, and

a face to which something besides water and exercise had communicated a

rather inflamed appearance. He was smoking a cigar, with his eyes fixed

on the ceiling, and had that confident oracular air which marked him as

the leading politician, general authority, and universal

anecdote-relater, of the place. He had evidently just delivered himself

of something very weighty; for the remainder of the company were puffing

at their respective pipes and cigars in a kind of solemn abstraction, as

if quite overwhelmed with the magnitude of the subject recently under

discussion.

On his right hand sat an elderly gentleman with a white head, and

broad-brimmed brown hat; on his left, a sharp-nosed, light-haired man in

a brown surtout reaching nearly to his heels, who took a whiff at his

pipe, and an admiring glance at the red-faced man, alternately.

âVery extraordinary!â said the light-haired man after a pause of five

minutes. A murmur of assent ran through the company.

âNot at all extraordinaryânot at all,â said the red-faced man, awakening

suddenly from his reverie, and turning upon the light-haired man, the

moment he had spoken.

âWhy should it be extraordinary?âwhy is it extraordinary?âprove it to be

extraordinary!â

âOh, if you come to thatââ said the light-haired man, meekly.

âCome to that!â ejaculated the man with the red face; âbut we \_must\_ come

to that. We stand, in these times, upon a calm elevation of intellectual

attainment, and not in the dark recess of mental deprivation. Proof, is

what I requireâproof, and not assertions, in these stirring times. Every

genâlemân that knows me, knows what was the nature and effect of my

observations, when it was in the contemplation of the Old-street Suburban

Representative Discovery Society, to recommend a candidate for that place

in Cornwall thereâI forget the name of it. âMr. Snobee,â said Mr.

Wilson, âis a fit and proper person to represent the borough in

Parliament.â âProve it,â says I. âHe is a friend to Reform,â says Mr.

Wilson. âProve it,â says I. âThe abolitionist of the national debt, the

unflinching opponent of pensions, the uncompromising advocate of the

negro, the reducer of sinecures and the duration of Parliaments; the

extender of nothing but the suffrages of the people,â says Mr. Wilson.

âProve it,â says I. âHis acts prove it,â says he. âProve \_them\_,â says

I.

âAnd he could not prove them,â said the red-faced man, looking round

triumphantly; âand the borough didnât have him; and if you carried this

principle to the full extent, youâd have no debt, no pensions, no

sinecures, no negroes, no nothing. And then, standing upon an elevation

of intellectual attainment, and having reached the summit of popular

prosperity, you might bid defiance to the nations of the earth, and erect

yourselves in the proud confidence of wisdom and superiority. This is my

argumentâthis always has been my argumentâand if I was a Member of the

House of Commons to-morrow, Iâd make âem shake in their shoes with it.

And the red-faced man, having struck the table very hard with his

clenched fist, to add weight to the declaration, smoked away like a

brewery.

âWell!â said the sharp-nosed man, in a very slow and soft voice,

addressing the company in general, âI always do say, that of all the

gentlemen I have the pleasure of meeting in this room, there is not one

whose conversation I like to hear so much as Mr. Rogersâs, or who is such

improving company.â

âImproving company!â said Mr. Rogers, for that, it seemed, was the name

of the red-faced man. âYou may say I am improving company, for Iâve

improved you all to some purpose; though as to my conversation being as

my friend Mr. Ellis here describes it, that is not for me to say anything

about. You, gentlemen, are the best judges on that point; but this I

will say, when I came into this parish, and first used this room, ten

years ago, I donât believe there was one man in it, who knew he was a

slaveâand now you all know it, and writhe under it. Inscribe that upon

my tomb, and I am satisfied.â

âWhy, as to inscribing it on your tomb,â said a little greengrocer with a

chubby face, âof course you can have anything chalked up, as you likes to

pay for, so far as it relates to yourself and your affairs; but, when you

come to talk about slaves, and that there abuse, youâd better keep it in

the family, âcos I for one donât like to be called them names, night

after night.â

âYou \_are\_ a slave,â said the red-faced man, âand the most pitiable of

all slaves.â

âWerry hard if I am,â interrupted the greengrocer, âfor I got no good out

of the twenty million that was paid for âmancipation, anyhow.â

âA willing slave,â ejaculated the red-faced man, getting more red with

eloquence, and contradictionââresigning the dearest birthright of your

childrenâneglecting the sacred call of Libertyâwho, standing imploringly

before you, appeals to the warmest feelings of your heart, and points to

your helpless infants, but in vain.â

âProve it,â said the greengrocer.

âProve it!â sneered the man with the red face. âWhat! bending beneath

the yoke of an insolent and factious oligarchy; bowed down by the

domination of cruel laws; groaning beneath tyranny and oppression on

every hand, at every side, and in every corner. Prove it!ââ The

red-faced man abruptly broke off, sneered melo-dramatically, and buried

his countenance and his indignation together, in a quart pot.

âAh, to be sure, Mr. Rogers,â said a stout broker in a large waistcoat,

who had kept his eyes fixed on this luminary all the time he was

speaking. âAh, to be sure,â said the broker with a sigh, âthatâs the

point.â

âOf course, of course,â said divers members of the company, who

understood almost as much about the matter as the broker himself.

âYou had better let him alone, Tommy,â said the broker, by way of advice

to the little greengrocer; âhe can tell whatâs oâclock by an eight-day,

without looking at the minute hand, he can. Try it on, on some other

suit; it wonât do with him, Tommy.â

âWhat is a man?â continued the red-faced specimen of the species, jerking

his hat indignantly from its peg on the wall. âWhat is an Englishman?

Is he to be trampled upon by every oppressor? Is he to be knocked down

at everybodyâs bidding? Whatâs freedom? Not a standing army. Whatâs a

standing army? Not freedom. Whatâs general happiness? Not universal

misery. Liberty ainât the window-tax, is it? The Lords ainât the

Commons, are they?â And the red-faced man, gradually bursting into a

radiating sentence, in which such adjectives as âdastardly,â

âoppressive,â âviolent,â and âsanguinary,â formed the most conspicuous

words, knocked his hat indignantly over his eyes, left the room, and

slammed the door after him.

âWonderful man!â said he of the sharp nose.

âSplendid speaker!â added the broker.

âGreat power!â said everybody but the greengrocer. And as they said it,

the whole party shook their heads mysteriously, and one by one retired,

leaving us alone in the old parlour.

If we had followed the established precedent in all such instances, we

should have fallen into a fit of musing, without delay. The ancient

appearance of the roomâthe old panelling of the wallâthe chimney

blackened with smoke and ageâwould have carried us back a hundred years

at least, and we should have gone dreaming on, until the pewter-pot on

the table, or the little beer-chiller on the fire, had started into life,

and addressed to us a long story of days gone by. But, by some means or

other, we were not in a romantic humour; and although we tried very hard

to invest the furniture with vitality, it remained perfectly unmoved,

obstinate, and sullen. Being thus reduced to the unpleasant necessity of

musing about ordinary matters, our thoughts reverted to the red-faced

man, and his oratorical display.

A numerous race are these red-faced men; there is not a parlour, or

club-room, or benefit society, or humble party of any kind, without its

red-faced man. Weak-pated dolts they are, and a great deal of mischief

they do to their cause, however good. So, just to hold a pattern one up,

to know the others by, we took his likeness at once, and put him in here.

And that is the reason why we have written this paper.

CHAPTER VIâTHE HOSPITAL PATIENT

In our rambles through the streets of London after evening has set in, we

often pause beneath the windows of some public hospital, and picture to

ourself the gloomy and mournful scenes that are passing within. The

sudden moving of a taper as its feeble ray shoots from window to window,

until its light gradually disappears, as if it were carried farther back

into the room to the bedside of some suffering patient, is enough to

awaken a whole crowd of reflections; the mere glimmering of the

low-burning lamps, which, when all other habitations are wrapped in

darkness and slumber, denote the chamber where so many forms are writhing

with pain, or wasting with disease, is sufficient to check the most

boisterous merriment.

Who can tell the anguish of those weary hours, when the only sound the

sick man hears, is the disjointed wanderings of some feverish slumberer

near him, the low moan of pain, or perhaps the muttered, long-forgotten

prayer of a dying man? Who, but they who have felt it, can imagine the

sense of loneliness and desolation which must be the portion of those who

in the hour of dangerous illness are left to be tended by strangers; for

what hands, be they ever so gentle, can wipe the clammy brow, or smooth

the restless bed, like those of mother, wife, or child?

Impressed with these thoughts, we have turned away, through the

nearly-deserted streets; and the sight of the few miserable creatures

still hovering about them, has not tended to lessen the pain which such

meditations awaken. The hospital is a refuge and resting-place for

hundreds, who but for such institutions must die in the streets and

doorways; but what can be the feelings of some outcasts when they are

stretched on the bed of sickness with scarcely a hope of recovery? The

wretched woman who lingers about the pavement, hours after midnight, and

the miserable shadow of a manâthe ghastly remnant that want and

drunkenness have leftâwhich crouches beneath a window-ledge, to sleep

where there is some shelter from the rain, have little to bind them to

life, but what have they to look back upon, in death? What are the

unwonted comforts of a roof and a bed, to them, when the recollections of

a whole life of debasement stalk before them; when repentance seems a

mockery, and sorrow comes too late?

About a twelvemonth ago, as we were strolling through Covent-garden (we

had been thinking about these things over-night), we were attracted by

the very prepossessing appearance of a pickpocket, who having declined to

take the trouble of walking to the Police-office, on the ground that he

hadnât the slightest wish to go there at all, was being conveyed thither

in a wheelbarrow, to the huge delight of a crowd.

Somehow, we never can resist joining a crowd, so we turned back with the

mob, and entered the office, in company with our friend the pickpocket, a

couple of policemen, and as many dirty-faced spectators as could squeeze

their way in.

There was a powerful, ill-looking young fellow at the bar, who was

undergoing an examination, on the very common charge of having, on the

previous night, ill-treated a woman, with whom he lived in some court

hard by. Several witnesses bore testimony to acts of the grossest

brutality; and a certificate was read from the house-surgeon of a

neighbouring hospital, describing the nature of the injuries the woman

had received, and intimating that her recovery was extremely doubtful.

Some question appeared to have been raised about the identity of the

prisoner; for when it was agreed that the two magistrates should visit

the hospital at eight oâclock that evening, to take her deposition, it

was settled that the man should be taken there also. He turned pale at

this, and we saw him clench the bar very hard when the order was given.

He was removed directly afterwards, and he spoke not a word.

We felt an irrepressible curiosity to witness this interview, although it

is hard to tell why, at this instant, for we knew it must be a painful

one. It was no very difficult matter for us to gain permission, and we

obtained it.

The prisoner, and the officer who had him in custody, were already at the

hospital when we reached it, and waiting the arrival of the magistrates

in a small room below stairs. The man was handcuffed, and his hat was

pulled forward over his eyes. It was easy to see, though, by the

whiteness of his countenance, and the constant twitching of the muscles

of his face, that he dreaded what was to come. After a short interval,

the magistrates and clerk were bowed in by the house-surgeon and a couple

of young men who smelt very strong of tobacco-smokeâthey were introduced

as âdressersââand after one magistrate had complained bitterly of the

cold, and the other of the absence of any news in the evening paper, it

was announced that the patient was prepared; and we were conducted to the

âcasualty wardâ in which she was lying.

The dim light which burnt in the spacious room, increased rather than

diminished the ghastly appearance of the hapless creatures in the beds,

which were ranged in two long rows on either side. In one bed, lay a

child enveloped in bandages, with its body half-consumed by fire; in

another, a female, rendered hideous by some dreadful accident, was wildly

beating her clenched fists on the coverlet, in pain; on a third, there

lay stretched a young girl, apparently in the heavy stupor often the

immediate precursor of death: her face was stained with blood, and her

breast and arms were bound up in folds of linen. Two or three of the

beds were empty, and their recent occupants were sitting beside them, but

with faces so wan, and eyes so bright and glassy, that it was fearful to

meet their gaze. On every face was stamped the expression of anguish and

suffering.

The object of the visit was lying at the upper end of the room. She was

a fine young woman of about two or three and twenty. Her long black

hair, which had been hastily cut from near the wounds on her head,

streamed over the pillow in jagged and matted locks. Her face bore deep

marks of the ill-usage she had received: her hand was pressed upon her

side, as if her chief pain were there; her breathing was short and heavy;

and it was plain to see that she was dying fast. She murmured a few

words in reply to the magistrateâs inquiry whether she was in great pain;

and, having been raised on the pillow by the nurse, looked vacantly upon

the strange countenances that surrounded her bed. The magistrate nodded

to the officer, to bring the man forward. He did so, and stationed him

at the bedside. The girl looked on with a wild and troubled expression

of face; but her sight was dim, and she did not know him.

âTake off his hat,â said the magistrate. The officer did as he was

desired, and the manâs features were disclosed.

The girl started up, with an energy quite preternatural; the fire gleamed

in her heavy eyes, and the blood rushed to her pale and sunken cheeks.

It was a convulsive effort. She fell back upon her pillow, and covering

her scarred and bruised face with her hands, burst into tears. The man

cast an anxious look towards her, but otherwise appeared wholly unmoved.

After a brief pause the nature of the errand was explained, and the oath

tendered.

âOh, no, gentlemen,â said the girl, raising herself once more, and

folding her hands together; âno, gentlemen, for Godâs sake! I did it

myselfâit was nobodyâs faultâit was an accident. He didnât hurt me; he

wouldnât for all the world. Jack, dear Jack, you know you wouldnât!â

Her sight was fast failing her, and her hand groped over the bedclothes

in search of his. Brute as the man was, he was not prepared for this.

He turned his face from the bed, and sobbed. The girlâs colour changed,

and her breathing grew more difficult. She was evidently dying.

âWe respect the feelings which prompt you to this,â said the gentleman

who had spoken first, âbut let me warn you, not to persist in what you

know to be untrue, until it is too late. It cannot save him.â

âJack,â murmured the girl, laying her hand upon his arm, âthey shall not

persuade me to swear your life away. He didnât do it, gentlemen. He

never hurt me.â She grasped his arm tightly, and added, in a broken

whisper, âI hope God Almighty will forgive me all the wrong I have done,

and the life I have led. God bless you, Jack. Some kind gentleman take

my love to my poor old father. Five years ago, he said he wished I had

died a child. Oh, I wish I had! I wish I had!â

The nurse bent over the girl for a few seconds, and then drew the sheet

over her face. It covered a corpse.

CHAPTER VIIâTHE MISPLACED ATTACHMENT OF MR. JOHN DOUNCE

If we had to make a classification of society, there is a particular kind

of men whom we should immediately set down under the head of âOld Boys;â

and a column of most extensive dimensions the old boys would require. To

what precise causes the rapid advance of old-boy population is to be

traced, we are unable to determine. It would be an interesting and

curious speculation, but, as we have not sufficient space to devote to it

here, we simply state the fact that the numbers of the old boys have been

gradually augmenting within the last few years, and that they are at this

moment alarmingly on the increase.

Upon a general review of the subject, and without considering it minutely

in detail, we should be disposed to subdivide the old boys into two

distinct classesâthe gay old boys, and the steady old boys. The gay old

boys, are paunchy old men in the disguise of young ones, who frequent the

Quadrant and Regent-street in the day-time: the theatres (especially

theatres under lady management) at night; and who assume all the

foppishness and levity of boys, without the excuse of youth or

inexperience. The steady old boys are certain stout old gentlemen of

clean appearance, who are always to be seen in the same taverns, at the

same hours every evening, smoking and drinking in the same company.

There was once a fine collection of old boys to be seen round the

circular table at Offleyâs every night, between the hours of half-past

eight and half-past eleven. We have lost sight of them for some time.

There were, and may be still, for aught we know, two splendid specimens

in full blossom at the Rainbow Tavern in Fleet-street, who always used to

sit in the box nearest the fireplace, and smoked long cherry-stick pipes

which went under the table, with the bowls resting on the floor. Grand

old boys they wereâfat, red-faced, white-headed old fellowsâalways

thereâone on one side the table, and the other oppositeâpuffing and

drinking away in great state. Everybody knew them, and it was supposed

by some people that they were both immortal.

Mr. John Dounce was an old boy of the latter class (we donât mean

immortal, but steady), a retired glove and braces maker, a widower,

resident with three daughtersâall grown up, and all unmarriedâin

Cursitor-street, Chancery-lane. He was a short, round, large-faced,

tubbish sort of man, with a broad-brimmed hat, and a square coat; and had

that grave, but confident, kind of roll, peculiar to old boys in general.

Regular as clockworkâbreakfast at nineâdress and tittivate a littleâdown

to the Sir Somebodyâs Headâa glass of ale and the paperâcome back again,

and take daughters out for a walkâdinner at threeâglass of grog and

pipeânapâteaâlittle walkâSir Somebodyâs Head againâcapital

houseâdelightful evenings. There were Mr. Harris, the law-stationer, and

Mr. Jennings, the robe-maker (two jolly young fellows like himself), and

Jones, the barristerâs clerkârum fellow that Jonesâcapital companyâfull

of anecdote!âand there they sat every night till just ten minutes before

twelve, drinking their brandy-and-water, and smoking their pipes, and

telling stories, and enjoying themselves with a kind of solemn joviality

particularly edifying.

Sometimes Jones would propose a half-price visit to Drury Lane or Covent

Garden, to see two acts of a five-act play, and a new farce, perhaps, or

a ballet, on which occasions the whole four of them went together: none

of your hurrying and nonsense, but having their brandy-and-water first,

comfortably, and ordering a steak and some oysters for their supper

against they came back, and then walking coolly into the pit, when the

ârushâ had gone in, as all sensible people do, and did when Mr. Dounce

was a young man, except when the celebrated Master Betty was at the

height of his popularity, and then, sir,âthenâMr. Dounce perfectly well

remembered getting a holiday from business; and going to the pit doors at

eleven oâclock in the forenoon, and waiting there, till six in the

afternoon, with some sandwiches in a pocket-handkerchief and some wine in

a phial; and fainting after all, with the heat and fatigue, before the

play began; in which situation he was lifted out of the pit, into one of

the dress boxes, sir, by five of the finest women of that day, sir, who

compassionated his situation and administered restoratives, and sent a

black servant, six foot high, in blue and silver livery, next morning

with their compliments, and to know how he found himself, sirâby G-!

Between the acts Mr. Dounce and Mr. Harris, and Mr. Jennings, used to

stand up, and look round the house, and Jonesâknowing fellow that

Jonesâknew everybodyâpointed out the fashionable and celebrated Lady

So-and-So in the boxes, at the mention of whose name Mr. Dounce, after

brushing up his hair, and adjusting his neckerchief, would inspect the

aforesaid Lady So-and-So through an immense glass, and remark, either,

that she was a âfine womanâvery fine woman, indeed,â or that âthere might

be a little more of her, eh, Jones?â Just as the case might happen to

be. When the dancing began, John Dounce and the other old boys were

particularly anxious to see what was going forward on the stage, and

Jonesâwicked dog that Jonesâwhispered little critical remarks into the

ears of John Dounce, which John Dounce retailed to Mr. Harris and Mr.

Harris to Mr. Jennings; and then they all four laughed, until the tears

ran down out of their eyes.

When the curtain fell, they walked back together, two and two, to the

steaks and oysters; and when they came to the second glass of

brandy-and-water, Jonesâhoaxing scamp, that Jonesâused to recount how he

had observed a lady in white feathers, in one of the pit boxes, gazing

intently on Mr. Dounce all the evening, and how he had caught Mr. Dounce,

whenever he thought no one was looking at him, bestowing ardent looks of

intense devotion on the lady in return; on which Mr. Harris and Mr.

Jennings used to laugh very heartily, and John Dounce more heartily than

either of them, acknowledging, however, that the time \_had\_ been when he

\_might\_ have done such things; upon which Mr. Jones used to poke him in

the ribs, and tell him he had been a sad dog in his time, which John

Dounce with chuckles confessed. And after Mr. Harris and Mr. Jennings

had preferred their claims to the character of having been sad dogs too,

they separated harmoniously, and trotted home.

The decrees of Fate, and the means by which they are brought about, are

mysterious and inscrutable. John Dounce had led this life for twenty

years and upwards, without wish for change, or care for variety, when his

whole social system was suddenly upset and turned completely

topsy-turvyânot by an earthquake, or some other dreadful convulsion of

nature, as the reader would be inclined to suppose, but by the simple

agency of an oyster; and thus it happened.

Mr. John Dounce was returning one night from the Sir Somebodyâs Head, to

his residence in Cursitor-streetânot tipsy, but rather excited, for it

was Mr. Jenningsâs birthday, and they had had a brace of partridges for

supper, and a brace of extra glasses afterwards, and Jones had been more

than ordinarily amusingâwhen his eyes rested on a newly-opened

oyster-shop, on a magnificent scale, with natives laid, one deep, in

circular marble basins in the windows, together with little round barrels

of oysters directed to Lords and Baronets, and Colonels and Captains, in

every part of the habitable globe.

Behind the natives were the barrels, and behind the barrels was a young

lady of about five-and-twenty, all in blue, and all aloneâsplendid

creature, charming face and lovely figure! It is difficult to say

whether Mr. John Dounceâs red countenance, illuminated as it was by the

flickering gas-light in the window before which he paused, excited the

ladyâs risibility, or whether a natural exuberance of animal spirits

proved too much for that staidness of demeanour which the forms of

society rather dictatorially prescribe. But certain it is, that the lady

smiled; then put her finger upon her lip, with a striking recollection of

what was due to herself; and finally retired, in oyster-like bashfulness,

to the very back of the counter. The sad-dog sort of feeling came

strongly upon John Dounce: he lingeredâthe lady in blue made no sign. He

coughedâstill she came not. He entered the shop.

âCan you open me an oyster, my dear?â said Mr. John Dounce.

âDare say I can, sir,â replied the lady in blue, with playfulness. And

Mr. John Dounce eat one oyster, and then looked at the young lady, and

then eat another, and then squeezed the young ladyâs hand as she was

opening the third, and so forth, until he had devoured a dozen of those

at eightpence in less than no time.

âCan you open me half-a-dozen more, my dear?â inquired Mr. John Dounce.

âIâll see what I can do for you, sir,â replied the young lady in blue,

even more bewitchingly than before; and Mr. John Dounce eat half-a-dozen

more of those at eightpence.

âYou couldnât manage to get me a glass of brandy-and-water, my dear, I

suppose?â said Mr. John Dounce, when he had finished the oysters: in a

tone which clearly implied his supposition that she could.

âIâll see, sir,â said the young lady: and away she ran out of the shop,

and down the street, her long auburn ringlets shaking in the wind in the

most enchanting manner; and back she came again, tripping over the

coal-cellar lids like a whipping-top, with a tumbler of brandy-and-water,

which Mr. John Dounce insisted on her taking a share of, as it was

regular ladiesâ grogâhot, strong, sweet, and plenty of it.

So, the young lady sat down with Mr. John Dounce, in a little red box

with a green curtain, and took a small sip of the brandy-and-water, and a

small look at Mr. John Dounce, and then turned her head away, and went

through various other serio-pantomimic fascinations, which forcibly

reminded Mr. John Dounce of the first time he courted his first wife, and

which made him feel more affectionate than ever; in pursuance of which

affection, and actuated by which feeling, Mr. John Dounce sounded the

young lady on her matrimonial engagements, when the young lady denied

having formed any such engagements at allâshe couldnât abear the men,

they were such deceivers; thereupon Mr. John Dounce inquired whether this

sweeping condemnation was meant to include other than very young men; on

which the young lady blushed deeplyâat least she turned away her head,

and said Mr. John Dounce had made her blush, so of course she \_did\_

blushâand Mr. John Dounce was a long time drinking the brandy-and-water;

and, at last, John Dounce went home to bed, and dreamed of his first

wife, and his second wife, and the young lady, and partridges, and

oysters, and brandy-and-water, and disinterested attachments.

The next morning, John Dounce was rather feverish with the extra

brandy-and-water of the previous night; and, partly in the hope of

cooling himself with an oyster, and partly with the view of ascertaining

whether he owed the young lady anything, or not, went back to the

oyster-shop. If the young lady had appeared beautiful by night, she was

perfectly irresistible by day; and, from this time forward, a change came

over the spirit of John Dounceâs dream. He bought shirt-pins; wore a

ring on his third finger; read poetry; bribed a cheap miniature-painter

to perpetrate a faint resemblance to a youthful face, with a curtain over

his head, six large books in the background, and an open country in the

distance (this he called his portrait); âwent onâ altogether in such an

uproarious manner, that the three Miss Dounces went off on small

pensions, he having made the tenement in Cursitor-street too warm to

contain them; and in short, comported and demeaned himself in every

respect like an unmitigated old Saracen, as he was.

As to his ancient friends, the other old boys, at the Sir Somebodyâs

Head, he dropped off from them by gradual degrees; for, even when he did

go there, Jonesâvulgar fellow that Jonesâpersisted in asking âwhen it was

to be?â and âwhether he was to have any gloves?â together with other

inquiries of an equally offensive nature: at which not only Harris

laughed, but Jennings also; so, he cut the two, altogether, and attached

himself solely to the blue young lady at the smart oyster-shop.

Now comes the moral of the storyâfor it has a moral after all. The

last-mentioned young lady, having derived sufficient profit and emolument

from John Dounceâs attachment, not only refused, when matters came to a

crisis, to take him for better for worse, but expressly declared, to use

her own forcible words, that she âwouldnât have him at no price;â and

John Dounce, having lost his old friends, alienated his relations, and

rendered himself ridiculous to everybody, made offers successively to a

schoolmistress, a landlady, a feminine tobacconist, and a housekeeper;

and, being directly rejected by each and every of them, was accepted by

his cook, with whom he now lives, a henpecked husband, a melancholy

monument of antiquated misery, and a living warning to all uxorious old

boys.

CHAPTER VIIIâTHE MISTAKEN MILLINER. A TALE OF AMBITION

Miss Amelia Martin was pale, tallish, thin, and two-and-thirtyâwhat

ill-natured people would call plain, and police reports interesting. She

was a milliner and dressmaker, living on her business and not above it.

If you had been a young lady in service, and had wanted Miss Martin, as a

great many young ladies in service did, you would just have stepped up,

in the evening, to number forty-seven, Drummond-street, George-street,

Euston-square, and after casting your eye on a brass door-plate, one foot

ten by one and a half, ornamented with a great brass knob at each of the

four corners, and bearing the inscription âMiss Martin; millinery and

dressmaking, in all its branches;â youâd just have knocked two loud

knocks at the street-door; and down would have come Miss Martin herself,

in a merino gown of the newest fashion, black velvet bracelets on the

genteelest principle, and other little elegancies of the most approved

description.

If Miss Martin knew the young lady who called, or if the young lady who

called had been recommended by any other young lady whom Miss Martin

knew, Miss Martin would forthwith show her up-stairs into the two-pair

front, and chat she wouldâ\_so\_ kind, and \_so\_ comfortableâit really

wasnât like a matter of business, she was so friendly; and, then Miss

Martin, after contemplating the figure and general appearance of the

young lady in service with great apparent admiration, would say how well

she would look, to be sure, in a low dress with short sleeves; made very

full in the skirts, with four tucks in the bottom; to which the young

lady in service would reply in terms expressive of her entire concurrence

in the notion, and of the virtuous indignation with which she reflected

on the tyranny of âMissis,â who wouldnât allow a young girl to wear a

short sleeve of an arternoonâno, nor nothing smart, not even a pair of

ear-rings; let alone hiding peopleâs heads of hair under them frightful

caps. At the termination of this complaint, Miss Amelia Martin would

distantly suggest certain dark suspicions that some people were jealous

on account of their own daughters, and were obliged to keep their

servantsâ charms under, for fear they should get married first, which was

no uncommon circumstanceâleastways she had known two or three young

ladies in service, who had married a great deal better than their

missises, and \_they\_ were not very good-looking either; and then the

young lady would inform Miss Martin, in confidence, that how one of their

young ladies was engaged to a young man and was a-going to be married,

and Missis was so proud about it there was no bearing of her; but how she

neednât hold her head quite so high neither, for, after all, he was only

a clerk. And, after expressing due contempt for clerks in general, and

the engaged clerk in particular, and the highest opinion possible of

themselves and each other, Miss Martin and the young lady in service

would bid each other good night, in a friendly but perfectly genteel

manner: and the one went back to her âplace,â and the other, to her room

on the second-floor front.

There is no saying how long Miss Amelia Martin might have continued this

course of life; how extensive a connection she might have established

among young ladies in service; or what amount her demands upon their

quarterly receipts might have ultimately attained, had not an unforeseen

train of circumstances directed her thoughts to a sphere of action very

different from dressmaking or millinery.

A friend of Miss Martinâs who had long been keeping company with an

ornamental painter and decoratorâs journeyman, at last consented (on

being at last asked to do so) to name the day which would make the

aforesaid journeyman a happy husband. It was a Monday that was appointed

for the celebration of the nuptials, and Miss Amelia Martin was invited,

among others, to honour the wedding-dinner with her presence. It was a

charming party; Somers-town the locality, and a front parlour the

apartment. The ornamental painter and decoratorâs journeyman had taken a

houseâno lodgings nor vulgarity of that kind, but a houseâfour beautiful

rooms, and a delightful little washhouse at the end of the passageâwhich

was the most convenient thing in the world, for the bridesmaids could sit

in the front parlour and receive the company, and then run into the

little washhouse and see how the pudding and boiled pork were getting on

in the copper, and then pop back into the parlour again, as snug and

comfortable as possible. And such a parlour as it was! Beautiful

Kidderminster carpetâsix bran-new cane-bottomed stained chairsâthree

wine-glasses and a tumbler on each sideboardâfarmerâs girl and farmerâs

boy on the mantelpiece: girl tumbling over a stile, and boy spitting

himself, on the handle of a pitchforkâlong white dimity curtains in the

windowâand, in short, everything on the most genteel scale imaginable.

Then, the dinner. There was baked leg of mutton at the top, boiled leg

of mutton at the bottom, pair of fowls and leg of pork in the middle;

porter-pots at the corners; pepper, mustard, and vinegar in the centre;

vegetables on the floor; and plum-pudding and apple-pie and tartlets

without number: to say nothing of cheese, and celery, and water-cresses,

and all that sort of thing. As to the Company! Miss Amelia Martin

herself declared, on a subsequent occasion, that, much as she had heard

of the ornamental painterâs journeymanâs connexion, she never could have

supposed it was half so genteel. There was his father, such a funny old

gentlemanâand his mother, such a dear old ladyâand his sister, such a

charming girlâand his brother, such a manly-looking young manâwith such a

eye! But even all these were as nothing when compared with his musical

friends, Mr. and Mrs. Jennings Rodolph, from White Conduit, with whom the

ornamental painterâs journeyman had been fortunate enough to contract an

intimacy while engaged in decorating the concert-room of that noble

institution. To hear them sing separately, was divine, but when they

went through the tragic duet of âRed Ruffian, retire!â it was, as Miss

Martin afterwards remarked, âthrilling.â And why (as Mr. Jennings

Rodolph observed) why were they not engaged at one of the patent

theatres? If he was to be told that their voices were not powerful

enough to fill the House, his only reply was, that he would back himself

for any amount to fill Russell-squareâa statement in which the company,

after hearing the duet, expressed their full belief; so they all said it

was shameful treatment; and both Mr. and Mrs. Jennings Rodolph said it

was shameful too; and Mr. Jennings Rodolph looked very serious, and said

he knew who his malignant opponents were, but they had better take care

how far they went, for if they irritated him too much he had not quite

made up his mind whether he wouldnât bring the subject before Parliament;

and they all agreed that it ââud serve âem quite right, and it was very

proper that such people should be made an example of.â So Mr. Jennings

Rodolph said heâd think of it.

When the conversation resumed its former tone, Mr. Jennings Rodolph

claimed his right to call upon a lady, and the right being conceded,

trusted Miss Martin would favour the companyâa proposal which met with

unanimous approbation, whereupon Miss Martin, after sundry hesitatings

and coughings, with a preparatory choke or two, and an introductory

declaration that she was frightened to death to attempt it before such

great judges of the art, commenced a species of treble chirruping

containing frequent allusions to some young gentleman of the name of

Hen-e-ry, with an occasional reference to madness and broken hearts. Mr.

Jennings Rodolph frequently interrupted the progress of the song, by

ejaculating âBeautiful!âââCharming!âââBrilliant!âââOh! splendid,â &c.;

and at its close the admiration of himself, and his lady, knew no bounds.

âDid you ever hear so sweet a voice, my dear?â inquired Mr. Jennings

Rodolph of Mrs. Jennings Rodolph.

âNever; indeed I never did, love,â replied Mrs. Jennings Rodolph.

âDonât you think Miss Martin, with a little cultivation, would be very

like Signora Marra Boni, my dear?â asked Mr. Jennings Rodolph.

âJust exactly the very thing that struck me, my love,â answered Mrs.

Jennings Rodolph.

And thus the time passed away; Mr. Jennings Rodolph played tunes on a

walking-stick, and then went behind the parlour-door and gave his

celebrated imitations of actors, edge-tools, and animals; Miss Martin

sang several other songs with increased admiration every time; and even

the funny old gentleman began singing. His song had properly seven

verses, but as he couldnât recollect more than the first one, he sang

that over seven times, apparently very much to his own personal

gratification. And then all the company sang the national anthem with

national independenceâeach for himself, without reference to the

otherâand finally separated: all declaring that they never had spent so

pleasant an evening: and Miss Martin inwardly resolving to adopt the

advice of Mr. Jennings Rodolph, and to âcome outâ without delay.

Now, âcoming out,â either in acting, or singing, or society, or

facetiousness, or anything else, is all very well, and remarkably

pleasant to the individual principally concerned, if he or she can but

manage to come out with a burst, and being out, to keep out, and not go

in again; but, it does unfortunately happen that both consummations are

extremely difficult to accomplish, and that the difficulties, of getting

out at all in the first instance, and if you surmount them, of keeping

out in the second, are pretty much on a par, and no slight ones

eitherâand so Miss Amelia Martin shortly discovered. It is a singular

fact (there being ladies in the case) that Miss Amelia Martinâs principal

foible was vanity, and the leading characteristic of Mrs. Jennings

Rodolph an attachment to dress. Dismal wailings were heard to issue from

the second-floor front of number forty-seven, Drummond-street,

George-street, Euston-square; it was Miss Martin practising.

Half-suppressed murmurs disturbed the calm dignity of the White Conduit

orchestra at the commencement of the season. It was the appearance of

Mrs. Jennings Rodolph in full dress, that occasioned them. Miss Martin

studied incessantlyâthe practising was the consequence. Mrs. Jennings

Rodolph taught gratuitously now and thenâthe dresses were the result.

Weeks passed away; the White Conduit season had begun, and progressed,

and was more than half over. The dressmaking business had fallen off,

from neglect; and its profits had dwindled away almost imperceptibly. A

benefit-night approached; Mr. Jennings Rodolph yielded to the earnest

solicitations of Miss Amelia Martin, and introduced her personally to the

âcomic gentlemanâ whose benefit it was. The comic gentleman was all

smiles and blandnessâhe had composed a duet, expressly for the occasion,

and Miss Martin should sing it with him. The night arrived; there was an

immense roomâninety-seven sixpennâorths of gin-and-water, thirty-two

small glasses of brandy-and-water, five-and-twenty bottled ales, and

forty-one neguses; and the ornamental painterâs journeyman, with his wife

and a select circle of acquaintance, were seated at one of the

side-tables near the orchestra. The concert began. Songâsentimentalâby

a light-haired young gentleman in a blue coat, and bright basket

buttonsâ[applause]. Another song, doubtful, by another gentleman in

another blue coat and more bright basket buttonsâ[increased applause].

Duet, Mr. Jennings Rodolph, and Mrs. Jennings Rodolph, âRed Ruffian,

retire!ââ[great applause]. Solo, Miss Julia Montague (positively on this

occasion only)ââI am a Friarââ[enthusiasm]. Original duet, comicâMr. H.

Taplin (the comic gentleman) and Miss MartinââThe Time of Day.â

âBrayvo!âBrayvo!â cried the ornamental painterâs journeymanâs party, as

Miss Martin was gracefully led in by the comic gentleman. âGo to work,

Harry,â cried the comic gentlemanâs personal friends. âTap-tap-tap,â

went the leaderâs bow on the music-desk. The symphony began, and was

soon afterwards followed by a faint kind of ventriloquial chirping,

proceeding apparently from the deepest recesses of the interior of Miss

Amelia Martin. âSing outââshouted one gentleman in a white great-coat.

âDonât be afraid to put the steam on, old gal,â exclaimed another,

âS-s-s-s-s-s-sâ-went the five-and-twenty bottled ales. âShame, shame!â

remonstrated the ornamental painterâs journeymanâs partyââS-s-s-sâ went

the bottled ales again, accompanied by all the gins, and a majority of

the brandies.

âTurn them geese out,â cried the ornamental painterâs journeymanâs party,

with great indignation.

âSing out,â whispered Mr. Jennings Rodolph.

âSo I do,â responded Miss Amelia Martin.

âSing louder,â said Mrs. Jennings Rodolph.

âI canât,â replied Miss Amelia Martin.

âOff, off, off,â cried the rest of the audience.

âBray-vo!â shouted the painterâs party. It wouldnât doâMiss Amelia

Martin left the orchestra, with much less ceremony than she had entered

it; and, as she couldnât sing out, never came out. The general good

humour was not restored until Mr. Jennings Rodolph had become purple in

the face, by imitating divers quadrupeds for half an hour, without being

able to render himself audible; and, to this day, neither has Miss Amelia

Martinâs good humour been restored, nor the dresses made for and

presented to Mrs. Jennings Rodolph, nor the local abilities which Mr.

Jennings Rodolph once staked his professional reputation that Miss Martin

possessed.

CHAPTER IXâTHE DANCING ACADEMY

Of all the dancing academies that ever were established, there never was

one more popular in its immediate vicinity than Signor Billsmethiâs, of

the âKingâs Theatre.â It was not in Spring-gardens, or Newman-street, or

Berners-street, or Gower-street, or Charlotte-street, or Percy-street, or

any other of the numerous streets which have been devoted time out of

mind to professional people, dispensaries, and boarding-houses; it was

not in the West-end at allâit rather approximated to the eastern portion

of London, being situated in the populous and improving neighbourhood of

Grayâs-inn-lane. It was not a dear dancing academyâfour-and-sixpence a

quarter is decidedly cheap upon the whole. It was \_very\_ select, the

number of pupils being strictly limited to seventy-five, and a quarterâs

payment in advance being rigidly exacted. There was public tuition and

private tuitionâan assembly-room and a parlour. Signor Billsmethiâs

family were always thrown in with the parlour, and included in parlour

price; that is to say, a private pupil had Signor Billsmethiâs parlour to

dance \_in\_, and Signor Billsmethiâs family to dance \_with\_; and when he

had been sufficiently broken in in the parlour, he began to run in

couples in the assembly-room.

Such was the dancing academy of Signor Billsmethi, when Mr. Augustus

Cooper, of Fetter-lane, first saw an unstamped advertisement walking

leisurely down Holborn-hill, announcing to the world that Signor

Billsmethi, of the Kingâs Theatre, intended opening for the season with a

Grand Ball.

Now, Mr. Augustus Cooper was in the oil and colour lineâjust of age, with

a little money, a little business, and a little mother, who, having

managed her husband and \_his\_ business in his lifetime, took to managing

her son and \_his\_ business after his decease; and so, somehow or other,

he had been cooped up in the little back parlour behind the shop on

week-days, and in a little deal box without a lid (called by courtesy a

pew) at Bethel Chapel, on Sundays, and had seen no more of the world than

if he had been an infant all his days; whereas Young White, at the

gas-fitterâs over the way, three years younger than him, had been flaring

away like winkinââgoing to the theatreâsupping at harmonic

meetingsâeating oysters by the barrelâdrinking stout by the gallonâeven

out all night, and coming home as cool in the morning as if nothing had

happened. So Mr. Augustus Cooper made up his mind that he would not

stand it any longer, and had that very morning expressed to his mother a

firm determination to be âblowed,â in the event of his not being

instantly provided with a street-door key. And he was walking down

Holborn-hill, thinking about all these things, and wondering how he could

manage to get introduced into genteel society for the first time, when

his eyes rested on Signor Billsmethiâs announcement, which it immediately

struck him was just the very thing he wanted; for he should not only be

able to select a genteel circle of acquaintance at once, out of the

five-and-seventy pupils at four-and-sixpence a quarter, but should

qualify himself at the same time to go through a hornpipe in private

society, with perfect ease to himself and great delight to his friends.

So, he stopped the unstamped advertisementâan animated sandwich, composed

of a boy between two boardsâand having procured a very small card with

the Signorâs address indented thereon, walked straight at once to the

Signorâs houseâand very fast he walked too, for fear the list should be

filled up, and the five-and-seventy completed, before he got there. The

Signor was at home, and, what was still more gratifying, he was an

Englishman! Such a nice manâand so polite! The list was not full, but

it was a most extraordinary circumstance that there was only just one

vacancy, and even that one would have been filled up, that very morning,

only Signor Billsmethi was dissatisfied with the reference, and, being

very much afraid that the lady wasnât select, wouldnât take her.

âAnd very much delighted I am, Mr. Cooper,â said Signor Billsmethi, âthat

I did \_not\_ take her. I assure you, Mr. CooperâI donât say it to flatter

you, for I know youâre above itâthat I consider myself extremely

fortunate in having a gentleman of your manners and appearance, sir.â

âI am very glad of it too, sir,â said Augustus Cooper.

âAnd I hope we shall be better acquainted, sir,â said Signor Billsmethi.

âAnd Iâm sure I hope we shall too, sir,â responded Augustus Cooper. Just

then, the door opened, and in came a young lady, with her hair curled in

a crop all over her head, and her shoes tied in sandals all over her

ankles.

âDonât run away, my dear,â said Signor Billsmethi; for the young lady

didnât know Mr. Cooper was there when she ran in, and was going to run

out again in her modesty, all in confusion-like. âDonât run away, my

dear,â said Signor Billsmethi, âthis is Mr. CooperâMr. Cooper, of

Fetter-lane. Mr. Cooper, my daughter, sirâMiss Billsmethi, sir, who I

hope will have the pleasure of dancing many a quadrille, minuet, gavotte,

country-dance, fandango, double-hornpipe, and farinagholkajingo with you,

sir. She dances them all, sir; and so shall you, sir, before youâre a

quarter older, sir.â

And Signor Bellsmethi slapped Mr. Augustus Cooper on the back, as if he

had known him a dozen years,âso friendly;âand Mr. Cooper bowed to the

young lady, and the young lady curtseyed to him, and Signor Billsmethi

said they were as handsome a pair as ever heâd wish to see; upon which

the young lady exclaimed, âLor, pa!â and blushed as red as Mr. Cooper

himselfâyou might have thought they were both standing under a red lamp

at a chemistâs shop; and before Mr. Cooper went away it was settled that

he should join the family circle that very nightâtaking them just as they

wereâno ceremony nor nonsense of that kindâand learn his positions in

order that he might lose no time, and be able to come out at the

forthcoming ball.

Well; Mr. Augustus Cooper went away to one of the cheap shoemakersâ shops

in Holborn, where gentlemenâs dress-pumps are seven-and-sixpence, and

menâs strong walking just nothing at all, and bought a pair of the

regular seven-and-sixpenny, long-quartered, town-mades, in which he

astonished himself quite as much as his mother, and sallied forth to

Signor Billsmethiâs. There were four other private pupils in the

parlour: two ladies and two gentlemen. Such nice people! Not a bit of

pride about them. One of the ladies in particular, who was in training

for a Columbine, was remarkably affable; and she and Miss Billsmethi took

such an interest in Mr. Augustus Cooper, and joked, and smiled, and

looked so bewitching, that he got quite at home, and learnt his steps in

no time. After the practising was over, Signor Billsmethi, and Miss

Billsmethi, and Master Billsmethi, and a young lady, and the two ladies,

and the two gentlemen, danced a quadrilleânone of your slipping and

sliding about, but regular warm work, flying into corners, and diving

among chairs, and shooting out at the door,âsomething like dancing!

Signor Billsmethi in particular, notwithstanding his having a little

fiddle to play all the time, was out on the landing every figure, and

Master Billsmethi, when everybody else was breathless, danced a hornpipe,

with a cane in his hand, and a cheese-plate on his head, to the

unqualified admiration of the whole company. Then, Signor Billsmethi

insisted, as they were so happy, that they should all stay to supper, and

proposed sending Master Billsmethi for the beer and spirits, whereupon

the two gentlemen swore, âstrike âem wulgar if theyâd stand that;â and

were just going to quarrel who should pay for it, when Mr. Augustus

Cooper said he would, if theyâd have the kindness to allow himâand they

\_had\_ the kindness to allow him; and Master Billsmethi brought the beer

in a can, and the rum in a quart pot. They had a regular night of it;

and Miss Billsmethi squeezed Mr. Augustus Cooperâs hand under the table;

and Mr. Augustus Cooper returned the squeeze, and returned home too, at

something to six oâclock in the morning, when he was put to bed by main

force by the apprentice, after repeatedly expressing an uncontrollable

desire to pitch his revered parent out of the second-floor window, and to

throttle the apprentice with his own neck-handkerchief.

Weeks had worn on, and the seven-and-sixpenny town-mades had nearly worn

out, when the night arrived for the grand dress-ball at which the whole

of the five-and-seventy pupils were to meet together, for the first time

that season, and to take out some portion of their respective

four-and-sixpences in lamp-oil and fiddlers. Mr. Augustus Cooper had

ordered a new coat for the occasionâa two-pound-tenner from Turnstile.

It was his first appearance in public; and, after a grand Sicilian

shawl-dance by fourteen young ladies in character, he was to open the

quadrille department with Miss Billsmethi herself, with whom he had

become quite intimate since his first introduction. It \_was\_ a night!

Everything was admirably arranged. The sandwich-boy took the hats and

bonnets at the street-door; there was a turn-up bedstead in the back

parlour, on which Miss Billsmethi made tea and coffee for such of the

gentlemen as chose to pay for it, and such of the ladies as the gentlemen

treated; red port-wine negus and lemonade were handed round at

eighteen-pence a head; and in pursuance of a previous engagement with the

public-house at the corner of the street, an extra potboy was laid on for

the occasion. In short, nothing could exceed the arrangements, except

the company. Such ladies! Such pink silk stockings! Such artificial

flowers! Such a number of cabs! No sooner had one cab set down a couple

of ladies, than another cab drove up and set down another couple of

ladies, and they all knew: not only one another, but the majority of the

gentlemen into the bargain, which made it all as pleasant and lively as

could be. Signor Billsmethi, in black tights, with a large blue bow in

his buttonhole, introduced the ladies to such of the gentlemen as were

strangers: and the ladies talked awayâand laughed they didâit was

delightful to see them.

As to the shawl-dance, it was the most exciting thing that ever was

beheld; there was such a whisking, and rustling, and fanning, and getting

ladies into a tangle with artificial flowers, and then disentangling them

again! And as to Mr. Augustus Cooperâs share in the quadrille, he got

through it admirably. He was missing from his partner, now and then,

certainly, and discovered on such occasions to be either dancing with

laudable perseverance in another set, or sliding about in perspective,

without any definite object; but, generally speaking, they managed to

shove him through the figure, until he turned up in the right place. Be

this as it may, when he had finished, a great many ladies and gentlemen

came up and complimented him very much, and said they had never seen a

beginner do anything like it before; and Mr. Augustus Cooper was

perfectly satisfied with himself, and everybody else into the bargain;

and âstoodâ considerable quantities of spirits-and-water, negus, and

compounds, for the use and behoof of two or three dozen very particular

friends, selected from the select circle of five-and-seventy pupils.

Now, whether it was the strength of the compounds, or the beauty of the

ladies, or what not, it did so happen that Mr. Augustus Cooper

encouraged, rather than repelled, the very flattering attentions of a

young lady in brown gauze over white calico who had appeared particularly

struck with him from the first; and when the encouragements had been

prolonged for some time, Miss Billsmethi betrayed her spite and jealousy

thereat by calling the young lady in brown gauze a âcreeter,â which

induced the young lady in brown gauze to retort, in certain sentences

containing a taunt founded on the payment of four-and-sixpence a quarter,

which reference Mr. Augustus Cooper, being then and there in a state of

considerable bewilderment, expressed his entire concurrence in. Miss

Billsmethi, thus renounced, forthwith began screaming in the loudest key

of her voice, at the rate of fourteen screams a minute; and being

unsuccessful, in an onslaught on the eyes and face, first of the lady in

gauze and then of Mr. Augustus Cooper, called distractedly on the other

three-and-seventy pupils to furnish her with oxalic acid for her own

private drinking; and, the call not being honoured, made another rush at

Mr. Cooper, and then had her stay-lace cut, and was carried off to bed.

Mr. Augustus Cooper, not being remarkable for quickness of apprehension,

was at a loss to understand what all this meant, until Signor Billsmethi

explained it in a most satisfactory manner, by stating to the pupils,

that Mr. Augustus Cooper had made and confirmed divers promises of

marriage to his daughter on divers occasions, and had now basely deserted

her; on which, the indignation of the pupils became universal; and as

several chivalrous gentlemen inquired rather pressingly of Mr. Augustus

Cooper, whether he required anything for his own use, or, in other words,

whether he âwanted anything for himself,â he deemed it prudent to make a

precipitate retreat. And the upshot of the matter was, that a lawyerâs

letter came next day, and an action was commenced next week; and that Mr.

Augustus Cooper, after walking twice to the Serpentine for the purpose of

drowning himself, and coming twice back without doing it, made a

confidante of his mother, who compromised the matter with twenty pounds

from the till: which made twenty pounds four shillings and sixpence paid

to Signor Billsmethi, exclusive of treats and pumps. And Mr. Augustus

Cooper went back and lived with his mother, and there he lives to this

day; and as he has lost his ambition for society, and never goes into the

world, he will never see this account of himself, and will never be any

the wiser.

CHAPTER XâSHABBY-GENTEEL PEOPLE

There are certain descriptions of people who, oddly enough, appear to

appertain exclusively to the metropolis. You meet them, every day, in

the streets of London, but no one ever encounters them elsewhere; they

seem indigenous to the soil, and to belong as exclusively to London as

its own smoke, or the dingy bricks and mortar. We could illustrate the

remark by a variety of examples, but, in our present sketch, we will only

advert to one class as a specimenâthat class which is so aptly and

expressively designated as âshabby-genteel.â

Now, shabby people, God knows, may be found anywhere, and genteel people

are not articles of greater scarcity out of London than in it; but this

compound of the twoâthis shabby-gentilityâis as purely local as the

statue at Charing-cross, or the pump at Aldgate. It is worthy of remark,

too, that only men are shabby-genteel; a woman is always either dirty and

slovenly in the extreme, or neat and respectable, however

poverty-stricken in appearance. A very poor man, âwho has seen better

days,â as the phrase goes, is a strange compound of dirty-slovenliness

and wretched attempts at faded smartness.

We will endeavour to explain our conception of the term which forms the

title of this paper. If you meet a man, lounging up Drury-Lane, or

leaning with his back against a post in Long-acre, with his hands in the

pockets of a pair of drab trousers plentifully besprinkled with

grease-spots: the trousers made very full over the boots, and ornamented

with two cords down the outside of each legâwearing, also, what has been

a brown coat with bright buttons, and a hat very much pinched up at the

side, cocked over his right eyeâdonât pity him. He is not

shabby-genteel. The âharmonic meetingsâ at some fourth-rate

public-house, or the purlieus of a private theatre, are his chosen

haunts; he entertains a rooted antipathy to any kind of work, and is on

familiar terms with several pantomime men at the large houses. But, if

you see hurrying along a by-street, keeping as close as he can to the

area-railings, a man of about forty or fifty, clad in an old rusty suit

of threadbare black cloth which shines with constant wear as if it had

been bees-waxedâthe trousers tightly strapped down, partly for the look

of the thing and partly to keep his old shoes from slipping off at the

heels,âif you observe, too, that his yellowish-white neckerchief is

carefully pinned up, to conceal the tattered garment underneath, and that

his hands are encased in the remains of an old pair of beaver gloves, you

may set him down as a shabby-genteel man. A glance at that depressed

face, and timorous air of conscious poverty, will make your heart

acheâalways supposing that you are neither a philosopher nor a political

economist.

We were once haunted by a shabby-genteel man; he was bodily present to

our senses all day, and he was in our mindâs eye all night. The man of

whom Sir Walter Scott speaks in his Demonology, did not suffer half the

persecution from his imaginary gentleman-usher in black velvet, that we

sustained from our friend in quondam black cloth. He first attracted our

notice, by sitting opposite to us in the reading-room at the British

Museum; and what made the man more remarkable was, that he always had

before him a couple of shabby-genteel booksâtwo old dogâs-eared folios,

in mouldy worm-eaten covers, which had once been smart. He was in his

chair, every morning, just as the clock struck ten; he was always the

last to leave the room in the afternoon; and when he did, he quitted it

with the air of a man who knew not where else to go, for warmth and

quiet. There he used to sit all day, as close to the table as possible,

in order to conceal the lack of buttons on his coat: with his old hat

carefully deposited at his feet, where he evidently flattered himself it

escaped observation.

About two oâclock, you would see him munching a French roll or a penny

loaf; not taking it boldly out of his pocket at once, like a man who knew

he was only making a lunch; but breaking off little bits in his pocket,

and eating them by stealth. He knew too well it was his dinner.

When we first saw this poor object, we thought it quite impossible that

his attire could ever become worse. We even went so far, as to speculate

on the possibility of his shortly appearing in a decent second-hand suit.

We knew nothing about the matter; he grew more and more shabby-genteel

every day. The buttons dropped off his waistcoat, one by one; then, he

buttoned his coat; and when one side of the coat was reduced to the same

condition as the waistcoat, he buttoned it overâon the other side. He

looked somewhat better at the beginning of the week than at the

conclusion, because the neckerchief, though yellow, was not quite so

dingy; and, in the midst of all this wretchedness, he never appeared

without gloves and straps. He remained in this state for a week or two.

At length, one of the buttons on the back of the coat fell off, and then

the man himself disappeared, and we thought he was dead.

We were sitting at the same table about a week after his disappearance,

and as our eyes rested on his vacant chair, we insensibly fell into a

train of meditation on the subject of his retirement from public life.

We were wondering whether he had hung himself, or thrown himself off a

bridgeâwhether he really was dead or had only been arrestedâwhen our

conjectures were suddenly set at rest by the entry of the man himself.

He had undergone some strange metamorphosis, and walked up the centre of

the room with an air which showed he was fully conscious of the

improvement in his appearance. It was very odd. His clothes were a

fine, deep, glossy black; and yet they looked like the same suit; nay,

there were the very darns with which old acquaintance had made us

familiar. The hat, tooânobody could mistake the shape of that hat, with

its high crown gradually increasing in circumference towards the top.

Long service had imparted to it a reddish-brown tint; but, now, it was as

black as the coat. The truth flashed suddenly upon usâthey had been

ârevived.â It is a deceitful liquid that black and blue reviver; we have

watched its effects on many a shabby-genteel man. It betrays its victims

into a temporary assumption of importance: possibly into the purchase of

a new pair of gloves, or a cheap stock, or some other trifling article of

dress. It elevates their spirits for a week, only to depress them, if

possible, below their original level. It was so in this case; the

transient dignity of the unhappy man decreased, in exact proportion as

the âreviverâ wore off. The knees of the unmentionables, and the elbows

of the coat, and the seams generally, soon began to get alarmingly white.

The hat was once more deposited under the table, and its owner crept into

his seat as quietly as ever.

There was a week of incessant small rain and mist. At its expiration the

âreviverâ had entirely vanished, and the shabby-genteel man never

afterwards attempted to effect any improvement in his outward appearance.

It would be difficult to name any particular part of town as the

principal resort of shabby-genteel men. We have met a great many persons

of this description in the neighbourhood of the inns of court. They may

be met with, in Holborn, between eight and ten any morning; and whoever

has the curiosity to enter the Insolvent Debtorsâ Court will observe,

both among spectators and practitioners, a great variety of them. We

never went on âChange, by any chance, without seeing some shabby-genteel

men, and we have often wondered what earthly business they can have

there. They will sit there, for hours, leaning on great, dropsical,

mildewed umbrellas, or eating Abernethy biscuits. Nobody speaks to them,

nor they to any one. On consideration, we remember to have occasionally

seen two shabby-genteel men conversing together on âChange, but our

experience assures us that this is an uncommon circumstance, occasioned

by the offer of a pinch of snuff, or some such civility.

It would be a task of equal difficulty, either to assign any particular

spot for the residence of these beings, or to endeavour to enumerate

their general occupations. We were never engaged in business with more

than one shabby-genteel man; and he was a drunken engraver, and lived in

a damp back-parlour in a new row of houses at Camden-town, half street,

half brick-field, somewhere near the canal. A shabby-genteel man may

have no occupation, or he may be a corn agent, or a coal agent, or a wine

merchant, or a collector of debts, or a brokerâs assistant, or a

broken-down attorney. He may be a clerk of the lowest description, or a

contributor to the press of the same grade. Whether our readers have

noticed these men, in their walks, as often as we have, we know not; this

we knowâthat the miserably poor man (no matter whether he owes his

distresses to his own conduct, or that of others) who feels his poverty

and vainly strives to conceal it, is one of the most pitiable objects in

human nature. Such objects, with few exceptions, are shabby-genteel

people.

CHAPTER XIâMAKING A NIGHT OF IT

Damon and Pythias were undoubtedly very good fellows in their way: the

former for his extreme readiness to put in special bail for a friend: and

the latter for a certain trump-like punctuality in turning up just in the

very nick of time, scarcely less remarkable. Many points in their

character have, however, grown obsolete. Damons are rather hard to find,

in these days of imprisonment for debt (except the sham ones, and they

cost half-a-crown); and, as to the Pythiases, the few that have existed

in these degenerate times, have had an unfortunate knack of making

themselves scarce, at the very moment when their appearance would have

been strictly classical. If the actions of these heroes, however, can

find no parallel in modern times, their friendship can. We have Damon

and Pythias on the one hand. We have Potter and Smithers on the other;

and, lest the two last-mentioned names should never have reached the ears

of our unenlightened readers, we can do no better than make them

acquainted with the owners thereof.

Mr. Thomas Potter, then, was a clerk in the city, and Mr. Robert Smithers

was a ditto in the same; their incomes were limited, but their friendship

was unbounded. They lived in the same street, walked into town every

morning at the same hour, dined at the same slap-bang every day, and

revelled in each otherâs company very night. They were knit together by

the closest ties of intimacy and friendship, or, as Mr. Thomas Potter

touchingly observed, they were âthick-and-thin pals, and nothing but it.â

There was a spice of romance in Mr. Smithersâs disposition, a ray of

poetry, a gleam of misery, a sort of consciousness of he didnât exactly

know what, coming across him he didnât precisely know whyâwhich stood out

in fine relief against the off-hand, dashing,

amateur-pickpocket-sort-of-manner, which distinguished Mr. Potter in an

eminent degree.

The peculiarity of their respective dispositions, extended itself to

their individual costume. Mr. Smithers generally appeared in public in a

surtout and shoes, with a narrow black neckerchief and a brown hat, very

much turned up at the sidesâpeculiarities which Mr. Potter wholly

eschewed, for it was his ambition to do something in the celebrated

âkiddyâ or stage-coach way, and he had even gone so far as to invest

capital in the purchase of a rough blue coat with wooden buttons, made

upon the firemanâs principle, in which, with the addition of a

low-crowned, flower-pot-saucer-shaped hat, he had created no

inconsiderable sensation at the Albion in Little Russell-street, and

divers other places of public and fashionable resort.

Mr. Potter and Mr. Smithers had mutually agreed that, on the receipt of

their quarterâs salary, they would jointly and in company âspend the

eveningââan evident misnomerâthe spending applying, as everybody knows,

not to the evening itself but to all the money the individual may chance

to be possessed of, on the occasion to which reference is made; and they

had likewise agreed that, on the evening aforesaid, they would âmake a

night of itââan expressive term, implying the borrowing of several hours

from to-morrow morning, adding them to the night before, and

manufacturing a compound night of the whole.

The quarter-day arrived at lastâwe say at last, because quarter-days are

as eccentric as comets: moving wonderfully quick when you have a good

deal to pay, and marvellously slow when you have a little to receive.

Mr. Thomas Potter and Mr. Robert Smithers met by appointment to begin the

evening with a dinner; and a nice, snug, comfortable dinner they had,

consisting of a little procession of four chops and four kidneys,

following each other, supported on either side by a pot of the real

draught stout, and attended by divers cushions of bread, and wedges of

cheese.

When the cloth was removed, Mr. Thomas Potter ordered the waiter to bring

in, two goes of his best Scotch whiskey, with warm water and sugar, and a

couple of his âvery mildestâ Havannahs, which the waiter did. Mr. Thomas

Potter mixed his grog, and lighted his cigar; Mr. Robert Smithers did the

same; and then, Mr. Thomas Potter jocularly proposed as the first toast,

âthe abolition of all offices whateverâ (not sinecures, but

counting-houses), which was immediately drunk by Mr. Robert Smithers,

with enthusiastic applause. So they went on, talking politics, puffing

cigars, and sipping whiskey-and-water, until the âgoesââmost

appropriately so calledâwere both gone, which Mr. Robert Smithers

perceiving, immediately ordered in two more goes of the best Scotch

whiskey, and two more of the very mildest Havannahs; and the goes kept

coming in, and the mild Havannahs kept going out, until, what with the

drinking, and lighting, and puffing, and the stale ashes on the table,

and the tallow-grease on the cigars, Mr. Robert Smithers began to doubt

the mildness of the Havannahs, and to feel very much as if he had been

sitting in a hackney-coach with his back to the horses.

As to Mr. Thomas Potter, he \_would\_ keep laughing out loud, and

volunteering inarticulate declarations that he was âall right;â in proof

of which, he feebly bespoke the evening paper after the next gentleman,

but finding it a matter of some difficulty to discover any news in its

columns, or to ascertain distinctly whether it had any columns at all,

walked slowly out to look for the moon, and, after coming back quite pale

with looking up at the sky so long, and attempting to express mirth at

Mr. Robert Smithers having fallen asleep, by various galvanic chuckles,

laid his head on his arm, and went to sleep also. When he awoke again,

Mr. Robert Smithers awoke too, and they both very gravely agreed that it

was extremely unwise to eat so many pickled walnuts with the chops, as it

was a notorious fact that they always made people queer and sleepy;

indeed, if it had not been for the whiskey and cigars, there was no

knowing what harm they mightnât have done âem. So they took some coffee,

and after paying the bill,âtwelve and twopence the dinner, and the odd

tenpence for the waiterâthirteen shillings in allâstarted out on their

expedition to manufacture a night.

It was just half-past eight, so they thought they couldnât do better than

go at half-price to the slips at the City Theatre, which they did

accordingly. Mr. Robert Smithers, who had become extremely poetical

after the settlement of the bill, enlivening the walk by informing Mr.

Thomas Potter in confidence that he felt an inward presentiment of

approaching dissolution, and subsequently embellishing the theatre, by

falling asleep with his head and both arms gracefully drooping over the

front of the boxes.

Such was the quiet demeanour of the unassuming Smithers, and such were

the happy effects of Scotch whiskey and Havannahs on that interesting

person! But Mr. Thomas Potter, whose great aim it was to be considered

as a âknowing card,â a âfast-goer,â and so forth, conducted himself in a

very different manner, and commenced going very fast indeedârather too

fast at last, for the patience of the audience to keep pace with him. On

his first entry, he contented himself by earnestly calling upon the

gentlemen in the gallery to âflare up,â accompanying the demand with

another request, expressive of his wish that they would instantaneously

âform a union,â both which requisitions were responded to, in the manner

most in vogue on such occasions.

âGive that dog a bone!â cried one gentleman in his shirt-sleeves.

âWhere have you been a having half a pint of intermediate beer?â cried a

second. âTailor!â screamed a third. âBarberâs clerk!â shouted a fourth.

âThrow him OâVER!â roared a fifth; while numerous voices concurred in

desiring Mr. Thomas Potter to âgo home to his mother!â All these taunts

Mr. Thomas Potter received with supreme contempt, cocking the low-crowned

hat a little more on one side, whenever any reference was made to his

personal appearance, and, standing up with his arms a-kimbo, expressing

defiance melodramatically.

The overtureâto which these various sounds had been an \_ad libitum\_

accompanimentâconcluded, the second piece began, and Mr. Thomas Potter,

emboldened by impunity, proceeded to behave in a most unprecedented and

outrageous manner. First of all, he imitated the shake of the principal

female singer; then, groaned at the blue fire; then, affected to be

frightened into convulsions of terror at the appearance of the ghost;

and, lastly, not only made a running commentary, in an audible voice,

upon the dialogue on the stage, but actually awoke Mr. Robert Smithers,

who, hearing his companion making a noise, and having a very indistinct

notion where he was, or what was required of him, immediately, by way of

imitating a good example, set up the most unearthly, unremitting, and

appalling howling that ever audience heard. It was too much. âTurn them

out!â was the general cry. A noise, as of shuffling of feet, and men

being knocked up with violence against wainscoting, was heard: a hurried

dialogue of âCome out?âââI wonât!âââYou shall!âââI shanât!âââGive me your

card, Sir?âââYouâre a scoundrel, Sir!â and so forth, succeeded. A round

of applause betokened the approbation of the audience, and Mr. Robert

Smithers and Mr. Thomas Potter found themselves shot with astonishing

swiftness into the road, without having had the trouble of once putting

foot to ground during the whole progress of their rapid descent.

Mr. Robert Smithers, being constitutionally one of the slow-goers, and

having had quite enough of fast-going, in the course of his recent

expulsion, to last until the quarter-day then next ensuing at the very

least, had no sooner emerged with his companion from the precincts of

Milton-street, than he proceeded to indulge in circuitous references to

the beauties of sleep, mingled with distant allusions to the propriety of

returning to Islington, and testing the influence of their patent Bramahs

over the street-door locks to which they respectively belonged. Mr.

Thomas Potter, however, was valorous and peremptory. They had come out

to make a night of it: and a night must be made. So Mr. Robert Smithers,

who was three parts dull, and the other dismal, despairingly assented;

and they went into a wine-vaults, to get materials for assisting them in

making a night; where they found a good many young ladies, and various

old gentlemen, and a plentiful sprinkling of hackney-coachmen and

cab-drivers, all drinking and talking together; and Mr. Thomas Potter and

Mr. Robert Smithers drank small glasses of brandy, and large glasses of

soda, until they began to have a very confused idea, either of things in

general, or of anything in particular; and, when they had done treating

themselves they began to treat everybody else; and the rest of the

entertainment was a confused mixture of heads and heels, black eyes and

blue uniforms, mud and gas-lights, thick doors, and stone paving.

Then, as standard novelists expressively inform usââall was a blank!â and

in the morning the blank was filled up with the words âSTATION-HOUSE,â

and the station-house was filled up with Mr. Thomas Potter, Mr. Robert

Smithers, and the major part of their wine-vault companions of the

preceding night, with a comparatively small portion of clothing of any

kind. And it was disclosed at the Police-office, to the indignation of

the Bench, and the astonishment of the spectators, how one Robert

Smithers, aided and abetted by one Thomas Potter, had knocked down and

beaten, in divers streets, at different times, five men, four boys, and

three women; how the said Thomas Potter had feloniously obtained

possession of five door-knockers, two bell-handles, and a bonnet; how

Robert Smithers, his friend, had sworn, at least forty poundsâ worth of

oaths, at the rate of five shillings apiece; terrified whole streets full

of Her Majestyâs subjects with awful shrieks and alarms of fire;

destroyed the uniforms of five policemen; and committed various other

atrocities, too numerous to recapitulate. And the magistrate, after an

appropriate reprimand, fined Mr. Thomas Potter and Mr. Thomas Smithers

five shillings each, for being, what the law vulgarly terms, drunk; and

thirty-four pounds for seventeen assaults at forty shillings a-head, with

liberty to speak to the prosecutors.

The prosecutors \_were\_ spoken to, and Messrs. Potter and Smithers lived

on credit, for a quarter, as best they might; and, although the

prosecutors expressed their readiness to be assaulted twice a week, on

the same terms, they have never since been detected in âmaking a night of

it.â

CHAPTER XIIâTHE PRISONERSâ VAN

We were passing the corner of Bow-street, on our return from a lounging

excursion the other afternoon, when a crowd, assembled round the door of

the Police-office, attracted our attention. We turned up the street

accordingly. There were thirty or forty people, standing on the pavement

and half across the road; and a few stragglers were patiently stationed

on the opposite side of the wayâall evidently waiting in expectation of

some arrival. We waited too, a few minutes, but nothing occurred; so, we

turned round to an unshorn, sallow-looking cobbler, who was standing next

us with his hands under the bib of his apron, and put the usual question

of âWhatâs the matter?â The cobbler eyed us from head to foot, with

superlative contempt, and laconically replied âNuffin.â

Now, we were perfectly aware that if two men stop in the street to look

at any given object, or even to gaze in the air, two hundred men will be

assembled in no time; but, as we knew very well that no crowd of people

could by possibility remain in a street for five minutes without getting

up a little amusement among themselves, unless they had some absorbing

object in view, the natural inquiry next in order was, âWhat are all

these people waiting here for?âââHer Majestyâs carriage,â replied the

cobbler. This was still more extraordinary. We could not imagine what

earthly business Her Majestyâs carriage could have at the Public Office,

Bow-street. We were beginning to ruminate on the possible causes of such

an uncommon appearance, when a general exclamation from all the boys in

the crowd of âHereâs the wan!â caused us to raise our heads, and look up

the street.

The covered vehicle, in which prisoners are conveyed from the

police-offices to the different prisons, was coming along at full speed.

It then occurred to us, for the first time, that Her Majestyâs carriage

was merely another name for the prisonersâ van, conferred upon it, not

only by reason of the superior gentility of the term, but because the

aforesaid van is maintained at Her Majestyâs expense: having been

originally started for the exclusive accommodation of ladies and

gentlemen under the necessity of visiting the various houses of call

known by the general denomination of âHer Majestyâs Gaols.â

The van drew up at the office-door, and the people thronged round the

steps, just leaving a little alley for the prisoners to pass through.

Our friend the cobbler, and the other stragglers, crossed over, and we

followed their example. The driver, and another man who had been seated

by his side in front of the vehicle, dismounted, and were admitted into

the office. The office-door was closed after them, and the crowd were on

the tiptoe of expectation.

After a few minutesâ delay, the door again opened, and the two first

prisoners appeared. They were a couple of girls, of whom the elderâcould

not be more than sixteen, and the younger of whom had certainly not

attained her fourteenth year. That they were sisters, was evident, from

the resemblance which still subsisted between them, though two additional

years of depravity had fixed their brand upon the elder girlâs features,

as legibly as if a red-hot iron had seared them. They were both gaudily

dressed, the younger one especially; and, although there was a strong

similarity between them in both respects, which was rendered the more

obvious by their being handcuffed together, it is impossible to conceive

a greater contrast than the demeanour of the two presented. The younger

girl was weeping bitterlyânot for display, or in the hope of producing

effect, but for very shame: her face was buried in her handkerchief: and

her whole manner was but too expressive of bitter and unavailing sorrow.

âHow long are you for, Emily?â screamed a red-faced woman in the crowd.

âSix weeks and labour,â replied the elder girl with a flaunting laugh;

âand thatâs better than the stone jug anyhow; the millâs a deal better

than the Sessions, and hereâs Bella a-going too for the first time. Hold

up your head, you chicken,â she continued, boisterously tearing the other

girlâs handkerchief away; âHold up your head, and show âem your face. I

anât jealous, but Iâm blessed if I anât game!âââThatâs right, old gal,â

exclaimed a man in a paper cap, who, in common with the greater part of

the crowd, had been inexpressibly delighted with this little

incident.ââRight!â replied the girl; âah, to be sure; whatâs the odds,

eh?âââCome! In with you,â interrupted the driver. âDonât you be in a

hurry, coachman,â replied the girl, âand recollect I want to be set down

in Cold Bath Fieldsâlarge house with a high garden-wall in front; you

canât mistake it. Hallo. Bella, where are you going toâyouâll pull my

precious arm off?â This was addressed to the younger girl, who, in her

anxiety to hide herself in the caravan, had ascended the steps first, and

forgotten the strain upon the handcuff. âCome down, and letâs show you

the way.â And after jerking the miserable girl down with a force which

made her stagger on the pavement, she got into the vehicle, and was

followed by her wretched companion.

These two girls had been thrown upon London streets, their vices and

debauchery, by a sordid and rapacious mother. What the younger girl was

then, the elder had been once; and what the elder then was, the younger

must soon become. A melancholy prospect, but how surely to be realised;

a tragic drama, but how often acted! Turn to the prisons and police

offices of Londonânay, look into the very streets themselves. These

things pass before our eyes, day after day, and hour after hourâthey have

become such matters of course, that they are utterly disregarded. The

progress of these girls in crime will be as rapid as the flight of a

pestilence, resembling it too in its baneful influence and wide-spreading

infection. Step by step, how many wretched females, within the sphere of

every manâs observation, have become involved in a career of vice,

frightful to contemplate; hopeless at its commencement, loathsome and

repulsive in its course; friendless, forlorn, and unpitied, at its

miserable conclusion!

There were other prisonersâboys of ten, as hardened in vice as men of

fiftyâa houseless vagrant, going joyfully to prison as a place of food

and shelter, handcuffed to a man whose prospects were ruined, character

lost, and family rendered destitute, by his first offence. Our

curiosity, however, was satisfied. The first group had left an

impression on our mind we would gladly have avoided, and would willingly

have effaced.

The crowd dispersed; the vehicle rolled away with its load of guilt and

misfortune; and we saw no more of the Prisonersâ Van.

TALES

CHAPTER IâTHE BOARDING-HOUSE

CHAPTER I.

Mrs. Tibbs was, beyond all dispute, the most tidy, fidgety, thrifty

little personage that ever inhaled the smoke of London; and the house of

Mrs. Tibbs was, decidedly, the neatest in all Great Coram-street. The

area and the area-steps, and the street-door and the street-door steps,

and the brass handle, and the door-plate, and the knocker, and the

fan-light, were all as clean and bright, as indefatigable white-washing,

and hearth-stoning, and scrubbing and rubbing, could make them. The

wonder was, that the brass door-plate, with the interesting inscription

âMRS. TIBBS,â had never caught fire from constant friction, so

perseveringly was it polished. There were meat-safe-looking blinds in

the parlour-windows, blue and gold curtains in the drawing-room, and

spring-roller blinds, as Mrs. Tibbs was wont in the pride of her heart to

boast, âall the way up.â The bell-lamp in the passage looked as clear as

a soap-bubble; you could see yourself in all the tables, and

French-polish yourself on any one of the chairs. The banisters were

bees-waxed; and the very stair-wires made your eyes wink, they were so

glittering.

Mrs. Tibbs was somewhat short of stature, and Mr. Tibbs was by no means a

large man. He had, moreover, very short legs, but, by way of

indemnification, his face was peculiarly long. He was to his wife what

the 0 is in 90âhe was of some importance \_with\_ herâhe was nothing

without her. Mrs. Tibbs was always talking. Mr. Tibbs rarely spoke;

but, if it were at any time possible to put in a word, when he should

have said nothing at all, he had that talent. Mrs. Tibbs detested long

stories, and Mr. Tibbs had one, the conclusion of which had never been

heard by his most intimate friends. It always began, âI recollect when I

was in the volunteer corps, in eighteen hundred and six,ââbut, as he

spoke very slowly and softly, and his better half very quickly and

loudly, he rarely got beyond the introductory sentence. He was a

melancholy specimen of the story-teller. He was the wandering Jew of

Joe Millerism.

Mr. Tibbs enjoyed a small independence from the pension-listâabout 43\_l.\_

15\_s.\_ 10\_d.\_ a year. His father, mother, and five interesting scions

from the same stock, drew a like sum from the revenue of a grateful

country, though for what particular service was never known. But, as

this said independence was not quite sufficient to furnish two people

with \_all\_ the luxuries of this life, it had occurred to the busy little

spouse of Tibbs, that the best thing she could do with a legacy of

700\_l.\_, would be to take and furnish a tolerable houseâsomewhere in that

partially-explored tract of country which lies between the British

Museum, and a remote village called Somers-townâfor the reception of

boarders. Great Coram-street was the spot pitched upon. The house had

been furnished accordingly; two female servants and a boy engaged; and an

advertisement inserted in the morning papers, informing the public that

âSix individuals would meet with all the comforts of a cheerful musical

home in a select private family, residing within ten minutesâ walk

ofââeverywhere. Answers out of number were received, with all sorts of

initials; all the letters of the alphabet seemed to be seized with a

sudden wish to go out boarding and lodging; voluminous was the

correspondence between Mrs. Tibbs and the applicants; and most profound

was the secrecy observed. âE.â didnât like this; âI.â couldnât think of

putting up with that; âI. O. U.â didnât think the terms would suit him;

and âG. R.â had never slept in a French bed. The result, however, was,

that three gentlemen became inmates of Mrs. Tibbsâs house, on terms which

were âagreeable to all parties.â In went the advertisement again, and a

lady with her two daughters, proposed to increaseânot their families, but

Mrs. Tibbsâs.

âCharming woman, that Mrs. Maplesone!â said Mrs. Tibbs, as she and her

spouse were sitting by the fire after breakfast; the gentlemen having

gone out on their several avocations. âCharming woman, indeed!â repeated

little Mrs. Tibbs, more by way of soliloquy than anything else, for she

never thought of consulting her husband. âAnd the two daughters are

delightful. We must have some fish to-day; theyâll join us at dinner for

the first time.â

Mr. Tibbs placed the poker at right angles with the fire shovel, and

essayed to speak, but recollected he had nothing to say.

âThe young ladies,â continued Mrs. T., âhave kindly volunteered to bring

their own piano.â

Tibbs thought of the volunteer story, but did not venture it.

A bright thought struck himâ

âItâs very likelyââ said he.

âPray donât lean your head against the paper,â interrupted Mrs. Tibbs;

âand donât put your feet on the steel fender; thatâs worse.â

Tibbs took his head from the paper, and his feet from the fender, and

proceeded. âItâs very likely one of the young ladies may set her cap at

young Mr. Simpson, and you know a marriageââ

âA what!â shrieked Mrs. Tibbs. Tibbs modestly repeated his former

suggestion.

âI beg you wonât mention such a thing,â said Mrs. T. âA marriage, indeed

to rob me of my boardersâno, not for the world.â

Tibbs thought in his own mind that the event was by no means unlikely,

but, as he never argued with his wife, he put a stop to the dialogue, by

observing it was âtime to go to business.â He always went out at ten

oâclock in the morning, and returned at five in the afternoon, with an

exceedingly dirty face, and smelling mouldy. Nobody knew what he was, or

where he went; but Mrs. Tibbs used to say with an air of great

importance, that he was engaged in the City.

The Miss Maplesones and their accomplished parent arrived in the course

of the afternoon in a hackney-coach, and accompanied by a most

astonishing number of packages. Trunks, bonnet-boxes, muff-boxes and

parasols, guitar-cases, and parcels of all imaginable shapes, done up in

brown paper, and fastened with pins, filled the passage. Then, there was

such a running up and down with the luggage, such scampering for warm

water for the ladies to wash in, and such a bustle, and confusion, and

heating of servants, and curling-irons, as had never been known in Great

Coram-street before. Little Mrs. Tibbs was quite in her element,

bustling about, talking incessantly, and distributing towels and soap,

like a head nurse in a hospital. The house was not restored to its usual

state of quiet repose, until the ladies were safely shut up in their

respective bedrooms, engaged in the important occupation of dressing for

dinner.

âAre these gals âandsome?â inquired Mr. Simpson of Mr. Septimus Hicks,

another of the boarders, as they were amusing themselves in the

drawing-room, before dinner, by lolling on sofas, and contemplating their

pumps.

âDonât know,â replied Mr. Septimus Hicks, who was a tallish, white-faced

young man, with spectacles, and a black ribbon round his neck instead of

a neckerchiefâa most interesting person; a poetical walker of the

hospitals, and a âvery talented young man.â He was fond of âluggingâ

into conversation all sorts of quotations from Don Juan, without

fettering himself by the propriety of their application; in which

particular he was remarkably independent. The other, Mr. Simpson, was

one of those young men, who are in society what walking gentlemen are on

the stage, only infinitely worse skilled in his vocation than the most

indifferent artist. He was as empty-headed as the great bell of St.

Paulâs; always dressed according to the caricatures published in the

monthly fashion; and spelt Character with a K.

âI saw a devilish number of parcels in the passage when I came home,â

simpered Mr. Simpson.

âMaterials for the toilet, no doubt,â rejoined the Don Juan reader.

ââMuch linen, lace, and several pair

Of stockings, slippers, brushes, combs, complete;

With other articles of ladies fair,

To keep them beautiful, or leave them neat.â

âIs that from Milton?â inquired Mr. Simpson.

âNoâfrom Byron,â returned Mr. Hicks, with a look of contempt. He was

quite sure of his author, because he had never read any other. âHush!

Here come the gals,â and they both commenced talking in a very loud key.

âMrs. Maplesone and the Miss Maplesones, Mr. Hicks. Mr. HicksâMrs.

Maplesone and the Miss Maplesones,â said Mrs. Tibbs, with a very red

face, for she had been superintending the cooking operations below

stairs, and looked like a wax doll on a sunny day. âMr. Simpson, I beg

your pardonâMr. SimpsonâMrs. Maplesone and the Miss Maplesonesââand \_vice

versÃ¢\_. The gentlemen immediately began to slide about with much

politeness, and to look as if they wished their arms had been legs, so

little did they know what to do with them. The ladies smiled, curtseyed,

and glided into chairs, and dived for dropped pocket-handkerchiefs: the

gentlemen leant against two of the curtain-pegs; Mrs. Tibbs went through

an admirable bit of serious pantomime with a servant who had come up to

ask some question about the fish-sauce; and then the two young ladies

looked at each other; and everybody else appeared to discover something

very attractive in the pattern of the fender.

âJulia, my love,â said Mrs. Maplesone to her youngest daughter, in a tone

loud enough for the remainder of the company to hearââJulia.â

âYes, Ma.â

âDonât stoop.ââThis was said for the purpose of directing general

attention to Miss Juliaâs figure, which was undeniable. Everybody looked

at her, accordingly, and there was another pause.

âWe had the most uncivil hackney-coachman to-day, you can imagine,â said

Mrs. Maplesone to Mrs. Tibbs, in a confidential tone.

âDear me!â replied the hostess, with an air of great commiseration. She

couldnât say more, for the servant again appeared at the door, and

commenced telegraphing most earnestly to her âMissis.â

âI think hackney-coachmen generally \_are\_ uncivil,â said Mr. Hicks in his

most insinuating tone.

âPositively I think they are,â replied Mrs. Maplesone, as if the idea had

never struck her before.

âAnd cabmen, too,â said Mr. Simpson. This remark was a failure, for no

one intimated, by word or sign, the slightest knowledge of the manners

and customs of cabmen.

âRobinson, what \_do\_ you want?â said Mrs. Tibbs to the servant, who, by

way of making her presence known to her mistress, had been giving sundry

hems and sniffs outside the door during the preceding five minutes.

âPlease, maâam, master wants his clean things,â replied the servant,

taken off her guard. The two young men turned their faces to the window,

and âwent offâ like a couple of bottles of ginger-beer; the ladies put

their handkerchiefs to their mouths; and little Mrs. Tibbs bustled out of

the room to give Tibbs his clean linen,âand the servant warning.

Mr. Calton, the remaining boarder, shortly afterwards made his

appearance, and proved a surprising promoter of the conversation. Mr.

Calton was a superannuated beauâan old boy. He used to say of himself

that although his features were not regularly handsome, they were

striking. They certainly were. It was impossible to look at his face

without being reminded of a chubby street-door knocker, half-lion

half-monkey; and the comparison might be extended to his whole character

and conversation. He had stood still, while everything else had been

moving. He never originated a conversation, or started an idea; but if

any commonplace topic were broached, or, to pursue the comparison, if

anybody \_lifted him up\_, he would hammer away with surprising rapidity.

He had the tic-douloureux occasionally, and then he might be said to be

muffled, because he did not make quite as much noise as at other times,

when he would go on prosing, rat-tat-tat the same thing over and over

again. He had never been married; but he was still on the look-out for a

wife with money. He had a life interest worth about 300\_l.\_ a yearâhe

was exceedingly vain, and inordinately selfish. He had acquired the

reputation of being the very pink of politeness, and he walked round the

park, and up Regent-street, every day.

This respectable personage had made up his mind to render himself

exceedingly agreeable to Mrs. Maplesoneâindeed, the desire of being as

amiable as possible extended itself to the whole party; Mrs. Tibbs having

considered it an admirable little bit of management to represent to the

gentlemen that she had \_some\_ reason to believe the ladies were fortunes,

and to hint to the ladies, that all the gentlemen were âeligible.â A

little flirtation, she thought, might keep her house full, without

leading to any other result.

Mrs. Maplesone was an enterprising widow of about fifty: shrewd,

scheming, and good-looking. She was amiably anxious on behalf of her

daughters; in proof whereof she used to remark, that she would have no

objection to marry again, if it would benefit her dear girlsâshe could

have no other motive. The âdear girlsâ themselves were not at all

insensible to the merits of âa good establishment.â One of them was

twenty-five; the other, three years younger. They had been at different

watering-places, for four seasons; they had gambled at libraries, read

books in balconies, sold at fancy fairs, danced at assemblies, talked

sentimentâin short, they had done all that industrious girls could

doâbut, as yet, to no purpose.

âWhat a magnificent dresser Mr. Simpson is!â whispered Matilda Maplesone

to her sister Julia.

âSplendid!â returned the youngest. The magnificent individual alluded to

wore a maroon-coloured dress-coat, with a velvet collar and cuffs of the

same tintâvery like that which usually invests the form of the

distinguished unknown who condescends to play the âswellâ in the

pantomime at âRichardsonâs Show.â

âWhat whiskers!â said Miss Julia.

âCharming!â responded her sister; âand what hair!â His hair was like a

wig, and distinguished by that insinuating wave which graces the shining

locks of those \_chef-dâoeuvres\_ of art surmounting the waxen images in

Bartellotâs window in Regent-street; his whiskers meeting beneath his

chin, seemed strings wherewith to tie it on, ere science had rendered

them unnecessary by her patent invisible springs.

âDinnerâs on the table, maâam, if you please,â said the boy, who now

appeared for the first time, in a revived black coat of his masterâs.

âOh! Mr. Calton, will you lead Mrs. Maplesone?âThank you.â Mr. Simpson

offered his arm to Miss Julia; Mr. Septimus Hicks escorted the lovely

Matilda; and the procession proceeded to the dining-room. Mr. Tibbs was

introduced, and Mr. Tibbs bobbed up and down to the three ladies like a

figure in a Dutch clock, with a powerful spring in the middle of his

body, and then dived rapidly into his seat at the bottom of the table,

delighted to screen himself behind a soup-tureen, which he could just see

over, and that was all. The boarders were seated, a lady and gentleman

alternately, like the layers of bread and meat in a plate of sandwiches;

and then Mrs. Tibbs directed James to take off the covers. Salmon,

lobster-sauce, giblet-soup, and the usual accompaniments were discovered:

potatoes like petrifactions, and bits of toasted bread, the shape and

size of blank dice.

âSoup for Mrs. Maplesone, my dear,â said the bustling Mrs. Tibbs. She

always called her husband âmy dearâ before company. Tibbs, who had been

eating his bread, and calculating how long it would be before he should

get any fish, helped the soup in a hurry, made a small island on the

table-cloth, and put his glass upon it, to hide it from his wife.

âMiss Julia, shall I assist you to some fish?â

âIf you pleaseâvery littleâoh! plenty, thank youâ (a bit about the size

of a walnut put upon the plate).

âJulia is a \_very\_ little eater,â said Mrs. Maplesone to Mr. Calton.

The knocker gave a single rap. He was busy eating the fish with his

eyes: so he only ejaculated, âAh!â

âMy dear,â said Mrs. Tibbs to her spouse after every one else had been

helped, âwhat do \_you\_ take?â The inquiry was accompanied with a look

intimating that he mustnât say fish, because there was not much left.

Tibbs thought the frown referred to the island on the table-cloth; he

therefore coolly replied, âWhyâIâll take a littleâfish, I think.â

âDid you say fish, my dear?â (another frown).

âYes, dear,â replied the villain, with an expression of acute hunger

depicted in his countenance. The tears almost started to Mrs. Tibbsâs

eyes, as she helped her âwretch of a husband,â as she inwardly called

him, to the last eatable bit of salmon on the dish.

âJames, take this to your master, and take away your masterâs knife.â

This was deliberate revenge, as Tibbs never could eat fish without one.

He was, however, constrained to chase small particles of salmon round and

round his plate with a piece of bread and a fork, the number of

successful attempts being about one in seventeen.

âTake away, James,â said Mrs. Tibbs, as Tibbs swallowed the fourth

mouthfulâand away went the plates like lightning.

âIâll take a bit of bread, James,â said the poor âmaster of the house,â

more hungry than ever.

âNever mind your master now, James,â said Mrs. Tibbs, âsee about the

meat.â This was conveyed in the tone in which ladies usually give

admonitions to servants in company, that is to say, a low one; but which,

like a stage whisper, from its peculiar emphasis, is most distinctly

heard by everybody present.

A pause ensued, before the table was replenishedâa sort of parenthesis in

which Mr. Simpson, Mr. Calton, and Mr. Hicks, produced respectively a

bottle of sauterne, bucellas, and sherry, and took wine with

everybodyâexcept Tibbs. No one ever thought of him.

Between the fish and an intimated sirloin, there was a prolonged

interval.

Here was an opportunity for Mr. Hicks. He could not resist the

singularly appropriate quotationâ

âBut beef is rare within these oxless isles;

Goatsâ flesh there is, no doubt, and kid, and mutton,

And when a holiday upon them smiles,

A joint upon their barbarous spits they put on.â

âVery ungentlemanly behaviour,â thought little Mrs. Tibbs, âto talk in

that way.â

âAh,â said Mr. Calton, filling his glass. âTom Moore is my poet.â

âAnd mine,â said Mrs. Maplesone.

âAnd mine,â said Miss Julia.

âAnd mine,â added Mr. Simpson.

âLook at his compositions,â resumed the knocker.

âTo be sure,â said Simpson, with confidence.

âLook at Don Juan,â replied Mr. Septimus Hicks.

âJuliaâs letter,â suggested Miss Matilda.

âCan anything be grander than the Fire Worshippers?â inquired Miss Julia.

âTo be sure,â said Simpson.

âOr Paradise and the Peri,â said the old beau.

âYes; or Paradise and the Peer,â repeated Simpson, who thought he was

getting through it capitally.

âItâs all very well,â replied Mr. Septimus Hicks, who, as we have before

hinted, never had read anything but Don Juan. âWhere will you find

anything finer than the description of the siege, at the commencement of

the seventh canto?â

âTalking of a siege,â said Tibbs, with a mouthful of breadââwhen I was in

the volunteer corps, in eighteen hundred and six, our commanding officer

was Sir Charles Rampart; and one day, when we were exercising on the

ground on which the London University now stands, he says, says he, Tibbs

(calling me from the ranks), Tibbsââ

âTell your master, James,â interrupted Mrs. Tibbs, in an awfully distinct

tone, âtell your master if he \_wonât\_ carve those fowls, to send them to

me.â The discomfited volunteer instantly set to work, and carved the

fowls almost as expeditiously as his wife operated on the haunch of

mutton. Whether he ever finished the story is not known but, if he did,

nobody heard it.

As the ice was now broken, and the new inmates more at home, every member

of the company felt more at ease. Tibbs himself most certainly did,

because he went to sleep immediately after dinner. Mr. Hicks and the

ladies discoursed most eloquently about poetry, and the theatres, and

Lord Chesterfieldâs Letters; and Mr. Calton followed up what everybody

said, with continuous double knocks. Mrs. Tibbs highly approved of every

observation that fell from Mrs. Maplesone; and as Mr. Simpson sat with a

smile upon his face and said âYes,â or âCertainly,â at intervals of about

four minutes each, he received full credit for understanding what was

going forward. The gentlemen rejoined the ladies in the drawing-room

very shortly after they had left the dining-parlour. Mrs. Maplesone and

Mr. Calton played cribbage, and the âyoung peopleâ amused themselves with

music and conversation. The Miss Maplesones sang the most fascinating

duets, and accompanied themselves on guitars, ornamented with bits of

ethereal blue ribbon. Mr. Simpson put on a pink waistcoat, and said he

was in raptures; and Mr. Hicks felt in the seventh heaven of poetry or

the seventh canto of Don Juanâit was the same thing to him. Mrs. Tibbs

was quite charmed with the newcomers; and Mr. Tibbs spent the evening in

his usual wayâhe went to sleep, and woke up, and went to sleep again, and

woke at supper-time.

\* \* \* \* \*

We are not about to adopt the licence of novel-writers, and to let âyears

roll on;â but we will take the liberty of requesting the reader to

suppose that six months have elapsed, since the dinner we have described,

and that Mrs. Tibbsâs boarders have, during that period, sang, and

danced, and gone to theatres and exhibitions, together, as ladies and

gentlemen, wherever they board, often do. And we will beg them, the

period we have mentioned having elapsed, to imagine farther, that Mr.

Septimus Hicks received, in his own bedroom (a front attic), at an early

hour one morning, a note from Mr. Calton, requesting the favour of seeing

him, as soon as convenient to himself, in his (Caltonâs) dressing-room on

the second-floor back.

âTell Mr. Calton Iâll come down directly,â said Mr. Septimus to the boy.

âStopâis Mr. Calton unwell?â inquired this excited walker of hospitals,

as he put on a bed-furniture-looking dressing-gown.

âNot as I knows on, sir,â replied the boy. â Please, sir, he looked

rather rum, as it might be.â

âAh, thatâs no proof of his being ill,â returned Hicks, unconsciously.

âVery well: Iâll be down directly.â Downstairs ran the boy with the

message, and down went the excited Hicks himself, almost as soon as the

message was delivered. âTap, tap.â âCome in.ââDoor opens, and discovers

Mr. Calton sitting in an easy chair. Mutual shakes of the hand

exchanged, and Mr. Septimus Hicks motioned to a seat. A short pause.

Mr. Hicks coughed, and Mr. Calton took a pinch of snuff. It was one of

those interviews where neither party knows what to say. Mr. Septimus

Hicks broke silence.

âI received a noteââ he said, very tremulously, in a voice like a Punch

with a cold.

âYes,â returned the other, âyou did.â

âExactly.â

âYes.â

Now, although this dialogue must have been satisfactory, both gentlemen

felt there was something more important to be said; therefore they did as

most men in such a situation would have doneâthey looked at the table

with a determined aspect. The conversation had been opened, however, and

Mr. Calton had made up his mind to continue it with a regular double

knock. He always spoke very pompously.

âHicks,â said he, âI have sent for you, in consequence of certain

arrangements which are pending in this house, connected with a marriage.â

âWith a marriage!â gasped Hicks, compared with whose expression of

countenance, Hamletâs, when he sees his fatherâs ghost, is pleasing and

composed.

âWith a marriage,â returned the knocker. âI have sent for you to prove

the great confidence I can repose in you.â

âAnd will you betray me?â eagerly inquired Hicks, who in his alarm had

even forgotten to quote.

â\_I\_ betray \_you\_! Wonât \_you\_ betray\_ me\_?â

âNever: no one shall know, to my dying day, that you had a hand in the

business,â responded the agitated Hicks, with an inflamed countenance,

and his hair standing on end as if he were on the stool of an

electrifying machine in full operation.

âPeople must know that, some time or otherâwithin a year, I imagine,â

said Mr. Calton, with an air of great self-complacency. âWe \_may\_ have

a family.â

â\_We\_!âThat wonât affect you, surely?â

âThe devil it wonât!â

âNo! how can it?â said the bewildered Hicks. Calton was too much

inwrapped in the contemplation of his happiness to see the equivoque

between Hicks and himself; and threw himself back in his chair. âOh,

Matilda!â sighed the antique beau, in a lack-a-daisical voice, and

applying his right hand a little to the left of the fourth button of his

waistcoat, counting from the bottom. âOh, Matilda!â

âWhat Matilda?â inquired Hicks, starting up.

âMatilda Maplesone,â responded the other, doing the same.

âI marry her to-morrow morning,â said Hicks.

âItâs false,â rejoined his companion: âI marry her!â

âYou marry her?â

âI marry her!â

âYou marry Matilda Maplesone?â

âMatilda Maplesone.â

â\_Miss\_ Maplesone marry \_you\_?â

âMiss Maplesone! No; Mrs. Maplesone.â

âGood Heaven!â said Hicks, falling into his chair: âYou marry the mother,

and I the daughter!â

âMost extraordinary circumstance!â replied Mr. Calton, âand rather

inconvenient too; for the fact is, that owing to Matildaâs wishing to

keep her intention secret from her daughters until the ceremony had taken

place, she doesnât like applying to any of her friends to give her away.

I entertain an objection to making the affair known to my acquaintance

just now; and the consequence is, that I sent to you to know whether

youâd oblige me by acting as father.â

âI should have been most happy, I assure you,â said Hicks, in a tone of

condolence; âbut, you see, I shall be acting as bridegroom. One

character is frequently a consequence of the other; but it is not usual

to act in both at the same time. Thereâs SimpsonâI have no doubt heâll

do it for you.â

âI donât like to ask him,â replied Calton, âheâs such a donkey.â

Mr. Septimus Hicks looked up at the ceiling, and down at the floor; at

last an idea struck him. âLet the man of the house, Tibbs, be the

father,â he suggested; and then he quoted, as peculiarly applicable to

Tibbs and the pairâ

âOh Powers of Heaven! what dark eyes meets she there?

âTisââtis her fatherâsâfixed upon the pair.â

âThe idea has struck me already,â said Mr. Calton: âbut, you see,

Matilda, for what reason I know not, is very anxious that Mrs. Tibbs

should know nothing about it, till itâs all over. Itâs a natural

delicacy, after all, you know.â

âHeâs the best-natured little man in existence, if you manage him

properly,â said Mr. Septimus Hicks. âTell him not to mention it to his

wife, and assure him she wonât mind it, and heâll do it directly. My

marriage is to be a secret one, on account of the mother and \_my\_ father;

therefore he must be enjoined to secrecy.â

A small double knock, like a presumptuous single one, was that instant

heard at the street-door. It was Tibbs; it could be no one else; for no

one else occupied five minutes in rubbing his shoes. He had been out to

pay the bakerâs bill.

âMr. Tibbs,â called Mr. Calton in a very bland tone, looking over the

banisters.

âSir!â replied he of the dirty face.

âWill you have the kindness to step up-stairs for a moment?â

âCertainly, sir,â said Tibbs, delighted to be taken notice of. The

bedroom-door was carefully closed, and Tibbs, having put his hat on the

floor (as most timid men do), and been accommodated with a seat, looked

as astounded as if he were suddenly summoned before the familiars of the

Inquisition.

âA rather unpleasant occurrence, Mr. Tibbs,â said Calton, in a very

portentous manner, âobliges me to consult you, and to beg you will not

communicate what I am about to say, to your wife.â

Tibbs acquiesced, wondering in his own mind what the deuce the other

could have done, and imagining that at least he must have broken the best

decanters.

Mr. Calton resumed; âI am placed, Mr. Tibbs, in rather an unpleasant

situation.â

Tibbs looked at Mr. Septimus Hicks, as if he thought Mr. H.âs being in

the immediate vicinity of his fellow-boarder might constitute the

unpleasantness of his situation; but as he did not exactly know what to

say, he merely ejaculated the monosyllable âLor!â

âNow,â continued the knocker, âlet me beg you will exhibit no

manifestations of surprise, which may be overheard by the domestics, when

I tell youâcommand your feelings of astonishmentâthat two inmates of this

house intend to be married to-morrow morning.â And he drew back his

chair, several feet, to perceive the effect of the unlooked-for

announcement.

If Tibbs had rushed from the room, staggered down-stairs, and fainted in

the passageâif he had instantaneously jumped out of the window into the

mews behind the house, in an agony of surpriseâhis behaviour would have

been much less inexplicable to Mr. Calton than it was, when he put his

hands into his inexpressible-pockets, and said with a half-chuckle, âJust

so.â

âYou are not surprised, Mr. Tibbs?â inquired Mr. Calton.

âBless you, no, sir,â returned Tibbs; âafter all, its very natural. When

two young people get together, you knowââ

âCertainly, certainly,â said Calton, with an indescribable air of

self-satisfaction.

âYou donât think itâs at all an out-of-the-way affair then?â asked Mr.

Septimus Hicks, who had watched the countenance of Tibbs in mute

astonishment.

âNo, sir,â replied Tibbs; âI was just the same at his age.â He actually

smiled when he said this.

âHow devilish well I must carry my years!â thought the delighted old

beau, knowing he was at least ten years older than Tibbs at that moment.

âWell, then, to come to the point at once,â he continued, âI have to ask

you whether you will object to act as father on the occasion?â

âCertainly not,â replied Tibbs; still without evincing an atom of

surprise.

âYou will not?â

âDecidedly not,â reiterated Tibbs, still as calm as a pot of porter with

the head off.

Mr. Calton seized the hand of the petticoat-governed little man, and

vowed eternal friendship from that hour. Hicks, who was all admiration

and surprise, did the same.

âNow, confess,â asked Mr. Calton of Tibbs, as he picked up his hat, âwere

you not a little surprised?â

âI bâlieve you!â replied that illustrious person, holding up one hand; âI

bâlieve you! When I first heard of it.â

âSo sudden,â said Septimus Hicks.

âSo strange to ask \_me\_, you know,â said Tibbs.

âSo odd altogether!â said the superannuated love-maker; and then all

three laughed.

âI say,â said Tibbs, shutting the door which he had previously opened,

and giving full vent to a hitherto corked-up giggle, âwhat bothers me is,

what \_will\_ his father say?â

Mr. Septimus Hicks looked at Mr. Calton.

âYes; but the best of it is,â said the latter, giggling in his turn, âI

havenât got a fatherâhe! he! he!â

âYou havenât got a father. No; but \_he\_ has,â said Tibbs.

â\_Who\_ has?â inquired Septimus Hicks.

âWhy, \_him\_.â

âHim, who? Do you know my secret? Do you mean me?â

âYou! No; you know who I mean,â returned Tibbs with a knowing wink.

âFor Heavenâs sake, whom do you mean?â inquired Mr. Calton, who, like

Septimus Hicks, was all but out of his senses at the strange confusion.

âWhy Mr. Simpson, of course,â replied Tibbs; âwho else could I mean?â

âI see it all,â said the Byron-quoter; âSimpson marries Julia Maplesone

to-morrow morning!â

âUndoubtedly,â replied Tibbs, thoroughly satisfied, âof course he does.â

It would require the pencil of Hogarth to illustrateâour feeble pen is

inadequate to describeâthe expression which the countenances of Mr.

Calton and Mr. Septimus Hicks respectively assumed, at this unexpected

announcement. Equally impossible is it to describe, although perhaps it

is easier for our lady readers to imagine, what arts the three ladies

could have used, so completely to entangle their separate partners.

Whatever they were, however, they were successful. The mother was

perfectly aware of the intended marriage of both daughters; and the young

ladies were equally acquainted with the intention of their estimable

parent. They agreed, however, that it would have a much better

appearance if each feigned ignorance of the otherâs engagement; and it

was equally desirable that all the marriages should take place on the

same day, to prevent the discovery of one clandestine alliance, operating

prejudicially on the others. Hence, the mystification of Mr. Calton and

Mr. Septimus Hicks, and the pre-engagement of the unwary Tibbs.

On the following morning, Mr. Septimus Hicks was united to Miss Matilda

Maplesone. Mr. Simpson also entered into a âholy allianceâ with Miss

Julia; Tibbs acting as father, âhis first appearance in that character.â

Mr. Calton, not being quite so eager as the two young men, was rather

struck by the double discovery; and as he had found some difficulty in

getting any one to give the lady away, it occurred to him that the best

mode of obviating the inconvenience would be not to take her at all. The

lady, however, âappealed,â as her counsel said on the trial of the cause,

\_Maplesone\_ v. \_Calton\_, for a breach of promise, âwith a broken heart,

to the outraged laws of her country.â She recovered damages to the

amount of 1,000\_l.\_ which the unfortunate knocker was compelled to pay.

Mr. Septimus Hicks having walked the hospitals, took it into his head to

walk off altogether. His injured wife is at present residing with her

mother at Boulogne. Mr. Simpson, having the misfortune to lose his wife

six weeks after marriage (by her eloping with an officer during his

temporary sojourn in the Fleet Prison, in consequence of his inability to

discharge her little mantua-makerâs bill), and being disinherited by his

father, who died soon afterwards, was fortunate enough to obtain a

permanent engagement at a fashionable haircutterâs; hairdressing being a

science to which he had frequently directed his attention. In this

situation he had necessarily many opportunities of making himself

acquainted with the habits, and style of thinking, of the exclusive

portion of the nobility of this kingdom. To this fortunate circumstance

are we indebted for the production of those brilliant efforts of genius,

his fashionable novels, which so long as good taste, unsullied by

exaggeration, cant, and quackery, continues to exist, cannot fail to

instruct and amuse the thinking portion of the community.

It only remains to add, that this complication of disorders completely

deprived poor Mrs. Tibbs of all her inmates, except the one whom she

could have best sparedâher husband. That wretched little man returned

home, on the day of the wedding, in a state of partial intoxication; and,

under the influence of wine, excitement, and despair, actually dared to

brave the anger of his wife. Since that ill-fated hour he has constantly

taken his meals in the kitchen, to which apartment, it is understood, his

witticisms will be in future confined: a turn-up bedstead having been

conveyed there by Mrs. Tibbsâs order for his exclusive accommodation. It

is possible that he will be enabled to finish, in that seclusion, his

story of the volunteers.

The advertisement has again appeared in the morning papers. Results must

be reserved for another chapter.

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

âWell!â said little Mrs. Tibbs to herself, as she sat in the front

parlour of the Coram-street mansion one morning, mending a piece of

stair-carpet off the first Landings;ââThings have not turned out so

badly, either, and if I only get a favourable answer to the

advertisement, we shall be full again.â

Mrs. Tibbs resumed her occupation of making worsted lattice-work in the

carpet, anxiously listening to the twopenny postman, who was hammering

his way down the street, at the rate of a penny a knock. The house was

as quiet as possible. There was only one low sound to be heardâit was

the unhappy Tibbs cleaning the gentlemenâs boots in the back kitchen, and

accompanying himself with a buzzing noise, in wretched mockery of humming

a tune.

The postman drew near the house. He pausedâso did Mrs. Tibbs. A knockâa

bustleâa letterâpost-paid.

âT. I. presents compt. to I. T. and T. I. begs To say that i see the

advertisement And she will Do Herself the pleasure of calling On you

at 12 oâclock to-morrow morning.

âT. I. as To apologise to I. T. for the shortness Of the notice But i

hope it will not unconvenience you.

âI remain yours Truly

âWednesday evening.â

Little Mrs. Tibbs perused the document, over and over again; and the more

she read it, the more was she confused by the mixture of the first and

third person; the substitution of the âiâ for the âT. I.;â and the

transition from the âI. T.â to the âYou.â The writing looked like a

skein of thread in a tangle, and the note was ingeniously folded into a

perfect square, with the direction squeezed up into the right-hand

corner, as if it were ashamed of itself. The back of the epistle was

pleasingly ornamented with a large red wafer, which, with the addition of

divers ink-stains, bore a marvellous resemblance to a black beetle

trodden upon. One thing, however, was perfectly clear to the perplexed

Mrs. Tibbs. Somebody was to call at twelve. The drawing-room was

forthwith dusted for the third time that morning; three or four chairs

were pulled out of their places, and a corresponding number of books

carefully upset, in order that there might be a due absence of formality.

Down went the piece of stair-carpet before noticed, and up ran Mrs. Tibbs

âto make herself tidy.â

The clock of New Saint Pancras Church struck twelve, and the Foundling,

with laudable politeness, did the same ten minutes afterwards, Saint

something else struck the quarter, and then there arrived a single lady

with a double knock, in a pelisse the colour of the interior of a damson

pie; a bonnet of the same, with a regular conservatory of artificial

flowers; a white veil, and a green parasol, with a cobweb border.

The visitor (who was very fat and red-faced) was shown into the

drawing-room; Mrs. Tibbs presented herself, and the negotiation

commenced.

âI called in consequence of an advertisement,â said the stranger, in a

voice as if she had been playing a set of Panâs pipes for a fortnight

without leaving off.

âYes!â said Mrs. Tibbs, rubbing her hands very slowly, and looking the

applicant full in the faceâtwo things she always did on such occasions.

âMoney isnât no object whatever to me,â said the lady, âso much as living

in a state of retirement and obtrusion.â

Mrs. Tibbs, as a matter of course, acquiesced in such an exceedingly

natural desire.

âI am constantly attended by a medical man,â resumed the pelisse wearer;

âI have been a shocking unitarian for some timeâI, indeed, have had very

little peace since the death of Mr. Bloss.â

Mrs. Tibbs looked at the relict of the departed Bloss, and thought he

must have had very little peace in his time. Of course she could not say

so; so she looked very sympathising.

âI shall be a good deal of trouble to you,â said Mrs. Bloss; âbut, for

that trouble I am willing to pay. I am going through a course of

treatment which renders attention necessary. I have one mutton-chop in

bed at half-past eight, and another at ten, every morning.â

Mrs. Tibbs, as in duty bound, expressed the pity she felt for anybody

placed in such a distressing situation; and the carnivorous Mrs. Bloss

proceeded to arrange the various preliminaries with wonderful despatch.

âNow mind,â said that lady, after terms were arranged; âI am to have the

second-floor front, for my bed-room?â

âYes, maâam.â

âAnd youâll find room for my little servant Agnes?â

âOh! certainly.â

âAnd I can have one of the cellars in the area for my bottled porter.â

âWith the greatest pleasure;âJames shall get it ready for you by

Saturday.â

âAnd Iâll join the company at the breakfast-table on Sunday morning,â

said Mrs. Bloss. âI shall get up on purpose.â

âVery well,â returned Mrs. Tibbs, in her most amiable tone; for

satisfactory references had âbeen given and required,â and it was quite

certain that the new-comer had plenty of money. âItâs rather singular,â

continued Mrs. Tibbs, with what was meant for a most bewitching smile,

âthat we have a gentleman now with us, who is in a very delicate state of

healthâa Mr. Gobler.âHis apartment is the back drawing-room.â

âThe next room?â inquired Mrs. Bloss.

âThe next room,â repeated the hostess.

âHow very promiscuous!â ejaculated the widow.

âHe hardly ever gets up,â said Mrs. Tibbs in a whisper.

âLor!â cried Mrs. Bloss, in an equally low tone.

âAnd when he is up,â said Mrs. Tibbs, âwe never can persuade him to go to

bed again.â

âDear me!â said the astonished Mrs. Bloss, drawing her chair nearer Mrs.

Tibbs. âWhat is his complaint?â

âWhy, the fact is,â replied Mrs. Tibbs, with a most communicative air,

âhe has no stomach whatever.â

âNo what?â inquired Mrs. Bloss, with a look of the most indescribable

alarm.

âNo stomach,â repeated Mrs. Tibbs, with a shake of the head.

âLord bless us! what an extraordinary case!â gasped Mrs. Bloss, as if she

understood the communication in its literal sense, and was astonished at

a gentleman without a stomach finding it necessary to board anywhere.

âWhen I say he has no stomach,â explained the chatty little Mrs. Tibbs,

âI mean that his digestion is so much impaired, and his interior so

deranged, that his stomach is not of the least use to him;âin fact, itâs

an inconvenience.â

âNever heard such a case in my life!â exclaimed Mrs. Bloss. âWhy, heâs

worse than I am.â

âOh, yes!â replied Mrs. Tibbs;ââcertainly.â She said this with great

confidence, for the damson pelisse suggested that Mrs. Bloss, at all

events, was not suffering under Mr. Goblerâs complaint.

âYou have quite incited my curiosity,â said Mrs. Bloss, as she rose to

depart. âHow I long to see him!â

âHe generally comes down, once a week,â replied Mrs. Tibbs; âI dare say

youâll see him on Sunday.â With this consolatory promise Mrs. Bloss was

obliged to be contented. She accordingly walked slowly down the stairs,

detailing her complaints all the way; and Mrs. Tibbs followed her,

uttering an exclamation of compassion at every step. James (who looked

very gritty, for he was cleaning the knives) fell up the kitchen-stairs,

and opened the street-door; and, after mutual farewells, Mrs. Bloss

slowly departed, down the shady side of the street.

It is almost superfluous to say, that the lady whom we have just shown

out at the street-door (and whom the two female servants are now

inspecting from the second-floor windows) was exceedingly vulgar,

ignorant, and selfish. Her deceased better-half had been an eminent

cork-cutter, in which capacity he had amassed a decent fortune. He had

no relative but his nephew, and no friend but his cook. The former had

the insolence one morning to ask for the loan of fifteen pounds; and, by

way of retaliation, he married the latter next day; he made a will

immediately afterwards, containing a burst of honest indignation against

his nephew (who supported himself and two sisters on 100\_l.\_ a year), and

a bequest of his whole property to his wife. He felt ill after

breakfast, and died after dinner. There is a mantelpiece-looking tablet

in a civic parish church, setting forth his virtues, and deploring his

loss. He never dishonoured a bill, or gave away a halfpenny.

The relict and sole executrix of this noble-minded man was an odd mixture

of shrewdness and simplicity, liberality and meanness. Bred up as she

had been, she knew no mode of living so agreeable as a boarding-house:

and having nothing to do, and nothing to wish for, she naturally imagined

she must be illâan impression which was most assiduously promoted by her

medical attendant, Dr. Wosky, and her handmaid Agnes: both of whom,

doubtless for good reasons, encouraged all her extravagant notions.

Since the catastrophe recorded in the last chapter, Mrs. Tibbs had been

very shy of young-lady boarders. Her present inmates were all lords of

the creation, and she availed herself of the opportunity of their

assemblage at the dinner-table, to announce the expected arrival of Mrs.

Bloss. The gentlemen received the communication with stoical

indifference, and Mrs. Tibbs devoted all her energies to prepare for the

reception of the valetudinarian. The second-floor front was scrubbed,

and washed, and flannelled, till the wet went through to the drawing-room

ceiling. Clean white counterpanes, and curtains, and napkins,

water-bottles as clear as crystal, blue jugs, and mahogany furniture,

added to the splendour, and increased the comfort, of the apartment. The

warming-pan was in constant requisition, and a fire lighted in the room

every day. The chattels of Mrs. Bloss were forwarded by instalments.

First, there came a large hamper of Guinnessâs stout, and an umbrella;

then, a train of trunks; then, a pair of clogs and a bandbox; then, an

easy chair with an air-cushion; then, a variety of suspicious-looking

packages; andââthough last not leastââMrs. Bloss and Agnes: the latter in

a cherry-coloured merino dress, open-work stockings, and shoes with

sandals: like a disguised Columbine.

The installation of the Duke of Wellington, as Chancellor of the

University of Oxford, was nothing, in point of bustle and turmoil, to the

installation of Mrs. Bloss in her new quarters. True, there was no

bright doctor of civil law to deliver a classical address on the

occasion; but there were several other old women present, who spoke quite

as much to the purpose, and understood themselves equally well. The

chop-eater was so fatigued with the process of removal that she declined

leaving her room until the following morning; so a mutton-chop, pickle, a

pill, a pint bottle of stout, and other medicines, were carried up-stairs

for her consumption.

âWhy, what \_do\_ you think, maâam?â inquired the inquisitive Agnes of her

mistress, after they had been in the house some three hours; âwhat \_do\_

you think, maâam? the lady of the house is married.â

âMarried!â said Mrs. Bloss, taking the pill and a draught of

Guinnessââmarried! Unpossible!â

âShe is indeed, maâam,â returned the Columbine; âand her husband, maâam,

livesâheâheâheâlives in the kitchen, maâam.â

âIn the kitchen!â

âYes, maâam: and heâheâheâthe housemaid says, he never goes into the

parlour except on Sundays; and that Ms. Tibbs makes him clean the

gentlemenâs boots; and that he cleans the windows, too, sometimes; and

that one morning early, when he was in the front balcony cleaning the

drawing-room windows, he called out to a gentleman on the opposite side

of the way, who used to live hereââAh! Mr. Calton, sir, how are you?ââ

Here the attendant laughed till Mrs. Bloss was in serious apprehension of

her chuckling herself into a fit.

âWell, I never!â said Mrs. Bloss.

âYes. And please, maâam, the servants gives him gin-and-water sometimes;

and then he cries, and says he hates his wife and the boarders, and wants

to tickle them.â

âTickle the boarders!â exclaimed Mrs. Bloss, seriously alarmed.

âNo, maâam, not the boarders, the servants.â

âOh, is that all!â said Mrs. Bloss, quite satisfied.

âHe wanted to kiss me as I came up the kitchen-stairs, just now,â said

Agnes, indignantly; âbut I gave it himâa little wretch!â

This intelligence was but too true. A long course of snubbing and

neglect; his days spent in the kitchen, and his nights in the turn-up

bedstead, had completely broken the little spirit that the unfortunate

volunteer had ever possessed. He had no one to whom he could detail his

injuries but the servants, and they were almost of necessity his chosen

confidants. It is no less strange than true, however, that the little

weaknesses which he had incurred, most probably during his military

career, seemed to increase as his comforts diminished. He was actually a

sort of journeyman Giovanni of the basement story.

The next morning, being Sunday, breakfast was laid in the front parlour

at ten oâclock. Nine was the usual time, but the family always

breakfasted an hour later on sabbath. Tibbs enrobed himself in his

Sunday costumeâa black coat, and exceedingly short, thin trousers; with a

very large white waistcoat, white stockings and cravat, and Blucher

bootsâand mounted to the parlour aforesaid. Nobody had come down, and he

amused himself by drinking the contents of the milkpot with a teaspoon.

A pair of slippers were heard descending the stairs. Tibbs flew to a

chair; and a stern-looking man, of about fifty, with very little hair on

his head, and a Sunday paper in his hand, entered the room.

âGood morning, Mr. Evenson,â said Tibbs, very humbly, with something

between a nod and a bow.

âHow do you do, Mr. Tibbs?â replied he of the slippers, as he sat himself

down, and began to read his paper without saying another word.

âIs Mr. Wisbottle in town to-day, do you know, sir?â inquired Tibbs, just

for the sake of saying something.

âI should think he was,â replied the stern gentleman. âHe was whistling

âThe Light Guitar,â in the next room to mine, at five oâclock this

morning.â

âHeâs very fond of whistling,â said Tibbs, with a slight smirk.

âYesâI ainât,â was the laconic reply.

Mr. John Evenson was in the receipt of an independent income, arising

chiefly from various houses he owned in the different suburbs. He was

very morose and discontented. He was a thorough radical, and used to

attend a great variety of public meetings, for the express purpose of

finding fault with everything that was proposed. Mr. Wisbottle, on the

other hand, was a high Tory. He was a clerk in the Woods and Forests

Office, which he considered rather an aristocratic employment; he knew

the peerage by heart, and, could tell you, off-hand, where any

illustrious personage lived. He had a good set of teeth, and a capital

tailor. Mr. Evenson looked on all these qualifications with profound

contempt; and the consequence was that the two were always disputing,

much to the edification of the rest of the house. It should be added,

that, in addition to his partiality for whistling, Mr. Wisbottle had a

great idea of his singing powers. There were two other boarders, besides

the gentleman in the back drawing-roomâMr. Alfred Tomkins and Mr.

Frederick OâBleary. Mr. Tomkins was a clerk in a wine-house; he was a

connoisseur in paintings, and had a wonderful eye for the picturesque.

Mr. OâBleary was an Irishman, recently imported; he was in a perfectly

wild state; and had come over to England to be an apothecary, a clerk in

a government office, an actor, a reporter, or anything else that turned

upâhe was not particular. He was on familiar terms with two small Irish

members, and got franks for everybody in the house. He felt convinced

that his intrinsic merits must procure him a high destiny. He wore

shepherdâs-plaid inexpressibles, and used to look under all the ladiesâ

bonnets as he walked along the streets. His manners and appearance

reminded one of Orson.

âHere comes Mr. Wisbottle,â said Tibbs; and Mr. Wisbottle forthwith

appeared in blue slippers, and a shawl dressing-gown, whistling â\_Di

piacer\_.â

âGood morning, sir,â said Tibbs again. It was almost the only thing he

ever said to anybody.

âHow are you, Tibbs?â condescendingly replied the amateur; and he walked

to the window, and whistled louder than ever.

âPretty air, that!â said Evenson, with a snarl, and without taking his

eyes off the paper.

âGlad you like it,â replied Wisbottle, highly gratified.

âDonât you think it would sound better, if you whistled it a little

louder?â inquired the mastiff.

âNo; I donât think it would,â rejoined the unconscious Wisbottle.

âIâll tell you what, Wisbottle,â said Evenson, who had been bottling up

his anger for some hoursââthe next time you feel disposed to whistle âThe

Light Guitarâ at five oâclock in the morning, Iâll trouble you to whistle

it with your head out oâ window. If you donât, Iâll learn the triangleâI

will, byââ

The entrance of Mrs. Tibbs (with the keys in a little basket) interrupted

the threat, and prevented its conclusion.

Mrs. Tibbs apologised for being down rather late; the bell was rung;

James brought up the urn, and received an unlimited order for dry toast

and bacon. Tibbs sat down at the bottom of the table, and began eating

water-cresses like a Nebuchadnezzar. Mr. OâBleary appeared, and Mr.

Alfred Tomkins. The compliments of the morning were exchanged, and the

tea was made.

âGod bless me!â exclaimed Tomkins, who had been looking out at the

window. âHereâWisbottleâpray come hereâmake haste.â

Mr. Wisbottle started from the table, and every one looked up.

âDo you see,â said the connoisseur, placing Wisbottle in the right

positionââa little more this way: thereâdo you see how splendidly the

light falls upon the left side of that broken chimney-pot at No. 48?â

âDear me! I see,â replied Wisbottle, in a tone of admiration.

âI never saw an object stand out so beautifully against the clear sky in

my life,â ejaculated Alfred. Everybody (except John Evenson) echoed the

sentiment; for Mr. Tomkins had a great character for finding out beauties

which no one else could discoverâhe certainly deserved it.

âI have frequently observed a chimney-pot in College-green, Dublin, which

has a much better effect,â said the patriotic OâBleary, who never allowed

Ireland to be outdone on any point.

The assertion was received with obvious incredulity, for Mr. Tomkins

declared that no other chimney-pot in the United Kingdom, broken or

unbroken, could be so beautiful as the one at No. 48.

The room-door was suddenly thrown open, and Agnes appeared, leading in

Mrs. Bloss, who was dressed in a geranium-coloured muslin gown, and

displayed a gold watch of huge dimensions; a chain to match; and a

splendid assortment of rings, with enormous stones. A general rush was

made for a chair, and a regular introduction took place. Mr. John

Evenson made a slight inclination of the head; Mr. Frederick OâBleary,

Mr. Alfred Tomkins, and Mr. Wisbottle, bowed like the mandarins in a

grocerâs shop; Tibbs rubbed hands, and went round in circles. He was

observed to close one eye, and to assume a clock-work sort of expression

with the other; this has been considered as a wink, and it has been

reported that Agnes was its object. We repel the calumny, and challenge

contradiction.

Mrs. Tibbs inquired after Mrs. Blossâs health in a low tone. Mrs. Bloss,

with a supreme contempt for the memory of Lindley Murray, answered the

various questions in a most satisfactory manner; and a pause ensued,

during which the eatables disappeared with awful rapidity.

âYou must have been very much pleased with the appearance of the ladies

going to the Drawing-room the other day, Mr. OâBleary?â said Mrs. Tibbs,

hoping to start a topic.

âYes,â replied Orson, with a mouthful of toast.

âNever saw anything like it before, I suppose?â suggested Wisbottle.

âNoâexcept the Lord Lieutenantâs levees,â replied OâBleary.

âAre they at all equal to our drawing-rooms?â

âOh, infinitely superior!â

âGad! I donât know,â said the aristocratic Wisbottle, âthe Dowager

Marchioness of Publiccash was most magnificently dressed, and so was the

Baron Slappenbachenhausen.â

âWhat was he presented on?â inquired Evenson.

âOn his arrival in England.â

âI thought so,â growled the radical; âyou never hear of these fellows

being presented on their going away again. They know better than that.â

âUnless somebody pervades them with an apintment,â said Mrs. Bloss,

joining in the conversation in a faint voice.

âWell,â said Wisbottle, evading the point, âitâs a splendid sight.â

âAnd did it never occur to you,â inquired the radical, who never would be

quiet; âdid it never occur to you, that you pay for these precious

ornaments of society?â

âIt certainly \_has\_ occurred to me,â said Wisbottle, who thought this

answer was a poser; âit \_has\_ occurred to me, and I am willing to pay for

them.â

âWell, and it has occurred to me too,â replied John Evenson, âand I ainât

willing to pay for âem. Then why should I?âI say, why should I?â

continued the politician, laying down the paper, and knocking his

knuckles on the table. âThere are two great principlesâdemandââ

âA cup of tea if you please, dear,â interrupted Tibbs.

âAnd supplyââ

âMay I trouble you to hand this tea to Mr. Tibbs?â said Mrs. Tibbs,

interrupting the argument, and unconsciously illustrating it.

The thread of the oratorâs discourse was broken. He drank his tea and

resumed the paper.

âIf itâs very fine,â said Mr. Alfred Tomkins, addressing the company in

general, âI shall ride down to Richmond to-day, and come back by the

steamer. There are some splendid effects of light and shade on the

Thames; the contrast between the blueness of the sky and the yellow water

is frequently exceedingly beautiful.â Mr. Wisbottle hummed, âFlow on,

thou shining river.â

âWe have some splendid steam-vessels in Ireland,â said OâBleary.

âCertainly,â said Mrs. Bloss, delighted to find a subject broached in

which she could take part.

âThe accommodations are extraordinary,â said OâBleary.

âExtraordinary indeed,â returned Mrs. Bloss. âWhen Mr. Bloss was alive,

he was promiscuously obligated to go to Ireland on business. I went with

him, and raly the manner in which the ladies and gentlemen were

accommodated with berths, is not creditable.â

Tibbs, who had been listening to the dialogue, looked aghast, and evinced

a strong inclination to ask a question, but was checked by a look from

his wife. Mr. Wisbottle laughed, and said Tomkins had made a pun; and

Tomkins laughed too, and said he had not.

The remainder of the meal passed off as breakfasts usually do.

Conversation flagged, and people played with their teaspoons. The

gentlemen looked out at the window; walked about the room; and, when they

got near the door, dropped off one by one. Tibbs retired to the back

parlour by his wifeâs orders, to check the green-grocerâs weekly account;

and ultimately Mrs. Tibbs and Mrs. Bloss were left alone together.

âOh dear!â said the latter, âI feel alarmingly faint; itâs very

singular.â (It certainly was, for she had eaten four pounds of solids

that morning.) âBy-the-bye,â said Mrs. Bloss, âI have not seen Mr.

Whatâs-his-name yet.â

âMr. Gobler?â suggested Mrs. Tibbs.

âYes.â

âOh!â said Mrs. Tibbs, âhe is a most mysterious person. He has his meals

regularly sent up-stairs, and sometimes donât leave his room for weeks

together.â

âI havenât seen or heard nothing of him,â repeated Mrs. Bloss.

âI dare say youâll hear him to-night,â replied Mrs. Tibbs; âhe generally

groans a good deal on Sunday evenings.â

âI never felt such an interest in any one in my life,â ejaculated Mrs.

Bloss. A little double-knock interrupted the conversation; Dr. Wosky was

announced, and duly shown in. He was a little man with a red

faceâdressed of course in black, with a stiff white neckerchief. He had

a very good practice, and plenty of money, which he had amassed by

invariably humouring the worst fancies of all the females of all the

families he had ever been introduced into. Mrs. Tibbs offered to retire,

but was entreated to stay.

âWell, my dear maâam, and how are we?â inquired Wosky, in a soothing

tone.

âVery ill, doctorâvery ill,â said Mrs. Bloss, in a whisper

âAh! we must take care of ourselves;âwe must, indeed,â said the

obsequious Wosky, as he felt the pulse of his interesting patient.

âHow is our appetite?â

Mrs. Bloss shook her head.

âOur friend requires great care,â said Wosky, appealing to Mrs. Tibbs,

who of course assented. âI hope, however, with the blessing of

Providence, that we shall be enabled to make her quite stout again.â

Mrs. Tibbs wondered in her own mind what the patient would be when she

was made quite stout.

âWe must take stimulants,â said the cunning Woskyââplenty of nourishment,

and, above all, we must keep our nerves quiet; we positively must not

give way to our sensibilities. We must take all we can get,â concluded

the doctor, as he pocketed his fee, âand we must keep quiet.â

âDear man!â exclaimed Mrs. Bloss, as the doctor stepped into the

carriage.

âCharming creature indeedâquite a ladyâs man!â said Mrs. Tibbs, and Dr.

Wosky rattled away to make fresh gulls of delicate females, and pocket

fresh fees.

As we had occasion, in a former paper, to describe a dinner at Mrs.

Tibbsâs; and as one meal went off very like another on all ordinary

occasions; we will not fatigue our readers by entering into any other

detailed account of the domestic economy of the establishment. We will

therefore proceed to events, merely premising that the mysterious tenant

of the back drawing-room was a lazy, selfish hypochondriac; always

complaining and never ill. As his character in many respects closely

assimilated to that of Mrs. Bloss, a very warm friendship soon sprung up

between them. He was tall, thin, and pale; he always fancied he had a

severe pain somewhere or other, and his face invariably wore a pinched,

screwed-up expression; he looked, indeed, like a man who had got his feet

in a tub of exceedingly hot water, against his will.

For two or three months after Mrs. Blossâs first appearance in

Coram-street, John Evenson was observed to become, every day, more

sarcastic and more ill-natured; and there was a degree of additional

importance in his manner, which clearly showed that he fancied he had

discovered something, which he only wanted a proper opportunity of

divulging. He found it at last.

One evening, the different inmates of the house were assembled in the

drawing-room engaged in their ordinary occupations. Mr. Gobler and Mrs.

Bloss were sitting at a small card-table near the centre window, playing

cribbage; Mr. Wisbottle was describing semicircles on the music-stool,

turning over the leaves of a book on the piano, and humming most

melodiously; Alfred Tomkins was sitting at the round table, with his

elbows duly squared, making a pencil sketch of a head considerably larger

than his own; OâBleary was reading Horace, and trying to look as if he

understood it; and John Evenson had drawn his chair close to Mrs. Tibbsâs

work-table, and was talking to her very earnestly in a low tone.

âI can assure you, Mrs. Tibbs,â said the radical, laying his forefinger

on the muslin she was at work on; âI can assure you, Mrs. Tibbs, that

nothing but the interest I take in your welfare would induce me to make

this communication. I repeat, I fear Wisbottle is endeavouring to gain

the affections of that young woman, Agnes, and that he is in the habit of

meeting her in the store-room on the first floor, over the leads. From

my bedroom I distinctly heard voices there, last night. I opened my door

immediately, and crept very softly on to the landing; there I saw Mr.

Tibbs, who, it seems, had been disturbed also.âBless me, Mrs. Tibbs, you

change colour!â

âNo, noâitâs nothing,â returned Mrs. T. in a hurried manner; âitâs only

the heat of the room.â

âA flush!â ejaculated Mrs. Bloss from the card-table; âthatâs good for

four.â

âIf I thought it was Mr. Wisbottle,â said Mrs. Tibbs, after a pause, âhe

should leave this house instantly.â

âGo!â said Mrs. Bloss again.

âAnd if I thought,â continued the hostess with a most threatening air,

âif I thought he was assisted by Mr. Tibbsââ

âOne for his nob!â said Gobler.

âOh,â said Evenson, in a most soothing toneâhe liked to make mischiefââI

should hope Mr. Tibbs was not in any way implicated. He always appeared

to me very harmless.â

âI have generally found him so,â sobbed poor little Mrs. Tibbs; crying

like a watering-pot.

âHush! hush! prayâMrs. Tibbsâconsiderâwe shall be observedâpray, donât!â

said John Evenson, fearing his whole plan would be interrupted. âWe will

set the matter at rest with the utmost care, and I shall be most happy to

assist you in doing so.â Mrs. Tibbs murmured her thanks.

âWhen you think every one has retired to rest to-night,â said Evenson

very pompously, âif youâll meet me without a light, just outside my

bedroom door, by the staircase window, I think we can ascertain who the

parties really are, and you will afterwards be enabled to proceed as you

think proper.â

Mrs. Tibbs was easily persuaded; her curiosity was excited, her jealousy

was roused, and the arrangement was forthwith made. She resumed her

work, and John Evenson walked up and down the room with his hands in his

pockets, looking as if nothing had happened. The game of cribbage was

over, and conversation began again.

âWell, Mr. OâBleary,â said the humming-top, turning round on his pivot,

and facing the company, âwhat did you think of Vauxhall the other night?â

âOh, itâs very fair,â replied Orson, who had been enthusiastically

delighted with the whole exhibition.

âNever saw anything like that Captain Rossâs set-outâeh?â

âNo,â returned the patriot, with his usual reservationââexcept in

Dublin.â

âI saw the Count de Canky and Captain Fitzthompson in the Gardens,â said

Wisbottle; âthey appeared much delighted.â

âThen it \_must\_ be beautiful,â snarled Evenson.

âI think the white bears is partickerlerly well done,â suggested Mrs.

Bloss. âIn their shaggy white coats, they look just like Polar

bearsâdonât you think they do, Mr. Evenson?â

âI think they look a great deal more like omnibus cads on all fours,â

replied the discontented one.

âUpon the whole, I should have liked our evening very well,â gasped

Gobler; âonly I caught a desperate cold which increased my pain

dreadfully! I was obliged to have several shower-baths, before I could

leave my room.â

âCapital things those shower-baths!â ejaculated Wisbottle.

âExcellent!â said Tomkins.

âDelightful!â chimed in OâBleary. (He had once seen one, outside a

tinmanâs.)

âDisgusting machines!â rejoined Evenson, who extended his dislike to

almost every created object, masculine, feminine, or neuter.

âDisgusting, Mr. Evenson!â said Gobler, in a tone of strong

indignation.ââDisgusting! Look at their utilityâconsider how many lives

they have saved by promoting perspiration.â

âPromoting perspiration, indeed,â growled John Evenson, stopping short in

his walk across the large squares in the pattern of the carpetââI was ass

enough to be persuaded some time ago to have one in my bedroom. âGad, I

was in it once, and it effectually cured \_me\_, for the mere sight of it

threw me into a profuse perspiration for six months afterwards.â

A titter followed this announcement, and before it had subsided James

brought up âthe tray,â containing the remains of a leg of lamb which had

made its \_dÃ©but\_ at dinner; bread; cheese; an atom of butter in a forest

of parsley; one pickled walnut and the third of another; and so forth.

The boy disappeared, and returned again with another tray, containing

glasses and jugs of hot and cold water. The gentlemen brought in their

spirit-bottles; the housemaid placed divers plated bedroom candlesticks

under the card-table; and the servants retired for the night.

Chairs were drawn round the table, and the conversation proceeded in the

customary manner. John Evenson, who never ate supper, lolled on the

sofa, and amused himself by contradicting everybody. OâBleary ate as

much as he could conveniently carry, and Mrs. Tibbs felt a due degree of

indignation thereat; Mr. Gobler and Mrs. Bloss conversed most

affectionately on the subject of pill-taking, and other innocent

amusements; and Tomkins and Wisbottle âgot into an argument;â that is to

say, they both talked very loudly and vehemently, each flattering himself

that he had got some advantage about something, and neither of them

having more than a very indistinct idea of what they were talking about.

An hour or two passed away; and the boarders and the plated candlesticks

retired in pairs to their respective bedrooms. John Evenson pulled off

his boots, locked his door, and determined to sit up until Mr. Gobler had

retired. He always sat in the drawing-room an hour after everybody else

had left it, taking medicine, and groaning.

Great Coram-street was hushed into a state of profound repose: it was

nearly two oâclock. A hackney-coach now and then rumbled slowly by; and

occasionally some stray lawyerâs clerk, on his way home to Somers-town,

struck his iron heel on the top of the coal-cellar with a noise

resembling the click of a smoke-Jack. A low, monotonous, gushing sound

was heard, which added considerably to the romantic dreariness of the

scene. It was the water âcoming inâ at number eleven.

âHe must be asleep by this time,â said John Evenson to himself, after

waiting with exemplary patience for nearly an hour after Mr. Gobler had

left the drawing-room. He listened for a few moments; the house was

perfectly quiet; he extinguished his rushlight, and opened his bedroom

door. The staircase was so dark that it was impossible to see anything.

âS-s-s!â whispered the mischief-maker, making a noise like the first

indication a catherine-wheel gives of the probability of its going off.

âHush!â whispered somebody else.

âIs that you, Mrs. Tibbs?â

âYes, sir.â

âWhere?â

âHere;â and the misty outline of Mrs. Tibbs appeared at the staircase

window, like the ghost of Queen Anne in the tent scene in Richard.

âThis way, Mrs. Tibbs,â whispered the delighted busybody: âgive me your

handâthere! Whoever these people are, they are in the store-room now,

for I have been looking down from my window, and I could see that they

accidentally upset their candlestick, and are now in darkness. You have

no shoes on, have you?â

âNo,â said little Mrs. Tibbs, who could hardly speak for trembling.

âWell; I have taken my boots off, so we can go down, close to the

store-room door, and listen over the banisters;â and down-stairs they

both crept accordingly, every board creaking like a patent mangle on a

Saturday afternoon.

âItâs Wisbottle and somebody, Iâll swear,â exclaimed the radical in an

energetic whisper, when they had listened for a few moments.

âHushâpray letâs hear what they say!â exclaimed Mrs. Tibbs, the

gratification of whose curiosity was now paramount to every other

consideration.

âAh! if I could but believe you,â said a female voice coquettishly, âIâd

be bound to settle my missis for life.â

âWhat does she say?â inquired Mr. Evenson, who was not quite so well

situated as his companion.

âShe says sheâll settle her missisâs life,â replied Mrs. Tibbs. âThe

wretch! theyâre plotting murder.â

âI know you want money,â continued the voice, which belonged to Agnes;

âand if youâd secure me the five hundred pound, I warrant she should take

fire soon enough.â

âWhatâs that?â inquired Evenson again. He could just hear enough to want

to hear more.

âI think she says sheâll set the house on fire,â replied the affrighted

Mrs. Tibbs. âBut thank God Iâm insured in the Phoenix!â

âThe moment I have secured your mistress, my dear,â said a manâs voice in

a strong Irish brogue, âyou may depend on having the money.â

âBless my soul, itâs Mr. OâBleary!â exclaimed Mrs. Tibbs, in a

parenthesis.

âThe villain!â said the indignant Mr. Evenson.

âThe first thing to be done,â continued the Hibernian, âis to poison Mr.

Goblerâs mind.â

âOh, certainly,â returned Agnes.

âWhatâs that?â inquired Evenson again, in an agony of curiosity and a

whisper.

âHe says sheâs to mind and poison Mr. Gobler,â replied Mrs. Tibbs, aghast

at this sacrifice of human life.

âAnd in regard of Mrs. Tibbs,â continued OâBleary.âMrs. Tibbs shuddered.

âHush!â exclaimed Agnes, in a tone of the greatest alarm, just as Mrs.

Tibbs was on the extreme verge of a fainting fit. âHush!â

âHush!â exclaimed Evenson, at the same moment to Mrs. Tibbs.

âThereâs somebody coming \_up\_-stairs,â said Agnes to OâBleary.

âThereâs somebody coming \_down\_-stairs,â whispered Evenson to Mrs. Tibbs.

âGo into the parlour, sir,â said Agnes to her companion. âYou will get

there, before whoever it is, gets to the top of the kitchen stairs.â

âThe drawing-room, Mrs. Tibbs!â whispered the astonished Evenson to his

equally astonished companion; and for the drawing-room they both made,

plainly hearing the rustling of two persons, one coming down-stairs, and

one coming up.

âWhat can it be?â exclaimed Mrs. Tibbs. âItâs like a dream. I wouldnât

be found in this situation for the world!â

âNor I,â returned Evenson, who could never bear a joke at his own

expense. âHush! here they are at the door.â

âWhat fun!â whispered one of the new-comers.âIt was Wisbottle.

âGlorious!â replied his companion, in an equally low tone.âThis was

Alfred Tomkins. âWho would have thought it?â

âI told you so,â said Wisbottle, in a most knowing whisper. âLord bless

you, he has paid her most extraordinary attention for the last two

months. I saw âem when I was sitting at the piano to-night.â

âWell, do you know I didnât notice it?â interrupted Tomkins.

âNot notice it!â continued Wisbottle. âBless you; I saw him whispering

to her, and she crying; and then Iâll swear I heard him say something

about to-night when we were all in bed.â

âTheyâre talking of \_us\_!â exclaimed the agonised Mrs. Tibbs, as the

painful suspicion, and a sense of their situation, flashed upon her mind.

âI know itâI know it,â replied Evenson, with a melancholy consciousness

that there was no mode of escape.

âWhatâs to be done? we cannot both stop here!â ejaculated Mrs. Tibbs, in

a state of partial derangement.

âIâll get up the chimney,â replied Evenson, who really meant what he

said.

âYou canât,â said Mrs. Tibbs, in despair. âYou canâtâitâs a register

stove.â

âHush!â repeated John Evenson.

âHushâhush!â cried somebody down-stairs.

âWhat a d-d hushing!â said Alfred Tomkins, who began to get rather

bewildered.

âThere they are!â exclaimed the sapient Wisbottle, as a rustling noise

was heard in the store-room.

âHark!â whispered both the young men.

âHark!â repeated Mrs. Tibbs and Evenson.

âLet me alone, sir,â said a female voice in the store-room.

âOh, Hagnes!â cried another voice, which clearly belonged to Tibbs, for

nobody else ever owned one like it, âOh, Hagnesâlovely creature!â

âBe quiet, sir!â (A bounce.)

âHagââ

âBe quiet, sirâI am ashamed of you. Think of your wife, Mr. Tibbs. Be

quiet, sir!â

âMy wife!â exclaimed the valorous Tibbs, who was clearly under the

influence of gin-and-water, and a misplaced attachment; âI ate her! Oh,

Hagnes! when I was in the volunteer corps, in eighteen hundred andââ

âI declare Iâll scream. Be quiet, sir, will you?â (Another bounce and a

scuffle.)

âWhatâs that?â exclaimed Tibbs, with a start.

âWhatâs what?â said Agnes, stopping short.

âWhy that!â

âAh! you have done it nicely now, sir,â sobbed the frightened Agnes, as a

tapping was heard at Mrs. Tibbsâs bedroom door, which would have beaten

any dozen woodpeckers hollow.

âMrs. Tibbs! Mrs. Tibbs!â called out Mrs. Bloss. âMrs. Tibbs, pray get

up.â (Here the imitation of a woodpecker was resumed with tenfold

violence.)

âOh, dearâdear!â exclaimed the wretched partner of the depraved Tibbs.

âSheâs knocking at my door. We must be discovered! What will they

think?â

âMrs. Tibbs! Mrs. Tibbs!â screamed the woodpecker again.

âWhatâs the matter!â shouted Gobler, bursting out of the back

drawing-room, like the dragon at Astleyâs.

âOh, Mr. Gobler!â cried Mrs. Bloss, with a proper approximation to

hysterics; âI think the house is on fire, or else thereâs thieves in it.

I have heard the most dreadful noises!â

âThe devil you have!â shouted Gobler again, bouncing back into his den,

in happy imitation of the aforesaid dragon, and returning immediately

with a lighted candle. âWhy, whatâs this? Wisbottle! Tomkins!

OâBleary! Agnes! What the deuce! all up and dressed?â

âAstonishing!â said Mrs. Bloss, who had run down-stairs, and taken Mr.

Goblerâs arm.

âCall Mrs. Tibbs directly, somebody,â said Gobler, turning into the front

drawing-room.ââWhat! Mrs. Tibbs and Mr. Evenson!!â

âMrs. Tibbs and Mr. Evenson!â repeated everybody, as that unhappy pair

were discovered: Mrs. Tibbs seated in an arm-chair by the fireplace, and

Mr. Evenson standing by her side.

We must leave the scene that ensued to the readerâs imagination. We

could tell, how Mrs. Tibbs forthwith fainted away, and how it required

the united strength of Mr. Wisbottle and Mr. Alfred Tomkins to hold her

in her chair; how Mr. Evenson explained, and how his explanation was

evidently disbelieved; how Agnes repelled the accusations of Mrs. Tibbs

by proving that she was negotiating with Mr. OâBleary to influence her

mistressâs affections in his behalf; and how Mr. Gobler threw a damp

counterpane on the hopes of Mr. OâBleary by avowing that he (Gobler) had

already proposed to, and been accepted by, Mrs. Bloss; how Agnes was

discharged from that ladyâs service; how Mr. OâBleary discharged himself

from Mrs. Tibbsâs house, without going through the form of previously

discharging his bill; and how that disappointed young gentleman rails

against England and the English, and vows there is no virtue or fine

feeling extant, âexcept in Ireland.â We repeat that we \_could\_ tell all

this, but we love to exercise our self-denial, and we therefore prefer

leaving it to be imagined.

The lady whom we have hitherto described as Mrs. Bloss, is no more. Mrs.

Gobler exists: Mrs. Bloss has left us for ever. In a secluded retreat in

Newington Butts, far, far removed from the noisy strife of that great

boarding-house, the world, the enviable Gobler and his pleasing wife

revel in retirement: happy in their complaints, their table, and their

medicine, wafted through life by the grateful prayers of all the

purveyors of animal food within three miles round.

We would willingly stop here, but we have a painful duty imposed upon us,

which we must discharge. Mr. and Mrs. Tibbs have separated by mutual

consent, Mrs. Tibbs receiving one moiety of 43\_l.\_ 15\_s.\_ 10\_d.\_, which

we before stated to be the amount of her husbandâs annual income, and Mr.

Tibbs the other. He is spending the evening of his days in retirement;

and he is spending also, annually, that small but honourable

independence. He resides among the original settlers at Walworth; and it

has been stated, on unquestionable authority, that the conclusion of the

volunteer story has been heard in a small tavern in that respectable

neighbourhood.

The unfortunate Mrs. Tibbs has determined to dispose of the whole of her

furniture by public auction, and to retire from a residence in which she

has suffered so much. Mr. Robins has been applied to, to conduct the

sale, and the transcendent abilities of the literary gentlemen connected

with his establishment are now devoted to the task of drawing up the

preliminary advertisement. It is to contain, among a variety of

brilliant matter, seventy-eight words in large capitals, and six original

quotations in inverted commas.

CHAPTER IIâMR. MINNS AND HIS COUSIN

Mr. Augustus Minns was a bachelor, of about forty as he saidâof about

eight-and-forty as his friends said. He was always exceedingly clean,

precise, and tidy; perhaps somewhat priggish, and the most retiring man

in the world. He usually wore a brown frock-coat without a wrinkle,

light inexplicables without a spot, a neat neckerchief with a remarkably

neat tie, and boots without a fault; moreover, he always carried a brown

silk umbrella with an ivory handle. He was a clerk in Somerset-house,

or, as he said himself, he held âa responsible situation under

Government.â He had a good and increasing salary, in addition to some

10,000\_l.\_ of his own (invested in the funds), and he occupied a first

floor in Tavistock-street, Covent-garden, where he had resided for twenty

years, having been in the habit of quarrelling with his landlord the

whole time: regularly giving notice of his intention to quit on the first

day of every quarter, and as regularly countermanding it on the second.

There were two classes of created objects which he held in the deepest

and most unmingled horror; these were dogs, and children. He was not

unamiable, but he could, at any time, have viewed the execution of a dog,

or the assassination of an infant, with the liveliest satisfaction.

Their habits were at variance with his love of order; and his love of

order was as powerful as his love of life. Mr. Augustus Minns had no

relations, in or near London, with the exception of his cousin, Mr.

Octavius Budden, to whose son, whom he had never seen (for he disliked

the father), he had consented to become godfather by proxy. Mr. Budden

having realised a moderate fortune by exercising the trade or calling of

a corn-chandler, and having a great predilection for the country, had

purchased a cottage in the vicinity of Stamford-hill, whither he retired

with the wife of his bosom, and his only son, Master Alexander Augustus

Budden. One evening, as Mr. and Mrs. B. were admiring their son,

discussing his various merits, talking over his education, and disputing

whether the classics should be made an essential part thereof, the lady

pressed so strongly upon her husband the propriety of cultivating the

friendship of Mr. Minns in behalf of their son, that Mr. Budden at last

made up his mind, that it should not be his fault if he and his cousin

were not in future more intimate.

âIâll break the ice, my love,â said Mr. Budden, stirring up the sugar at

the bottom of his glass of brandy-and-water, and casting a sidelong look

at his spouse to see the effect of the announcement of his determination,

âby asking Minns down to dine with us, on Sunday.â

âThen pray, Budden, write to your cousin at once,â replied Mrs. Budden.

âWho knows, if we could only get him down here, but he might take a fancy

to our Alexander, and leave him his property?âAlick, my dear, take your

legs off the rail of the chair!â

âVery true,â said Mr. Budden, musing, âvery true indeed, my love!â On

the following morning, as Mr. Minns was sitting at his breakfast-table,

alternately biting his dry toast and casting a look upon the columns of

his morning paper, which he always read from the title to the printerâs

name, he heard a loud knock at the street-door; which was shortly

afterwards followed by the entrance of his servant, who put into his

hands a particularly small card, on which was engraven in immense

letters, âMr. Octavius Budden, Amelia Cottage (Mrs. B.âs name was

Amelia), Poplar-walk, Stamford-hill.â

âBudden!â ejaculated Minns, âwhat can bring that vulgar man here!âsay Iâm

asleepâsay Iâm out, and shall never be home againâanything to keep him

down-stairs.â

âBut please, sir, the gentlemanâs coming up,â replied the servant, and

the fact was made evident, by an appalling creaking of boots on the

staircase accompanied by a pattering noise; the cause of which, Minns

could not, for the life of him, divine.

âHemâshow the gentleman in,â said the unfortunate bachelor. Exit

servant, and enter Octavius preceded by a large white dog, dressed in a

suit of fleecy hosiery, with pink eyes, large ears, and no perceptible

tail.

The cause of the pattering on the stairs was but too plain. Mr. Augustus

Minns staggered beneath the shock of the dogâs appearance.

âMy dear fellow, how are you?â said Budden, as he entered.

He always spoke at the top of his voice, and always said the same thing

half-a-dozen times.

âHow are you, my hearty?â

âHow do you do, Mr. Budden?âpray take a chair!â politely stammered the

discomfited Minns.

âThank youâthank youâwellâhow are you, eh?â

âUncommonly well, thank you,â said Minns, casting a diabolical look at

the dog, who, with his hind legs on the floor, and his fore paws resting

on the table, was dragging a bit of bread and butter out of a plate,

preparatory to devouring it, with the buttered side next the carpet.

âAh, you rogue!â said Budden to his dog; âyou see, Minns, heâs like me,

always at home, eh, my boy!âEgad, Iâm precious hot and hungry! Iâve

walked all the way from Stamford-hill this morning.â

âHave you breakfasted?â inquired Minns.

âOh, no!âcame to breakfast with you; so ring the bell, my dear fellow,

will you? and letâs have another cup and saucer, and the cold ham.âMake

myself at home, you see!â continued Budden, dusting his boots with a

table-napkin. âHa!âha!âha!ââpon my life, Iâm hungry.â

Minns rang the bell, and tried to smile.

âI decidedly never was so hot in my life,â continued Octavius, wiping his

forehead; âwell, but how are you, Minns? âPon my soul, you wear

capitally!â

âDâye think so?â said Minns; and he tried another smile.

ââPon my life, I do!â

âMrs. B. andâwhatâs his nameâquite well?â

âAlickâmy son, you mean; never betterânever better. But at such a place

as weâve got at Poplar-walk, you know, he couldnât be ill if he tried.

When I first saw it, by Jove! it looked so knowing, with the front

garden, and the green railings and the brass knocker, and all thatâI

really thought it was a cut above me.â

âDonât you think youâd like the ham better,â interrupted Minns, âif you

cut it the other way?â He saw, with feelings which it is impossible to

describe, that his visitor was cutting or rather maiming the ham, in

utter violation of all established rules.

âNo, thank ye,â returned Budden, with the most barbarous indifference to

crime, âI prefer it this way, it eats short. But I say, Minns, when will

you come down and see us? You will be delighted with the place; I know

you will. Amelia and I were talking about you the other night, and

Amelia saidâanother lump of sugar, please; thank yeâshe said, donât you

think you could contrive, my dear, to say to Mr. Minns, in a friendly

wayâcome down, sirâdamn the dog! heâs spoiling your curtains,

Minnsâha!âha!âha!â Minns leaped from his seat as though he had received

the discharge from a galvanic battery.

âCome out, sir!âgo out, hoo!â cried poor Augustus, keeping, nevertheless,

at a very respectful distance from the dog; having read of a case of

hydrophobia in the paper of that morning. By dint of great exertion,

much shouting, and a marvellous deal of poking under the tables with a

stick and umbrella, the dog was at last dislodged, and placed on the

landing outside the door, where he immediately commenced a most appalling

howling; at the same time vehemently scratching the paint off the two

nicely-varnished bottom panels, until they resembled the interior of a

backgammon-board.

âA good dog for the country that!â coolly observed Budden to the

distracted Minns, âbut heâs not much used to confinement. But now,

Minns, when will you come down? Iâll take no denial, positively. Letâs

see, to-dayâs Thursday.âWill you come on Sunday? We dine at five, donât

say noâdo.â

After a great deal of pressing, Mr. Augustus Minns, driven to despair,

accepted the invitation, and promised to be at Poplar-walk on the ensuing

Sunday, at a quarter before five to the minute.

âNow mind the direction,â said Budden: âthe coach goes from the

Flower-pot, in Bishopsgate-street, every half hour. When the coach stops

at the Swan, youâll see, immediately opposite you, a white house.â

âWhich is your houseâI understand,â said Minns, wishing to cut short the

visit, and the story, at the same time.

âNo, no, thatâs not mine; thatâs Grogusâs, the great ironmongerâs. I was

going to sayâyou turn down by the side of the white house till you canât

go another step furtherâmind that!âand then you turn to your right, by

some stablesâwell; close to you, youâll see a wall with âBeware of the

Dogâ written on it in large lettersâ(Minns shuddered)âgo along by the

side of that wall for about a quarter of a mileâand anybody will show you

which is my place.â

âVery wellâthank yeâgood-bye.â

âBe punctual.â

âCertainly: good morning.â

âI say, Minns, youâve got a card.â

âYes, I have; thank ye.â And Mr. Octavius Budden departed, leaving his

cousin looking forward to his visit on the following Sunday, with the

feelings of a penniless poet to the weekly visit of his Scotch landlady.

Sunday arrived; the sky was bright and clear; crowds of people were

hurrying along the streets, intent on their different schemes of pleasure

for the day; everything and everybody looked cheerful and happy except

Mr. Augustus Minns.

The day was fine, but the heat was considerable; when Mr. Minns had

fagged up the shady side of Fleet-street, Cheapside, and

Threadneedle-street, he had become pretty warm, tolerably dusty, and it

was getting late into the bargain. By the most extraordinary good

fortune, however, a coach was waiting at the Flower-pot, into which Mr.

Augustus Minns got, on the solemn assurance of the cad that the vehicle

would start in three minutesâthat being the very utmost extremity of time

it was allowed to wait by Act of Parliament. A quarter of an hour

elapsed, and there were no signs of moving. Minns looked at his watch

for the sixth time.

âCoachman, are you going or not?â bawled Mr. Minns, with his head and

half his body out of the coach window.

âDi-rectly, sir,â said the coachman, with his hands in his pockets,

looking as much unlike a man in a hurry as possible.

âBill, take them cloths off.â Five minutes more elapsed: at the end of

which time the coachman mounted the box, from whence he looked down the

street, and up the street, and hailed all the pedestrians for another

five minutes.

âCoachman! if you donât go this moment, I shall get out,â said Mr. Minns,

rendered desperate by the lateness of the hour, and the impossibility of

being in Poplar-walk at the appointed time.

âGoing this minute, sir,â was the reply;âand, accordingly, the machine

trundled on for a couple of hundred yards, and then stopped again. Minns

doubled himself up in a corner of the coach, and abandoned himself to his

fate, as a child, a mother, a bandbox and a parasol, became his

fellow-passengers.

The child was an affectionate and an amiable infant; the little dear

mistook Minns for his other parent, and screamed to embrace him.

âBe quiet, dear,â said the mamma, restraining the impetuosity of the

darling, whose little fat legs were kicking, and stamping, and twining

themselves into the most complicated forms, in an ecstasy of impatience.

âBe quiet, dear, thatâs not your papa.â

âThank Heaven I am not!â thought Minns, as the first gleam of pleasure he

had experienced that morning shone like a meteor through his

wretchedness.

Playfulness was agreeably mingled with affection in the disposition of

the boy. When satisfied that Mr. Minns was not his parent, he

endeavoured to attract his notice by scraping his drab trousers with his

dirty shoes, poking his chest with his mammaâs parasol, and other

nameless endearments peculiar to infancy, with which he beguiled the

tediousness of the ride, apparently very much to his own satisfaction.

When the unfortunate gentleman arrived at the Swan, he found to his great

dismay, that it was a quarter past five. The white house, the stables,

the âBeware of the Dog,ââevery landmark was passed, with a rapidity not

unusual to a gentleman of a certain age when too late for dinner. After

the lapse of a few minutes, Mr. Minns found himself opposite a yellow

brick house with a green door, brass knocker, and door-plate, green

window-frames and ditto railings, with âa gardenâ in front, that is to

say, a small loose bit of gravelled ground, with one round and two

scalene triangular beds, containing a fir-tree, twenty or thirty bulbs,

and an unlimited number of marigolds. The taste of Mr. and Mrs. Budden

was further displayed by the appearance of a Cupid on each side of the

door, perched upon a heap of large chalk flints, variegated with pink

conch-shells. His knock at the door was answered by a stumpy boy, in

drab livery, cotton stockings and high-lows, who, after hanging his hat

on one of the dozen brass pegs which ornamented the passage, denominated

by courtesy âThe Hall,â ushered him into a front drawing-room commanding

a very extensive view of the backs of the neighbouring houses. The usual

ceremony of introduction, and so forth, over, Mr. Minns took his seat:

not a little agitated at finding that he was the last comer, and, somehow

or other, the Lion of about a dozen people, sitting together in a small

drawing-room, getting rid of that most tedious of all time, the time

preceding dinner.

âWell, Brogson,â said Budden, addressing an elderly gentleman in a black

coat, drab knee-breeches, and long gaiters, who, under pretence of

inspecting the prints in an Annual, had been engaged in satisfying

himself on the subject of Mr. Minnsâs general appearance, by looking at

him over the tops of the leavesââWell, Brogson, what do ministers mean to

do? Will they go out, or what?â

âOhâwhyâreally, you know, Iâm the last person in the world to ask for

news. Your cousin, from his situation, is the most likely person to

answer the question.â

Mr. Minns assured the last speaker, that although he was in

Somerset-house, he possessed no official communication relative to the

projects of his Majestyâs Ministers. But his remark was evidently

received incredulously; and no further conjectures being hazarded on the

subject, a long pause ensued, during which the company occupied

themselves in coughing and blowing their noses, until the entrance of

Mrs. Budden caused a general rise.

The ceremony of introduction being over, dinner was announced, and

down-stairs the party proceeded accordinglyâMr. Minns escorting Mrs.

Budden as far as the drawing-room door, but being prevented, by the

narrowness of the staircase, from extending his gallantry any farther.

The dinner passed off as such dinners usually do. Ever and anon, amidst

the clatter of knives and forks, and the hum of conversation, Mr. B.âs

voice might be heard, asking a friend to take wine, and assuring him he

was glad to see him; and a great deal of by-play took place between Mrs.

B. and the servants, respecting the removal of the dishes, during which

her countenance assumed all the variations of a weather-glass, from

âstormyâ to âset fair.â

Upon the dessert and wine being placed on the table, the servant, in

compliance with a significant look from Mrs. B., brought down âMaster

Alexander,â habited in a sky-blue suit with silver buttons; and

possessing hair of nearly the same colour as the metal. After sundry

praises from his mother, and various admonitions as to his behaviour from

his father, he was introduced to his godfather.

âWell, my little fellowâyou are a fine boy, ainât you?â said Mr. Minns,

as happy as a tomtit on birdlime.

âYes.â

âHow old are you?â

âEight, next Weânsday. How old are \_you\_?â

âAlexander,â interrupted his mother, âhow dare you ask Mr. Minns how old

he is!â

âHe asked me how old \_I\_ was,â said the precocious child, to whom Minns

had from that moment internally resolved that he never would bequeath one

shilling. As soon as the titter occasioned by the observation had

subsided, a little smirking man with red whiskers, sitting at the bottom

of the table, who during the whole of dinner had been endeavouring to

obtain a listener to some stories about Sheridan, called, out, with a

very patronising air, âAlick, what part of speech is \_be\_.â

âA verb.â

âThatâs a good boy,â said Mrs. Budden, with all a motherâs pride.

âNow, you know what a verb is?â

âA verb is a word which signifies to be, to do, or to suffer; as, I amâI

ruleâI am ruled. Give me an apple, Ma.â

âIâll give you an apple,â replied the man with the red whiskers, who was

an established friend of the family, or in other words was always invited

by Mrs. Budden, whether Mr. Budden liked it or not, âif youâll tell me

what is the meaning of \_be\_.â

âBe?â said the prodigy, after a little hesitationââan insect that gathers

honey.â

âNo, dear,â frowned Mrs. Budden; âB double E is the substantive.â

âI donât think he knows much yet about \_common\_ substantives,â said the

smirking gentleman, who thought this an admirable opportunity for letting

off a joke. âItâs clear heâs not very well acquainted with \_proper

names\_. He! he! he!â

âGentlemen,â called out Mr. Budden, from the end of the table, in a

stentorian voice, and with a very important air, âwill you have the

goodness to charge your glasses? I have a toast to propose.â

âHear! hear!â cried the gentlemen, passing the decanters. After they had

made the round of the table, Mr. Budden proceededââGentlemen; there is an

individual presentââ

âHear! hear!â said the little man with red whiskers.

â\_Pray\_ be quiet, Jones,â remonstrated Budden.

âI say, gentlemen, there is an individual present,â resumed the host, âin

whose society, I am sure we must take great delightâandâandâthe

conversation of that individual must have afforded to every one present,

the utmost pleasure.â [âThank Heaven, he does not mean me!â thought

Minns, conscious that his diffidence and exclusiveness had prevented his

saying above a dozen words since he entered the house.] âGentlemen, I am

but a humble individual myself, and I perhaps ought to apologise for

allowing any individual feeling of friendship and affection for the

person I allude to, to induce me to venture to rise, to propose the

health of that personâa person that, I am sureâthat is to say, a person

whose virtues must endear him to those who know himâand those who have

not the pleasure of knowing him, cannot dislike him.â

âHear! hear!â said the company, in a tone of encouragement and approval.

âGentlemen,â continued Budden, âmy cousin is a man whoâwho is a relation

of my own.â (Hear! hear!) Minns groaned audibly. âWho I am most happy

to see here, and who, if he were not here, would certainly have deprived

us of the great pleasure we all feel in seeing him. (Loud cries of

hear!) Gentlemen, I feel that I have already trespassed on your

attention for too long a time. With every feelingâofâwith every

sentiment ofâofââ

âGratificationââsuggested the friend of the family.

ââOf gratification, I beg to propose the health of Mr. Minns.â

âStanding, gentlemen!â shouted the indefatigable little man with the

whiskersââand with the honours. Take your time from me, if you please.

Hip! hip! hip!âZa!âHip! hip! hip!âZa!âHip hip!âZa-a-a!â

All eyes were now fixed on the subject of the toast, who by gulping down

port wine at the imminent hazard of suffocation, endeavoured to conceal

his confusion. After as long a pause as decency would admit, he rose,

but, as the newspapers sometimes say in their reports, âwe regret that we

are quite unable to give even the substance of the honourable gentlemanâs

observations.â The words âpresent companyâhonourâpresent occasion,â and

âgreat happinessââheard occasionally, and repeated at intervals, with a

countenance expressive of the utmost confusion and misery, convinced the

company that he was making an excellent speech; and, accordingly, on his

resuming his seat, they cried âBravo!â and manifested tumultuous

applause. Jones, who had been long watching his opportunity, then darted

up.

âBudden,â said he, âwill you allow \_me\_ to propose a toast?â

âCertainly,â replied Budden, adding in an under-tone to Minns right

across the table, âDevilish sharp fellow that: youâll be very much

pleased with his speech. He talks equally well on any subject.â Minns

bowed, and Mr. Jones proceeded:

âIt has on several occasions, in various instances, under many

circumstances, and in different companies, fallen to my lot to propose a

toast to those by whom, at the time, I have had the honour to be

surrounded, I have sometimes, I will cheerfully ownâfor why should I deny

it?âfelt the overwhelming nature of the task I have undertaken, and my

own utter incapability to do justice to the subject. If such have been

my feelings, however, on former occasions, what must they be

nowânowâunder the extraordinary circumstances in which I am placed.

(Hear! hear!) To describe my feelings accurately, would be impossible;

but I cannot give you a better idea of them, gentlemen, than by referring

to a circumstance which happens, oddly enough, to occur to my mind at the

moment. On one occasion, when that truly great and illustrious man,

Sheridan, wasââ

Now, there is no knowing what new villainy in the form of a joke would

have been heaped on the grave of that very ill-used man, Mr. Sheridan, if

the boy in drab had not at that moment entered the room in a breathless

state, to report that, as it was a very wet night, the nine oâclock stage

had come round, to know whether there was anybody going to town, as, in

that case, he (the nine oâclock) had room for one inside.

Mr. Minns started up; and, despite countless exclamations of surprise,

and entreaties to stay, persisted in his determination to accept the

vacant place. But, the brown silk umbrella was nowhere to be found; and

as the coachman couldnât wait, he drove back to the Swan, leaving word

for Mr. Minns to ârun roundâ and catch him. However, as it did not occur

to Mr. Minns for some ten minutes or so, that he had left the brown silk

umbrella with the ivory handle in the other coach, coming down; and,

moreover, as he was by no means remarkable for speed, it is no matter of

surprise that when he accomplished the feat of ârunning roundâ to the

Swan, the coachâthe last coachâhad gone without him.

It was somewhere about three oâclock in the morning, when Mr. Augustus

Minns knocked feebly at the street-door of his lodgings in

Tavistock-street, cold, wet, cross, and miserable. He made his will next

morning, and his professional man informs us, in that strict confidence

in which we inform the public, that neither the name of Mr. Octavius

Budden, nor of Mrs. Amelia Budden, nor of Master Alexander Augustus

Budden, appears therein.

CHAPTER IIIâSENTIMENT

The Miss Crumptons, or to quote the authority of the inscription on the

garden-gate of Minerva House, Hammersmith, âThe Misses Crumpton,â were

two unusually tall, particularly thin, and exceedingly skinny personages:

very upright, and very yellow. Miss Amelia Crumpton owned to

thirty-eight, and Miss Maria Crumpton admitted she was forty; an

admission which was rendered perfectly unnecessary by the self-evident

fact of her being at least fifty. They dressed in the most interesting

mannerâlike twins! and looked as happy and comfortable as a couple of

marigolds run to seed. They were very precise, had the strictest

possible ideas of propriety, wore false hair, and always smelt very

strongly of lavender.

Minerva House, conducted under the auspices of the two sisters, was a

âfinishing establishment for young ladies,â where some twenty girls of

the ages of from thirteen to nineteen inclusive, acquired a smattering of

everything, and a knowledge of nothing; instruction in French and

Italian, dancing lessons twice a-week; and other necessaries of life.

The house was a white one, a little removed from the roadside, with close

palings in front. The bedroom windows were always left partly open, to

afford a birdâs-eye view of numerous little bedsteads with very white

dimity furniture, and thereby impress the passer-by with a due sense of

the luxuries of the establishment; and there was a front parlour hung

round with highly varnished maps which nobody ever looked at, and filled

with books which no one ever read, appropriated exclusively to the

reception of parents, who, whenever they called, could not fail to be

struck with the very deep appearance of the place.

âAmelia, my dear,â said Miss Maria Crumpton, entering the school-room one

morning, with her false hair in papers: as she occasionally did, in order

to impress the young ladies with a conviction of its reality. âAmelia,

my dear, here is a most gratifying note I have just received. You

neednât mind reading it aloud.â

Miss Amelia, thus advised, proceeded to read the following note with an

air of great triumph:

âCornelius Brook Dingwall, Esq., M.P., presents his compliments to

Miss Crumpton, and will feel much obliged by Miss Crumptonâs calling

on him, if she conveniently can, to-morrow morning at one oâclock, as

Cornelius Brook Dingwall, Esq., M.P., is anxious to see Miss Crumpton

on the subject of placing Miss Brook Dingwall under her charge.

âAdelphi.

âMonday morning.â

âA Member of Parliamentâs daughter!â ejaculated Amelia, in an ecstatic

tone.

âA Member of Parliamentâs daughter!â repeated Miss Maria, with a smile of

delight, which, of course, elicited a concurrent titter of pleasure from

all the young ladies.

âItâs exceedingly delightful!â said Miss Amelia; whereupon all the young

ladies murmured their admiration again. Courtiers are but school-boys,

and court-ladies school-girlâs.

So important an announcement at once superseded the business of the day.

A holiday was declared, in commemoration of the great event; the Miss

Crumptons retired to their private apartment to talk it over; the smaller

girls discussed the probable manners and customs of the daughter of a

Member of Parliament; and the young ladies verging on eighteen wondered

whether she was engaged, whether she was pretty, whether she wore much

bustle, and many other \_whethers\_ of equal importance.

The two Miss Crumptons proceeded to the Adelphi at the appointed time

next day, dressed, of course, in their best style, and looking as amiable

as they possibly couldâwhich, by-the-bye, is not saying much for them.

Having sent in their cards, through the medium of a red-hot looking

footman in bright livery, they were ushered into the august presence of

the profound Dingwall.

Cornelius Brook Dingwall, Esq., M.P., was very haughty, solemn, and

portentous. He had, naturally, a somewhat spasmodic expression of

countenance, which was not rendered the less remarkable by his wearing an

extremely stiff cravat. He was wonderfully proud of the M.P. attached to

his name, and never lost an opportunity of reminding people of his

dignity. He had a great idea of his own abilities, which must have been

a great comfort to him, as no one else had; and in diplomacy, on a small

scale, in his own family arrangements, he considered himself unrivalled.

He was a county magistrate, and discharged the duties of his station with

all due justice and impartiality; frequently committing poachers, and

occasionally committing himself. Miss Brook Dingwall was one of that

numerous class of young ladies, who, like adverbs, may be known by their

answering to a commonplace question, and doing nothing else.

On the present occasion, this talented individual was seated in a small

library at a table covered with papers, doing nothing, but trying to look

busy, playing at shop. Acts of Parliament, and letters directed to

âCornelius Brook Dingwall, Esq., M.P.,â were ostentatiously scattered

over the table; at a little distance from which, Mrs. Brook Dingwall was

seated at work. One of those public nuisances, a spoiled child, was

playing about the room, dressed after the most approved fashionâin a blue

tunic with a black beltâa quarter of a yard wide, fastened with an

immense buckleâlooking like a robber in a melodrama, seen through a

diminishing glass.

After a little pleasantry from the sweet child, who amused himself by

running away with Miss Maria Crumptonâs chair as fast as it was placed

for her, the visitors were seated, and Cornelius Brook Dingwall, Esq.,

opened the conversation.

He had sent for Miss Crumpton, he said, in consequence of the high

character he had received of her establishment from his friend, Sir

Alfred Muggs.

Miss Crumpton murmured her acknowledgments to him (Muggs), and Cornelius

proceeded.

âOne of my principal reasons, Miss Crumpton, for parting with my

daughter, is, that she has lately acquired some sentimental ideas, which

it is most desirable to eradicate from her young mind.â (Here the little

innocent before noticed, fell out of an arm-chair with an awful crash.)

âNaughty boy!â said his mamma, who appeared more surprised at his taking

the liberty of falling down, than at anything else; âIâll ring the bell

for James to take him away.â

âPray donât check him, my love,â said the diplomatist, as soon as he

could make himself heard amidst the unearthly howling consequent upon the

threat and the tumble. âIt all arises from his great flow of spirits.â

This last explanation was addressed to Miss Crumpton.

âCertainly, sir,â replied the antique Maria: not exactly seeing, however,

the connexion between a flow of animal spirits, and a fall from an

arm-chair.

Silence was restored, and the M.P. resumed: âNow, I know nothing so

likely to effect this object, Miss Crumpton, as her mixing constantly in

the society of girls of her own age; and, as I know that in your

establishment she will meet such as are not likely to contaminate her

young mind, I propose to send her to you.â

The youngest Miss Crumpton expressed the acknowledgments of the

establishment generally. Maria was rendered speechless by bodily pain.

The dear little fellow, having recovered his animal spirits, was standing

upon her most tender foot, by way of getting his face (which looked like

a capital O in a red-lettered play-bill) on a level with the

writing-table.

âOf course, Lavinia will be a parlour boarder,â continued the enviable

father; âand on one point I wish my directions to be strictly observed.

The fact is, that some ridiculous love affair, with a person much her

inferior in life, has been the cause of her present state of mind.

Knowing that of course, under your care, she can have no opportunity of

meeting this person, I do not object toâindeed, I should rather

preferâher mixing with such society as you see yourself.â

This important statement was again interrupted by the high-spirited

little creature, in the excess of his joyousness breaking a pane of

glass, and nearly precipitating himself into an adjacent area. James was

rung for; considerable confusion and screaming succeeded; two little blue

legs were seen to kick violently in the air as the man left the room, and

the child was gone.

âMr. Brook Dingwall would like Miss Brook Dingwall to learn everything,â

said Mrs. Brook Dingwall, who hardly ever said anything at all.

âCertainly,â said both the Miss Crumptons together.

âAnd as I trust the plan I have devised will be effectual in weaning my

daughter from this absurd idea, Miss Crumpton,â continued the legislator,

âI hope you will have the goodness to comply, in all respects, with any

request I may forward to you.â

The promise was of course made; and after a lengthened discussion,

conducted on behalf of the Dingwalls with the most becoming diplomatic

gravity, and on that of the Crumptons with profound respect, it was

finally arranged that Miss Lavinia should be forwarded to Hammersmith on

the next day but one, on which occasion the half-yearly ball given at the

establishment was to take place. It might divert the dear girlâs mind.

This, by the way, was another bit of diplomacy.

Miss Lavinia was introduced to her future governess, and both the Miss

Crumptons pronounced her âa most charming girl;â an opinion which, by a

singular coincidence, they always entertained of any new pupil.

Courtesies were exchanged, acknowledgments expressed, condescension

exhibited, and the interview terminated.

Preparations, to make use of theatrical phraseology, âon a scale of

magnitude never before attempted,â were incessantly made at Minerva House

to give every effect to the forthcoming ball. The largest room in the

house was pleasingly ornamented with blue calico roses, plaid tulips, and

other equally natural-looking artificial flowers, the work of the young

ladies themselves. The carpet was taken up, the folding-doors were taken

down, the furniture was taken out, and rout-seats were taken in. The

linen-drapers of Hammersmith were astounded at the sudden demand for blue

sarsenet ribbon, and long white gloves. Dozens of geraniums were

purchased for bouquets, and a harp and two violins were bespoke from

town, in addition to the grand piano already on the premises. The young

ladies who were selected to show off on the occasion, and do credit to

the establishment, practised incessantly, much to their own satisfaction,

and greatly to the annoyance of the lame old gentleman over the way; and

a constant correspondence was kept up, between the Misses Crumpton and

the Hammersmith pastrycook.

The evening came; and then there was such a lacing of stays, and tying of

sandals, and dressing of hair, as never can take place with a proper

degree of bustle out of a boarding-school. The smaller girls managed to

be in everybodyâs way, and were pushed about accordingly; and the elder

ones dressed, and tied, and flattered, and envied, one another, as

earnestly and sincerely as if they had actually \_come out\_.

âHow do I look, dear?â inquired Miss Emily Smithers, the belle of the

house, of Miss Caroline Wilson, who was her bosom friend, because she was

the ugliest girl in Hammersmith, or out of it.

âOh! charming, dear. How do I?â

âDelightful! you never looked so handsome,â returned the belle, adjusting

her own dress, and not bestowing a glance on her poor companion.

âI hope young Hilton will come early,â said another young lady to Miss

somebody else, in a fever of expectation.

âIâm sure heâd be highly flattered if he knew it,â returned the other,

who was practising \_lâÃ©tÃ©\_.

âOh! heâs so handsome,â said the first.

âSuch a charming person!â added a second.

âSuch a \_distinguÃ©\_ air!â said a third.

âOh, what \_do\_ you think?â said another girl, running into the room;

âMiss Crumpton says her cousinâs coming.â

âWhat! Theodosius Butler?â said everybody in raptures.

âIs \_he\_ handsome?â inquired a novice.

âNo, not particularly handsome,â was the general reply; âbut, oh, so

clever!â

Mr. Theodosius Butler was one of those immortal geniuses who are to be

met with in almost every circle. They have, usually, very deep,

monotonous voices. They always persuade themselves that they are

wonderful persons, and that they ought to be very miserable, though they

donât precisely know why. They are very conceited, and usually possess

half an idea; but, with enthusiastic young ladies, and silly young

gentlemen, they are very wonderful persons. The individual in question,

Mr. Theodosius, had written a pamphlet containing some very weighty

considerations on the expediency of doing something or other; and as

every sentence contained a good many words of four syllables, his

admirers took it for granted that he meant a good deal.

âPerhaps thatâs he,â exclaimed several young ladies, as the first pull of

the evening threatened destruction to the bell of the gate.

An awful pause ensued. Some boxes arrived and a young ladyâMiss Brook

Dingwall, in full ball costume, with an immense gold chain round her

neck, and her dress looped up with a single rose; an ivory fan in her

hand, and a most interesting expression of despair in her face.

The Miss Crumptons inquired after the family, with the most excruciating

anxiety, and Miss Brook Dingwall was formally introduced to her future

companions. The Miss Crumptons conversed with the young ladies in the

most mellifluous tones, in order that Miss Brook Dingwall might be

properly impressed with their amiable treatment.

Another pull at the bell. Mr. Dadson the writing-master, and his wife.

The wife in green silk, with shoes and cap-trimmings to correspond: the

writing-master in a white waistcoat, black knee-shorts, and ditto silk

stockings, displaying a leg large enough for two writing-masters. The

young ladies whispered one another, and the writing-master and his wife

flattered the Miss Crumptons, who were dressed in amber, with long

sashes, like dolls.

Repeated pulls at the bell, and arrivals too numerous to particularise:

papas and mammas, and aunts and uncles, the owners and guardians of the

different pupils; the singing-master, Signor Lobskini, in a black wig;

the piano-forte player and the violins; the harp, in a state of

intoxication; and some twenty young men, who stood near the door, and

talked to one another, occasionally bursting into a giggle. A general

hum of conversation. Coffee handed round, and plentifully partaken of by

fat mammas, who looked like the stout people who come on in pantomimes

for the sole purpose of being knocked down.

The popular Mr. Hilton was the next arrival; and he having, at the

request of the Miss Crumptons, undertaken the office of Master of the

Ceremonies, the quadrilles commenced with considerable spirit. The young

men by the door gradually advanced into the middle of the room, and in

time became sufficiently at ease to consent to be introduced to partners.

The writing-master danced every set, springing about with the most

fearful agility, and his wife played a rubber in the back-parlourâa

little room with five book-shelves, dignified by the name of the study.

Setting her down to whist was a half-yearly piece of generalship on the

part of the Miss Crumptons; it was necessary to hide her somewhere, on

account of her being a fright.

The interesting Lavinia Brook Dingwall was the only girl present, who

appeared to take no interest in the proceedings of the evening. In vain

was she solicited to dance; in vain was the universal homage paid to her

as the daughter of a member of parliament. She was equally unmoved by

the splendid tenor of the inimitable Lobskini, and the brilliant

execution of Miss Laetitia Parsons, whose performance of âThe

Recollections of Irelandâ was universally declared to be almost equal to

that of Moscheles himself. Not even the announcement of the arrival of

Mr. Theodosius Butler could induce her to leave the corner of the back

drawing-room in which she was seated.

âNow, Theodosius,â said Miss Maria Crumpton, after that enlightened

pamphleteer had nearly run the gauntlet of the whole company, âI must

introduce you to our new pupil.â

Theodosius looked as if he cared for nothing earthly.

âSheâs the daughter of a member of parliament,â said Maria.âTheodosius

started.

âAnd her name isâ?â he inquired.

âMiss Brook Dingwall.â

âGreat Heaven!â poetically exclaimed Theodosius, in a low tone.

Miss Crumpton commenced the introduction in due form. Miss Brook

Dingwall languidly raised her head.

âEdward!â she exclaimed, with a half-shriek, on seeing the well-known

nankeen legs.

Fortunately, as Miss Maria Crumpton possessed no remarkable share of

penetration, and as it was one of the diplomatic arrangements that no

attention was to be paid to Miss Laviniaâs incoherent exclamations, she

was perfectly unconscious of the mutual agitation of the parties; and

therefore, seeing that the offer of his hand for the next quadrille was

accepted, she left him by the side of Miss Brook Dingwall.

âOh, Edward!â exclaimed that most romantic of all romantic young ladies,

as the light of science seated himself beside her, âOh, Edward, is it

you?â

Mr. Theodosius assured the dear creature, in the most impassioned manner,

that he was not conscious of being anybody but himself.

âThen whyâwhyâthis disguise? Oh! Edward MâNeville Walter, what have I

not suffered on your account?â

âLavinia, hear me,â replied the hero, in his most poetic strain. âDo not

condemn me unheard. If anything that emanates from the soul of such a

wretch as I, can occupy a place in your recollectionâif any being, so

vile, deserve your noticeâyou may remember that I once published a

pamphlet (and paid for its publication) entitled âConsiderations on the

Policy of Removing the Duty on Beesâ-wax.ââ

âI doâI do!â sobbed Lavinia.

âThat,â continued the lover, âwas a subject to which your father was

devoted heart and soul.â

âHe wasâhe was!â reiterated the sentimentalist.

âI knew it,â continued Theodosius, tragically; âI knew itâI forwarded him

a copy. He wished to know me. Could I disclose my real name? Never!

No, I assumed that name which you have so often pronounced in tones of

endearment. As MâNeville Walter, I devoted myself to the stirring cause;

as MâNeville Walter I gained your heart; in the same character I was

ejected from your house by your fatherâs domestics; and in no character

at all have I since been enabled to see you. We now meet again, and I

proudly own that I amâTheodosius Butler.â

The young lady appeared perfectly satisfied with this argumentative

address, and bestowed a look of the most ardent affection on the immortal

advocate of beesâ-wax.

âMay I hope,â said he, âthat the promise your fatherâs violent behaviour

interrupted, may be renewed?â

âLet us join this set,â replied Lavinia, coquettishlyâfor girls of

nineteen \_can\_ coquette.

âNo,â ejaculated he of the nankeens. âI stir not from this spot,

writhing under this torture of suspense. May Iâmay Iâhope?â

âYou may.â

âThe promise is renewed?â

âIt is.â

âI have your permission?â

âYou have.â

âTo the fullest extent?â

âYou know it,â returned the blushing Lavinia. The contortions of the

interesting Butlerâs visage expressed his raptures.

We could dilate upon the occurrences that ensued. How Mr. Theodosius and

Miss Lavinia danced, and talked, and sighed for the remainder of the

eveningâhow the Miss Crumptons were delighted thereat. How the

writing-master continued to frisk about with one-horse power, and how his

wife, from some unaccountable freak, left the whist-table in the little

back-parlour, and persisted in displaying her green head-dress in the

most conspicuous part of the drawing-room. How the supper consisted of

small triangular sandwiches in trays, and a tart here and there by way of

variety; and how the visitors consumed warm water disguised with lemon,

and dotted with nutmeg, under the denomination of negus. These, and

other matters of as much interest, however, we pass over, for the purpose

of describing a scene of even more importance.

A fortnight after the date of the ball, Cornelius Brook Dingwall, Esq.,

M.P., was seated at the same library-table, and in the same room, as we

have before described. He was alone, and his face bore an expression of

deep thought and solemn gravityâhe was drawing up âA Bill for the better

observance of Easter Monday.â

The footman tapped at the doorâthe legislator started from his reverie,

and âMiss Crumptonâ was announced. Permission was given for Miss

Crumpton to enter the \_sanctum\_; Maria came sliding in, and having taken

her seat with a due portion of affectation, the footman retired, and the

governess was left alone with the M.P. Oh! how she longed for the

presence of a third party! Even the facetious young gentleman would have

been a relief.

Miss Crumpton began the duet. She hoped Mrs. Brook Dingwall and the

handsome little boy were in good health.

They were. Mrs. Brook Dingwall and little Frederick were at Brighton.

âMuch obliged to you, Miss Crumpton,â said Cornelius, in his most

dignified manner, âfor your attention in calling this morning. I should

have driven down to Hammersmith, to see Lavinia, but your account was so

very satisfactory, and my duties in the House occupy me so much, that I

determined to postpone it for a week. How has she gone on?â

âVery well indeed, sir,â returned Maria, dreading to inform the father

that she had gone off.

âAh, I thought the plan on which I proceeded would be a match for her.â

Here was a favourable opportunity to say that somebody else had been a

match for her. But the unfortunate governess was unequal to the task.

âYou have persevered strictly in the line of conduct I prescribed, Miss

Crumpton?â

âStrictly, sir.â

âYou tell me in your note that her spirits gradually improved.â

âVery much indeed, sir.â

âTo be sure. I was convinced they would.â

âBut I fear, sir,â said Miss Crumpton, with visible emotion, âI fear the

plan has not succeeded, quite so well as we could have wished.â

No!â exclaimed the prophet. âBless me! Miss Crumpton, you look alarmed.

What has happened?â

âMiss Brook Dingwall, sirââ

âYes, maâam?â

âHas gone, sirââsaid Maria, exhibiting a strong inclination to faint.

âGone!â

âEloped, sir.â

âEloped!âWho withâwhenâwhereâhow?â almost shrieked the agitated

diplomatist.

The natural yellow of the unfortunate Mariaâs face changed to all the

hues of the rainbow, as she laid a small packet on the memberâs table.

He hurriedly opened it. A letter from his daughter, and another from

Theodosius. He glanced over their contentsââEre this reaches you, far

distantâappeal to feelingsâlove to distractionâbeesâ-waxâslavery,â &c.,

&c. He dashed his hand to his forehead, and paced the room with

fearfully long strides, to the great alarm of the precise Maria.

âNow mind; from this time forward,â said Mr. Brook Dingwall, suddenly

stopping at the table, and beating time upon it with his hand; âfrom this

time forward, I never will, under any circumstances whatever, permit a

man who writes pamphlets to enter any other room of this house but the

kitchen.âIâll allow my daughter and her husband one hundred and fifty

pounds a-year, and never see their faces again: and, damme! maâam, Iâll

bring in a bill for the abolition of finishing-schools.â

Some time has elapsed since this passionate declaration. Mr. and Mrs.

Butler are at present rusticating in a small cottage at Ballâs-pond,

pleasantly situated in the immediate vicinity of a brick-field. They

have no family. Mr. Theodosius looks very important, and writes

incessantly; but, in consequence of a gross combination on the part of

publishers, none of his productions appear in print. His young wife

begins to think that ideal misery is preferable to real unhappiness; and

that a marriage, contracted in haste, and repented at leisure, is the

cause of more substantial wretchedness than she ever anticipated.

On cool reflection, Cornelius Brook Dingwall, Esq., M.P., was reluctantly

compelled to admit that the untoward result of his admirable arrangements

was attributable, not to the Miss Crumptons, but his own diplomacy. He,

however, consoles himself, like some other small diplomatists, by

satisfactorily proving that if his plans did not succeed, they ought to

have done so. Minerva House is \_in status quo\_, and âThe Misses

Crumptonâ remain in the peaceable and undisturbed enjoyment of all the

advantages resulting from their Finishing-School.

CHAPTER IVâTHE TUGGSES AT RAMSGATE

Once upon a time there dwelt, in a narrow street on the Surrey side of

the water, within three minutesâ walk of old London Bridge, Mr. Joseph

Tuggsâa little dark-faced man, with shiny hair, twinkling eyes, short

legs, and a body of very considerable thickness, measuring from the

centre button of his waistcoat in front, to the ornamental buttons of his

coat behind. The figure of the amiable Mrs. Tuggs, if not perfectly

symmetrical, was decidedly comfortable; and the form of her only

daughter, the accomplished Miss Charlotte Tuggs, was fast ripening into

that state of luxuriant plumpness which had enchanted the eyes, and

captivated the heart, of Mr. Joseph Tuggs in his earlier days. Mr. Simon

Tuggs, his only son, and Miss Charlotte Tuggsâs only brother, was as

differently formed in body, as he was differently constituted in mind,

from the remainder of his family. There was that elongation in his

thoughtful face, and that tendency to weakness in his interesting legs,

which tell so forcibly of a great mind and romantic disposition. The

slightest traits of character in such a being, possess no mean interest

to speculative minds. He usually appeared in public, in capacious shoes

with black cotton stockings; and was observed to be particularly attached

to a black glazed stock, without tie or ornament of any description.

There is perhaps no profession, however useful; no pursuit, however

meritorious; which can escape the petty attacks of vulgar minds. Mr.

Joseph Tuggs was a grocer. It might be supposed that a grocer was beyond

the breath of calumny; but noâthe neighbours stigmatised him as a

chandler; and the poisonous voice of envy distinctly asserted that he

dispensed tea and coffee by the quartern, retailed sugar by the ounce,

cheese by the slice, tobacco by the screw, and butter by the pat. These

taunts, however, were lost upon the Tuggses. Mr. Tuggs attended to the

grocery department; Mrs. Tuggs to the cheesemongery; and Miss Tuggs to

her education. Mr. Simon Tuggs kept his fatherâs books, and his own

counsel.

One fine spring afternoon, the latter gentleman was seated on a tub of

weekly Dorset, behind the little red desk with a wooden rail, which

ornamented a corner of the counter; when a stranger dismounted from a

cab, and hastily entered the shop. He was habited in black cloth, and

bore with him, a green umbrella, and a blue bag.

âMr. Tuggs?â said the stranger, inquiringly.

â\_My\_ name is Tuggs,â replied Mr. Simon.

âItâs the other Mr. Tuggs,â said the stranger, looking towards the glass

door which led into the parlour behind the shop, and on the inside of

which, the round face of Mr. Tuggs, senior, was distinctly visible,

peeping over the curtain.

Mr. Simon gracefully waved his pen, as if in intimation of his wish that

his father would advance. Mr. Joseph Tuggs, with considerable celerity,

removed his face from the curtain and placed it before the stranger.

âI come from the Temple,â said the man with the bag.

âFrom the Temple!â said Mrs. Tuggs, flinging open the door of the little

parlour and disclosing Miss Tuggs in perspective.

âFrom the Temple!â said Miss Tuggs and Mr. Simon Tuggs at the same

moment.

âFrom the Temple!â said Mr. Joseph Tuggs, turning as pale as a Dutch

cheese.

âFrom the Temple,â repeated the man with the bag; âfrom Mr. Cowerâs, the

solicitorâs. Mr. Tuggs, I congratulate you, sir. Ladies, I wish you joy

of your prosperity! We have been successful.â And the man with the bag

leisurely divested himself of his umbrella and glove, as a preliminary to

shaking hands with Mr. Joseph Tuggs.

Now the words âwe have been successful,â had no sooner issued from the

mouth of the man with the bag, than Mr. Simon Tuggs rose from the tub of

weekly Dorset, opened his eyes very wide, gasped for breath, made figures

of eight in the air with his pen, and finally fell into the arms of his

anxious mother, and fainted away without the slightest ostensible cause

or pretence.

âWater!â screamed Mrs. Tuggs.

âLook up, my son,â exclaimed Mr. Tuggs.

âSimon! dear Simon!â shrieked Miss Tuggs.

âIâm better now,â said Mr. Simon Tuggs. âWhat! successful!â And then,

as corroborative evidence of his being better, he fainted away again, and

was borne into the little parlour by the united efforts of the remainder

of the family, and the man with the bag.

To a casual spectator, or to any one unacquainted with the position of

the family, this fainting would have been unaccountable. To those who

understood the mission of the man with the bag, and were moreover

acquainted with the excitability of the nerves of Mr. Simon Tuggs, it was

quite comprehensible. A long-pending lawsuit respecting the validity of

a will, had been unexpectedly decided; and Mr. Joseph Tuggs was the

possessor of twenty thousand pounds.

A prolonged consultation took place, that night, in the little parlourâa

consultation that was to settle the future destinies of the Tuggses. The

shop was shut up, at an unusually early hour; and many were the

unavailing kicks bestowed upon the closed door by applicants for

quarterns of sugar, or half-quarterns of bread, or pennâorths of pepper,

which were to have been âleft till Saturday,â but which fortune had

decreed were to be left alone altogether.

âWe must certainly give up business,â said Miss Tuggs.

âOh, decidedly,â said Mrs. Tuggs.

âSimon shall go to the bar,â said Mr. Joseph Tuggs.

âAnd I shall always sign myself âCymonâ in future,â said his son.

âAnd I shall call myself Charlotta,â said Miss Tuggs.

âAnd you must always call \_me\_ âMa,â and father âPa,ââ said Mrs. Tuggs.

âYes, and Pa must leave off all his vulgar habits,â interposed Miss

Tuggs.

âIâll take care of all that,â responded Mr. Joseph Tuggs, complacently.

He was, at that very moment, eating pickled salmon with a pocket-knife.

âWe must leave town immediately,â said Mr. Cymon Tuggs.

Everybody concurred that this was an indispensable preliminary to being

genteel. The question then arose, Where should they go?

âGravesend?â mildly suggested Mr. Joseph Tuggs. The idea was unanimously

scouted. Gravesend was \_low\_.

âMargate?â insinuated Mrs. Tuggs. Worse and worseânobody there, but

tradespeople.

âBrighton?â Mr. Cymon Tuggs opposed an insurmountable objection. All

the coaches had been upset, in turn, within the last three weeks; each

coach had averaged two passengers killed, and six wounded; and, in every

case, the newspapers had distinctly understood that âno blame whatever

was attributable to the coachman.â

âRamsgate?â ejaculated Mr. Cymon, thoughtfully. To be sure; how stupid

they must have been, not to have thought of that before! Ramsgate was

just the place of all others.

Two months after this conversation, the City of London Ramsgate steamer

was running gaily down the river. Her flag was flying, her band was

playing, her passengers were conversing; everything about her seemed gay

and lively.âNo wonderâthe Tuggses were on board.

âCharming, ainât it?â said Mr. Joseph Tuggs, in a bottle-green

great-coat, with a velvet collar of the same, and a blue travelling-cap

with a gold band.

âSoul-inspiring,â replied Mr. Cymon Tuggsâhe was entered at the bar.

âSoul-inspiring!â

âDelightful morning, sir!â said a stoutish, military-looking gentleman in

a blue surtout buttoned up to his chin, and white trousers chained down

to the soles of his boots.

Mr. Cymon Tuggs took upon himself the responsibility of answering the

observation. âHeavenly!â he replied.

âYou are an enthusiastic admirer of the beauties of Nature, sir?â said

the military gentleman.

âI am, sir,â replied Mr. Cymon Tuggs.

âTravelled much, sir?â inquired the military gentleman.

âNot much,â replied Mr. Cymon Tuggs.

âYouâve been on the continent, of course?â inquired the military

gentleman.

âNot exactly,â replied Mr. Cymon Tuggsâin a qualified tone, as if he

wished it to be implied that he had gone half-way and come back again.

âYou of course intend your son to make the grand tour, sir?â said the

military gentleman, addressing Mr. Joseph Tuggs.

As Mr. Joseph Tuggs did not precisely understand what the grand tour was,

or how such an article was manufactured, he replied, âOf course.â Just

as he said the word, there came tripping up, from her seat at the stern

of the vessel, a young lady in a puce-coloured silk cloak, and boots of

the same; with long black ringlets, large black eyes, brief petticoats,

and unexceptionable ankles.

âWalter, my dear,â said the young lady to the military gentleman.

âYes, Belinda, my love,â responded the military gentleman to the

black-eyed young lady.

âWhat have you left me alone so long for?â said the young lady. âI have

been stared out of countenance by those rude young men.â

âWhat! stared at?â exclaimed the military gentleman, with an emphasis

which made Mr. Cymon Tuggs withdraw his eyes from the young ladyâs face

with inconceivable rapidity. âWhich young menâwhere?â and the military

gentleman clenched his fist, and glared fearfully on the cigar-smokers

around.

âBe calm, Walter, I entreat,â said the young lady.

âI wonât,â said the military gentleman.

âDo, sir,â interposed Mr. Cymon Tuggs. âThey ainât worth your notice.â

âNoânoâthey are not, indeed,â urged the young lady.

âI \_will\_ be calm,â said the military gentleman. âYou speak truly, sir.

I thank you for a timely remonstrance, which may have spared me the guilt

of manslaughter.â Calming his wrath, the military gentleman wrung Mr.

Cymon Tuggs by the hand.

âMy sister, sir!â said Mr. Cymon Tuggs; seeing that the military

gentleman was casting an admiring look towards Miss Charlotta.

âMy wife, maâamâMrs. Captain Waters,â said the military gentleman,

presenting the black-eyed young lady.

âMy mother, maâamâMrs. Tuggs,â said Mr. Cymon. The military gentleman

and his wife murmured enchanting courtesies; and the Tuggses looked as

unembarrassed as they could.

âWalter, my dear,â said the black-eyed young lady, after they had sat

chatting with the Tuggses some half-hour.

âYes, my love,â said the military gentleman.

âDonât you think this gentleman (with an inclination of the head towards

Mr. Cymon Tuggs) is very much like the Marquis Carriwini?â

âLord bless me, very!â said the military gentleman.

âIt struck me, the moment I saw him,â said the young lady, gazing

intently, and with a melancholy air, on the scarlet countenance of Mr.

Cymon Tuggs. Mr. Cymon Tuggs looked at everybody; and finding that

everybody was looking at him, appeared to feel some temporary difficulty

in disposing of his eyesight.

âSo exactly the air of the marquis,â said the military gentleman.

âQuite extraordinary!â sighed the military gentlemanâs lady.

âYou donât know the marquis, sir?â inquired the military gentleman.

Mr. Cymon Tuggs stammered a negative.

âIf you did,â continued Captain Walter Waters, âyou would feel how much

reason you have to be proud of the resemblanceâa most elegant man, with a

most prepossessing appearance.â

âHe isâhe is indeed!â exclaimed Belinda Waters energetically. As her eye

caught that of Mr. Cymon Tuggs, she withdrew it from his features in

bashful confusion.

All this was highly gratifying to the feelings of the Tuggses; and when,

in the course of farther conversation, it was discovered that Miss

Charlotta Tuggs was the \_fac simile\_ of a titled relative of Mrs. Belinda

Waters, and that Mrs. Tuggs herself was the very picture of the Dowager

Duchess of Dobbleton, their delight in the acquisition of so genteel and

friendly an acquaintance, knew no bounds. Even the dignity of Captain

Walter Waters relaxed, to that degree, that he suffered himself to be

prevailed upon by Mr. Joseph Tuggs, to partake of cold pigeon-pie and

sherry, on deck; and a most delightful conversation, aided by these

agreeable stimulants, was prolonged, until they ran alongside Ramsgate

Pier.

âGood-bye, dear!â said Mrs. Captain Waters to Miss Charlotta Tuggs, just

before the bustle of landing commenced; âwe shall see you on the sands in

the morning; and, as we are sure to have found lodgings before then, I

hope we shall be inseparables for many weeks to come.â

âOh! I hope so,â said Miss Charlotta Tuggs, emphatically.

âTickets, ladies and genâlmân,â said the man on the paddle-box.

âWant a porter, sir?â inquired a dozen men in smock-frocks.

âNow, my dear!â said Captain Waters.

âGood-bye!â said Mrs. Captain Watersââgood-bye, Mr. Cymon!â and with a

pressure of the hand which threw the amiable young manâs nerves into a

state of considerable derangement, Mrs. Captain Waters disappeared among

the crowd. A pair of puce-coloured boots were seen ascending the steps,

a white handkerchief fluttered, a black eye gleamed. The Waterses were

gone, and Mr. Cymon Tuggs was alone in a heartless world.

Silently and abstractedly, did that too sensitive youth follow his

revered parents, and a train of smock-frocks and wheelbarrows, along the

pier, until the bustle of the scene around, recalled him to himself. The

sun was shining brightly; the sea, dancing to its own music, rolled

merrily in; crowds of people promenaded to and fro; young ladies

tittered; old ladies talked; nursemaids displayed their charms to the

greatest possible advantage; and their little charges ran up and down,

and to and fro, and in and out, under the feet, and between the legs, of

the assembled concourse, in the most playful and exhilarating manner.

There were old gentlemen, trying to make out objects through long

telescopes; and young ones, making objects of themselves in open

shirt-collars; ladies, carrying about portable chairs, and portable

chairs carrying about invalids; parties, waiting on the pier for parties

who had come by the steam-boat; and nothing was to be heard but talking,

laughing, welcoming, and merriment.

âFly, sir?â exclaimed a chorus of fourteen men and six boys, the moment

Mr. Joseph Tuggs, at the head of his little party, set foot in the

street.

âHereâs the genâlmân at last!â said one, touching his hat with mock

politeness. âWerry glad to see you, sir,âbeen a-waitinâ for you these

six weeks. Jump in, if you please, sir!â

âNice light fly and a fast trotter, sir,â said another: âfourteen mile a

hour, and surroundinâ objects rendered inwisible by ex-treme welocity!â

âLarge fly for your luggage, sir,â cried a third. âWerry large fly here,

sirâregâlar bluebottle!â

âHereâs \_your\_ fly, sir!â shouted another aspiring charioteer, mounting

the box, and inducing an old grey horse to indulge in some imperfect

reminiscences of a canter. âLook at him, sir!âtemper of a lamb and

haction of a steam-ingein!â

Resisting even the temptation of securing the services of so valuable a

quadruped as the last named, Mr. Joseph Tuggs beckoned to the proprietor

of a dingy conveyance of a greenish hue, lined with faded striped calico;

and, the luggage and the family having been deposited therein, the animal

in the shafts, after describing circles in the road for a quarter of an

hour, at last consented to depart in quest of lodgings.

âHow many beds have you got?â screamed Mrs. Tuggs out of the fly, to the

woman who opened the door of the first house which displayed a bill

intimating that apartments were to be let within.

âHow many did you want, maâam?â was, of course, the reply.

âThree.â

âWill you step in, maâam?â Down got Mrs. Tuggs. The family were

delighted. Splendid view of the sea from the front windowsâcharming! A

short pause. Back came Mrs. Tuggs again.âOne parlour and a mattress.

âWhy the devil didnât they say so at first?â inquired Mr. Joseph Tuggs,

rather pettishly.

âDonât know,â said Mrs. Tuggs.

âWretches!â exclaimed the nervous Cymon. Another billâanother stoppage.

Same questionâsame answerâsimilar result.

âWhat do they mean by this?â inquired Mr. Joseph Tuggs, thoroughly out of

temper.

âDonât know,â said the placid Mrs. Tuggs.

âOrvis the vay here, sir,â said the driver, by way of accounting for the

circumstance in a satisfactory manner; and off they went again, to make

fresh inquiries, and encounter fresh disappointments.

It had grown dusk when the âflyââthe rate of whose progress greatly

belied its nameâafter climbing up four or five perpendicular hills,

stopped before the door of a dusty house, with a bay window, from which

you could obtain a beautiful glimpse of the seaâif you thrust half of

your body out of it, at the imminent peril of falling into the area.

Mrs. Tuggs alighted. One ground-floor sitting-room, and three cells with

beds in them up-stairs. A double-house. Family on the opposite side.

Five children milk-and-watering in the parlour, and one little boy,

expelled for bad behaviour, screaming on his back in the passage.

âWhatâs the terms?â said Mrs. Tuggs. The mistress of the house was

considering the expediency of putting on an extra guinea; so, she coughed

slightly, and affected not to hear the question.

âWhatâs the terms?â said Mrs. Tuggs, in a louder key.

âFive guineas a week, maâam, \_with\_ attendance,â replied the

lodging-house keeper. (Attendance means the privilege of ringing the

bell as often as you like, for your own amusement.)

âRather dear,â said Mrs. Tuggs. âOh dear, no, maâam!â replied the

mistress of the house, with a benign smile of pity at the ignorance of

manners and customs, which the observation betrayed. âVery cheap!â

Such an authority was indisputable. Mrs. Tuggs paid a weekâs rent in

advance, and took the lodgings for a month. In an hourâs time, the

family were seated at tea in their new abode.

âCapital srimps!â said Mr. Joseph Tuggs.

Mr. Cymon eyed his father with a rebellious scowl, as he emphatically

said â\_Shrimps\_.â

âWell, then, shrimps,â said Mr. Joseph Tuggs. âSrimps or shrimps, donât

much matter.â

There was pity, blended with malignity, in Mr. Cymonâs eye, as he

replied, âDonât matter, father! What would Captain Waters say, if he

heard such vulgarity?â

âOr what would dear Mrs. Captain Waters say,â added Charlotta, âif she

saw motherâma, I meanâeating them whole, heads and all!â

âIt wonât bear thinking of!â ejaculated Mr. Cymon, with a shudder. âHow

different,â he thought, âfrom the Dowager Duchess of Dobbleton!â

âVery pretty woman, Mrs. Captain Waters, is she not, Cymon?â inquired

Miss Charlotta.

A glow of nervous excitement passed over the countenance of Mr. Cymon

Tuggs, as he replied, âAn angel of beauty!â

âHallo!â said Mr. Joseph Tuggs. âHallo, Cymon, my boy, take care.

Married lady, you know;â and he winked one of his twinkling eyes

knowingly.

âWhy,â exclaimed Cymon, starting up with an ebullition of fury, as

unexpected as alarming, âwhy am I to be reminded of that blight of my

happiness, and ruin of my hopes? Why am I to be taunted with the

miseries which are heaped upon my head? Is it not enough toâtoâtoââ and

the orator paused; but whether for want of words, or lack of breath, was

never distinctly ascertained.

There was an impressive solemnity in the tone of this address, and in the

air with which the romantic Cymon, at its conclusion, rang the bell, and

demanded a flat candlestick, which effectually forbade a reply. He

stalked dramatically to bed, and the Tuggses went to bed too, half an

hour afterwards, in a state of considerable mystification and perplexity.

If the pier had presented a scene of life and bustle to the Tuggses on

their first landing at Ramsgate, it was far surpassed by the appearance

of the sands on the morning after their arrival. It was a fine, bright,

clear day, with a light breeze from the sea. There were the same ladies

and gentlemen, the same children, the same nursemaids, the same

telescopes, the same portable chairs. The ladies were employed in

needlework, or watch-guard making, or knitting, or reading novels; the

gentlemen were reading newspapers and magazines; the children were

digging holes in the sand with wooden spades, and collecting water

therein; the nursemaids, with their youngest charges in their arms, were

running in after the waves, and then running back with the waves after

them; and, now and then, a little sailing-boat either departed with a gay

and talkative cargo of passengers, or returned with a very silent and

particularly uncomfortable-looking one.

âWell, I never!â exclaimed Mrs. Tuggs, as she and Mr. Joseph Tuggs, and

Miss Charlotta Tuggs, and Mr. Cymon Tuggs, with their eight feet in a

corresponding number of yellow shoes, seated themselves on four

rush-bottomed chairs, which, being placed in a soft part of the sand,

forthwith sunk down some two feet and a halfââWell, I never!â

Mr. Cymon, by an exertion of great personal strength, uprooted the

chairs, and removed them further back.

âWhy, Iâm blessed if there ainât some ladies a-going in!â exclaimed Mr.

Joseph Tuggs, with intense astonishment.

âLor, pa!â exclaimed Miss Charlotta.

âThere \_is\_, my dear,â said Mr. Joseph Tuggs. And, sure enough, four

young ladies, each furnished with a towel, tripped up the steps of a

bathing-machine. In went the horse, floundering about in the water;

round turned the machine; down sat the driver; and presently out burst

the young ladies aforesaid, with four distinct splashes.

âWell, thatâs singâler, too!â ejaculated Mr. Joseph Tuggs, after an

awkward pause. Mr. Cymon coughed slightly.

âWhy, hereâs some gentlemen a-going in on this side!â exclaimed Mrs.

Tuggs, in a tone of horror.

Three machinesâthree horsesâthree flounderingsâthree turnings roundâthree

splashesâthree gentlemen, disporting themselves in the water like so many

dolphins.

âWell, \_thatâs\_ singâler!â said Mr. Joseph Tuggs again. Miss Charlotta

coughed this time, and another pause ensued. It was agreeably broken.

âHow dâye do, dear? We have been looking for you, all the morning,â said

a voice to Miss Charlotta Tuggs. Mrs. Captain Waters was the owner of

it.

âHow dâye do?â said Captain Walter Waters, all suavity; and a most

cordial interchange of greetings ensued.

âBelinda, my love,â said Captain Walter Waters, applying his glass to his

eye, and looking in the direction of the sea.

âYes, my dear,â replied Mrs. Captain Waters.

âThereâs Harry Thompson!â

âWhere?â said Belinda, applying her glass to her eye.

âBathing.â

âLor, so it is! He donât see us, does he?â

âNo, I donât think he doesâ replied the captain. âBless my soul, how

very singular!â

âWhat?â inquired Belinda.

âThereâs Mary Golding, too.â

âLor!âwhere?â (Up went the glass again.)

âThere!â said the captain, pointing to one of the young ladies before

noticed, who, in her bathing costume, looked as if she was enveloped in a

patent Mackintosh, of scanty dimensions.

âSo it is, I declare!â exclaimed Mrs. Captain Waters. âHow very curious

we should see them both!â

âVery,â said the captain, with perfect coolness.

âItâs the regâlar thing here, you see,â whispered Mr. Cymon Tuggs to his

father.

âI see it is,â whispered Mr. Joseph Tuggs in reply. âQueer, thoughâainât

it?â Mr. Cymon Tuggs nodded assent.

âWhat do you think of doing with yourself this morning?â inquired the

captain. âShall we lunch at Pegwell?â

âI should like that very much indeed,â interposed Mrs. Tuggs. She had

never heard of Pegwell; but the word âlunchâ had reached her ears, and it

sounded very agreeably.

âHow shall we go?â inquired the captain; âitâs too warm to walk.â

âA shay?â suggested Mr. Joseph Tuggs.

âChaise,â whispered Mr. Cymon.

âI should think one would be enough,â said Mr. Joseph Tuggs aloud, quite

unconscious of the meaning of the correction. âHowever, two shays if you

like.â

âI should like a donkey \_so\_ much,â said Belinda.

âOh, so should I!â echoed Charlotta Tuggs.

âWell, we can have a fly,â suggested the captain, âand you can have a

couple of donkeys.â

A fresh difficulty arose. Mrs. Captain Waters declared it would be

decidedly improper for two ladies to ride alone. The remedy was obvious.

Perhaps young Mr. Tuggs would be gallant enough to accompany them.

Mr. Cymon Tuggs blushed, smiled, looked vacant, and faintly protested

that he was no horseman. The objection was at once overruled. A fly was

speedily found; and three donkeysâwhich the proprietor declared on his

solemn asseveration to be âthree parts blood, and the other cornââwere

engaged in the service.

âKim up!â shouted one of the two boys who followed behind, to propel the

donkeys, when Belinda Waters and Charlotta Tuggs had been hoisted, and

pushed, and pulled, into their respective saddles.

âHiâhiâhi!â groaned the other boy behind Mr. Cymon Tuggs. Away went the

donkey, with the stirrups jingling against the heels of Cymonâs boots,

and Cymonâs boots nearly scraping the ground.

âWayâway! Woâoâoâ!â cried Mr. Cymon Tuggs as well as he could, in the

midst of the jolting.

âDonât make it gallop!â screamed Mrs. Captain Waters, behind.

âMy donkey \_will\_ go into the public-house!â shrieked Miss Tuggs in the

rear.

âHiâhiâhi!â groaned both the boys together; and on went the donkeys as if

nothing would ever stop them.

Everything has an end, however; even the galloping of donkeys will cease

in time. The animal which Mr. Cymon Tuggs bestrode, feeling sundry

uncomfortable tugs at the bit, the intent of which he could by no means

divine, abruptly sidled against a brick wall, and expressed his

uneasiness by grinding Mr. Cymon Tuggsâs leg on the rough surface. Mrs.

Captain Watersâs donkey, apparently under the influence of some

playfulness of spirit, rushed suddenly, head first, into a hedge, and

declined to come out again: and the quadruped on which Miss Tuggs was

mounted, expressed his delight at this humorous proceeding by firmly

planting his fore-feet against the ground, and kicking up his hind-legs

in a very agile, but somewhat alarming manner.

This abrupt termination to the rapidity of the ride, naturally occasioned

some confusion. Both the ladies indulged in vehement screaming for

several minutes; and Mr. Cymon Tuggs, besides sustaining intense bodily

pain, had the additional mental anguish of witnessing their distressing

situation, without having the power to rescue them, by reason of his leg

being firmly screwed in between the animal and the wall. The efforts of

the boys, however, assisted by the ingenious expedient of twisting the

tail of the most rebellious donkey, restored order in a much shorter time

than could have reasonably been expected, and the little party jogged

slowly on together.

âNow let âem walk,â said Mr. Cymon Tuggs. âItâs cruel to overdrive âem.â

âWerry well, sir,â replied the boy, with a grin at his companion, as if

he understood Mr. Cymon to mean that the cruelty applied less to the

animals than to their riders.

âWhat a lovely day, dear!â said Charlotta.

âCharming; enchanting, dear!â responded Mrs. Captain Waters.

âWhat a beautiful prospect, Mr. Tuggs!â

Cymon looked full in Belindaâs face, as he respondedââBeautiful, indeed!â

The lady cast down her eyes, and suffered the animal she was riding to

fall a little back. Cymon Tuggs instinctively did the same.

There was a brief silence, broken only by a sigh from Mr. Cymon Tuggs.

âMr. Cymon,â said the lady suddenly, in a low tone, âMr. CymonâI am

anotherâs.â

Mr. Cymon expressed his perfect concurrence in a statement which it was

impossible to controvert.

âIf I had not beenââ resumed Belinda; and there she stopped.

âWhatâwhat?â said Mr. Cymon earnestly. âDo not torture me. What would

you say?â

âIf I had not beenââcontinued Mrs. Captain Watersââif, in earlier life,

it had been my fate to have known, and been beloved by, a noble youthâa

kindred soulâa congenial spiritâone capable of feeling and appreciating

the sentiments whichââ

âHeavens! what do I hear?â exclaimed Mr. Cymon Tuggs. âIs it possible!

can I believe myâCome up!â (This last unsentimental parenthesis was

addressed to the donkey, who, with his head between his fore-legs,

appeared to be examining the state of his shoes with great anxiety.)

âHiâhiâhi,â said the boys behind. âCome up,â expostulated Cymon Tuggs

again. âHiâhiâhi,â repeated the boys. And whether it was that the

animal felt indignant at the tone of Mr. Tuggsâs command, or felt alarmed

by the noise of the deputy proprietorâs boots running behind him; or

whether he burned with a noble emulation to outstrip the other donkeys;

certain it is that he no sooner heard the second series of âhiâhiâs,â

than he started away, with a celerity of pace which jerked Mr. Cymonâs

hat off, instantaneously, and carried him to the Pegwell Bay hotel in no

time, where he deposited his rider without giving him the trouble of

dismounting, by sagaciously pitching him over his head, into the very

doorway of the tavern.

Great was the confusion of Mr. Cymon Tuggs, when he was put right end

uppermost, by two waiters; considerable was the alarm of Mrs. Tuggs in

behalf of her son; agonizing were the apprehensions of Mrs. Captain

Waters on his account. It was speedily discovered, however, that he had

not sustained much more injury than the donkeyâhe was grazed, and the

animal was grazingâand then it \_was\_ a delightful party to be sure! Mr.

and Mrs. Tuggs, and the captain, had ordered lunch in the little garden

behind:âsmall saucers of large shrimps, dabs of butter, crusty loaves,

and bottled ale. The sky was without a cloud; there were flower-pots and

turf before them; the sea, from the foot of the cliff, stretching away as

far as the eye could discern anything at all; vessels in the distance

with sails as white, and as small, as nicely-got-up cambric

handkerchiefs. The shrimps were delightful, the ale better, and the

captain even more pleasant than either. Mrs. Captain Waters was in

\_such\_ spirits after lunch!âchasing, first the captain across the turf,

and among the flower-pots; and then Mr. Cymon Tuggs; and then Miss Tuggs;

and laughing, too, quite boisterously. But as the captain said, it

didnât matter; who knew what they were, there? For all the people of the

house knew, they might be common people. To which Mr. Joseph Tuggs

responded, âTo be sure.â And then they went down the steep wooden steps

a little further on, which led to the bottom of the cliff; and looked at

the crabs, and the seaweed, and the eels, till it was more than fully

time to go back to Ramsgate again. Finally, Mr. Cymon Tuggs ascended the

steps last, and Mrs. Captain Waters last but one; and Mr. Cymon Tuggs

discovered that the foot and ankle of Mrs. Captain Waters, were even more

unexceptionable than he had at first supposed.

Taking a donkey towards his ordinary place of residence, is a very

different thing, and a feat much more easily to be accomplished, than

taking him from it. It requires a great deal of foresight and presence

of mind in the one case, to anticipate the numerous flights of his

discursive imagination; whereas, in the other, all you have to do, is, to

hold on, and place a blind confidence in the animal. Mr. Cymon Tuggs

adopted the latter expedient on his return; and his nerves were so little

discomposed by the journey, that he distinctly understood they were all

to meet again at the library in the evening.

The library was crowded. There were the same ladies, and the same

gentlemen, who had been on the sands in the morning, and on the pier the

day before. There were young ladies, in maroon-coloured gowns and black

velvet bracelets, dispensing fancy articles in the shop, and presiding

over games of chance in the concert-room. There were marriageable

daughters, and marriage-making mammas, gaming and promenading, and

turning over music, and flirting. There were some male beaux doing the

sentimental in whispers, and others doing the ferocious in moustache.

There were Mrs. Tuggs in amber, Miss Tuggs in sky-blue, Mrs. Captain

Waters in pink. There was Captain Waters in a braided surtout; there was

Mr. Cymon Tuggs in pumps and a gilt waistcoat; there was Mr. Joseph Tuggs

in a blue coat and a shirt-frill.

âNumbers three, eight, and eleven!â cried one of the young ladies in the

maroon-coloured gowns.

âNumbers three, eight, and eleven!â echoed another young lady in the same

uniform.

âNumber threeâs gone,â said the first young lady. âNumbers eight and

eleven!â

âNumbers eight and eleven!â echoed the second young lady.

âNumber eightâs gone, Mary Ann,â said the first young lady.

âNumber eleven!â screamed the second.

âThe numbers are all taken now, ladies, if you please,â said the first.

The representatives of numbers three, eight, and eleven, and the rest of

the numbers, crowded round the table.

âWill you throw, maâam?â said the presiding goddess, handing the dice-box

to the eldest daughter of a stout lady, with four girls.

There was a profound silence among the lookers-on.

âThrow, Jane, my dear,â said the stout lady. An interesting display of

bashfulnessâa little blushing in a cambric handkerchiefâa whispering to a

younger sister.

âAmelia, my dear, throw for your sister,â said the stout lady; and then

she turned to a walking advertisement of Rowlandsâ Macassar Oil, who

stood next her, and said, âJane is so \_very\_ modest and retiring; but I

canât be angry with her for it. An artless and unsophisticated girl is

\_so\_ truly amiable, that I often wish Amelia was more like her sister!â

The gentleman with the whiskers whispered his admiring approval.

âNow, my dear!â said the stout lady. Miss Amelia threwâeight for her

sister, ten for herself.

âNice figure, Amelia,â whispered the stout lady to a thin youth beside

her.

âBeautiful!â

âAnd \_such\_ a spirit! I am like you in that respect. I can \_not\_ help

admiring that life and vivacity. Ah! (a sigh) I wish I could make poor

Jane a little more like my dear Amelia!â

The young gentleman cordially acquiesced in the sentiment; both he, and

the individual first addressed, were perfectly contented.

âWhoâs this?â inquired Mr. Cymon Tuggs of Mrs. Captain Waters, as a short

female, in a blue velvet hat and feathers, was led into the orchestra, by

a fat man in black tights and cloudy Berlins.

âMrs. Tippin, of the London theatres,â replied Belinda, referring to the

programme of the concert.

The talented Tippin having condescendingly acknowledged the clapping of

hands, and shouts of âbravo!â which greeted her appearance, proceeded to

sing the popular cavatina of âBid me discourse,â accompanied on the piano

by Mr. Tippin; after which, Mr. Tippin sang a comic song, accompanied on

the piano by Mrs. Tippin: the applause consequent upon which, was only to

be exceeded by the enthusiastic approbation bestowed upon an air with

variations on the guitar, by Miss Tippin, accompanied on the chin by

Master Tippin.

Thus passed the evening; thus passed the days and evenings of the

Tuggses, and the Waterses, for six weeks. Sands in the morningâdonkeys

at noonâpier in the afternoonâlibrary at nightâand the same people

everywhere.

On that very night six weeks, the moon was shining brightly over the calm

sea, which dashed against the feet of the tall gaunt cliffs, with just

enough noise to lull the old fish to sleep, without disturbing the young

ones, when two figures were discernibleâor would have been, if anybody

had looked for themâseated on one of the wooden benches which are

stationed near the verge of the western cliff. The moon had climbed

higher into the heavens, by two hoursâ journeying, since those figures

first sat downâand yet they had moved not. The crowd of loungers had

thinned and dispersed; the noise of itinerant musicians had died away;

light after light had appeared in the windows of the different houses in

the distance; blockade-man after blockade-man had passed the spot,

wending his way towards his solitary post; and yet those figures had

remained stationary. Some portions of the two forms were in deep shadow,

but the light of the moon fell strongly on a puce-coloured boot and a

glazed stock. Mr. Cymon Tuggs and Mrs. Captain Waters were seated on

that bench. They spoke not, but were silently gazing on the sea.

âWalter will return to-morrow,â said Mrs. Captain Waters, mournfully

breaking silence.

Mr. Cymon Tuggs sighed like a gust of wind through a forest of gooseberry

bushes, as he replied, âAlas! he will.â

âOh, Cymon!â resumed Belinda, âthe chaste delight, the calm happiness, of

this one week of Platonic love, is too much for me!â Cymon was about to

suggest that it was too little for him, but he stopped himself, and

murmured unintelligibly.

âAnd to think that even this gleam of happiness, innocent as it is,â

exclaimed Belinda, âis now to be lost for ever!â

âOh, do not say for ever, Belinda,â exclaimed the excitable Cymon, as two

strongly-defined tears chased each other down his pale faceâit was so

long that there was plenty of room for a chase. âDo not say for ever!â

âI must,â replied Belinda.

âWhy?â urged Cymon, âoh why? Such Platonic acquaintance as ours is so

harmless, that even your husband can never object to it.â

âMy husband!â exclaimed Belinda. âYou little know him. Jealous and

revengeful; ferocious in his revengeâa maniac in his jealousy! Would you

be assassinated before my eyes?â Mr. Cymon Tuggs, in a voice broken by

emotion, expressed his disinclination to undergo the process of

assassination before the eyes of anybody.

âThen leave me,â said Mrs. Captain Waters. âLeave me, this night, for

ever. It is late: let us return.â

Mr. Cymon Tuggs sadly offered the lady his arm, and escorted her to her

lodgings. He paused at the doorâhe felt a Platonic pressure of his hand.

âGood night,â he said, hesitating.

âGood night,â sobbed the lady. Mr. Cymon Tuggs paused again.

âWonât you walk in, sir?â said the servant. Mr. Tuggs hesitated. Oh,

that hesitation! He \_did\_ walk in.

âGood night!â said Mr. Cymon Tuggs again, when he reached the

drawing-room.

âGood night!â replied Belinda; âand, if at any period of my life,

IâHush!â The lady paused and stared with a steady gaze of horror, on the

ashy countenance of Mr. Cymon Tuggs. There was a double knock at the

street-door.

âIt is my husband!â said Belinda, as the captainâs voice was heard below.

âAnd my family!â added Cymon Tuggs, as the voices of his relatives

floated up the staircase.

âThe curtain! The curtain!â gasped Mrs. Captain Waters, pointing to the

window, before which some chintz hangings were closely drawn.

âBut I have done nothing wrong,â said the hesitating Cymon.

âThe curtain!â reiterated the frantic lady: âyou will be murdered.â This

last appeal to his feelings was irresistible. The dismayed Cymon

concealed himself behind the curtain with pantomimic suddenness.

Enter the captain, Joseph Tuggs, Mrs. Tuggs, and Charlotta.

âMy dear,â said the captain, âLieutenant, Slaughter.â Two iron-shod

boots and one gruff voice were heard by Mr. Cymon to advance, and

acknowledge the honour of the introduction. The sabre of the lieutenant

rattled heavily upon the floor, as he seated himself at the table. Mr.

Cymonâs fears almost overcame his reason.

âThe brandy, my dear!â said the captain. Here was a situation! They

were going to make a night of it! And Mr. Cymon Tuggs was pent up behind

the curtain and afraid to breathe!

âSlaughter,â said the captain, âa cigar?â

Now, Mr. Cymon Tuggs never could smoke without feeling it indispensably

necessary to retire, immediately, and never could smell smoke without a

strong disposition to cough. The cigars were introduced; the captain was

a professed smoker; so was the lieutenant; so was Joseph Tuggs. The

apartment was small, the door was closed, the smoke powerful: it hung in

heavy wreaths over the room, and at length found its way behind the

curtain. Cymon Tuggs held his nose, his mouth, his breath. It was all

of no useâout came the cough.

âBless my soul!â said the captain, âI beg your pardon, Miss Tuggs. You

dislike smoking?â

âOh, no; I donât indeed,â said Charlotta.

âIt makes you cough.â

âOh dear no.â

âYou coughed just now.â

âMe, Captain Waters! Lor! how can you say so?â

âSomebody coughed,â said the captain.

âI certainly thought so,â said Slaughter. No; everybody denied it.

âFancy,â said the captain.

âMust be,â echoed Slaughter.

Cigars resumedâmore smokeâanother coughâsmothered, but violent.

âDamned odd!â said the captain, staring about him.

âSingâler!â ejaculated the unconscious Mr. Joseph Tuggs.

Lieutenant Slaughter looked first at one person mysteriously, then at

another: then, laid down his cigar, then approached the window on tiptoe,

and pointed with his right thumb over his shoulder, in the direction of

the curtain.

âSlaughter!â ejaculated the captain, rising from table, âwhat do you

mean?â

The lieutenant, in reply, drew back the curtain and discovered Mr. Cymon

Tuggs behind it: pallid with apprehension, and blue with wanting to

cough.

âAha!â exclaimed the captain, furiously. âWhat do I see? Slaughter,

your sabre!â

âCymon!â screamed the Tuggses.

âMercy!â said Belinda.

âPlatonic!â gasped Cymon.

âYour sabre!â roared the captain: âSlaughterâunhand meâthe villainâs

life!â

âMurder!â screamed the Tuggses.

âHold him fast, sir!â faintly articulated Cymon.

âWater!â exclaimed Joseph Tuggsâand Mr. Cymon Tuggs and all the ladies

forthwith fainted away, and formed a tableau.

Most willingly would we conceal the disastrous termination of the six

weeksâ acquaintance. A troublesome form, and an arbitrary custom,

however, prescribe that a story should have a conclusion, in addition to

a commencement; we have therefore no alternative. Lieutenant Slaughter

brought a messageâthe captain brought an action. Mr. Joseph Tuggs

interposedâthe lieutenant negotiated. When Mr. Cymon Tuggs recovered

from the nervous disorder into which misplaced affection, and exciting

circumstances, had plunged him, he found that his family had lost their

pleasant acquaintance; that his father was minus fifteen hundred pounds;

and the captain plus the precise sum. The money was paid to hush the

matter up, but it got abroad notwithstanding; and there are not wanting

some who affirm that three designing impostors never found more easy

dupes, than did Captain Waters, Mrs. Waters, and Lieutenant Slaughter, in

the Tuggses at Ramsgate.

CHAPTER VâHORATIO SPARKINS

âIndeed, my love, he paid Teresa very great attention on the last

assembly night,â said Mrs. Malderton, addressing her spouse, who, after

the fatigues of the day in the City, was sitting with a silk handkerchief

over his head, and his feet on the fender, drinking his port;ââvery great

attention; and I say again, every possible encouragement ought to be

given him. He positively must be asked down here to dine.â

âWho must?â inquired Mr. Malderton.

âWhy, you know whom I mean, my dearâthe young man with the black whiskers

and the white cravat, who has just come out at our assembly, and whom all

the girls are talking about. Youngâdear me! whatâs his name?âMarianne,

what \_is\_ his name?â continued Mrs. Malderton, addressing her youngest

daughter, who was engaged in netting a purse, and looking sentimental.

âMr. Horatio Sparkins, ma,â replied Miss Marianne, with a sigh.

âOh! yes, to be sureâHoratio Sparkins,â said Mrs. Malderton. âDecidedly

the most gentleman-like young man I ever saw. I am sure in the

beautifully-made coat he wore the other night, he looked likeâlikeââ

âLike Prince Leopold, maâso noble, so full of sentiment!â suggested

Marianne, in a tone of enthusiastic admiration.

âYou should recollect, my dear,â resumed Mrs. Malderton, âthat Teresa is

now eight-and-twenty; and that it really is very important that something

should be done.â

Miss Teresa Malderton was a very little girl, rather fat, with vermilion

cheeks, but good-humoured, and still disengaged, although, to do her

justice, the misfortune arose from no lack of perseverance on her part.

In vain had she flirted for ten years; in vain had Mr. and Mrs. Malderton

assiduously kept up an extensive acquaintance among the young eligible

bachelors of Camberwell, and even of Wandsworth and Brixton; to say

nothing of those who âdropped inâ from town. Miss Malderton was as well

known as the lion on the top of Northumberland House, and had an equal

chance of âgoing off.â

âI am quite sure youâd like him,â continued Mrs. Malderton, âhe is so

gentlemanly!â

âSo clever!â said Miss Marianne.

âAnd has such a flow of language!â added Miss Teresa.

âHe has a great respect for you, my dear,â said Mrs. Malderton to her

husband. Mr. Malderton coughed, and looked at the fire.

âYes Iâm sure heâs very much attached to paâs society,â said Miss

Marianne.

âNo doubt of it,â echoed Miss Teresa.

âIndeed, he said as much to me in confidence,â observed Mrs. Malderton.

âWell, well,â returned Mr. Malderton, somewhat flattered; âif I see him

at the assembly to-morrow, perhaps Iâll ask him down. I hope he knows we

live at Oak Lodge, Camberwell, my dear?â

âOf courseâand that you keep a one-horse carriage.â

âIâll see about it,â said Mr. Malderton, composing himself for a nap;

âIâll see about it.â

Mr. Malderton was a man whose whole scope of ideas was limited to

Lloydâs, the Exchange, the India House, and the Bank. A few successful

speculations had raised him from a situation of obscurity and comparative

poverty, to a state of affluence. As frequently happens in such cases,

the ideas of himself and his family became elevated to an extraordinary

pitch as their means increased; they affected fashion, taste, and many

other fooleries, in imitation of their betters, and had a very decided

and becoming horror of anything which could, by possibility, be

considered low. He was hospitable from ostentation, illiberal from

ignorance, and prejudiced from conceit. Egotism and the love of display

induced him to keep an excellent table: convenience, and a love of good

things of this life, ensured him plenty of guests. He liked to have

clever men, or what he considered such, at his table, because it was a

great thing to talk about; but he never could endure what he called

âsharp fellows.â Probably, he cherished this feeling out of compliment

to his two sons, who gave their respected parent no uneasiness in that

particular. The family were ambitious of forming acquaintances and

connexions in some sphere of society superior to that in which they

themselves moved; and one of the necessary consequences of this desire,

added to their utter ignorance of the world beyond their own small

circle, was, that any one who could lay claim to an acquaintance with

people of rank and title, had a sure passport to the table at Oak Lodge,

Camberwell.

The appearance of Mr. Horatio Sparkins at the assembly, had excited no

small degree of surprise and curiosity among its regular frequenters.

Who could he be? He was evidently reserved, and apparently melancholy.

Was he a clergyman?âHe danced too well. A barrister?âHe said he was not

called. He used very fine words, and talked a great deal. Could he be a

distinguished foreigner, come to England for the purpose of describing

the country, its manners and customs; and frequenting public balls and

public dinners, with the view of becoming acquainted with high life,

polished etiquette, and English refinement?âNo, he had not a foreign

accent. Was he a surgeon, a contributor to the magazines, a writer of

fashionable novels, or an artist?âNo; to each and all of these surmises,

there existed some valid objection.ââThen,â said everybody, âhe must be

\_somebody\_.âââI should think he must be,â reasoned Mr. Malderton, within

himself, âbecause he perceives our superiority, and pays us so much

attention.â

The night succeeding the conversation we have just recorded, was

âassembly night.â The double-fly was ordered to be at the door of Oak

Lodge at nine oâclock precisely. The Miss Maldertons were dressed in

sky-blue satin trimmed with artificial flowers; and Mrs. M. (who was a

little fat woman), in ditto ditto, looked like her eldest daughter

multiplied by two. Mr. Frederick Malderton, the eldest son, in

full-dress costume, was the very \_beau idÃ©al\_ of a smart waiter; and Mr.

Thomas Malderton, the youngest, with his white dress-stock, blue coat,

bright buttons, and red watch-ribbon, strongly resembled the portrait of

that interesting, but rash young gentleman, George Barnwell. Every

member of the party had made up his or her mind to cultivate the

acquaintance of Mr. Horatio Sparkins. Miss Teresa, of course, was to be

as amiable and interesting as ladies of eight-and-twenty on the look-out

for a husband, usually are. Mrs. Malderton would be all smiles and

graces. Miss Marianne would request the favour of some verses for her

album. Mr. Malderton would patronise the great unknown by asking him to

dinner. Tom intended to ascertain the extent of his information on the

interesting topics of snuff and cigars. Even Mr. Frederick Malderton

himself, the family authority on all points of taste, dress, and

fashionable arrangement; who had lodgings of his own in town; who had a

free admission to Covent-garden theatre; who always dressed according to

the fashions of the months; who went up the water twice a-week in the

season; and who actually had an intimate friend who once knew a gentleman

who formerly lived in the Albany,âeven he had determined that Mr. Horatio

Sparkins must be a devilish good fellow, and that he would do him the

honour of challenging him to a game at billiards.

The first object that met the anxious eyes of the expectant family on

their entrance into the ball-room, was the interesting Horatio, with his

hair brushed off his forehead, and his eyes fixed on the ceiling,

reclining in a contemplative attitude on one of the seats.

âThere he is, my dear,â whispered Mrs. Malderton to Mr. Malderton.

âHow like Lord Byron!â murmured Miss Teresa.

âOr Montgomery!â whispered Miss Marianne.

âOr the portraits of Captain Cook!â suggested Tom.

âTomâdonât be an ass!â said his father, who checked him on all occasions,

probably with a view to prevent his becoming âsharpââwhich was very

unnecessary.

The elegant Sparkins attitudinised with admirable effect, until the

family had crossed the room. He then started up, with the most natural

appearance of surprise and delight; accosted Mrs. Malderton with the

utmost cordiality; saluted the young ladies in the most enchanting

manner; bowed to, and shook hands with Mr. Malderton, with a degree of

respect amounting almost to veneration; and returned the greetings of the

two young men in a half-gratified, half-patronising manner, which fully

convinced them that he must be an important, and, at the same time,

condescending personage.

âMiss Malderton,â said Horatio, after the ordinary salutations, and

bowing very low, âmay I be permitted to presume to hope that you will

allow me to have the pleasureââ

âI donât \_think\_ I am engaged,â said Miss Teresa, with a dreadful

affectation of indifferenceââbut, reallyâso manyââ

Horatio looked handsomely miserable.

âI shall be most happy,â simpered the interesting Teresa, at last.

Horatioâs countenance brightened up, like an old hat in a shower of rain.

âA very genteel young man, certainly!â said the gratified Mr. Malderton,

as the obsequious Sparkins and his partner joined the quadrille which was

just forming.

âHe has a remarkably good address,â said Mr. Frederick.

âYes, he is a prime fellow,â interposed Tom, who always managed to put

his foot in itââhe talks just like an auctioneer.â

âTom!â said his father solemnly, âI think I desired you, before, not to

be a fool.â Tom looked as happy as a cock on a drizzly morning.

âHow delightful!â said the interesting Horatio to his partner, as they

promenaded the room at the conclusion of the setââhow delightful, how

refreshing it is, to retire from the cloudy storms, the vicissitudes, and

the troubles, of life, even if it be but for a few short fleeting

moments: and to spend those moments, fading and evanescent though they

be, in the delightful, the blessed society of one individualâwhose frowns

would be death, whose coldness would be madness, whose falsehood would be

ruin, whose constancy would be bliss; the possession of whose affection

would be the brightest and best reward that Heaven could bestow on man?â

âWhat feeling! what sentiment!â thought Miss Teresa, as she leaned more

heavily on her companionâs arm.

âBut enoughâenough!â resumed the elegant Sparkins, with a theatrical air.

âWhat have I said? what have IâIâto do with sentiments like these! Miss

Maldertonââhere he stopped shortââmay I hope to be permitted to offer the

humble tribute ofââ

âReally, Mr. Sparkins,â returned the enraptured Teresa, blushing in the

sweetest confusion, âI must refer you to papa. I never can, without his

consent, venture toââ

âSurely he cannot objectââ

âOh, yes. Indeed, indeed, you know him not!â interrupted Miss Teresa,

well knowing there was nothing to fear, but wishing to make the interview

resemble a scene in some romantic novel.

âHe cannot object to my offering you a glass of negus,â returned the

adorable Sparkins, with some surprise.

âIs that all?â thought the disappointed Teresa. âWhat a fuss about

nothing!â

âIt will give me the greatest pleasure, sir, to see you to dinner at Oak

Lodge, Camberwell, on Sunday next at five oâclock, if you have no better

engagement,â said Mr. Malderton, at the conclusion of the evening, as he

and his sons were standing in conversation with Mr. Horatio Sparkins.

Horatio bowed his acknowledgments, and accepted the flattering

invitation.

âI must confess,â continued the father, offering his snuff-box to his new

acquaintance, âthat I donât enjoy these assemblies half so much as the

comfortâI had almost said the luxuryâof Oak Lodge. They have no great

charms for an elderly man.â

âAnd after all, sir, what is man?â said the metaphysical Sparkins. âI

say, what is man?â

âAh! very true,â said Mr. Malderton; âvery true.â

âWe know that we live and breathe,â continued Horatio; âthat we have

wants and wishes, desires and appetitesââ

âCertainly,â said Mr. Frederick Malderton, looking profound.

âI say, we know that we exist,â repeated Horatio, raising his voice, âbut

there we stop; there, is an end to our knowledge; there, is the summit of

our attainments; there, is the termination of our ends. What more do we

know?â

âNothing,â replied Mr. Frederickâthan whom no one was more capable of

answering for himself in that particular. Tom was about to hazard

something, but, fortunately for his reputation, he caught his fatherâs

angry eye, and slunk off like a puppy convicted of petty larceny.

âUpon my word,â said Mr. Malderton the elder, as they were returning home

in the fly, âthat Mr. Sparkins is a wonderful young man. Such surprising

knowledge! such extraordinary information! and such a splendid mode of

expressing himself!â

âI think he must be somebody in disguise,â said Miss Marianne. âHow

charmingly romantic!â

âHe talks very loud and nicely,â timidly observed Tom, âbut I donât

exactly understand what he means.â

âI almost begin to despair of your understanding anything, Tom,â said his

father, who, of course, had been much enlightened by Mr. Horatio

Sparkinsâs conversation.

âIt strikes me, Tom,â said Miss Teresa, âthat you have made yourself very

ridiculous this evening.â

âNo doubt of it,â cried everybodyâand the unfortunate Tom reduced himself

into the least possible space. That night, Mr. and Mrs. Malderton had a

long conversation respecting their daughterâs prospects and future

arrangements. Miss Teresa went to bed, considering whether, in the event

of her marrying a title, she could conscientiously encourage the visits

of her present associates; and dreamed, all night, of disguised noblemen,

large routs, ostrich plumes, bridal favours, and Horatio Sparkins.

Various surmises were hazarded on the Sunday morning, as to the mode of

conveyance which the anxiously-expected Horatio would adopt. Did he keep

a gig?âwas it possible he could come on horseback?âor would he patronize

the stage? These, and other various conjectures of equal importance,

engrossed the attention of Mrs. Malderton and her daughters during the

whole morning after church.

âUpon my word, my dear, itâs a most annoying thing that that vulgar

brother of yours should have invited himself to dine here to-day,â said

Mr. Malderton to his wife. âOn account of Mr. Sparkinsâs coming down, I

purposely abstained from asking any one but Flamwell. And then to think

of your brotherâa tradesmanâitâs insufferable! I declare I wouldnât have

him mention his shop, before our new guestâno, not for a thousand pounds!

I wouldnât care if he had the good sense to conceal the disgrace he is to

the family; but heâs so fond of his horrible business, that he \_will\_ let

people know what he is.â

Mr. Jacob Barton, the individual alluded to, was a large grocer; so

vulgar, and so lost to all sense of feeling, that he actually never

scrupled to avow that he wasnât above his business: âheâd made his money

by it, and he didnât care who knowâd it.â

âAh! Flamwell, my dear fellow, how dâye do?â said Mr. Malderton, as a

little spoffish man, with green spectacles, entered the room. âYou got

my note?â

âYes, I did; and here I am in consequence.â

âYou donât happen to know this Mr. Sparkins by name? You know

everybody?â

Mr. Flamwell was one of those gentlemen of remarkably extensive

information whom one occasionally meets in society, who pretend to know

everybody, but in reality know nobody. At Maldertonâs, where any stories

about great people were received with a greedy ear, he was an especial

favourite; and, knowing the kind of people he had to deal with, he

carried his passion of claiming acquaintance with everybody, to the most

immoderate length. He had rather a singular way of telling his greatest

lies in a parenthesis, and with an air of self-denial, as if he feared

being thought egotistical.

âWhy, no, I donât know him by that name,â returned Flamwell, in a low

tone, and with an air of immense importance. âI have no doubt I know

him, though. Is he tall?â

âMiddle-sized,â said Miss Teresa.

âWith black hair?â inquired Flamwell, hazarding a bold guess.

âYes,â returned Miss Teresa, eagerly.

âRather a snub nose?â

âNo,â said the disappointed Teresa, âhe has a Roman nose.â

âI said a Roman nose, didnât I?â inquired Flamwell. âHeâs an elegant

young man?â

âOh, certainly.â

âWith remarkably prepossessing manners?â

âOh, yes!â said all the family together. âYou must know him.â

âYes, I thought you knew him, if he was anybody,â triumphantly exclaimed

Mr. Malderton. âWho dâye think he is?â

âWhy, from your description,â said Flamwell, ruminating, and sinking his

voice, almost to a whisper, âhe bears a strong resemblance to the

Honourable Augustus Fitz-Edward Fitz-John Fitz-Osborne. Heâs a very

talented young man, and rather eccentric. Itâs extremely probable he may

have changed his name for some temporary purpose.â

Teresaâs heart beat high. Could he be the Honourable Augustus

Fitz-Edward Fitz-John Fitz-Osborne! What a name to be elegantly engraved

upon two glazed cards, tied together with a piece of white satin ribbon!

âThe Honourable Mrs. Augustus Fitz-Edward Fitz-John Fitz-Osborne!â The

thought was transport.

âItâs five minutes to five,â said Mr. Malderton, looking at his watch: âI

hope heâs not going to disappoint us.â

âThere he is!â exclaimed Miss Teresa, as a loud double-knock was heard at

the door. Everybody endeavoured to lookâas people when they particularly

expect a visitor always doâas if they were perfectly unsuspicious of the

approach of anybody.

The room-door openedââMr. Barton!â said the servant.

âConfound the man!â murmured Malderton. âAh! my dear sir, how dâye do!

Any news?â

âWhy no,â returned the grocer, in his usual bluff manner. âNo, none

partickler. None that I am much aware of. How dâye do, gals and boys?

Mr. Flamwell, sirâglad to see you.â

âHereâs Mr. Sparkins!â said Tom, who had been looking out at the window,

âon \_such\_ a black horse!â There was Horatio, sure enough, on a large

black horse, curvetting and prancing along, like an Astleyâs

supernumerary. After a great deal of reining in, and pulling up, with

the accompaniments of snorting, rearing, and kicking, the animal

consented to stop at about a hundred yards from the gate, where Mr.

Sparkins dismounted, and confided him to the care of Mr. Maldertonâs

groom. The ceremony of introduction was gone through, in all due form.

Mr. Flamwell looked from behind his green spectacles at Horatio with an

air of mysterious importance; and the gallant Horatio looked unutterable

things at Teresa.

âIs he the Honourable Mr. Augustus Whatâs-his-name?â whispered Mrs.

Malderton to Flamwell, as he was escorting her to the dining-room.

âWhy, noâat least not exactly,â returned that great authorityâânot

exactly.â

âWho \_is\_ he then?â

âHush!â said Flamwell, nodding his head with a grave air, importing that

he knew very well; but was prevented, by some grave reasons of state,

from disclosing the important secret. It might be one of the ministers

making himself acquainted with the views of the people.

âMr. Sparkins,â said the delighted Mrs. Malderton, âpray divide the

ladies. John, put a chair for the gentleman between Miss Teresa and Miss

Marianne.â This was addressed to a man who, on ordinary occasions, acted

as half-groom, half-gardener; but who, as it was important to make an

impression on Mr. Sparkins, had been forced into a white neckerchief and

shoes, and touched up, and brushed, to look like a second footman.

The dinner was excellent; Horatio was most attentive to Miss Teresa, and

every one felt in high spirits, except Mr. Malderton, who, knowing the

propensity of his brother-in-law, Mr. Barton, endured that sort of agony

which the newspapers inform us is experienced by the surrounding

neighbourhood when a pot-boy hangs himself in a hay-loft, and which is

âmuch easier to be imagined than described.â

âHave you seen your friend, Sir Thomas Noland, lately, Flamwell?â

inquired Mr. Malderton, casting a sidelong look at Horatio, to see what

effect the mention of so great a man had upon him.

âWhy, noânot very lately. I saw Lord Gubbleton the day before

yesterday.â

âAll! I hope his lordship is very well?â said Malderton, in a tone of

the greatest interest. It is scarcely necessary to say that, until that

moment, he had been quite innocent of the existence of such a person.

âWhy, yes; he was very wellâvery well indeed. Heâs a devilish good

fellow. I met him in the City, and had a long chat with him. Indeed,

Iâm rather intimate with him. I couldnât stop to talk to him as long as

I could wish, though, because I was on my way to a bankerâs, a very rich

man, and a member of Parliament, with whom I am also rather, indeed I may

say very, intimate.â

âI know whom you mean,â returned the host, consequentiallyâin reality

knowing as much about the matter as Flamwell himself.ââHe has a capital

business.â

This was touching on a dangerous topic.

âTalking of business,â interposed Mr. Barton, from the centre of the

table. âA gentleman whom you knew very well, Malderton, before you made

that first lucky spec of yours, called at our shop the other day, andââ

âBarton, may I trouble you for a potato?â interrupted the wretched master

of the house, hoping to nip the story in the bud.

âCertainly,â returned the grocer, quite insensible of his

brother-in-lawâs objectââand he said in a very plain mannerââ

â\_Floury\_, if you please,â interrupted Malderton again; dreading the

termination of the anecdote, and fearing a repetition of the word âshop.â

âHe said, says he,â continued the culprit, after despatching the potato;

âsays he, how goes on your business? So I said, jokinglyâyou know my

wayâsays I, Iâm never above my business, and I hope my business will

never be above me. Ha, ha!â

âMr. Sparkins,â said the host, vainly endeavouring to conceal his dismay,

âa glass of wine?â

âWith the utmost pleasure, sir.â

âHappy to see you.â

âThank you.â

âWe were talking the other evening,â resumed the host, addressing

Horatio, partly with the view of displaying the conversational powers of

his new acquaintance, and partly in the hope of drowning the grocerâs

storiesââwe were talking the other night about the nature of man. Your

argument struck me very forcibly.â

âAnd me,â said Mr. Frederick. Horatio made a graceful inclination of the

head.

âPray, what is your opinion of woman, Mr. Sparkins?â inquired Mrs.

Malderton. The young ladies simpered.

âMan,â replied Horatio, âman, whether he ranged the bright, gay, flowery

plains of a second Eden, or the more sterile, barren, and I may say,

commonplace regions, to which we are compelled to accustom ourselves, in

times such as these; man, under any circumstances, or in any

placeâwhether he were bending beneath the withering blasts of the frigid

zone, or scorching under the rays of a vertical sunâman, without woman,

would beâalone.â

âI am very happy to find you entertain such honourable opinions, Mr.

Sparkins,â said Mrs. Malderton.

âAnd I,â added Miss Teresa. Horatio looked his delight, and the young

lady blushed.

âNow, itâs my opinionââ said Mr. Barton.

âI know what youâre going to say,â interposed Malderton, determined not

to give his relation another opportunity, âand I donât agree with you.â

âWhat!â inquired the astonished grocer.

âI am sorry to differ from you, Barton,â said the host, in as positive a

manner as if he really were contradicting a position which the other had

laid down, âbut I cannot give my assent to what I consider a very

monstrous proposition.â

âBut I meant to sayââ

âYou never can convince me,â said Malderton, with an air of obstinate

determination. âNever.â

âAnd I,â said Mr. Frederick, following up his fatherâs attack, âcannot

entirely agree in Mr. Sparkinsâs argument.â

âWhat!â said Horatio, who became more metaphysical, and more

argumentative, as he saw the female part of the family listening in

wondering delightââwhat! Is effect the consequence of cause? Is cause

the precursor of effect?â

âThatâs the point,â said Flamwell.

âTo be sure,â said Mr. Malderton.

âBecause, if effect is the consequence of cause, and if cause does

precede effect, I apprehend you are wrong,â added Horatio.

âDecidedly,â said the toad-eating Flamwell.

âAt least, I apprehend that to be the just and logical deduction?â said

Sparkins, in a tone of interrogation.

âNo doubt of it,â chimed in Flamwell again. âIt settles the point.â

âWell, perhaps it does,â said Mr. Frederick; âI didnât see it before.â

âI donât exactly see it now,â thought the grocer; âbut I suppose itâs all

right.â

âHow wonderfully clever he is!â whispered Mrs. Malderton to her

daughters, as they retired to the drawing-room.

âOh, heâs quite a love!â said both the young ladies together; âhe talks

like an oracle. He must have seen a great deal of life.â

The gentlemen being left to themselves, a pause ensued, during which

everybody looked very grave, as if they were quite overcome by the

profound nature of the previous discussion. Flamwell, who had made up

his mind to find out who and what Mr. Horatio Sparkins really was, first

broke silence.

âExcuse me, sir,â said that distinguished personage, âI presume you have

studied for the bar? I thought of entering once, myselfâindeed, Iâm

rather intimate with some of the highest ornaments of that distinguished

profession.â

âN-no!â said Horatio, with a little hesitation; ânot exactly.â

âBut you have been much among the silk gowns, or I mistake?â inquired

Flamwell, deferentially.

âNearly all my life,â returned Sparkins.

The question was thus pretty well settled in the mind of Mr. Flamwell.

He was a young gentleman âabout to be called.â

âI shouldnât like to be a barrister,â said Tom, speaking for the first

time, and looking round the table to find somebody who would notice the

remark.

No one made any reply.

âI shouldnât like to wear a wig,â said Tom, hazarding another

observation.

âTom, I beg you will not make yourself ridiculous,â said his father.

âPray listen, and improve yourself by the conversation you hear, and

donât be constantly making these absurd remarks.â

âVery well, father,â replied the unfortunate Tom, who had not spoken a

word since he had asked for another slice of beef at a quarter-past five

oâclock, P.M., and it was then eight.

âWell, Tom,â observed his good-natured uncle, ânever mind! \_I\_ think

with you. I shouldnât like to wear a wig. Iâd rather wear an apron.â

Mr. Malderton coughed violently. Mr. Barton resumedââFor if a manâs

above his businessââ

The cough returned with tenfold violence, and did not cease until the

unfortunate cause of it, in his alarm, had quite forgotten what he

intended to say.

âMr. Sparkins,â said Flamwell, returning to the charge, âdo you happen to

know Mr. Delafontaine, of Bedford-square?â

âI have exchanged cards with him; since which, indeed, I have had an

opportunity of serving him considerably,â replied Horatio, slightly

colouring; no doubt, at having been betrayed into making the

acknowledgment.

âYou are very lucky, if you have had an opportunity of obliging that

great man,â observed Flamwell, with an air of profound respect.

âI donât know who he is,â he whispered to Mr. Malderton, confidentially,

as they followed Horatio up to the drawing-room. âItâs quite clear,

however, that he belongs to the law, and that he is somebody of great

importance, and very highly connected.â

âNo doubt, no doubt,â returned his companion.

The remainder of the evening passed away most delightfully. Mr.

Malderton, relieved from his apprehensions by the circumstance of Mr.

Bartonâs falling into a profound sleep, was as affable and gracious as

possible. Miss Teresa played the âFall of Paris,â as Mr. Sparkins

declared, in a most masterly manner, and both of them, assisted by Mr.

Frederick, tried over glees and trios without number; they having made

the pleasing discovery that their voices harmonised beautifully. To be

sure, they all sang the first part; and Horatio, in addition to the

slight drawback of having no ear, was perfectly innocent of knowing a

note of music; still, they passed the time very agreeably, and it was

past twelve oâclock before Mr. Sparkins ordered the

mourning-coach-looking steed to be brought outâan order which was only

complied with, on the distinct understanding that he was to repeat his

visit on the following Sunday.

âBut, perhaps, Mr. Sparkins will form one of our party to-morrow

evening?â suggested Mrs. M. âMr. Malderton intends taking the girls to

see the pantomime.â Mr. Sparkins bowed, and promised to join the party

in box 48, in the course of the evening.

âWe will not tax you for the morning,â said Miss Teresa, bewitchingly;

âfor ma is going to take us to all sorts of places, shopping. I know

that gentlemen have a great horror of that employment.â Mr. Sparkins

bowed again, and declared that he should be delighted, but business of

importance occupied him in the morning. Flamwell looked at Malderton

significantly.ââItâs term time!â he whispered.

At twelve oâclock on the following morning, the âflyâ was at the door of

Oak Lodge, to convey Mrs. Malderton and her daughters on their expedition

for the day. They were to dine and dress for the play at a friendâs

house. First, driving thither with their band-boxes, they departed on

their first errand to make some purchases at Messrs. Jones, Spruggins,

and Smithâs, of Tottenham-court-road; after which, they were to go to

Redmayneâs in Bond-street; thence, to innumerable places that no one ever

heard of. The young ladies beguiled the tediousness of the ride by

eulogising Mr. Horatio Sparkins, scolding their mamma for taking them so

far to save a shilling, and wondering whether they should ever reach

their destination. At length, the vehicle stopped before a dirty-looking

ticketed linen-draperâs shop, with goods of all kinds, and labels of all

sorts and sizes, in the window. There were dropsical figures of seven

with a little three-farthings in the corner; âperfectly invisible to the

naked eye;â three hundred and fifty thousand ladiesâ boas, \_from\_ one

shilling and a penny halfpenny; real French kid shoes, at two and

ninepence per pair; green parasols, at an equally cheap rate; and âevery

description of goods,â as the proprietors saidâand they must know

bestââfifty per cent. under cost price.â

âLor! ma, what a place you have brought us to!â said Miss Teresa; âwhat

\_would\_ Mr. Sparkins say if he could see us!â

âAh! what, indeed!â said Miss Marianne, horrified at the idea.

âPray be seated, ladies. What is the first article?â inquired the

obsequious master of the ceremonies of the establishment, who, in his

large white neckcloth and formal tie, looked like a bad âportrait of a

gentlemanâ in the Somerset-house exhibition.

âI want to see some silks,â answered Mrs. Malderton.

âDirectly, maâam.âMr. Smith! Where \_is\_ Mr. Smith?â

âHere, sir,â cried a voice at the back of the shop.

âPray make haste, Mr. Smith,â said the M.C. âYou never are to be found

when youâre wanted, sir.â

Mr. Smith, thus enjoined to use all possible despatch, leaped over the

counter with great agility, and placed himself before the newly-arrived

customers. Mrs. Malderton uttered a faint scream; Miss Teresa, who had

been stooping down to talk to her sister, raised her head, and

beheldâHoratio Sparkins!

âWe will draw a veil,â as novel-writers say, over the scene that ensued.

The mysterious, philosophical, romantic, metaphysical Sparkinsâhe who, to

the interesting Teresa, seemed like the embodied idea of the young dukes

and poetical exquisites in blue silk dressing-gowns, and ditto ditto

slippers, of whom she had read and dreamed, but had never expected to

behold, was suddenly converted into Mr. Samuel Smith, the assistant at a

âcheap shop;â the junior partner in a slippery firm of some three weeksâ

existence. The dignified evanishment of the hero of Oak Lodge, on this

unexpected recognition, could only be equalled by that of a furtive dog

with a considerable kettle at his tail. All the hopes of the Maldertons

were destined at once to melt away, like the lemon ices at a Companyâs

dinner; Almackâs was still to them as distant as the North Pole; and Miss

Teresa had as much chance of a husband as Captain Ross had of the

north-west passage.

Years have elapsed since the occurrence of this dreadful morning. The

daisies have thrice bloomed on Camberwell-green; the sparrows have thrice

repeated their vernal chirps in Camberwell-grove; but the Miss Maldertons

are still unmated. Miss Teresaâs case is more desperate than ever; but

Flamwell is yet in the zenith of his reputation; and the family have the

same predilection for aristocratic personages, with an increased aversion

to anything \_low\_.

CHAPTER VIâTHE BLACK VEIL

One winterâs evening, towards the close of the year 1800, or within a

year or two of that time, a young medical practitioner, recently

established in business, was seated by a cheerful fire in his little

parlour, listening to the wind which was beating the rain in pattering

drops against the window, or rumbling dismally in the chimney. The night

was wet and cold; he had been walking through mud and water the whole

day, and was now comfortably reposing in his dressing-gown and slippers,

more than half asleep and less than half awake, revolving a thousand

matters in his wandering imagination. First, he thought how hard the

wind was blowing, and how the cold, sharp rain would be at that moment

beating in his face, if he were not comfortably housed at home. Then,

his mind reverted to his annual Christmas visit to his native place and

dearest friends; he thought how glad they would all be to see him, and

how happy it would make Rose if he could only tell her that he had found

a patient at last, and hoped to have more, and to come down again, in a

few monthsâ time, and marry her, and take her home to gladden his lonely

fireside, and stimulate him to fresh exertions. Then, he began to wonder

when his first patient would appear, or whether he was destined, by a

special dispensation of Providence, never to have any patients at all;

and then, he thought about Rose again, and dropped to sleep and dreamed

about her, till the tones of her sweet merry voice sounded in his ears,

and her soft tiny hand rested on his shoulder.

There \_was\_ a hand upon his shoulder, but it was neither soft nor tiny;

its owner being a corpulent round-headed boy, who, in consideration of

the sum of one shilling per week and his food, was let out by the parish

to carry medicine and messages. As there was no demand for the medicine,

however, and no necessity for the messages, he usually occupied his

unemployed hoursâaveraging fourteen a dayâin abstracting peppermint

drops, taking animal nourishment, and going to sleep.

âA lady, sirâa lady!â whispered the boy, rousing his master with a shake.

âWhat lady?â cried our friend, starting up, not quite certain that his

dream was an illusion, and half expecting that it might be Rose

herself.ââWhat lady? Where?â

â\_There\_, sir!â replied the boy, pointing to the glass door leading into

the surgery, with an expression of alarm which the very unusual

apparition of a customer might have tended to excite.

The surgeon looked towards the door, and started himself, for an instant,

on beholding the appearance of his unlooked-for visitor.

It was a singularly tall woman, dressed in deep mourning, and standing so

close to the door that her face almost touched the glass. The upper part

of her figure was carefully muffled in a black shawl, as if for the

purpose of concealment; and her face was shrouded by a thick black veil.

She stood perfectly erect, her figure was drawn up to its full height,

and though the surgeon felt that the eyes beneath the veil were fixed on

him, she stood perfectly motionless, and evinced, by no gesture whatever,

the slightest consciousness of his having turned towards her.

âDo you wish to consult me?â he inquired, with some hesitation, holding

open the door. It opened inwards, and therefore the action did not alter

the position of the figure, which still remained motionless on the same

spot.

She slightly inclined her head, in token of acquiescence.

âPray walk in,â said the surgeon.

The figure moved a step forward; and then, turning its head in the

direction of the boyâto his infinite horrorâappeared to hesitate.

âLeave the room, Tom,â said the young man, addressing the boy, whose

large round eyes had been extended to their utmost width during this

brief interview. âDraw the curtain, and shut the door.â

The boy drew a green curtain across the glass part of the door, retired

into the surgery, closed the door after him, and immediately applied one

of his large eyes to the keyhole on the other side.

The surgeon drew a chair to the fire, and motioned the visitor to a seat.

The mysterious figure slowly moved towards it. As the blaze shone upon

the black dress, the surgeon observed that the bottom of it was saturated

with mud and rain.

âYou are very wet,â be said.

âI am,â said the stranger, in a low deep voice.

âAnd you are ill?â added the surgeon, compassionately, for the tone was

that of a person in pain.

âI am,â was the replyââvery ill; not bodily, but mentally. It is not for

myself, or on my own behalf,â continued the stranger, âthat I come to

you. If I laboured under bodily disease, I should not be out, alone, at

such an hour, or on such a night as this; and if I were afflicted with

it, twenty-four hours hence, God knows how gladly I would lie down and

pray to die. It is for another that I beseech your aid, sir. I may be

mad to ask it for himâI think I am; but, night after night, through the

long dreary hours of watching and weeping, the thought has been ever

present to my mind; and though even \_I\_ see the hopelessness of human

assistance availing him, the bare thought of laying him in his grave

without it makes my blood run cold!â And a shudder, such as the surgeon

well knew art could not produce, trembled through the speakerâs frame.

There was a desperate earnestness in this womanâs manner, that went to

the young manâs heart. He was young in his profession, and had not yet

witnessed enough of the miseries which are daily presented before the

eyes of its members, to have grown comparatively callous to human

suffering.

âIf,â he said, rising hastily, âthe person of whom you speak, be in so

hopeless a condition as you describe, not a moment is to be lost. I will

go with you instantly. Why did you not obtain medical advice before?â

âBecause it would have been useless beforeâbecause it is useless even

now,â replied the woman, clasping her hands passionately.

The surgeon gazed, for a moment, on the black veil, as if to ascertain

the expression of the features beneath it: its thickness, however,

rendered such a result impossible.

âYou \_are\_ ill,â he said, gently, âalthough you do not know it. The

fever which has enabled you to bear, without feeling it, the fatigue you

have evidently undergone, is burning within you now. Put that to your

lips,â he continued, pouring out a glass of waterââcompose yourself for a

few moments, and then tell me, as calmly as you can, what the disease of

the patient is, and how long he has been ill. When I know what it is

necessary I should know, to render my visit serviceable to him, I am

ready to accompany you.â

The stranger lifted the glass of water to her mouth, without raising the

veil; put it down again untasted; and burst into tears.

âI know,â she said, sobbing aloud, âthat what I say to you now, seems

like the ravings of fever. I have been told so before, less kindly than

by you. I am not a young woman; and they do say, that as life steals on

towards its final close, the last short remnant, worthless as it may seem

to all beside, is dearer to its possessor than all the years that have

gone before, connected though they be with the recollection of old

friends long since dead, and young onesâchildren perhapsâwho have fallen

off from, and forgotten one as completely as if they had died too. My

natural term of life cannot be many years longer, and should be dear on

that account; but I would lay it down without a sighâwith

cheerfulnessâwith joyâif what I tell you now, were only false, or

imaginary. To-morrow morning he of whom I speak will be, I \_know\_,

though I would fain think otherwise, beyond the reach of human aid; and

yet, to-night, though he is in deadly peril, you must not see, and could

not serve, him.â

âI am unwilling to increase your distress,â said the surgeon, after a

short pause, âby making any comment on what you have just said, or

appearing desirous to investigate a subject you are so anxious to

conceal; but there is an inconsistency in your statement which I cannot

reconcile with probability. This person is dying to-night, and I cannot

see him when my assistance might possibly avail; you apprehend it will be

useless to-morrow, and yet you would have me see him then! If he be,

indeed, as dear to you, as your words and manner would imply, why not try

to save his life before delay and the progress of his disease render it

impracticable?â

âGod help me!â exclaimed the woman, weeping bitterly, âhow can I hope

strangers will believe what appears incredible, even to myself? You will

\_not\_ see him then, sir?â she added, rising suddenly.

âI did not say that I declined to see him,â replied the surgeon; âbut I

warn you, that if you persist in this extraordinary procrastination, and

the individual dies, a fearful responsibility rests with you.â

âThe responsibility will rest heavily somewhere,â replied the stranger

bitterly. âWhatever responsibility rests with me, I am content to bear,

and ready to answer.â

âAs I incur none,â continued the surgeon, âby acceding to your request, I

will see him in the morning, if you leave me the address. At what hour

can he be seen?â

â\_Nine\_,â replied the stranger.

âYou must excuse my pressing these inquiries,â said the surgeon. âBut is

he in your charge now?â

âHe is not,â was the rejoinder.

âThen, if I gave you instructions for his treatment through the night,

you could not assist him?â

The woman wept bitterly, as she replied, âI could not.â

Finding that there was but little prospect of obtaining more information

by prolonging the interview; and anxious to spare the womanâs feelings,

which, subdued at first by a violent effort, were now irrepressible and

most painful to witness; the surgeon repeated his promise of calling in

the morning at the appointed hour. His visitor, after giving him a

direction to an obscure part of Walworth, left the house in the same

mysterious manner in which she had entered it.

It will be readily believed that so extraordinary a visit produced a

considerable impression on the mind of the young surgeon; and that he

speculated a great deal and to very little purpose on the possible

circumstances of the case. In common with the generality of people, he

had often heard and read of singular instances, in which a presentiment

of death, at a particular day, or even minute, had been entertained and

realised. At one moment he was inclined to think that the present might

be such a case; but, then, it occurred to him that all the anecdotes of

the kind he had ever heard, were of persons who had been troubled with a

foreboding of their own death. This woman, however, spoke of another

personâa man; and it was impossible to suppose that a mere dream or

delusion of fancy would induce her to speak of his approaching

dissolution with such terrible certainty as she had spoken. It could not

be that the man was to be murdered in the morning, and that the woman,

originally a consenting party, and bound to secrecy by an oath, had

relented, and, though unable to prevent the commission of some outrage on

the victim, had determined to prevent his death if possible, by the

timely interposition of medical aid? The idea of such things happening

within two miles of the metropolis appeared too wild and preposterous to

be entertained beyond the instant. Then, his original impression that

the womanâs intellects were disordered, recurred; and, as it was the only

mode of solving the difficulty with any degree of satisfaction, he

obstinately made up his mind to believe that she was mad. Certain

misgivings upon this point, however, stole upon his thoughts at the time,

and presented themselves again and again through the long dull course of

a sleepless night; during which, in spite of all his efforts to the

contrary, he was unable to banish the black veil from his disturbed

imagination.

The back part of Walworth, at its greatest distance from town, is a

straggling miserable place enough, even in these days; but,

five-and-thirty years ago, the greater portion of it was little better

than a dreary waste, inhabited by a few scattered people of questionable

character, whose poverty prevented their living in any better

neighbourhood, or whose pursuits and mode of life rendered its solitude

desirable. Very many of the houses which have since sprung up on all

sides, were not built until some years afterwards; and the great majority

even of those which were sprinkled about, at irregular intervals, were of

the rudest and most miserable description.

The appearance of the place through which he walked in the morning, was

not calculated to raise the spirits of the young surgeon, or to dispel

any feeling of anxiety or depression which the singular kind of visit he

was about to make, had awakened. Striking off from the high road, his

way lay across a marshy common, through irregular lanes, with here and

there a ruinous and dismantled cottage fast falling to pieces with decay

and neglect. A stunted tree, or pool of stagnant water, roused into a

sluggish action by the heavy rain of the preceding night, skirted the

path occasionally; and, now and then, a miserable patch of garden-ground,

with a few old boards knocked together for a summer-house, and old

palings imperfectly mended with stakes pilfered from the neighbouring

hedges, bore testimony, at once to the poverty of the inhabitants, and

the little scruple they entertained in appropriating the property of

other people to their own use. Occasionally, a filthy-looking woman

would make her appearance from the door of a dirty house, to empty the

contents of some cooking utensil into the gutter in front, or to scream

after a little slip-shod girl, who had contrived to stagger a few yards

from the door under the weight of a sallow infant almost as big as

herself; but, scarcely anything was stirring around: and so much of the

prospect as could be faintly traced through the cold damp mist which hung

heavily over it, presented a lonely and dreary appearance perfectly in

keeping with the objects we have described.

After plodding wearily through the mud and mire; making many inquiries

for the place to which he had been directed; and receiving as many

contradictory and unsatisfactory replies in return; the young man at

length arrived before the house which had been pointed out to him as the

object of his destination. It was a small low building, one story above

the ground, with even a more desolate and unpromising exterior than any

he had yet passed. An old yellow curtain was closely drawn across the

window up-stairs, and the parlour shutters were closed, but not fastened.

The house was detached from any other, and, as it stood at an angle of a

narrow lane, there was no other habitation in sight.

When we say that the surgeon hesitated, and walked a few paces beyond the

house, before he could prevail upon himself to lift the knocker, we say

nothing that need raise a smile upon the face of the boldest reader. The

police of London were a very different body in that day; the isolated

position of the suburbs, when the rage for building and the progress of

improvement had not yet begun to connect them with the main body of the

city and its environs, rendered many of them (and this in particular) a

place of resort for the worst and most depraved characters. Even the

streets in the gayest parts of London were imperfectly lighted, at that

time; and such places as these, were left entirely to the mercy of the

moon and stars. The chances of detecting desperate characters, or of

tracing them to their haunts, were thus rendered very few, and their

offences naturally increased in boldness, as the consciousness of

comparative security became the more impressed upon them by daily

experience. Added to these considerations, it must be remembered that

the young man had spent some time in the public hospitals of the

metropolis; and, although neither Burke nor Bishop had then gained a

horrible notoriety, his own observation might have suggested to him how

easily the atrocities to which the former has since given his name, might

be committed. Be this as it may, whatever reflection made him hesitate,

he \_did\_ hesitate: but, being a young man of strong mind and great

personal courage, it was only for an instant;âhe stepped briskly back and

knocked gently at the door.

A low whispering was audible, immediately afterwards, as if some person

at the end of the passage were conversing stealthily with another on the

landing above. It was succeeded by the noise of a pair of heavy boots

upon the bare floor. The door-chain was softly unfastened; the door

opened; and a tall, ill-favoured man, with black hair, and a face, as the

surgeon often declared afterwards, as pale and haggard, as the

countenance of any dead man he ever saw, presented himself.

âWalk in, sir,â he said in a low tone.

The surgeon did so, and the man having secured the door again, by the

chain, led the way to a small back parlour at the extremity of the

passage.

âAm I in time?â

âToo soon!â replied the man. The surgeon turned hastily round, with a

gesture of astonishment not unmixed with alarm, which he found it

impossible to repress.

âIf youâll step in here, sir,â said the man, who had evidently noticed

the actionââif youâll step in here, sir, you wonât be detained five

minutes, I assure you.â

The surgeon at once walked into the room. The man closed the door, and

left him alone.

It was a little cold room, with no other furniture than two deal chairs,

and a table of the same material. A handful of fire, unguarded by any

fender, was burning in the grate, which brought out the damp if it served

no more comfortable purpose, for the unwholesome moisture was stealing

down the walls, in long slug-like tracks. The window, which was broken

and patched in many places, looked into a small enclosed piece of ground,

almost covered with water. Not a sound was to be heard, either within

the house, or without. The young surgeon sat down by the fireplace, to

await the result of his first professional visit.

He had not remained in this position many minutes, when the noise of some

approaching vehicle struck his ear. It stopped; the street-door was

opened; a low talking succeeded, accompanied with a shuffling noise of

footsteps, along the passage and on the stairs, as if two or three men

were engaged in carrying some heavy body to the room above. The creaking

of the stairs, a few seconds afterwards, announced that the new-comers

having completed their task, whatever it was, were leaving the house.

The door was again closed, and the former silence was restored.

Another five minutes had elapsed, and the surgeon had resolved to explore

the house, in search of some one to whom he might make his errand known,

when the room-door opened, and his last nightâs visitor, dressed in

exactly the same manner, with the veil lowered as before, motioned him to

advance. The singular height of her form, coupled with the circumstance

of her not speaking, caused the idea to pass across his brain for an

instant, that it might be a man disguised in womanâs attire. The

hysteric sobs which issued from beneath the veil, and the convulsive

attitude of grief of the whole figure, however, at once exposed the

absurdity of the suspicion; and he hastily followed.

The woman led the way up-stairs to the front room, and paused at the

door, to let him enter first. It was scantily furnished with an old deal

box, a few chairs, and a tent bedstead, without hangings or cross-rails,

which was covered with a patchwork counterpane. The dim light admitted

through the curtain which he had noticed from the outside, rendered the

objects in the room so indistinct, and communicated to all of them so

uniform a hue, that he did not, at first, perceive the object on which

his eye at once rested when the woman rushed frantically past him, and

flung herself on her knees by the bedside.

Stretched upon the bed, closely enveloped in a linen wrapper, and covered

with blankets, lay a human form, stiff and motionless. The head and

face, which were those of a man, were uncovered, save by a bandage which

passed over the head and under the chin. The eyes were closed. The left

arm lay heavily across the bed, and the woman held the passive hand.

The surgeon gently pushed the woman aside, and took the hand in his.

âMy God!â he exclaimed, letting it fall involuntarilyââthe man is dead!â

The woman started to her feet and beat her hands together.

âOh! donât say so, sir,â she exclaimed, with a burst of passion,

amounting almost to frenzy. âOh! donât say so, sir! I canât bear it!

Men have been brought to life, before, when unskilful people have given

them up for lost; and men have died, who might have been restored, if

proper means had been resorted to. Donât let him lie here, sir, without

one effort to save him! This very moment life may be passing away. Do

try, sir,âdo, for Heavenâs sake!ââAnd while speaking, she hurriedly

chafed, first the forehead, and then the breast, of the senseless form

before her; and then, wildly beat the cold hands, which, when she ceased

to hold them, fell listlessly and heavily back on the coverlet.

âIt is of no use, my good woman,â said the surgeon, soothingly, as he

withdrew his hand from the manâs breast. âStayâundraw that curtain!â

âWhy?â said the woman, starting up.

âUndraw that curtain!â repeated the surgeon in an agitated tone.

âI darkened the room on purpose,â said the woman, throwing herself before

him as he rose to undraw it.ââOh! sir, have pity on me! If it can be of

no use, and he is really dead, do not expose that form to other eyes than

mine!â

âThis man died no natural or easy death,â said the surgeon. âI \_must\_

see the body!â With a motion so sudden, that the woman hardly knew that

he had slipped from beside her, he tore open the curtain, admitted the

full light of day, and returned to the bedside.

âThere has been violence here,â he said, pointing towards the body, and

gazing intently on the face, from which the black veil was now, for the

first time, removed. In the excitement of a minute before, the female

had thrown off the bonnet and veil, and now stood with her eyes fixed

upon him. Her features were those of a woman about fifty, who had once

been handsome. Sorrow and weeping had left traces upon them which not

time itself would ever have produced without their aid; her face was

deadly pale; and there was a nervous contortion of the lip, and an

unnatural fire in her eye, which showed too plainly that her bodily and

mental powers had nearly sunk, beneath an accumulation of misery.

âThere has been violence here,â said the surgeon, preserving his

searching glance.

âThere has!â replied the woman.

âThis man has been murdered.â

âThat I call God to witness he has,â said the woman, passionately;

âpitilessly, inhumanly murdered!â

âBy whom?â said the surgeon, seizing the woman by the arm.

âLook at the butchersâ marks, and then ask me!â she replied.

The surgeon turned his face towards the bed, and bent over the body which

now lay full in the light of the window. The throat was swollen, and a

livid mark encircled it. The truth flashed suddenly upon him.

âThis is one of the men who were hanged this morning!â he exclaimed,

turning away with a shudder.

âIt is,â replied the woman, with a cold, unmeaning stare.

âWho was he?â inquired the surgeon.

â\_My son\_,â rejoined the woman; and fell senseless at his feet.

It was true. A companion, equally guilty with himself, had been

acquitted for want of evidence; and this man had been left for death, and

executed. To recount the circumstances of the case, at this distant

period, must be unnecessary, and might give pain to some persons still

alive. The history was an every-day one. The mother was a widow without

friends or money, and had denied herself necessaries to bestow them on

her orphan boy. That boy, unmindful of her prayers, and forgetful of the

sufferings she had endured for himâincessant anxiety of mind, and

voluntary starvation of bodyâhad plunged into a career of dissipation and

crime. And this was the result; his own death by the hangmanâs hands,

and his motherâs shame, and incurable insanity.

For many years after this occurrence, and when profitable and arduous

avocations would have led many men to forget that such a miserable being

existed, the young surgeon was a daily visitor at the side of the

harmless mad woman; not only soothing her by his presence and kindness,

but alleviating the rigour of her condition by pecuniary donations for

her comfort and support, bestowed with no sparing hand. In the transient

gleam of recollection and consciousness which preceded her death, a

prayer for his welfare and protection, as fervent as mortal ever

breathed, rose from the lips of this poor friendless creature. That

prayer flew to Heaven, and was heard. The blessings he was instrumental

in conferring, have been repaid to him a thousand-fold; but, amid all the

honours of rank and station which have since been heaped upon him, and

which he has so well earned, he can have no reminiscence more gratifying

to his heart than that connected with The Black Veil.

CHAPTER VIIâTHE STEAM EXCURSION

Mr. Percy Noakes was a law student, inhabiting a set of chambers on the

fourth floor, in one of those houses in Grayâs-inn-square which command

an extensive view of the gardens, and their usual adjunctsâflaunting

nursery-maids, and town-made children, with parenthetical legs. Mr.

Percy Noakes was what is generally termedââa devilish good fellow.â He

had a large circle of acquaintance, and seldom dined at his own expense.

He used to talk politics to papas, flatter the vanity of mammas, do the

amiable to their daughters, make pleasure engagements with their sons,

and romp with the younger branches. Like those paragons of perfection,

advertising footmen out of place, he was always âwilling to make himself

generally useful.â If any old lady, whose son was in India, gave a ball,

Mr. Percy Noakes was master of the ceremonies; if any young lady made a

stolen match, Mr. Percy Noakes gave her away; if a juvenile wife

presented her husband with a blooming cherub, Mr. Percy Noakes was either

godfather, or deputy-godfather; and if any member of a friendâs family

died, Mr. Percy Noakes was invariably to be seen in the second mourning

coach, with a white handkerchief to his eyes, sobbingâto use his own

appropriate and expressive descriptionââlike winkinâ!â

It may readily be imagined that these numerous avocations were rather

calculated to interfere with Mr. Percy Noakesâs professional studies.

Mr. Percy Noakes was perfectly aware of the fact, and had, therefore,

after mature reflection, made up his mind not to study at allâa laudable

determination, to which he adhered in the most praiseworthy manner. His

sitting-room presented a strange chaos of dress-gloves, boxing-gloves,

caricatures, albums, invitation-cards, foils, cricket-bats, cardboard

drawings, paste, gum, and fifty other miscellaneous articles, heaped

together in the strangest confusion. He was always making something for

somebody, or planning some party of pleasure, which was his great

\_forte\_. He invariably spoke with astonishing rapidity; was smart,

spoffish, and eight-and-twenty.

âSplendid idea, âpon my life!â soliloquised Mr. Percy Noakes, over his

morning coffee, as his mind reverted to a suggestion which had been

thrown out on the previous night, by a lady at whose house he had spent

the evening. âGlorious idea!âMrs. Stubbs.â

âYes, sir,â replied a dirty old woman with an inflamed countenance,

emerging from the bedroom, with a barrel of dirt and cinders.âThis was

the laundress. âDid you call, sir?â

âOh! Mrs. Stubbs, Iâm going out. If that tailor should call again,

youâd better sayâyouâd better say Iâm out of town, and shanât be back for

a fortnight; and if that bootmaker should come, tell him Iâve lost his

address, or Iâd have sent him that little amount. Mind he writes it

down; and if Mr. Hardy should callâyou know Mr. Hardy?â

âThe funny gentleman, sir?â

âAh! the funny gentleman. If Mr. Hardy should call, say Iâve gone to

Mrs. Tauntonâs about that water-party.â

âYes, sir.â

âAnd if any fellow calls, and says heâs come about a steamer, tell him to

be here at five oâclock this afternoon, Mrs. Stubbs.â

âVery well, sir.â

Mr. Percy Noakes brushed his hat, whisked the crumbs off his

inexpressibles with a silk handkerchief, gave the ends of his hair a

persuasive roll round his forefinger, and sallied forth for Mrs.

Tauntonâs domicile in Great Marlborough-street, where she and her

daughters occupied the upper part of a house. She was a good-looking

widow of fifty, with the form of a giantess and the mind of a child. The

pursuit of pleasure, and some means of killing time, were the sole end of

her existence. She doted on her daughters, who were as frivolous as

herself.

A general exclamation of satisfaction hailed the arrival of Mr. Percy

Noakes, who went through the ordinary salutations, and threw himself into

an easy chair near the ladiesâ work-table, with the ease of a regularly

established friend of the family. Mrs. Taunton was busily engaged in

planting immense bright bows on every part of a smart cap on which it was

possible to stick one; Miss Emily Taunton was making a watch-guard; Miss

Sophia was at the piano, practising a new songâpoetry by the young

officer, or the police-officer, or the custom-house officer, or some

other interesting amateur.

âYou good creature!â said Mrs. Taunton, addressing the gallant Percy.

âYou really are a good soul! Youâve come about the water-party, I know.â

âI should rather suspect I had,â replied Mr. Noakes, triumphantly. âNow,

come here, girls, and Iâll tell you all about it.â Miss Emily and Miss

Sophia advanced to the table.

âNow,â continued Mr. Percy Noakes, âit seems to me that the best way will

be, to have a committee of ten, to make all the arrangements, and manage

the whole set-out. Then, I propose that the expenses shall be paid by

these ten fellows jointly.â

âExcellent, indeed!â said Mrs. Taunton, who highly approved of this part

of the arrangements.

âThen, my plan is, that each of these ten fellows shall have the power of

asking five people. There must be a meeting of the committee, at my

chambers, to make all the arrangements, and these people shall be then

named; every member of the committee shall have the power of

black-balling any one who is proposed; and one black ball shall exclude

that person. This will ensure our having a pleasant party, you know.â

âWhat a manager you are!â interrupted Mrs. Taunton again.

âCharming!â said the lovely Emily.

âI never did!â ejaculated Sophia.

âYes, I think itâll do,â replied Mr. Percy Noakes, who was now quite in

his element. âI think itâll do. Then you know we shall go down to the

Nore, and back, and have a regular capital cold dinner laid out in the

cabin before we start, so that everything may be ready without any

confusion; and we shall have the lunch laid out, on deck, in those little

tea-garden-looking concerns by the paddle-boxesâI donât know what you

call âem. Then, we shall hire a steamer expressly for our party, and a

band, and have the deck chalked, and we shall be able to dance quadrilles

all day; and then, whoever we know thatâs musical, you know, why theyâll

make themselves useful and agreeable; andâandâupon the whole, I really

hope we shall have a glorious day, you know!â

The announcement of these arrangements was received with the utmost

enthusiasm. Mrs. Taunton, Emily, and Sophia, were loud in their praises.

âWell, but tell me, Percy,â said Mrs. Taunton, âwho are the ten gentlemen

to be?â

âOh! I know plenty of fellows whoâll be delighted with the scheme,â

replied Mr. Percy Noakes; âof course we shall haveââ

âMr. Hardy!â interrupted the servant, announcing a visitor. Miss Sophia

and Miss Emily hastily assumed the most interesting attitudes that could

be adopted on so short a notice.

âHow are you?â said a stout gentleman of about forty, pausing at the door

in the attitude of an awkward harlequin. This was Mr. Hardy, whom we

have before described, on the authority of Mrs. Stubbs, as âthe funny

gentleman.â He was an Astley-Cooperish Joe Millerâa practical joker,

immensely popular with married ladies, and a general favourite with young

men. He was always engaged in some pleasure excursion or other, and

delighted in getting somebody into a scrape on such occasions. He could

sing comic songs, imitate hackney-coachmen and fowls, play airs on his

chin, and execute concertos on the Jewsâ-harp. He always eat and drank

most immoderately, and was the bosom friend of Mr. Percy Noakes. He had

a red face, a somewhat husky voice, and a tremendous laugh.

âHow \_are\_ you?â said this worthy, laughing, as if it were the finest

joke in the world to make a morning call, and shaking hands with the

ladies with as much vehemence as if their arms had been so many

pump-handles.

âYouâre just the very man I wanted,â said Mr. Percy Noakes, who proceeded

to explain the cause of his being in requisition.

âHa! ha! ha!â shouted Hardy, after hearing the statement, and receiving a

detailed account of the proposed excursion. âOh, capital! glorious!

What a day it will be! what fun!âBut, I say, when are you going to begin

making the arrangements?â

âNo time like the presentâat once, if you please.â

âOh, charming!â cried the ladies. âPray, do!â

Writing materials were laid before Mr. Percy Noakes, and the names of the

different members of the committee were agreed on, after as much

discussion between him and Mr. Hardy as if the fate of nations had

depended on their appointment. It was then agreed that a meeting should

take place at Mr. Percy Noakesâs chambers on the ensuing Wednesday

evening at eight oâclock, and the visitors departed.

Wednesday evening arrived; eight oâclock came, and eight members of the

committee were punctual in their attendance. Mr. Loggins, the solicitor,

of Boswell-court, sent an excuse, and Mr. Samuel Briggs, the ditto of

Furnivalâs Inn, sent his brother: much to his (the brotherâs)

satisfaction, and greatly to the discomfiture of Mr. Percy Noakes.

Between the Briggses and the Tauntons there existed a degree of

implacable hatred, quite unprecedented. The animosity between the

Montagues and Capulets, was nothing to that which prevailed between these

two illustrious houses. Mrs. Briggs was a widow, with three daughters

and two sons; Mr. Samuel, the eldest, was an attorney, and Mr. Alexander,

the youngest, was under articles to his brother. They resided in

Portland-street, Oxford-street, and moved in the same orbit as the

Tauntonsâhence their mutual dislike. If the Miss Briggses appeared in

smart bonnets, the Miss Tauntons eclipsed them with smarter. If Mrs.

Taunton appeared in a cap of all the hues of the rainbow, Mrs. Briggs

forthwith mounted a toque, with all the patterns of the kaleidoscope. If

Miss Sophia Taunton learnt a new song, two of the Miss Briggses came out

with a new duet. The Tauntons had once gained a temporary triumph with

the assistance of a harp, but the Briggses brought three guitars into the

field, and effectually routed the enemy. There was no end to the rivalry

between them.

Now, as Mr. Samuel Briggs was a mere machine, a sort of self-acting legal

walking-stick; and as the party was known to have originated, however

remotely, with Mrs. Taunton, the female branches of the Briggs family had

arranged that Mr. Alexander should attend, instead of his brother; and as

the said Mr. Alexander was deservedly celebrated for possessing all the

pertinacity of a bankruptcy-court attorney, combined with the obstinacy

of that useful animal which browses on the thistle, he required but

little tuition. He was especially enjoined to make himself as

disagreeable as possible; and, above all, to black-ball the Tauntons at

every hazard.

The proceedings of the evening were opened by Mr. Percy Noakes. After

successfully urging on the gentlemen present the propriety of their

mixing some brandy-and-water, he briefly stated the object of the

meeting, and concluded by observing that the first step must be the

selection of a chairman, necessarily possessing some arbitraryâhe trusted

not unconstitutionalâpowers, to whom the personal direction of the whole

of the arrangements (subject to the approval of the committee) should be

confided. A pale young gentleman, in a green stock and spectacles of the

same, a member of the honourable society of the Inner Temple, immediately

rose for the purpose of proposing Mr. Percy Noakes. He had known him

long, and this he would say, that a more honourable, a more excellent, or

a better-hearted fellow, never existed.â(Hear, hear!) The young

gentleman, who was a member of a debating society, took this opportunity

of entering into an examination of the state of the English law, from the

days of William the Conqueror down to the present period; he briefly

adverted to the code established by the ancient Druids; slightly glanced

at the principles laid down by the Athenian law-givers; and concluded

with a most glowing eulogium on pic-nics and constitutional rights.

Mr. Alexander Briggs opposed the motion. He had the highest esteem for

Mr. Percy Noakes as an individual, but he did consider that he ought not

to be intrusted with these immense powersâ(oh, oh!)âHe believed that in

the proposed capacity Mr. Percy Noakes would not act fairly, impartially,

or honourably; but he begged it to be distinctly understood, that he said

this, without the slightest personal disrespect. Mr. Hardy defended his

honourable friend, in a voice rendered partially unintelligible by

emotion and brandy-and-water. The proposition was put to the vote, and

there appearing to be only one dissentient voice, Mr. Percy Noakes was

declared duly elected, and took the chair accordingly.

The business of the meeting now proceeded with rapidity. The chairman

delivered in his estimate of the probable expense of the excursion, and

every one present subscribed his portion thereof. The question was put

that âThe Endeavourâ be hired for the occasion; Mr. Alexander Briggs

moved as an amendment, that the word âFlyâ be substituted for the word

âEndeavourâ; but after some debate consented to withdraw his opposition.

The important ceremony of balloting then commenced. A tea-caddy was

placed on a table in a dark corner of the apartment, and every one was

provided with two backgammon men, one black and one white.

The chairman with great solemnity then read the following list of the

guests whom he proposed to introduce:âMrs. Taunton and two daughters, Mr.

Wizzle, Mr. Simson. The names were respectively balloted for, and Mrs.

Taunton and her daughters were declared to be black-balled. Mr. Percy

Noakes and Mr. Hardy exchanged glances.

âIs your list prepared, Mr. Briggs?â inquired the chairman.

âIt is,â replied Alexander, delivering in the following:ââMrs. Briggs and

three daughters, Mr. Samuel Briggs.â The previous ceremony was repeated,

and Mrs. Briggs and three daughters were declared to be black-balled.

Mr. Alexander Briggs looked rather foolish, and the remainder of the

company appeared somewhat overawed by the mysterious nature of the

proceedings.

The balloting proceeded; but, one little circumstance which Mr. Percy

Noakes had not originally foreseen, prevented the system from working

quite as well as he had anticipated. Everybody was black-balled. Mr.

Alexander Briggs, by way of retaliation, exercised his power of exclusion

in every instance, and the result was, that after three hours had been

consumed in hard balloting, the names of only three gentlemen were found

to have been agreed to. In this dilemma what was to be done? either the

whole plan must fall to the ground, or a compromise must be effected.

The latter alternative was preferable; and Mr. Percy Noakes therefore

proposed that the form of balloting should be dispensed with, and that

every gentleman should merely be required to state whom he intended to

bring. The proposal was acceded to; the Tauntons and the Briggses were

reinstated; and the party was formed.

The next Wednesday was fixed for the eventful day, and it was unanimously

resolved that every member of the committee should wear a piece of blue

sarsenet ribbon round his left arm. It appeared from the statement of

Mr. Percy Noakes, that the boat belonged to the General Steam Navigation

Company, and was then lying off the Custom-house; and, as he proposed

that the dinner and wines should be provided by an eminent city purveyor,

it was arranged that Mr. Percy Noakes should be on board by seven oâclock

to superintend the arrangements, and that the remaining members of the

committee, together with the company generally, should be expected to

join her by nine oâclock. More brandy-and-water was despatched; several

speeches were made by the different law students present; thanks were

voted to the chairman; and the meeting separated.

The weather had been beautiful up to this period, and beautiful it

continued to be. Sunday passed over, and Mr. Percy Noakes became

unusually fidgetyârushing, constantly, to and from the Steam Packet

Wharf, to the astonishment of the clerks, and the great emolument of the

Holborn cabmen. Tuesday arrived, and the anxiety of Mr. Percy Noakes

knew no bounds. He was every instant running to the window, to look out

for clouds; and Mr. Hardy astonished the whole square by practising a new

comic song for the occasion, in the chairmanâs chambers.

Uneasy were the slumbers of Mr. Percy Noakes that night; he tossed and

tumbled about, and had confused dreams of steamers starting off, and

gigantic clocks with the hands pointing to a quarter-past nine, and the

ugly face of Mr. Alexander Briggs looking over the boatâs side, and

grinning, as if in derision of his fruitless attempts to move. He made a

violent effort to get on board, and awoke. The bright sun was shining

cheerfully into the bedroom, and Mr. Percy Noakes started up for his

watch, in the dreadful expectation of finding his worst dreams realised.

It was just five oâclock. He calculated the timeâhe should be a good

half-hour dressing himself; and as it was a lovely morning, and the tide

would be then running down, he would walk leisurely to Strand-lane, and

have a boat to the Custom-house.

He dressed himself, took a hasty apology for a breakfast, and sallied

forth. The streets looked as lonely and deserted as if they had been

crowded, overnight, for the last time. Here and there, an early

apprentice, with quenched-looking sleepy eyes, was taking down the

shutters of a shop; and a policeman or milkwoman might occasionally be

seen pacing slowly along; but the servants had not yet begun to clean the

doors, or light the kitchen fires, and London looked the picture of

desolation. At the corner of a by-street, near Temple-bar, was stationed

a âstreet-breakfast.â The coffee was boiling over a charcoal fire, and

large slices of bread and butter were piled one upon the other, like

deals in a timber-yard. The company were seated on a form, which, with a

view both to security and comfort, was placed against a neighbouring

wall. Two young men, whose uproarious mirth and disordered dress bespoke

the conviviality of the preceding evening, were treating three âladiesâ

and an Irish labourer. A little sweep was standing at a short distance,

casting a longing eye at the tempting delicacies; and a policeman was

watching the group from the opposite side of the street. The wan looks

and gaudy finery of the thinly-clad women contrasted as strangely with

the gay sunlight, as did their forced merriment with the boisterous

hilarity of the two young men, who, now and then, varied their amusements

by âbonnetingâ the proprietor of this itinerant coffee-house.

Mr. Percy Noakes walked briskly by, and when he turned down Strand-lane,

and caught a glimpse of the glistening water, he thought he had never

felt so important or so happy in his life.

âBoat, sir?â cried one of the three watermen who were mopping out their

boats, and all whistling. âBoat, sir?â

âNo,â replied Mr. Percy Noakes, rather sharply; for the inquiry was not

made in a manner at all suitable to his dignity.

âWould you prefer a wessel, sir?â inquired another, to the infinite

delight of the âJack-in-the-water.â

Mr. Percy Noakes replied with a look of supreme contempt.

âDid you want to be put on board a steamer, sir?â inquired an old

fireman-waterman, very confidentially. He was dressed in a faded red

suit, just the colour of the cover of a very old Court-guide.

âYes, make hasteâthe Endeavourâoff the Custom-house.â

âEndeavour!â cried the man who had convulsed the âJackâ before. âVy, I

see the Endeavour go up half an hour ago.â

âSo did I,â said another; âand I should think sheâd gone down by this

time, for sheâs a precious sight too full of ladies and genâlemen.â

Mr. Percy Noakes affected to disregard these representations, and stepped

into the boat, which the old man, by dint of scrambling, and shoving, and

grating, had brought up to the causeway. âShove her off!â cried Mr.

Percy Noakes, and away the boat glided down the river; Mr. Percy Noakes

seated on the recently mopped seat, and the watermen at the stairs

offering to bet him any reasonable sum that heâd never reach the

âCustum-us.â

âHere she is, by Jove!â said the delighted Percy, as they ran alongside

the Endeavour.

âHold hard!â cried the steward over the side, and Mr. Percy Noakes jumped

on board.

âHope you will find everything as you wished, sir. She looks uncommon

well this morning.â

âShe does, indeed,â replied the manager, in a state of ecstasy which it

is impossible to describe. The deck was scrubbed, and the seats were

scrubbed, and there was a bench for the band, and a place for dancing,

and a pile of camp-stools, and an awning; and then Mr. Percy Noakes

bustled down below, and there were the pastrycookâs men, and the

stewardâs wife, laying out the dinner on two tables the whole length of

the cabin; and then Mr. Percy Noakes took off his coat and rushed

backwards and forwards, doing nothing, but quite convinced he was

assisting everybody; and the stewardâs wife laughed till she cried, and

Mr. Percy Noakes panted with the violence of his exertions. And then the

bell at London-bridge wharf rang; and a Margate boat was just starting;

and a Gravesend boat was just starting, and people shouted, and porters

ran down the steps with luggage that would crush any men but porters; and

sloping boards, with bits of wood nailed on them, were placed between the

outside boat and the inside boat; and the passengers ran along them, and

looked like so many fowls coming out of an area; and then, the bell

ceased, and the boards were taken away, and the boats started, and the

whole scene was one of the most delightful bustle and confusion.

The time wore on; half-past eight oâclock arrived; the pastry-cookâs men

went ashore; the dinner was completely laid out; and Mr. Percy Noakes

locked the principal cabin, and put the key in his pocket, in order that

it might be suddenly disclosed, in all its magnificence, to the eyes of

the astonished company. The band came on board, and so did the wine.

Ten minutes to nine, and the committee embarked in a body. There was Mr.

Hardy, in a blue jacket and waistcoat, white trousers, silk stockings,

and pumpsâin full aquatic costume, with a straw hat on his head, and an

immense telescope under his arm; and there was the young gentleman with

the green spectacles, in nankeen inexplicables, with a ditto waistcoat

and bright buttons, like the pictures of Paulânot the saint, but he of

Virginia notoriety. The remainder of the committee, dressed in white

hats, light jackets, waistcoats, and trousers, looked something between

waiters and West India planters.

Nine oâclock struck, and the company arrived in shoals. Mr. Samuel

Briggs, Mrs. Briggs, and the Misses Briggs, made their appearance in a

smart private wherry. The three guitars, in their respective dark green

cases, were carefully stowed away in the bottom of the boat, accompanied

by two immense portfolios of music, which it would take at least a weekâs

incessant playing to get through. The Tauntons arrived at the same

moment with more music, and a lionâa gentleman with a bass voice and an

incipient red moustache. The colours of the Taunton party were pink;

those of the Briggses a light blue. The Tauntons had artificial flowers

in their bonnets; here the Briggses gained a decided advantageâthey wore

feathers.

âHow dâye do, dear?â said the Misses Briggs to the Misses Taunton. (The

word âdearâ among girls is frequently synonymous with âwretch.â)

âQuite well, thank you, dear,â replied the Misses Taunton to the Misses

Briggs; and then, there was such a kissing, and congratulating, and

shaking of hands, as might have induced one to suppose that the two

families were the best friends in the world, instead of each wishing the

other overboard, as they most sincerely did.

Mr. Percy Noakes received the visitors, and bowed to the strange

gentleman, as if he should like to know who he was. This was just what

Mrs. Taunton wanted. Here was an opportunity to astonish the Briggses.

âOh! I beg your pardon,â said the general of the Taunton party, with a

careless air.ââCaptain HelvesâMr. Percy NoakesâMrs. BriggsâCaptain

Helves.â

Mr. Percy Noakes bowed very low; the gallant captain did the same with

all due ferocity, and the Briggses were clearly overcome.

âOur friend, Mr. Wizzle, being unfortunately prevented from coming,â

resumed Mrs. Taunton, âI did myself the pleasure of bringing the captain,

whose musical talents I knew would be a great acquisition.â

âIn the name of the committee I have to thank you for doing so, and to

offer you welcome, sir,â replied Percy. (Here the scraping was renewed.)

âBut pray be seatedâwonât you walk aft? Captain, will you conduct Miss

Taunton?âMiss Briggs, will you allow me?â

âWhere could they have picked up that military man?â inquired Mrs. Briggs

of Miss Kate Briggs, as they followed the little party.

âI canât imagine,â replied Miss Kate, bursting with vexation; for the

very fierce air with which the gallant captain regarded the company, had

impressed her with a high sense of his importance.

Boat after boat came alongside, and guest after guest arrived. The

invites had been excellently arranged: Mr. Percy Noakes having considered

it as important that the number of young men should exactly tally with

that of the young ladies, as that the quantity of knives on board should

be in precise proportion to the forks.

âNow, is every one on board?â inquired Mr. Percy Noakes. The committee

(who, with their bits of blue ribbon, looked as if they were all going to

be bled) bustled about to ascertain the fact, and reported that they

might safely start.

âGo on!â cried the master of the boat from the top of one of the

paddle-boxes.

âGo on!â echoed the boy, who was stationed over the hatchway to pass the

directions down to the engineer; and away went the vessel with that

agreeable noise which is peculiar to steamers, and which is composed of a

mixture of creaking, gushing, clanging, and snorting.

âHoi-oi-oi-oi-oi-oi-o-i-i-i!â shouted half-a-dozen voices from a boat, a

quarter of a mile astern.

âEase her!â cried the captain: âdo these people belong to us, sir?â

âNoakes,â exclaimed Hardy, who had been looking at every object far and

near, through the large telescope, âitâs the Fleetwoods and the

Wakefieldsâand two children with them, by Jove!â

âWhat a shame to bring children!â said everybody; âhow very

inconsiderate!â

âI say, it would be a good joke to pretend not to see âem, wouldnât it?â

suggested Hardy, to the immense delight of the company generally. A

council of war was hastily held, and it was resolved that the newcomers

should be taken on board, on Mr. Hardy solemnly pledging himself to tease

the children during the whole of the day.

âStop her!â cried the captain.

âStop her!â repeated the boy; whizz went the steam, and all the young

ladies, as in duty bound, screamed in concert. They were only appeased

by the assurance of the martial Helves, that the escape of steam

consequent on stopping a vessel was seldom attended with any great loss

of human life.

Two men ran to the side; and after some shouting, and swearing, and

angling for the wherry with a boat-hook, Mr. Fleetwood, and Mrs.

Fleetwood, and Master Fleetwood, and Mr. Wakefield, and Mrs. Wakefield,

and Miss Wakefield, were safely deposited on the deck. The girl was

about six years old, the boy about four; the former was dressed in a

white frock with a pink sash and dogâs-eared-looking little spencer: a

straw bonnet and green veil, six inches by three and a half; the latter,

was attired for the occasion in a nankeen frock, between the bottom of

which, and the top of his plaid socks, a considerable portion of two

small mottled legs was discernible. He had a light blue cap with a gold

band and tassel on his head, and a damp piece of gingerbread in his hand,

with which he had slightly embossed his countenance.

The boat once more started off; the band played âOff she goes:â the major

part of the company conversed cheerfully in groups; and the old gentlemen

walked up and down the deck in pairs, as perseveringly and gravely as if

they were doing a match against time for an immense stake. They ran

briskly down the Pool; the gentlemen pointed out the Docks, the Thames

Police-office, and other elegant public edifices; and the young ladies

exhibited a proper display of horror at the appearance of the

coal-whippers and ballast-heavers. Mr. Hardy told stories to the married

ladies, at which they laughed very much in their pocket-handkerchiefs,

and hit him on the knuckles with their fans, declaring him to be âa

naughty manâa shocking creatureââand so forth; and Captain Helves gave

slight descriptions of battles and duels, with a most bloodthirsty air,

which made him the admiration of the women, and the envy of the men.

Quadrilling commenced; Captain Helves danced one set with Miss Emily

Taunton, and another set with Miss Sophia Taunton. Mrs. Taunton was in

ecstasies. The victory appeared to be complete; but alas! the

inconstancy of man! Having performed this necessary duty, he attached

himself solely to Miss Julia Briggs, with whom he danced no less than

three sets consecutively, and from whose side he evinced no intention of

stirring for the remainder of the day.

Mr. Hardy, having played one or two very brilliant fantasias on the

Jewsâ-harp, and having frequently repeated the exquisitely amusing joke

of slily chalking a large cross on the back of some member of the

committee, Mr. Percy Noakes expressed his hope that some of their musical

friends would oblige the company by a display of their abilities.

âPerhaps,â he said in a very insinuating manner, âCaptain Helves will

oblige us?â Mrs. Tauntonâs countenance lighted up, for the captain only

sang duets, and couldnât sing them with anybody but one of her daughters.

âReally,â said that warlike individual, âI should be very happy, âbutââ

âOh! pray do,â cried all the young ladies.

âMiss Emily, have you any objection to join in a duet?â

âOh! not the slightest,â returned the young lady, in a tone which clearly

showed she had the greatest possible objection.

âShall I accompany you, dear?â inquired one of the Miss Briggses, with

the bland intention of spoiling the effect.

âVery much obliged to you, Miss Briggs,â sharply retorted Mrs. Taunton,

who saw through the manoeuvre; âmy daughters always sing without

accompaniments.â

âAnd without voices,â tittered Mrs. Briggs, in a low tone.

âPerhaps,â said Mrs. Taunton, reddening, for she guessed the tenor of the

observation, though she had not heard it clearlyââPerhaps it would be as

well for some people, if their voices were not quite so audible as they

are to other people.â

âAnd, perhaps, if gentlemen who are kidnapped to pay attention to some

personsâ daughters, had not sufficient discernment to pay attention to

other personsâ daughters,â returned Mrs. Briggs, âsome persons would not

be so ready to display that ill-temper which, thank God, distinguishes

them from other persons.â

âPersons!â ejaculated Mrs. Taunton.

âPersons,â replied Mrs. Briggs.

âInsolence!â

âCreature!â

âHush! hush!â interrupted Mr. Percy Noakes, who was one of the very few

by whom this dialogue had been overheard. âHush!âpray, silence for the

duet.â

After a great deal of preparatory crowing and humming, the captain began

the following duet from the opera of âPaul and Virginia,â in that

grunting tone in which a man gets down, Heaven knows where, without the

remotest chance of ever getting up again. This, in private circles, is

frequently designated âa bass voice.â

âSee (sung the captain) from oâceâan riâsing

Bright flames the orâb of dâay.

From yon groâove, the varied soâongsââ

Here, the singer was interrupted by varied cries of the most dreadful

description, proceeding from some grove in the immediate vicinity of the

starboard paddle-box.

âMy child!â screamed Mrs. Fleetwood. âMy child! it is his voiceâI know

it.â

Mr. Fleetwood, accompanied by several gentlemen, here rushed to the

quarter from whence the noise proceeded, and an exclamation of horror

burst from the company; the general impression being, that the little

innocent had either got his head in the water, or his legs in the

machinery.

âWhat is the matter?â shouted the agonised father, as he returned with

the child in his arms.

âOh! oh! oh!â screamed the small sufferer again.

âWhat is the matter, dear?â inquired the father once moreâhastily

stripping off the nankeen frock, for the purpose of ascertaining whether

the child had one bone which was not smashed to pieces.

âOh! oh!âIâm so frightened!â

âWhat at, dear?âwhat at?â said the mother, soothing the sweet infant.

âOh! heâs been making such dreadful faces at me,â cried the boy,

relapsing into convulsions at the bare recollection.

âHe!âwho?â cried everybody, crowding round him.

âOh!âhim!â replied the child, pointing at Hardy, who affected to be the

most concerned of the whole group.

The real state of the case at once flashed upon the minds of all present,

with the exception of the Fleetwoods and the Wakefields. The facetious

Hardy, in fulfilment of his promise, had watched the child to a remote

part of the vessel, and, suddenly appearing before him with the most

awful contortions of visage, had produced his paroxysm of terror. Of

course, he now observed that it was hardly necessary for him to deny the

accusation; and the unfortunate little victim was accordingly led below,

after receiving sundry thumps on the head from both his parents, for

having the wickedness to tell a story.

This little interruption having been adjusted, the captain resumed, and

Miss Emily chimed in, in due course. The duet was loudly applauded, and,

certainly, the perfect independence of the parties deserved great

commendation. Miss Emily sung her part, without the slightest reference

to the captain; and the captain sang so loud, that he had not the

slightest idea what was being done by his partner. After having gone

through the last few eighteen or nineteen bars by himself, therefore, he

acknowledged the plaudits of the circle with that air of self-denial

which men usually assume when they think they have done something to

astonish the company.

âNow,â said Mr. Percy Noakes, who had just ascended from the fore-cabin,

where he had been busily engaged in decanting the wine, âif the Misses

Briggs will oblige us with something before dinner, I am sure we shall be

very much delighted.â

One of those hums of admiration followed the suggestion, which one

frequently hears in society, when nobody has the most distant notion what

he is expressing his approval of. The three Misses Briggs looked

modestly at their mamma, and the mamma looked approvingly at her

daughters, and Mrs. Taunton looked scornfully at all of them. The Misses

Briggs asked for their guitars, and several gentlemen seriously damaged

the cases in their anxiety to present them. Then, there was a very

interesting production of three little keys for the aforesaid cases, and

a melodramatic expression of horror at finding a string broken; and a

vast deal of screwing and tightening, and winding, and tuning, during

which Mrs. Briggs expatiated to those near her on the immense difficulty

of playing a guitar, and hinted at the wondrous proficiency of her

daughters in that mystic art. Mrs. Taunton whispered to a neighbour that

it was âquite sickening!â and the Misses Taunton looked as if they knew

how to play, but disdained to do it.

At length, the Misses Briggs began in real earnest. It was a new Spanish

composition, for three voices and three guitars. The effect was

electrical. All eyes were turned upon the captain, who was reported to

have once passed through Spain with his regiment, and who must be well

acquainted with the national music. He was in raptures. This was

sufficient; the trio was encored; the applause was universal; and never

had the Tauntons suffered such a complete defeat.

âBravo! bravo!â ejaculated the captain;ââbravo!â

âPretty! isnât it, sir?â inquired Mr. Samuel Briggs, with the air of a

self-satisfied showman. By-the-bye, these were the first words he had

been heard to utter since he left Boswell-court the evening before.

âDe-lightful!â returned the captain, with a flourish, and a military

cough;ââde-lightful!â

âSweet instrument!â said an old gentleman with a bald head, who had been

trying all the morning to look through a telescope, inside the glass of

which Mr. Hardy had fixed a large black wafer.

âDid you ever hear a Portuguese tambourine?â inquired that jocular

individual.

âDid \_you\_ ever hear a tom-tom, sir?â sternly inquired the captain, who

lost no opportunity of showing off his travels, real or pretended.

âA what?â asked Hardy, rather taken aback.

âA tom-tom.â

âNever!â

âNor a gum-gum?â

âNever!â

âWhat \_is\_ a gum-gum?â eagerly inquired several young ladies.

âWhen I was in the East Indies,â replied the captainâ(here was a

discoveryâhe had been in the East Indies!)ââwhen I was in the East

Indies, I was once stopping a few thousand miles up the country, on a

visit at the house of a very particular friend of mine, Ram Chowdar Doss

Azuph Al Bowlarâa devilish pleasant fellow. As we were enjoying our

hookahs, one evening, in the cool verandah in front of his villa, we were

rather surprised by the sudden appearance of thirty-four of his

Kit-ma-gars (for he had rather a large establishment there), accompanied

by an equal number of Con-su-mars, approaching the house with a

threatening aspect, and beating a tom-tom. The Ram started upââ

âWho?â inquired the bald gentleman, intensely interested.

âThe RamâRam Chowdarââ

âOh!â said the old gentleman, âbeg your pardon; pray go on.â

ââStarted up and drew a pistol. âHelves,â said he, âmy boy,ââhe always

called me, my boyââHelves,â said he, âdo you hear that tom-tom?â âI do,â

said I. His countenance, which before was pale, assumed a most frightful

appearance; his whole visage was distorted, and his frame shaken by

violent emotions. âDo you see that gum-gum?â said he. âNo,â said I,

staring about me. âYou donât?â said he. âNo, Iâll be damned if I do,â

said I; âand whatâs more, I donât know what a gum-gum is,â said I. I

really thought the Ram would have dropped. He drew me aside, and with an

expression of agony I shall never forget, said in a low whisperââ

âDinnerâs on the table, ladies,â interrupted the stewardâs wife.

âWill you allow me?â said the captain, immediately suiting the action to

the word, and escorting Miss Julia Briggs to the cabin, with as much ease

as if he had finished the story.

âWhat an extraordinary circumstance!â ejaculated the same old gentleman,

preserving his listening attitude.

âWhat a traveller!â said the young ladies.

âWhat a singular name!â exclaimed the gentlemen, rather confused by the

coolness of the whole affair.

âI wish he had finished the story,â said an old lady. âI wonder what a

gum-gum really is?â

âBy Jove!â exclaimed Hardy, who until now had been lost in utter

amazement, âI donât know what it may be in India, but in England I think

a gum-gum has very much the same meaning as a hum-bug.â

âHow illiberal! how envious!â cried everybody, as they made for the

cabin, fully impressed with a belief in the captainâs amazing adventures.

Helves was the sole lion for the remainder of the dayâimpudence and the

marvellous are pretty sure passports to any society.

The party had by this time reached their destination, and put about on

their return home. The wind, which had been with them the whole day, was

now directly in their teeth; the weather had become gradually more and

more overcast; and the sky, water, and shore, were all of that dull,

heavy, uniform lead-colour, which house-painters daub in the first

instance over a street-door which is gradually approaching a state of

convalescence. It had been âspittingâ with rain for the last half-hour,

and now began to pour in good earnest. The wind was freshening very

fast, and the waterman at the wheel had unequivocally expressed his

opinion that there would shortly be a squall. A slight emotion on the

part of the vessel, now and then, seemed to suggest the possibility of

its pitching to a very uncomfortable extent in the event of its blowing

harder; and every timber began to creak, as if the boat were an overladen

clothes-basket. Sea-sickness, however, is like a belief in ghostsâevery

one entertains some misgivings on the subject, but few will acknowledge

any. The majority of the company, therefore, endeavoured to look

peculiarly happy, feeling all the while especially miserable.

âDonât it rain?â inquired the old gentleman before noticed, when, by dint

of squeezing and jamming, they were all seated at table.

âI think it doesâa little,â replied Mr. Percy Noakes, who could hardly

hear himself speak, in consequence of the pattering on the deck.

âDonât it blow?â inquired some one else.

âNo, I donât think it does,â responded Hardy, sincerely wishing that he

could persuade himself that it did not; for he sat near the door, and was

almost blown off his seat.

âItâll soon clear up,â said Mr. Percy Noakes, in a cheerful tone.

âOh, certainly!â ejaculated the committee generally.

âNo doubt of it!â said the remainder of the company, whose attention was

now pretty well engrossed by the serious business of eating, carving,

taking wine, and so forth.

The throbbing motion of the engine was but too perceptible. There was a

large, substantial, cold boiled leg of mutton, at the bottom of the

table, shaking like blancmange; a previously hearty sirloin of beef

looked as if it had been suddenly seized with the palsy; and some

tongues, which were placed on dishes rather too large for them, went

through the most surprising evolutions; darting from side to side, and

from end to end, like a fly in an inverted wine-glass. Then, the sweets

shook and trembled, till it was quite impossible to help them, and people

gave up the attempt in despair; and the pigeon-pies looked as if the

birds, whose legs were stuck outside, were trying to get them in. The

table vibrated and started like a feverish pulse, and the very legs were

convulsedâeverything was shaking and jarring. The beams in the roof of

the cabin seemed as if they were put there for the sole purpose of giving

people head-aches, and several elderly gentlemen became ill-tempered in

consequence. As fast as the steward put the fire-irons up, they \_would\_

fall down again; and the more the ladies and gentlemen tried to sit

comfortably on their seats, the more the seats seemed to slide away from

the ladies and gentlemen. Several ominous demands were made for small

glasses of brandy; the countenances of the company gradually underwent

most extraordinary changes; one gentleman was observed suddenly to rush

from table without the slightest ostensible reason, and dart up the steps

with incredible swiftness: thereby greatly damaging both himself and the

steward, who happened to be coming down at the same moment.

The cloth was removed; the dessert was laid on the table; and the glasses

were filled. The motion of the boat increased; several members of the

party began to feel rather vague and misty, and looked as if they had

only just got up. The young gentleman with the spectacles, who had been

in a fluctuating state for some timeâat one moment bright, and at another

dismal, like a revolving light on the sea-coastârashly announced his wish

to propose a toast. After several ineffectual attempts to preserve his

perpendicular, the young gentleman, having managed to hook himself to the

centre leg of the table with his left hand, proceeded as follows:

âLadies and gentlemen. A gentleman is among usâI may say a

strangerâ(here some painful thought seemed to strike the orator; he

paused, and looked extremely odd)âwhose talents, whose travels, whose

cheerfulnessââ

âI beg your pardon, Edkins,â hastily interrupted Mr. Percy

Noakes,ââHardy, whatâs the matter?â

âNothing,â replied the âfunny gentleman,â who had just life enough left

to utter two consecutive syllables.

âWill you have some brandy?â

âNo!â replied Hardy in a tone of great indignation, and looking as

comfortable as Temple-bar in a Scotch mist; âwhat should I want brandy

for?â

âWill you go on deck?â

âNo, I will \_not\_.â This was said with a most determined air, and in a

voice which might have been taken for an imitation of anything; it was

quite as much like a guinea-pig as a bassoon.

âI beg your pardon, Edkins,â said the courteous Percy; âI thought our

friend was ill. Pray go on.â

A pause.

âPray go on.â

âMr. Edkins \_is\_ gone,â cried somebody.

âI beg your pardon, sir,â said the steward, running up to Mr. Percy

Noakes, âI beg your pardon, sir, but the gentleman as just went on

deckâhim with the green spectaclesâis uncommon bad, to be sure; and the

young man as played the wiolin says, that unless he has some brandy he

canât answer for the consequences. He says he has a wife and two

children, whose werry subsistence depends on his breaking a wessel, and

he expects to do so every moment. The flageoletâs been werry ill, but

heâs better, only heâs in a dreadful prusperation.â

All disguise was now useless; the company staggered on deck; the

gentlemen tried to see nothing but the clouds; and the ladies, muffled up

in such shawls and cloaks as they had brought with them, lay about on the

seats, and under the seats, in the most wretched condition. Never was

such a blowing, and raining, and pitching, and tossing, endured by any

pleasure party before. Several remonstrances were sent down below, on

the subject of Master Fleetwood, but they were totally unheeded in

consequence of the indisposition of his natural protectors. That

interesting child screamed at the top of his voice, until he had no voice

left to scream with; and then, Miss Wakefield began, and screamed for the

remainder of the passage.

Mr. Hardy was observed, some hours afterwards, in an attitude which

induced his friends to suppose that he was busily engaged in

contemplating the beauties of the deep; they only regretted that his

taste for the picturesque should lead him to remain so long in a

position, very injurious at all times, but especially so, to an

individual labouring under a tendency of blood to the head.

The party arrived off the Custom-house at about two oâclock on the

Thursday morning dispirited and worn out. The Tauntons were too ill to

quarrel with the Briggses, and the Briggses were too wretched to annoy

the Tauntons. One of the guitar-cases was lost on its passage to a

hackney-coach, and Mrs. Briggs has not scrupled to state that the

Tauntons bribed a porter to throw it down an area. Mr. Alexander Briggs

opposes vote by ballotâhe says from personal experience of its

inefficacy; and Mr. Samuel Briggs, whenever he is asked to express his

sentiments on the point, says he has no opinion on that or any other

subject.

Mr. Edkinsâthe young gentleman in the green spectaclesâmakes a speech on

every occasion on which a speech can possibly be made: the eloquence of

which can only be equalled by its length. In the event of his not being

previously appointed to a judgeship, it is probable that he will practise

as a barrister in the New Central Criminal Court.

Captain Helves continued his attention to Miss Julia Briggs, whom he

might possibly have espoused, if it had not unfortunately happened that

Mr. Samuel arrested him, in the way of business, pursuant to instructions

received from Messrs. Scroggins and Payne, whose town-debts the gallant

captain had condescended to collect, but whose accounts, with the

indiscretion sometimes peculiar to military minds, he had omitted to keep

with that dull accuracy which custom has rendered necessary. Mrs.

Taunton complains that she has been much deceived in him. He introduced

himself to the family on board a Gravesend steam-packet, and certainly,

therefore, ought to have proved respectable.

Mr. Percy Noakes is as light-hearted and careless as ever.

CHAPTER VIIIâTHE GREAT WINGLEBURY DUEL

The little town of Great Winglebury is exactly forty-two miles and

three-quarters from Hyde Park corner. It has a long, straggling, quiet

High-street, with a great black and white clock at a small red Town-hall,

half-way upâa market-placeâa cageâan assembly-roomâa churchâa bridgeâa

chapelâa theatreâa libraryâan innâa pumpâand a Post-office. Tradition

tells of a âLittle Winglebury,â down some cross-road about two miles off;

and, as a square mass of dirty paper, supposed to have been originally

intended for a letter, with certain tremulous characters inscribed

thereon, in which a lively imagination might trace a remote resemblance

to the word âLittle,â was once stuck up to be owned in the sunny window

of the Great Winglebury Post-office, from which it only disappeared when

it fell to pieces with dust and extreme old age, there would appear to be

some foundation for the legend. Common belief is inclined to bestow the

name upon a little hole at the end of a muddy lane about a couple of

miles long, colonised by one wheelwright, four paupers, and a beer-shop;

but, even this authority, slight as it is, must be regarded with extreme

suspicion, inasmuch as the inhabitants of the hole aforesaid, concur in

opining that it never had any name at all, from the earliest ages down to

the present day.

The Winglebury Arms, in the centre of the High-street, opposite the small

building with the big clock, is the principal inn of Great Wingleburyâthe

commercial-inn, posting-house, and excise-office; the âBlueâ house at

every election, and the judgesâ house at every assizes. It is the

head-quarters of the Gentlemenâs Whist Club of Winglebury Blues (so

called in opposition to the Gentlemenâs Whist Club of Winglebury Buffs,

held at the other house, a little further down): and whenever a juggler,

or wax-work man, or concert-giver, takes Great Winglebury in his circuit,

it is immediately placarded all over the town that Mr. So-and-so,

âtrusting to that liberal support which the inhabitants of Great

Winglebury have long been so liberal in bestowing, has at a great expense

engaged the elegant and commodious assembly-rooms, attached to the

Winglebury Arms.â The house is a large one, with a red brick and stone

front; a pretty spacious hall, ornamented with evergreen plants,

terminates in a perspective view of the bar, and a glass case, in which

are displayed a choice variety of delicacies ready for dressing, to catch

the eye of a new-comer the moment he enters, and excite his appetite to

the highest possible pitch. Opposite doors lead to the âcoffeeâ and

âcommercialâ rooms; and a great wide, rambling staircase,âthree stairs

and a landingâfour stairs and another landingâone step and another

landingâhalf-a-dozen stairs and another landingâand so onâconducts to

galleries of bedrooms, and labyrinths of sitting-rooms, denominated

âprivate,â where you may enjoy yourself, as privately as you can in any

place where some bewildered being walks into your room every five

minutes, by mistake, and then walks out again, to open all the doors

along the gallery until he finds his own.

Such is the Winglebury Arms, at this day, and such was the Winglebury

Arms some time sinceâno matter whenâtwo or three minutes before the

arrival of the London stage. Four horses with cloths onâchange for a

coachâwere standing quietly at the corner of the yard surrounded by a

listless group of post-boys in shiny hats and smock-frocks, engaged in

discussing the merits of the cattle; half a dozen ragged boys were

standing a little apart, listening with evident interest to the

conversation of these worthies; and a few loungers were collected round

the horse-trough, awaiting the arrival of the coach.

The day was hot and sunny, the town in the zenith of its dulness, and

with the exception of these few idlers, not a living creature was to be

seen. Suddenly, the loud notes of a key-bugle broke the monotonous

stillness of the street; in came the coach, rattling over the uneven

paving with a noise startling enough to stop even the large-faced clock

itself. Down got the outsides, up went the windows in all directions,

out came the waiters, up started the ostlers, and the loungers, and the

post-boys, and the ragged boys, as if they were electrifiedâunstrapping,

and unchaining, and unbuckling, and dragging willing horses out, and

forcing reluctant horses in, and making a most exhilarating bustle.

âLady inside, here!â said the guard. âPlease to alight, maâam,â said the

waiter. âPrivate sitting-room?â interrogated the lady. âCertainly,

maâam,â responded the chamber-maid. âNothing but these âere trunks,

maâam?â inquired the guard. âNothing more,â replied the lady. Up got

the outsides again, and the guard, and the coachman; off came the cloths,

with a jerk; âAll right,â was the cry; and away they went. The loungers

lingered a minute or two in the road, watching the coach until it turned

the corner, and then loitered away one by one. The street was clear

again, and the town, by contrast, quieter than ever.

âLady in number twenty-five,â screamed the landlady.ââThomas!â

âYes, maâam.â

âLetter just been left for the gentleman in number nineteen. Boots at

the Lion left it. No answer.â

âLetter for you, sir,â said Thomas, depositing the letter on number

nineteenâs table.

âFor me?â said number nineteen, turning from the window, out of which he

had been surveying the scene just described.

âYes, sir,ââ(waiters always speak in hints, and never utter complete

sentences,)ââyes, sir,âBoots at the Lion, sir,âBar, sir,âMissis said

number nineteen, sirâAlexander Trott, Esq., sir?âYour card at the bar,

sir, I think, sir?â

âMy name \_is\_ Trott,â replied number nineteen, breaking the seal. âYou

may go, waiter.â The waiter pulled down the window-blind, and then

pulled it up againâfor a regular waiter must do something before he

leaves the roomâadjusted the glasses on the side-board, brushed a place

that was \_not\_ dusty, rubbed his hands very hard, walked stealthily to

the door, and evaporated.

There was, evidently, something in the contents of the letter, of a

nature, if not wholly unexpected, certainly extremely disagreeable. Mr.

Alexander Trott laid it down, and took it up again, and walked about the

room on particular squares of the carpet, and even attempted, though

unsuccessfully, to whistle an air. It wouldnât do. He threw himself

into a chair, and read the following epistle aloud:â

âBlue Lion and Stomach-warmer,

âGreat Winglebury.

â\_Wednesday Morning\_.

âSir. Immediately on discovering your intentions, I left our

counting-house, and followed you. I know the purport of your

journey;âthat journey shall never be completed.

âI have no friend here, just now, on whose secrecy I can rely. This

shall be no obstacle to my revenge. Neither shall Emily Brown be

exposed to the mercenary solicitations of a scoundrel, odious in her

eyes, and contemptible in everybody elseâs: nor will I tamely submit

to the clandestine attacks of a base umbrella-maker.

âSir. From Great Winglebury church, a footpath leads through four

meadows to a retired spot known to the townspeople as Stiffunâs

Acre.â [Mr. Trott shuddered.] âI shall be waiting there alone, at

twenty minutes before six oâclock to-morrow morning. Should I be

disappointed in seeing you there, I will do myself the pleasure of

calling with a horsewhip.

âHORACE HUNTER.

âPS. There is a gunsmiths in the High-street; and they wonât sell

gunpowder after darkâyou understand me.

âPPS. You had better not order your breakfast in the morning until

you have met me. It may be an unnecessary expense.â

âDesperate-minded villain! I knew how it would be!â ejaculated the

terrified Trott. âI always told father, that once start me on this

expedition, and Hunter would pursue me like the Wandering Jew. Itâs bad

enough as it is, to marry with the old peopleâs commands, and without the

girlâs consent; but what will Emily think of me, if I go down there

breathless with running away from this infernal salamander? What \_shall\_

I do? What \_can\_ I do? If I go back to the city, Iâm disgraced for

everâlose the girlâand, whatâs more, lose the money too. Even if I did

go on to the Brownsâ by the coach, Hunter would be after me in a

post-chaise; and if I go to this place, this Stiffunâs Acre (another

shudder), Iâm as good as dead. Iâve seen him hit the man at the

Pall-mall shooting-gallery, in the second button-hole of the waistcoat,

five times out of every six, and when he didnât hit him there, he hit him

in the head.â With this consolatory reminiscence Mr. Alexander Trott

again ejaculated, âWhat shall I do?â

Long and weary were his reflections, as, burying his face in his hand, he

sat, ruminating on the best course to be pursued. His mental

direction-post pointed to London. He thought of the âgovernorâsâ anger,

and the loss of the fortune which the paternal Brown had promised the

paternal Trott his daughter should contribute to the coffers of his son.

Then the words âTo Brownâsâ were legibly inscribed on the said

direction-post, but Horace Hunterâs denunciation rung in his ears;âlast

of all it bore, in red letters, the words, âTo Stiffunâs Acre;â and then

Mr. Alexander Trott decided on adopting a plan which he presently

matured.

First and foremost, he despatched the under-boots to the Blue Lion and

Stomach-warmer, with a gentlemanly note to Mr. Horace Hunter, intimating

that he thirsted for his destruction and would do himself the pleasure of

slaughtering him next morning, without fail. He then wrote another

letter, and requested the attendance of the other bootsâfor they kept a

pair. A modest knock at the room door was heard. âCome in,â said Mr.

Trott. A man thrust in a red head with one eye in it, and being again

desired to âcome in,â brought in the body and the legs to which the head

belonged, and a fur cap which belonged to the head.

âYou are the upper-boots, I think?â inquired Mr. Trott.

âYes, I am the upper-boots,â replied a voice from inside a velveteen

case, with mother-of-pearl buttonsââthat is, Iâm the boots as bâlongs to

the house; the other manâs my man, as goes errands and does odd jobs.

Top-boots and half-boots, I calls us.â

âYouâre from London?â inquired Mr. Trott.

âDriv a cab once,â was the laconic reply.

âWhy donât you drive it now?â asked Mr. Trott.

âOver-driv the cab, and driv over a âooman,â replied the top-boots, with

brevity.

âDo you know the mayorâs house?â inquired Mr. Trott.

âRather,â replied the boots, significantly, as if he had some good reason

to remember it.

âDo you think you could manage to leave a letter there?â interrogated

Trott.

âShouldnât wonder,â responded boots.

âBut this letter,â said Trott, holding a deformed note with a paralytic

direction in one hand, and five shillings in the otherââthis letter is

anonymous.â

âAâwhat?â interrupted the boots.

âAnonymousâheâs not to know who it comes from.â

âOh! I see,â responded the regâlar, with a knowing wink, but without

evincing the slightest disinclination to undertake the chargeââI seeâbit

oâ Sving, eh?â and his one eye wandered round the room, as if in quest of

a dark lantern and phosphorus-box. âBut, I say!â he continued, recalling

the eye from its search, and bringing it to bear on Mr. Trott. âI say,

heâs a lawyer, our mayor, and insured in the County. If youâve a spite

agen him, youâd better not burn his house downâblessed if I donât think

it would be the greatest favour you could do him.â And he chuckled

inwardly.

If Mr. Alexander Trott had been in any other situation, his first act

would have been to kick the man down-stairs by deputy; or, in other

words, to ring the bell, and desire the landlord to take his boots off.

He contented himself, however, with doubling the fee and explaining that

the letter merely related to a breach of the peace. The top-boots

retired, solemnly pledged to secrecy; and Mr. Alexander Trott sat down to

a fried sole, maintenon cutlet, Madeira, and sundries, with greater

composure than he had experienced since the receipt of Horace Hunterâs

letter of defiance.

The lady who alighted from the London coach had no sooner been installed

in number twenty-five, and made some alteration in her travelling-dress,

than she indited a note to Joseph Overton, esquire, solicitor, and mayor

of Great Winglebury, requesting his immediate attendance on private

business of paramount importanceâa summons which that worthy functionary

lost no time in obeying; for after sundry openings of his eyes, divers

ejaculations of âBless me!â and other manifestations of surprise, he took

his broad-brimmed hat from its accustomed peg in his little front office,

and walked briskly down the High-street to the Winglebury Arms; through

the hall and up the staircase of which establishment he was ushered by

the landlady, and a crowd of officious waiters, to the door of number

twenty-five.

âShow the gentleman in,â said the stranger lady, in reply to the foremost

waiterâs announcement. The gentleman was shown in accordingly.

The lady rose from the sofa; the mayor advanced a step from the door; and

there they both paused, for a minute or two, looking at one another as if

by mutual consent. The mayor saw before him a buxom, richly-dressed

female of about forty; the lady looked upon a sleek man, about ten years

older, in drab shorts and continuations, black coat, neckcloth, and

gloves.

âMiss Julia Manners!â exclaimed the mayor at length, âyou astonish me.â

âThatâs very unfair of you, Overton,â replied Miss Julia, âfor I have

known you, long enough, not to be surprised at anything you do, and you

might extend equal courtesy to me.â

âBut to run awayâactually run awayâwith a young man!â remonstrated the

mayor.

âYou wouldnât have me actually run away with an old one, I presume?â was

the cool rejoinder.

âAnd then to ask meâmeâof all people in the worldâa man of my age and

appearanceâmayor of the townâto promote such a scheme!â pettishly

ejaculated Joseph Overton; throwing himself into an arm-chair, and

producing Miss Juliaâs letter from his pocket, as if to corroborate the

assertion that he \_had\_ been asked.

âNow, Overton,â replied the lady, âI want your assistance in this matter,

and I must have it. In the lifetime of that poor old dear, Mr.

Cornberry, whoâwhoââ

âWho was to have married you, and didnât, because he died first; and who

left you his property unencumbered with the addition of himself,â

suggested the mayor.

âWell,â replied Miss Julia, reddening slightly, âin the lifetime of the

poor old dear, the property had the incumbrance of your management; and

all I will say of that, is, that I only wonder it didnât die of

consumption instead of its master. You helped yourself then:âhelp me

now.â

Mr. Joseph Overton was a man of the world, and an attorney; and as

certain indistinct recollections of an odd thousand pounds or two,

appropriated by mistake, passed across his mind he hemmed deprecatingly,

smiled blandly, remained silent for a few seconds; and finally inquired,

âWhat do you wish me to do?â

âIâll tell you,â replied Miss JuliaââIâll tell you in three words. Dear

Lord Peterââ

âThatâs the young man, I supposeââ interrupted the mayor.

âThatâs the young Nobleman,â replied the lady, with a great stress on the

last word. âDear Lord Peter is considerably afraid of the resentment of

his family; and we have therefore thought it better to make the match a

stolen one. He left town, to avoid suspicion, on a visit to his friend,

the Honourable Augustus Flair, whose seat, as you know, is about thirty

miles from this, accompanied only by his favourite tiger. We arranged

that I should come here alone in the London coach; and that he, leaving

his tiger and cab behind him, should come on, and arrive here as soon as

possible this afternoon.â

âVery well,â observed Joseph Overton, âand then he can order the chaise,

and you can go on to Gretna Green together, without requiring the

presence or interference of a third party, canât you?â

âNo,â replied Miss Julia. âWe have every reason to believeâdear Lord

Peter not being considered very prudent or sagacious by his friends, and

they having discovered his attachment to meâthat, immediately on his

absence being observed, pursuit will be made in this direction:âto elude

which, and to prevent our being traced, I wish it to be understood in

this house, that dear Lord Peter is slightly deranged, though perfectly

harmless; and that I am, unknown to him, awaiting his arrival to convey

him in a post-chaise to a private asylumâat Berwick, say. If I donât

show myself much, I dare say I can manage to pass for his mother.â

The thought occurred to the mayorâs mind that the lady might show herself

a good deal without fear of detection; seeing that she was about double

the age of her intended husband. He said nothing, however, and the lady

proceeded.

âWith the whole of this arrangement dear Lord Peter is acquainted; and

all I want you to do, is, to make the delusion more complete by giving it

the sanction of your influence in this place, and assigning this as a

reason to the people of the house for my taking the young gentleman away.

As it would not be consistent with the story that I should see him until

after he has entered the chaise, I also wish you to communicate with him,

and inform him that it is all going on well.â

âHas he arrived?â inquired Overton.

âI donât know,â replied the lady.

âThen how am I to know!â inquired the mayor. âOf course he will not give

his own name at the bar.â

âI begged him, immediately on his arrival, to write you a note,â replied

Miss Manners; âand to prevent the possibility of our project being

discovered through its means, I desired him to write anonymously, and in

mysterious terms, to acquaint you with the number of his room.â

âBless me!â exclaimed the mayor, rising from his seat, and searching his

pocketsââmost extraordinary circumstanceâhe has arrivedâmysterious note

left at my house in a most mysterious manner, just before yoursâdidnât

know what to make of it before, and certainly shouldnât have attended to

it.âOh! here it is.â And Joseph Overton pulled out of an inner

coat-pocket the identical letter penned by Alexander Trott. âIs this his

lordshipâs hand?â

âOh yes,â replied Julia; âgood, punctual creature! I have not seen it

more than once or twice, but I know he writes very badly and very large.

These dear, wild young noblemen, you know, Overtonââ

âAy, ay, I see,â replied the mayor.ââHorses and dogs, play and

wineâgrooms, actresses, and cigarsâthe stable, the green-room, the

saloon, and the tavern; and the legislative assembly at last.â

âHereâs what he says,â pursued the mayor; ââSir,âA young gentleman in

number nineteen at the Winglebury Arms, is bent on committing a rash act

to-morrow morning at an early hour.â (Thatâs goodâhe means marrying.)

âIf you have any regard for the peace of this town, or the preservation

of oneâit may be twoâhuman livesââWhat the deuce does he mean by that?â

âThat heâs so anxious for the ceremony, he will expire if itâs put off,

and that I may possibly do the same,â replied the lady with great

complacency.

âOh! I seeânot much fear of that;âwellââtwo human lives, you will cause

him to be removed to-night.â (He wants to start at once.) âFear not to

do this on your responsibility: for to-morrow the absolute necessity of

the proceeding will be but too apparent. Remember: number nineteen. The

name is Trott. No delay; for life and death depend upon your

promptitude.â Passionate language, certainly. Shall I see him?â

âDo,â replied Miss Julia; âand entreat him to act his part well. I am

half afraid of him. Tell him to be cautious.â

âI will,â said the mayor.

âSettle all the arrangements.â

âI will,â said the mayor again.

âAnd say I think the chaise had better be ordered for one oâclock.â

âVery well,â said the mayor once more; and, ruminating on the absurdity

of the situation in which fate and old acquaintance had placed him, he

desired a waiter to herald his approach to the temporary representative

of number nineteen.

The announcement, âGentleman to speak with you, sir,â induced Mr. Trott

to pause half-way in the glass of port, the contents of which he was in

the act of imbibing at the moment; to rise from his chair; and retreat a

few paces towards the window, as if to secure a retreat, in the event of

the visitor assuming the form and appearance of Horace Hunter. One

glance at Joseph Overton, however, quieted his apprehensions. He

courteously motioned the stranger to a seat. The waiter, after a little

jingling with the decanter and glasses, consented to leave the room; and

Joseph Overton, placing the broad-brimmed hat on the chair next him, and

bending his body gently forward, opened the business by saying in a very

low and cautious tone,

âMy lordââ

âEh?â said Mr. Alexander Trott, in a loud key, with the vacant and

mystified stare of a chilly somnambulist.

âHushâhush!â said the cautious attorney: âto be sureâquite rightâno

titles hereâmy name is Overton, sir.â

âOverton?â

âYes: the mayor of this placeâyou sent me a letter with anonymous

information, this afternoon.â

âI, sir?â exclaimed Trott with ill-dissembled surprise; for, coward as he

was, he would willingly have repudiated the authorship of the letter in

question. âI, sir?â

âYes, you, sir; did you not?â responded Overton, annoyed with what he

supposed to be an extreme degree of unnecessary suspicion. âEither this

letter is yours, or it is not. If it be, we can converse securely upon

the subject at once. If it be not, of course I have no more to say.â

âStay, stay,â said Trott, âit \_is\_ mine; I \_did\_ write it. What could I

do, sir? I had no friend here.â

âTo be sure, to be sure,â said the mayor, encouragingly, âyou could not

have managed it better. Well, sir; it will be necessary for you to leave

here to-night in a post-chaise and four. And the harder the boys drive,

the better. You are not safe from pursuit.â

âBless me!â exclaimed Trott, in an agony of apprehension, âcan such

things happen in a country like this? Such unrelenting and cold-blooded

hostility!â He wiped off the concentrated essence of cowardice that was

oozing fast down his forehead, and looked aghast at Joseph Overton.

âIt certainly is a very hard case,â replied the mayor with a smile,

âthat, in a free country, people canât marry whom they like, without

being hunted down as if they were criminals. However, in the present

instance the lady is willing, you know, and thatâs the main point, after

all.â

âLady willing,â repeated Trott, mechanically. âHow do you know the

ladyâs willing?â

âCome, thatâs a good one,â said the mayor, benevolently tapping Mr. Trott

on the arm with his broad-brimmed hat; âI have known her, well, for a

long time; and if anybody could entertain the remotest doubt on the

subject, I assure you I have none, nor need you have.â

âDear me!â said Mr. Trott, ruminating. âThis is \_very\_ extraordinary!â

âWell, Lord Peter,â said the mayor, rising.

âLord Peter?â repeated Mr. Trott.

âOhâah, I forgot. Mr. Trott, thenâTrottâvery good, ha! ha!âWell, sir,

the chaise shall be ready at half-past twelve.â

âAnd what is to become of me until then?â inquired Mr. Trott, anxiously.

âWouldnât it save appearances, if I were placed under some restraint?â

âAh!â replied Overton, âvery good thoughtâcapital idea indeed. Iâll send

somebody up directly. And if you make a little resistance when we put

you in the chaise it wouldnât be amissâlook as if you didnât want to be

taken away, you know.â

âTo be sure,â said Trottââto be sure.â

âWell, my lord,â said Overton, in a low tone, âuntil then, I wish your

lordship a good evening.â

âLordâlordship?â ejaculated Trott again, falling back a step or two, and

gazing, in unutterable wonder, on the countenance of the mayor.

âHa-ha! I see, my lordâpractising the madman?âvery good indeedâvery

vacant lookâcapital, my lord, capitalâgood evening, Mr.âTrottâha! ha!

ha!â

âThat mayorâs decidedly drunk,â soliloquised Mr. Trott, throwing himself

back in his chair, in an attitude of reflection.

âHe is a much cleverer fellow than I thought him, that young noblemanâhe

carries it off uncommonly well,â thought Overton, as he went his way to

the bar, there to complete his arrangements. This was soon done. Every

word of the story was implicitly believed, and the one-eyed boots was

immediately instructed to repair to number nineteen, to act as custodian

of the person of the supposed lunatic until half-past twelve oâclock. In

pursuance of this direction, that somewhat eccentric gentleman armed

himself with a walking-stick of gigantic dimensions, and repaired, with

his usual equanimity of manner, to Mr. Trottâs apartment, which he

entered without any ceremony, and mounted guard in, by quietly depositing

himself on a chair near the door, where he proceeded to beguile the time

by whistling a popular air with great apparent satisfaction.

âWhat do you want here, you scoundrel?â exclaimed Mr. Alexander Trott,

with a proper appearance of indignation at his detention.

The boots beat time with his head, as he looked gently round at Mr. Trott

with a smile of pity, and whistled an \_adagio\_ movement.

âDo you attend in this room by Mr. Overtonâs desire?â inquired Trott,

rather astonished at the manâs demeanour.

âKeep yourself to yourself, young feller,â calmly responded the boots,

âand donât say nothing to nobody.â And he whistled again.

âNow mind!â ejaculated Mr. Trott, anxious to keep up the farce of wishing

with great earnestness to fight a duel if theyâd let him. âI protest

against being kept here. I deny that I have any intention of fighting

with anybody. But as itâs useless contending with superior numbers, I

shall sit quietly down.â

âYouâd better,â observed the placid boots, shaking the large stick

expressively.

âUnder protest, however,â added Alexander Trott, seating himself with

indignation in his face, but great content in his heart. âUnder

protest.â

âOh, certainly!â responded the boots; âanything you please. If youâre

happy, Iâm transported; only donât talk too muchâitâll make you worse.â

âMake me worse?â exclaimed Trott, in unfeigned astonishment: âthe manâs

drunk!â

âYouâd better be quiet, young feller,â remarked the boots, going through

a threatening piece of pantomime with the stick.

âOr mad!â said Mr. Trott, rather alarmed. âLeave the room, sir, and tell

them to send somebody else.â

âWonât do!â replied the boots.

âLeave the room!â shouted Trott, ringing the bell violently: for he began

to be alarmed on a new score.

âLeave that âere bell alone, you wretched loo-nattic!â said the boots,

suddenly forcing the unfortunate Trott back into his chair, and

brandishing the stick aloft. âBe quiet, you miserable object, and donât

let everybody know thereâs a madman in the house.â

âHe \_is\_ a madman! He \_is\_ a madman!â exclaimed the terrified Mr. Trott,

gazing on the one eye of the red-headed boots with a look of abject

horror.

âMadman!â replied the boots, âdamâme, I think he \_is\_ a madman with a

vengeance! Listen to me, you unfortunate. Ah! would you?â [a slight tap

on the head with the large stick, as Mr. Trott made another move towards

the bell-handle] âI caught you there! did I?â

âSpare my life!â exclaimed Trott, raising his hands imploringly.

âI donât want your life,â replied the boots, disdainfully, âthough I

think it âud be a charity if somebody took it.â

âNo, no, it wouldnât,â interrupted poor Mr. Trott, hurriedly, âno, no, it

wouldnât! IâI-âd rather keep it!â

âO werry well,â said the boots: âthatâs a mere matter of tasteâevâry one

to his liking. Howsâever, all Iâve got to say is this here: You sit

quietly down in that chair, and Iâll sit hoppersite you here, and if you

keep quiet and donât stir, I wonât damage you; but, if you move hand or

foot till half-past twelve oâclock, I shall alter the expression of your

countenance so completely, that the next time you look in the glass

youâll ask vether youâre gone out of town, and ven youâre likely to come

back again. So sit down.â

âI willâI will,â responded the victim of mistakes; and down sat Mr. Trott

and down sat the boots too, exactly opposite him, with the stick ready

for immediate action in case of emergency.

Long and dreary were the hours that followed. The bell of Great

Winglebury church had just struck ten, and two hours and a half would

probably elapse before succour arrived.

For half an hour, the noise occasioned by shutting up the shops in the

street beneath, betokened something like life in the town, and rendered

Mr. Trottâs situation a little less insupportable; but, when even these

ceased, and nothing was heard beyond the occasional rattling of a

post-chaise as it drove up the yard to change horses, and then drove away

again, or the clattering of horsesâ hoofs in the stables behind, it

became almost unbearable. The boots occasionally moved an inch or two,

to knock superfluous bits of wax off the candles, which were burning low,

but instantaneously resumed his former position; and as he remembered to

have heard, somewhere or other, that the human eye had an unfailing

effect in controlling mad people, he kept his solitary organ of vision

constantly fixed on Mr. Alexander Trott. That unfortunate individual

stared at his companion in his turn, until his features grew more and

more indistinctâhis hair gradually less redâand the room more misty and

obscure. Mr. Alexander Trott fell into a sound sleep, from which he was

awakened by a rumbling in the street, and a cry of âChaise-and-four for

number twenty-five!â A bustle on the stairs succeeded; the room door was

hastily thrown open; and Mr. Joseph Overton entered, followed by four

stout waiters, and Mrs. Williamson, the stout landlady of the Winglebury

Arms.

âMr. Overton!â exclaimed Mr. Alexander Trott, jumping up in a frenzy.

âLook at this man, sir; consider the situation in which I have been

placed for three hours pastâthe person you sent to guard me, sir, was a

madmanâa madmanâa raging, ravaging, furious madman.â

âBravo!â whispered Mr. Overton.

âPoor dear!â said the compassionate Mrs. Williamson, âmad people always

thinks other peopleâs mad.â

âPoor dear!â ejaculated Mr. Alexander Trott. âWhat the devil do you mean

by poor dear! Are you the landlady of this house?â

âYes, yes,â replied the stout old lady, âdonât exert yourself, thereâs a

dear! Consider your health, now; do.â

âExert myself!â shouted Mr. Alexander Trott; âitâs a mercy, maâam, that I

have any breath to exert myself with! I might have been assassinated

three hours ago by that one-eyed monster with the oakum head. How dare

you have a madman, maâamâhow dare you have a madman, to assault and

terrify the visitors to your house?â

âIâll never have another,â said Mrs. Williamson, casting a look of

reproach at the mayor.

âCapital, capital,â whispered Overton again, as he enveloped Mr.

Alexander Trott in a thick travelling-cloak.

âCapital, sir!â exclaimed Trott, aloud; âitâs horrible. The very

recollection makes me shudder. Iâd rather fight four duels in three

hours, if I survived the first three, than Iâd sit for that time face to

face with a madman.â

âKeep it up, my lord, as you go down-stairs,â whispered Overton, âyour

bill is paid, and your portmanteau in the chaise.â And then he added

aloud, âNow, waiters, the gentlemanâs ready.â

At this signal, the waiters crowded round Mr. Alexander Trott. One took

one arm; another, the other; a third, walked before with a candle; the

fourth, behind with another candle; the boots and Mrs. Williamson brought

up the rear; and down-stairs they went: Mr. Alexander Trott expressing

alternately at the very top of his voice either his feigned reluctance to

go, or his unfeigned indignation at being shut up with a madman.

Mr. Overton was waiting at the chaise-door, the boys were ready mounted,

and a few ostlers and stable nondescripts were standing round to witness

the departure of âthe mad gentleman.â Mr. Alexander Trottâs foot was on

the step, when he observed (which the dim light had prevented his doing

before) a figure seated in the chaise, closely muffled up in a cloak like

his own.

âWhoâs that?â he inquired of Overton, in a whisper.

âHush, hush,â replied the mayor: âthe other party of course.â

âThe other party!â exclaimed Trott, with an effort to retreat.

âYes, yes; youâll soon find that out, before you go far, I should

thinkâbut make a noise, youâll excite suspicion if you whisper to me so

much.â

âI wonât go in this chaise!â shouted Mr. Alexander Trott, all his

original fears recurring with tenfold violence. âI shall be

assassinatedâI shall beââ

âBravo, bravo,â whispered Overton. âIâll push you in.â

âBut I wonât go,â exclaimed Mr. Trott. âHelp here, help! Theyâre

carrying me away against my will. This is a plot to murder me.â

âPoor dear!â said Mrs. Williamson again.

âNow, boys, put âem along,â cried the mayor, pushing Trott in and

slamming the door. âOff with you, as quick as you can, and stop for

nothing till you come to the next stageâall right!â

âHorses are paid, Tom,â screamed Mrs. Williamson; and away went the

chaise, at the rate of fourteen miles an hour, with Mr. Alexander Trott

and Miss Julia Manners carefully shut up in the inside.

Mr. Alexander Trott remained coiled up in one corner of the chaise, and

his mysterious companion in the other, for the first two or three miles;

Mr. Trott edging more and more into his corner, as he felt his companion

gradually edging more and more from hers; and vainly endeavouring in the

darkness to catch a glimpse of the furious face of the supposed Horace

Hunter.

âWe may speak now,â said his fellow-traveller, at length; âthe post-boys

can neither see nor hear us.â

âThatâs not Hunterâs voice!ââthought Alexander, astonished.

âDear Lord Peter!â said Miss Julia, most winningly: putting her arm on

Mr. Trottâs shoulder. âDear Lord Peter. Not a word?â

âWhy, itâs a woman!â exclaimed Mr. Trott, in a low tone of excessive

wonder.

âAh! Whose voice is that?â said Julia; ââtis not Lord Peterâs.â

âNo,âitâs mine,â replied Mr. Trott.

âYours!â ejaculated Miss Julia Manners; âa strange man! Gracious heaven!

How came you here!â

âWhoever you are, you might have known that I came against my will,

maâam,â replied Alexander, âfor I made noise enough when I got in.â

âDo you come from Lord Peter?â inquired Miss Manners.

âConfound Lord Peter,â replied Trott pettishly. âI donât know any Lord

Peter. I never heard of him before to-night, when Iâve been Lord Peterâd

by one and Lord Peterâd by another, till I verily believe Iâm mad, or

dreamingââ

âWhither are we going?â inquired the lady tragically.

âHow should \_I\_ know, maâam?â replied Trott with singular coolness; for

the events of the evening had completely hardened him.

âStop stop!â cried the lady, letting down the front glasses of the

chaise.

âStay, my dear maâam!â said Mr. Trott, pulling the glasses up again with

one hand, and gently squeezing Miss Juliaâs waist with the other. âThere

is some mistake here; give me till the end of this stage to explain my

share of it. We must go so far; you cannot be set down here alone, at

this hour of the night.â

The lady consented; the mistake was mutually explained. Mr. Trott was a

young man, had highly promising whiskers, an undeniable tailor, and an

insinuating addressâhe wanted nothing but valour, and who wants that with

three thousand a-year? The lady had this, and more; she wanted a young

husband, and the only course open to Mr. Trott to retrieve his disgrace

was a rich wife. So, they came to the conclusion that it would be a pity

to have all this trouble and expense for nothing; and that as they were

so far on the road already, they had better go to Gretna Green, and marry

each other; and they did so. And the very next preceding entry in the

Blacksmithâs book, was an entry of the marriage of Emily Brown with

Horace Hunter. Mr. Hunter took his wife home, and begged pardon, and

\_was\_ pardoned; and Mr. Trott took \_his\_ wife home, begged pardon too,

and was pardoned also. And Lord Peter, who had been detained beyond his

time by drinking champagne and riding a steeple-chase, went back to the

Honourable Augustus Flairâs, and drank more champagne, and rode another

steeple-chase, and was thrown and killed. And Horace Hunter took great

credit to himself for practising on the cowardice of Alexander Trott; and

all these circumstances were discovered in time, and carefully noted

down; and if you ever stop a week at the Winglebury Arms, they will give

you just this account of The Great Winglebury Duel.

CHAPTER IXâMRS. JOSEPH PORTER

Most extensive were the preparations at Rose Villa, Clapham Rise, in the

occupation of Mr. Gattleton (a stock-broker in especially comfortable

circumstances), and great was the anxiety of Mr. Gattletonâs interesting

family, as the day fixed for the representation of the Private Play which

had been âmany months in preparation,â approached. The whole family was

infected with the mania for Private Theatricals; the house, usually so

clean and tidy, was, to use Mr. Gattletonâs expressive description,

âregularly turned out oâ windows;â the large dining-room, dismantled of

its furniture, and ornaments, presented a strange jumble of flats, flies,

wings, lamps, bridges, clouds, thunder and lightning, festoons and

flowers, daggers and foil, and various other messes in theatrical slang

included under the comprehensive name of âproperties.â The bedrooms were

crowded with scenery, the kitchen was occupied by carpenters. Rehearsals

took place every other night in the drawing-room, and every sofa in the

house was more or less damaged by the perseverance and spirit with which

Mr. Sempronius Gattleton, and Miss Lucina, rehearsed the smothering scene

in âOthelloââit having been determined that that tragedy should form the

first portion of the eveningâs entertainments.

âWhen weâre a \_leetle\_ more perfect, I think it will go admirably,â said

Mr. Sempronius, addressing his \_corps dramatique\_, at the conclusion of

the hundred and fiftieth rehearsal. In consideration of his sustaining

the trifling inconvenience of bearing all the expenses of the play, Mr.

Sempronius had been, in the most handsome manner, unanimously elected

stage-manager. âEvans,â continued Mr. Gattleton, the younger, addressing

a tall, thin, pale young gentleman, with extensive whiskersââEvans, you

play \_Roderigo\_ beautifully.â

âBeautifully,â echoed the three Miss Gattletons; for Mr. Evans was

pronounced by all his lady friends to be âquite a dear.â He looked so

interesting, and had such lovely whiskers: to say nothing of his talent

for writing verses in albums and playing the flute! \_Roderigo\_ simpered

and bowed.

âBut I think,â added the manager, âyou are hardly perfect in theâfallâin

the fencing-scene, where you areâyou understand?â

âItâs very difficult,â said Mr. Evans, thoughtfully; âIâve fallen about,

a good deal, in our counting-house lately, for practice, only I find it

hurts one so. Being obliged to fall backward you see, it bruises oneâs

head a good deal.â

âBut you must take care you donât knock a wing down,â said Mr. Gattleton,

the elder, who had been appointed prompter, and who took as much interest

in the play as the youngest of the company. âThe stage is very narrow,

you know.â

âOh! donât be afraid,â said Mr. Evans, with a very self-satisfied air; âI

shall fall with my head âoff,â and then I canât do any harm.â

âBut, egad,â said the manager, rubbing his hands, âwe shall make a

decided hit in âMasaniello.â Harleigh sings that music admirably.â

Everybody echoed the sentiment. Mr. Harleigh smiled, and looked

foolishânot an unusual thing with himâhummedâ Behold how brightly breaks

the morning,â and blushed as red as the fishermanâs nightcap he was

trying on.

âLetâs see,â resumed the manager, telling the number on his fingers, âwe

shall have three dancing female peasants, besides \_Fenella\_, and four

fishermen. Then, thereâs our man Tom; he can have a pair of ducks of

mine, and a check shirt of Bobâs, and a red nightcap, and heâll do for

anotherâthatâs five. In the choruses, of course, we can sing at the

sides; and in the market-scene we can walk about in cloaks and things.

When the revolt takes place, Tom must keep rushing in on one side and out

on the other, with a pickaxe, as fast as he can. The effect will be

electrical; it will look exactly as if there were an immense number of

âem. And in the eruption-scene we must burn the red fire, and upset the

tea-trays, and make all sorts of noisesâand itâs sure to do.â

âSure! sure!â cried all the performers \_unÃ¢ voce\_âand away hurried Mr.

Sempronius Gattleton to wash the burnt cork off his face, and superintend

the âsetting upâ of some of the amateur-painted, but

never-sufficiently-to-be-admired, scenery.

Mrs. Gattleton was a kind, good-tempered, vulgar soul, exceedingly fond

of her husband and children, and entertaining only three dislikes. In

the first place, she had a natural antipathy to anybody elseâs unmarried

daughters; in the second, she was in bodily fear of anything in the shape

of ridicule; lastlyâalmost a necessary consequence of this feelingâshe

regarded, with feelings of the utmost horror, one Mrs. Joseph Porter over

the way. However, the good folks of Clapham and its vicinity stood very

much in awe of scandal and sarcasm; and thus Mrs. Joseph Porter was

courted, and flattered, and caressed, and invited, for much the same

reason that induces a poor author, without a farthing in his pocket, to

behave with extraordinary civility to a twopenny postman.

âNever mind, ma,â said Miss Emma Porter, in colloquy with her respected

relative, and trying to look unconcerned; âif they had invited me, you

know that neither you nor pa would have allowed me to take part in such

an exhibition.â

âJust what I should have thought from your high sense of propriety,â

returned the mother. âI am glad to see, Emma, you know how to designate

the proceeding.â Miss P., by-the-bye, had only the week before made âan

exhibitionâ of herself for four days, behind a counter at a fancy fair,

to all and every of her Majestyâs liege subjects who were disposed to pay

a shilling each for the privilege of seeing some four dozen girls

flirting with strangers, and playing at shop.

âThere!â said Mrs. Porter, looking out of window; âthere are two rounds

of beef and a ham going inâclearly for sandwiches; and Thomas, the

pastry-cook, says, there have been twelve dozen tarts ordered, besides

blancmange and jellies. Upon my word! think of the Miss Gattletons in

fancy dresses, too!â

âOh, itâs too ridiculous!â said Miss Porter, hysterically.

âIâll manage to put them a little out of conceit with the business,

however,â said Mrs. Porter; and out she went on her charitable errand.

âWell, my dear Mrs. Gattleton,â said Mrs. Joseph Porter, after they had

been closeted for some time, and when, by dint of indefatigable pumping,

she had managed to extract all the news about the play, âwell, my dear,

people may say what they please; indeed we know they will, for some folks

are \_so\_ ill-natured. Ah, my dear Miss Lucina, how dâye do? I was just

telling your mamma that I have heard it said, thatââ

âWhat?â

âMrs. Porter is alluding to the play, my dear,â said Mrs. Gattleton; âshe

was, I am sorry to say, just informing me thatââ

âOh, now pray donât mention it,â interrupted Mrs. Porter; âitâs most

absurdâquite as absurd as young Whatâs-his-name saying he wondered how

Miss Caroline, with such a foot and ankle, could have the vanity to play

\_Fenella\_.â

âHighly impertinent, whoever said it,â said Mrs. Gattleton, bridling up.

âCertainly, my dear,â chimed in the delighted Mrs. Porter; âmost

undoubtedly! Because, as I said, if Miss Caroline \_does\_ play \_Fenella\_,

it doesnât follow, as a matter of course, that she should think she has a

pretty foot;âand thenâsuch puppies as these young men areâhe had the

impudence to say, thatââ

How far the amiable Mrs. Porter might have succeeded in her pleasant

purpose, it is impossible to say, had not the entrance of Mr. Thomas

Balderstone, Mrs. Gattletonâs brother, familiarly called in the family

âUncle Tom,â changed the course of conversation, and suggested to her

mind an excellent plan of operation on the evening of the play.

Uncle Tom was very rich, and exceedingly fond of his nephews and nieces:

as a matter of course, therefore, he was an object of great importance in

his own family. He was one of the best-hearted men in existence: always

in a good temper, and always talking. It was his boast that he wore

top-boots on all occasions, and had never worn a black silk neckerchief;

and it was his pride that he remembered all the principal plays of

Shakspeare from beginning to endâand so he did. The result of this

parrot-like accomplishment was, that he was not only perpetually quoting

himself, but that he could never sit by, and hear a misquotation from the

âSwan of Avonâ without setting the unfortunate delinquent right. He was

also something of a wag; never missed an opportunity of saying what he

considered a good thing, and invariably laughed until he cried at

anything that appeared to him mirth-moving or ridiculous.

âWell, girls!â said Uncle Tom, after the preparatory ceremony of kissing

and how-dâye-do-ing had been gone throughââhow dâye get on? Know your

parts, eh?âLucina, my dear, act II., scene Iâplace, left-cueââUnknown

fate,ââWhatâs next, eh?âGo onââThe Heavensâââ

âOh, yes,â said Miss Lucina, âI recollectâ

âThe heavens forbid

But that our loves and comforts should increase

Even as our days do grow!ââ

âMake a pause here and there,â said the old gentleman, who was a great

critic. ââBut that our loves and comforts should increaseââemphasis on

the last syllable, âcrease,ââloud âeven,ââone, two, three, four; then

loud again, âas our days do grow;â emphasis on \_days\_. Thatâs the way,

my dear; trust to your uncle for emphasis. Ah! Sem, my boy, how are

you?â

âVery well, thankee, uncle,â returned Mr. Sempronius, who had just

appeared, looking something like a ringdove, with a small circle round

each eye: the result of his constant corking. âOf course we see you on

Thursday.â

âOf course, of course, my dear boy.â

âWhat a pity it is your nephew didnât think of making you prompter, Mr.

Balderstone!â whispered Mrs. Joseph Porter; âyou would have been

invaluable.â

âWell, I flatter myself, I \_should\_ have been tolerably up to the thing,â

responded Uncle Tom.

âI must bespeak sitting next you on the night,â resumed Mrs. Porter; âand

then, if our dear young friends here, should be at all wrong, you will be

able to enlighten me. I shall be so interested.â

âI am sure I shall be most happy to give you any assistance in my powerâ

âMind, itâs a bargain.â

âCertainly.â

âI donât know how it is,â said Mrs. Gattleton to her daughters, as they

were sitting round the fire in the evening, looking over their parts,

âbut I really very much wish Mrs. Joseph Porter wasnât coming on

Thursday. I am sure sheâs scheming something.â

âShe canât make us ridiculous, however,â observed Mr. Sempronius

Gattleton, haughtily.

The long-looked-for Thursday arrived in due course, and brought with it,

as Mr. Gattleton, senior, philosophically observed, âno disappointments,

to speak of.â True, it was yet a matter of doubt whether \_Cassio\_ would

be enabled to get into the dress which had been sent for him from the

masquerade warehouse. It was equally uncertain whether the principal

female singer would be sufficiently recovered from the influenza to make

her appearance; Mr. Harleigh, the \_Masaniello\_ of the night, was hoarse,

and rather unwell, in consequence of the great quantity of lemon and

sugar-candy he had eaten to improve his voice; and two flutes and a

violoncello had pleaded severe colds. What of that? the audience were

all coming. Everybody knew his part: the dresses were covered with

tinsel and spangles; the white plumes looked beautiful; Mr. Evans had

practised falling until he was bruised from head to foot and quite

perfect; \_Iago\_ was sure that, in the stabbing-scene, he should make âa

decided hit.â A self-taught deaf gentleman, who had kindly offered to

bring his flute, would be a most valuable addition to the orchestra; Miss

Jenkinsâs talent for the piano was too well known to be doubted for an

instant; Mr. Cape had practised the violin accompaniment with her

frequently; and Mr. Brown, who had kindly undertaken, at a few hoursâ

notice, to bring his violoncello, would, no doubt, manage extremely well.

Seven oâclock came, and so did the audience; all the rank and fashion of

Clapham and its vicinity was fast filling the theatre. There were the

Smiths, the Gubbinses, the Nixons, the Dixons, the Hicksons, people with

all sorts of names, two aldermen, a sheriff in perspective, Sir Thomas

Glumper (who had been knighted in the last reign for carrying up an

address on somebodyâs escaping from nothing); and last, not least, there

were Mrs. Joseph Porter and Uncle Tom, seated in the centre of the third

row from the stage; Mrs. P. amusing Uncle Tom with all sorts of stories,

and Uncle Tom amusing every one else by laughing most immoderately.

Ting, ting, ting! went the prompterâs bell at eight oâclock precisely,

and dash went the orchestra into the overture to âThe Men of Prometheus.â

The pianoforte player hammered away with laudable perseverance; and the

violoncello, which struck in at intervals, âsounded very well,

considering.â The unfortunate individual, however, who had undertaken to

play the flute accompaniment âat sight,â found, from fatal experience,

the perfect truth of the old adage, âought of sight, out of mind;â for

being very near-sighted, and being placed at a considerable distance from

his music-book, all he had an opportunity of doing was to play a bar now

and then in the wrong place, and put the other performers out. It is,

however, but justice to Mr. Brown to say that he did this to admiration.

The overture, in fact, was not unlike a race between the different

instruments; the piano came in first by several bars, and the violoncello

next, quite distancing the poor flute; for the deaf gentleman \_too-tooâd\_

away, quite unconscious that he was at all wrong, until apprised, by the

applause of the audience, that the overture was concluded. A

considerable bustle and shuffling of feet was then heard upon the stage,

accompanied by whispers of âHereâs a pretty go!âwhatâs to be done?â &c.

The audience applauded again, by way of raising the spirits of the

performers; and then Mr. Sempronius desired the prompter, in a very

audible voice, to âclear the stage, and ring up.â

Ting, ting, ting! went the bell again. Everybody sat down; the curtain

shook; rose sufficiently high to display several pair of yellow boots

paddling about; and there remained.

Ting, ting, ting! went the bell again. The curtain was violently

convulsed, but rose no higher; the audience tittered; Mrs. Porter looked

at Uncle Tom; Uncle Tom looked at everybody, rubbing his hands, and

laughing with perfect rapture. After as much ringing with the little

bell as a muffin-boy would make in going down a tolerably long street,

and a vast deal of whispering, hammering, and calling for nails and cord,

the curtain at length rose, and discovered Mr. Sempronius Gattleton

\_solus\_, and decked for \_Othello\_. After three distinct rounds of

applause, during which Mr. Sempronius applied his right hand to his left

breast, and bowed in the most approved manner, the manager advanced and

said:

âLadies and GentlemenâI assure you it is with sincere regret, that I

regret to be compelled to inform you, that \_Iago\_ who was to have played

Mr. WilsonâI beg your pardon, Ladies and Gentlemen, but I am naturally

somewhat agitated (applause)âI mean, Mr. Wilson, who was to have played

\_Iago\_, isâthat is, has beenâor, in other words, Ladies and Gentlemen,

the fact is, that I have just received a note, in which I am informed

that \_Iago\_ is unavoidably detained at the Post-office this evening.

Under these circumstances, I trustâaâaâamateur performanceâaâanother

gentleman undertaken to read the partârequest indulgence for a short

timeâcourtesy and kindness of a British audience.â Overwhelming

applause. Exit Mr. Sempronius Gattleton, and curtain falls.

The audience were, of course, exceedingly good-humoured; the whole

business was a joke; and accordingly they waited for an hour with the

utmost patience, being enlivened by an interlude of rout-cakes and

lemonade. It appeared by Mr. Semproniusâs subsequent explanation, that

the delay would not have been so great, had it not so happened that when

the substitute \_Iago\_ had finished dressing, and just as the play was on

the point of commencing, the original \_Iago\_ unexpectedly arrived. The

former was therefore compelled to undress, and the latter to dress for

his part; which, as he found some difficulty in getting into his clothes,

occupied no inconsiderable time. At last, the tragedy began in real

earnest. It went off well enough, until the third scene of the first

act, in which \_Othello\_ addresses the Senate: the only remarkable

circumstance being, that as \_Iago\_ could not get on any of the stage

boots, in consequence of his feet being violently swelled with the heat

and excitement, he was under the necessity of playing the part in a pair

of Wellingtons, which contrasted rather oddly with his richly embroidered

pantaloons. When \_Othello\_ started with his address to the Senate (whose

dignity was represented by, the \_Duke\_, \_a\_ carpenter, two men engaged on

the recommendation of the gardener, and a boy), Mrs. Porter found the

opportunity she so anxiously sought.

Mr. Sempronius proceeded:

ââMost potent, grave, and reverend signiors,

My very noble and approvâd good masters,

That I have taâen away this old manâs daughter,

It is most true;ârude am I in my speechâââ

âIs that right?â whispered Mrs. Porter to Uncle Tom.

âNo.â

âTell him so, then.â

âI will. Sem!â called out Uncle Tom, âthatâs wrong, my boy.â

âWhatâs wrong, uncle?â demanded \_Othello\_, quite forgetting the dignity

of his situation.

âYouâve left out something. âTrue I have marriedâââ

âOh, ah!â said Mr. Sempronius, endeavouring to hide his confusion as much

and as ineffectually as the audience attempted to conceal their

half-suppressed tittering, by coughing with extraordinary violenceâ

âââtrue I have married her;â

The very head and front of my offending

Hath this extent; no more.â

(\_Aside\_) Why donât you prompt, father?â

âBecause Iâve mislaid my spectacles,â said poor Mr. Gattleton, almost

dead with the heat and bustle.

âThere, now itâs ârude am I,ââ said Uncle Tom.

âYes, I know it is,â returned the unfortunate manager, proceeding with

his part.

It would be useless and tiresome to quote the number of instances in

which Uncle Tom, now completely in his element, and instigated by the

mischievous Mrs. Porter, corrected the mistakes of the performers;

suffice it to say, that having mounted his hobby, nothing could induce

him to dismount; so, during the whole remainder of the play, he performed

a kind of running accompaniment, by muttering everybodyâs part as it was

being delivered, in an under-tone. The audience were highly amused, Mrs.

Porter delighted, the performers embarrassed; Uncle Tom never was better

pleased in all his life; and Uncle Tomâs nephews and nieces had never,

although the declared heirs to his large property, so heartily wished him

gathered to his fathers as on that memorable occasion.

Several other minor causes, too, united to damp the ardour of the

\_dramatis personae\_. None of the performers could walk in their tights,

or move their arms in their jackets; the pantaloons were too small, the

boots too large, and the swords of all shapes and sizes. Mr. Evans,

naturally too tall for the scenery, wore a black velvet hat with immense

white plumes, the glory of which was lost in âthe flies;â and the only

other inconvenience of which was, that when it was off his head he could

not put it on, and when it was on he could not take it off.

Notwithstanding all his practice, too, he fell with his head and

shoulders as neatly through one of the side scenes, as a harlequin would

jump through a panel in a Christmas pantomime. The pianoforte player,

overpowered by the extreme heat of the room, fainted away at the

commencement of the entertainments, leaving the music of âMasanielloâ to

the flute and violoncello. The orchestra complained that Mr. Harleigh

put them out, and Mr. Harleigh declared that the orchestra prevented his

singing a note. The fishermen, who were hired for the occasion, revolted

to the very life, positively refusing to play without an increased

allowance of spirits; and, their demand being complied with, getting

drunk in the eruption-scene as naturally as possible. The red fire,

which was burnt at the conclusion of the second act, not only nearly

suffocated the audience, but nearly set the house on fire into the

bargain; and, as it was, the remainder of the piece was acted in a thick

fog.

In short, the whole affair was, as Mrs. Joseph Porter triumphantly told

everybody, âa complete failure.â The audience went home at four oâclock

in the morning, exhausted with laughter, suffering from severe headaches,

and smelling terribly of brimstone and gunpowder. The Messrs. Gattleton,

senior and junior, retired to rest, with the vague idea of emigrating to

Swan River early in the ensuing week.

Rose Villa has once again resumed its wonted appearance; the dining-room

furniture has been replaced; the tables are as nicely polished as

formerly; the horsehair chairs are ranged against the wall, as regularly

as ever; Venetian blinds have been fitted to every window in the house to

intercept the prying gaze of Mrs. Joseph Porter. The subject of

theatricals is never mentioned in the Gattleton family, unless, indeed,

by Uncle Tom, who cannot refrain from sometimes expressing his surprise

and regret at finding that his nephews and nieces appear to have lost the

relish they once possessed for the beauties of Shakspeare, and quotations

from the works of that immortal bard.

CHAPTER XâA PASSAGE IN THE LIFE OF MR. WATKINS TOTTLE

CHAPTER THE FIRST

Matrimony is proverbially a serious undertaking. Like an over-weening

predilection for brandy-and-water, it is a misfortune into which a man

easily falls, and from which he finds it remarkably difficult to

extricate himself. It is of no use telling a man who is timorous on

these points, that it is but one plunge, and all is over. They say the

same thing at the Old Bailey, and the unfortunate victims derive as much

comfort from the assurance in the one case as in the other.

Mr. Watkins Tottle was a rather uncommon compound of strong uxorious

inclinations, and an unparalleled degree of anti-connubial timidity. He

was about fifty years of age; stood four feet six inches and

three-quarters in his socksâfor he never stood in stockings at allâplump,

clean, and rosy. He looked something like a vignette to one of

Richardsonâs novels, and had a clean-cravatish formality of manner, and

kitchen-pokerness of carriage, which Sir Charles Grandison himself might

have envied. He lived on an annuity, which was well adapted to the

individual who received it, in one respectâit was rather small. He

received it in periodical payments on every alternate Monday; but he ran

himself out, about a day after the expiration of the first week, as

regularly as an eight-day clock; and then, to make the comparison

complete, his landlady wound him up, and he went on with a regular tick.

Mr. Watkins Tottle had long lived in a state of single blessedness, as

bachelors say, or single cursedness, as spinsters think; but the idea of

matrimony had never ceased to haunt him. Wrapt in profound reveries on

this never-failing theme, fancy transformed his small parlour in

Cecil-street, Strand, into a neat house in the suburbs; the

half-hundredweight of coals under the kitchen-stairs suddenly sprang up

into three tons of the best Walls-end; his small French bedstead was

converted into a regular matrimonial four-poster; and in the empty chair

on the opposite side of the fireplace, imagination seated a beautiful

young lady, with a very little independence or will of her own, and a

very large independence under a will of her fatherâs.

âWhoâs there?â inquired Mr. Watkins Tottle, as a gentle tap at his

room-door disturbed these meditations one evening.

âTottle, my dear fellow, how \_do\_ you do?â said a short elderly gentleman

with a gruffish voice, bursting into the room, and replying to the

question by asking another.

âTold you I should drop in some evening,â said the short gentleman, as he

delivered his hat into Tottleâs hand, after a little struggling and

dodging.

âDelighted to see you, Iâm sure,â said Mr. Watkins Tottle, wishing

internally that his visitor had âdropped inâ to the Thames at the bottom

of the street, instead of dropping into his parlour. The fortnight was

nearly up, and Watkins was hard up.

âHow is Mrs. Gabriel Parsons?â inquired Tottle.

âQuite well, thank you,â replied Mr. Gabriel Parsons, for that was the

name the short gentleman revelled in. Here there was a pause; the short

gentleman looked at the left hob of the fireplace; Mr. Watkins Tottle

stared vacancy out of countenance.

âQuite well,â repeated the short gentleman, when five minutes had

expired. âI may say remarkably well.â And he rubbed the palms of his

hands as hard as if he were going to strike a light by friction.

âWhat will you take?â inquired Tottle, with the desperate suddenness of a

man who knew that unless the visitor took his leave, he stood very little

chance of taking anything else.

âOh, I donât knowâhave you any whiskey?â

âWhy,â replied Tottle, very slowly, for all this was gaining time, âI

\_had\_ some capital, and remarkably strong whiskey last week; but itâs all

goneâand therefore its strengthââ

âIs much beyond proof; or, in other words, impossible to be proved,â said

the short gentleman; and he laughed very heartily, and seemed quite glad

the whiskey had been drunk. Mr. Tottle smiledâbut it was the smile of

despair. When Mr. Gabriel Parsons had done laughing, he delicately

insinuated that, in the absence of whiskey, he would not be averse to

brandy. And Mr. Watkins Tottle, lighting a flat candle very

ostentatiously; and displaying an immense key, which belonged to the

street-door, but which, for the sake of appearances, occasionally did

duty in an imaginary wine-cellar; left the room to entreat his landlady

to charge their glasses, and charge them in the bill. The application

was successful; the spirits were speedily calledânot from the vasty deep,

but the adjacent wine-vaults. The two short gentlemen mixed their grog;

and then sat cosily down before the fireâa pair of shorts, airing

themselves.

âTottle,â said Mr. Gabriel Parsons, âyou know my wayâoff-hand, open, say

what I mean, mean what I say, hate reserve, and canât bear affectation.

One, is a bad domino which only hides what good people have about âem,

without making the bad look better; and the other is much about the same

thing as pinking a white cotton stocking to make it look like a silk one.

Now listen to what Iâm going to say.â

Here, the little gentleman paused, and took a long pull at his

brandy-and-water. Mr. Watkins Tottle took a sip of his, stirred the

fire, and assumed an air of profound attention.

âItâs of no use humming and haâing about the matter,â resumed the short

gentleman.ââYou want to get married.â

âWhy,â replied Mr. Watkins Tottle evasively; for he trembled violently,

and felt a sudden tingling throughout his whole frame; âwhyâI should

certainlyâat least, I \_think\_ I should likeââ

âWonât do,â said the short gentleman.ââPlain and freeâor thereâs an end

of the matter. Do you want money?â

âYou know I do.â

âYou admire the sex?â

âI do.â

âAnd youâd like to be married?â

âCertainly.â

âThen you shall be. Thereâs an end of that.â Thus saying, Mr. Gabriel

Parsons took a pinch of snuff, and mixed another glass.

âLet me entreat you to be more explanatory,â said Tottle. âReally, as

the party principally interested, I cannot consent to be disposed of, in

this way.â

âIâll tell you,â replied Mr. Gabriel Parsons, warming with the subject,

and the brandy-and-waterââI know a ladyâsheâs stopping with my wife

nowâwho is just the thing for you. Well educated; talks French; plays

the piano; knows a good deal about flowers, and shells, and all that sort

of thing; and has five hundred a year, with an uncontrolled power of

disposing of it, by her last will and testament.â

âIâll pay my addresses to her,â said Mr. Watkins Tottle. âShe isnât

\_very\_ youngâis she?â

âNot very; just the thing for you. Iâve said that already.â

âWhat coloured hair has the lady?â inquired Mr. Watkins Tottle.

âEgad, I hardly recollect,â replied Gabriel, with coolness. âPerhaps I

ought to have observed, at first, she wears a front.â

âA what?â ejaculated Tottle.

âOne of those things with curls, along here,â said Parsons, drawing a

straight line across his forehead, just over his eyes, in illustration of

his meaning. âI know the frontâs black; I canât speak quite positively

about her own hair; because, unless one walks behind her, and catches a

glimpse of it under her bonnet, one seldom sees it; but I should say that

it was \_rather\_ lighter than the frontâa shade of a greyish tinge,

perhaps.â

Mr. Watkins Tottle looked as if he had certain misgivings of mind. Mr.

Gabriel Parsons perceived it, and thought it would be safe to begin the

next attack without delay.

âNow, were you ever in love, Tottle?â he inquired.

Mr. Watkins Tottle blushed up to the eyes, and down to the chin, and

exhibited a most extensive combination of colours as he confessed the

soft impeachment.

âI suppose you popped the question, more than once, when you were a

youngâI beg your pardonâa youngerâman,â said Parsons.

âNever in my life!â replied his friend, apparently indignant at being

suspected of such an act. âNever! The fact is, that I entertain, as you

know, peculiar opinions on these subjects. I am not afraid of ladies,

young or oldâfar from it; but, I think, that in compliance with the

custom of the present day, they allow too much freedom of speech and

manner to marriageable men. Now, the fact is, that anything like this

easy freedom I never could acquire; and as I am always afraid of going

too far, I am generally, I dare say, considered formal and cold.â

âI shouldnât wonder if you were,â replied Parsons, gravely; âI shouldnât

wonder. However, youâll be all right in this case; for the strictness

and delicacy of this ladyâs ideas greatly exceed your own. Lord bless

you, why, when she came to our house, there was an old portrait of some

man or other, with two large, black, staring eyes, hanging up in her

bedroom; she positively refused to go to bed there, till it was taken

down, considering it decidedly wrong.â

âI think so, too,â said Mr. Watkins Tottle; âcertainly.â

âAnd then, the other nightâI never laughed so much in my lifeââresumed

Mr. Gabriel Parsons; âI had driven home in an easterly wind, and caught a

devil of a face-ache. Well; as Fannyâthatâs Mrs. Parsons, you knowâand

this friend of hers, and I, and Frank Ross, were playing a rubber, I

said, jokingly, that when I went to bed I should wrap my head in Fannyâs

flannel petticoat. She instantly threw up her cards, and left the room.â

âQuite right!â said Mr. Watkins Tottle; âshe could not possibly have

behaved in a more dignified manner. What did you do?â

âDo?âFrank took dummy; and I won sixpence.â

âBut, didnât you apologise for hurting her feelings?â

âDevil a bit. Next morning at breakfast, we talked it over. She

contended that any reference to a flannel petticoat was improper;âmen

ought not to be supposed to know that such things were. I pleaded my

coverture; being a married man.â

âAnd what did the lady say to that?â inquired Tottle, deeply interested.

âChanged her ground, and said that Frank being a single man, its

impropriety was obvious.â

âNoble-minded creature!â exclaimed the enraptured Tottle.

âOh! both Fanny and I said, at once, that she was regularly cut out for

you.â

A gleam of placid satisfaction shone on the circular face of Mr. Watkins

Tottle, as he heard the prophecy.

âThereâs one thing I canât understand,â said Mr. Gabriel Parsons, as he

rose to depart; âI cannot, for the life and soul of me, imagine how the

deuce youâll ever contrive to come together. The lady would certainly go

into convulsions if the subject were mentioned.â Mr. Gabriel Parsons sat

down again, and laughed until he was weak. Tottle owed him money, so he

had a perfect right to laugh at Tottleâs expense.

Mr. Watkins Tottle feared, in his own mind, that this was another

characteristic which he had in common with this modern Lucretia. He,

however, accepted the invitation to dine with the Parsonses on the next

day but one, with great firmness: and looked forward to the introduction,

when again left alone, with tolerable composure.

The sun that rose on the next day but one, had never beheld a sprucer

personage on the outside of the Norwood stage, than Mr. Watkins Tottle;

and when the coach drew up before a cardboard-looking house with

disguised chimneys, and a lawn like a large sheet of green letter-paper,

he certainly had never lighted to his place of destination a gentleman

who felt more uncomfortable.

The coach stopped, and Mr. Watkins Tottle jumpedâwe beg his

pardonâalighted, with great dignity. âAll right!â said he, and away went

the coach up the hill with that beautiful equanimity of pace for which

âshortâ stages are generally remarkable.

Mr. Watkins Tottle gave a faltering jerk to the handle of the garden-gate

bell. He essayed a more energetic tug, and his previous nervousness was

not at all diminished by hearing the bell ringing like a fire alarum.

âIs Mr. Parsons at home?â inquired Tottle of the man who opened the gate.

He could hardly hear himself speak, for the bell had not yet done

tolling.

âHere I am,â shouted a voice on the lawn,âand there was Mr. Gabriel

Parsons in a flannel jacket, running backwards and forwards, from a

wicket to two hats piled on each other, and from the two hats to the

wicket, in the most violent manner, while another gentleman with his coat

off was getting down the area of the house, after a ball. When the

gentleman without the coat had found itâwhich he did in less than ten

minutesâhe ran back to the hats, and Gabriel Parsons pulled up. Then,

the gentleman without the coat called out âplay,â very loudly, and

bowled. Then Mr. Gabriel Parsons knocked the ball several yards, and

took another run. Then, the other gentleman aimed at the wicket, and

didnât hit it; and Mr. Gabriel Parsons, having finished running on his

own account, laid down the bat and ran after the ball, which went into a

neighbouring field. They called this cricket.

âTottle, will you âgo in?ââ inquired Mr. Gabriel Parsons, as he

approached him, wiping the perspiration off his face.

Mr. Watkins Tottle declined the offer, the bare idea of accepting which

made him even warmer than his friend.

âThen weâll go into the house, as itâs past four, and I shall have to

wash my hands before dinner,â said Mr. Gabriel Parsons. âHere, I hate

ceremony, you know! Timson, thatâs TottleâTottle, thatâs Timson; bred

for the church, which I fear will never be bread for him;â and he

chuckled at the old joke. Mr. Timson bowed carelessly. Mr. Watkins

Tottle bowed stiffly. Mr. Gabriel Parsons led the way to the house. He

was a rich sugar-baker, who mistook rudeness for honesty, and abrupt

bluntness for an open and candid manner; many besides Gabriel mistake

bluntness for sincerity.

Mrs. Gabriel Parsons received the visitors most graciously on the steps,

and preceded them to the drawing-room. On the sofa, was seated a lady of

very prim appearance, and remarkably inanimate. She was one of those

persons at whose age it is impossible to make any reasonable guess; her

features might have been remarkably pretty when she was younger, and they

might always have presented the same appearance. Her complexionâwith a

slight trace of powder here and thereâwas as clear as that of a well-made

wax doll, and her face as expressive. She was handsomely dressed, and

was winding up a gold watch.

âMiss Lillerton, my dear, this is our friend Mr. Watkins Tottle; a very

old acquaintance I assure you,â said Mrs. Parsons, presenting the

Strephon of Cecil-street, Strand. The lady rose, and made a deep

courtesy; Mr. Watkins Tottle made a bow.

âSplendid, majestic creature!â thought Tottle.

Mr. Timson advanced, and Mr. Watkins Tottle began to hate him. Men

generally discover a rival, instinctively, and Mr. Watkins Tottle felt

that his hate was deserved.

âMay I beg,â said the reverend gentleman,ââMay I beg to call upon you,

Miss Lillerton, for some trifling donation to my soup, coals, and blanket

distribution society?â

âPut my name down, for two sovereigns, if you please,â responded Miss

Lillerton.

âYou are truly charitable, madam,â said the Reverend Mr. Timson, âand we

know that charity will cover a multitude of sins. Let me beg you to

understand that I do not say this from the supposition that you have many

sins which require palliation; believe me when I say that I never yet met

any one who had fewer to atone for, than Miss Lillerton.â

Something like a bad imitation of animation lighted up the ladyâs face,

as she acknowledged the compliment. Watkins Tottle incurred the sin of

wishing that the ashes of the Reverend Charles Timson were quietly

deposited in the churchyard of his curacy, wherever it might be.

âIâll tell you what,â interrupted Parsons, who had just appeared with

clean hands, and a black coat, âitâs my private opinion, Timson, that

your âdistribution societyâ is rather a humbug.â

âYou are so severe,â replied Timson, with a Christian smile: he disliked

Parsons, but liked his dinners.

âSo positively unjust!â said Miss Lillerton.

âCertainly,â observed Tottle. The lady looked up; her eyes met those of

Mr. Watkins Tottle. She withdrew them in a sweet confusion, and Watkins

Tottle did the sameâthe confusion was mutual.

âWhy,â urged Mr. Parsons, pursuing his objections, âwhat on earth is the

use of giving a man coals who has nothing to cook, or giving him blankets

when he hasnât a bed, or giving him soup when he requires substantial

food?ââlike sending them ruffles when wanting a shirt.â Why not give âem

a trifle of money, as I do, when I think they deserve it, and let them

purchase what they think best? Why?âbecause your subscribers wouldnât

see their names flourishing in print on the church-doorâthatâs the

reason.â

âReally, Mr. Parsons, I hope you donât mean to insinuate that I wish to

see \_my\_ name in print, on the church-door,â interrupted Miss Lillerton.

âI hope not,â said Mr. Watkins Tottle, putting in another word, and

getting another glance.

âCertainly not,â replied Parsons. âI dare say you wouldnât mind seeing

it in writing, though, in the church registerâeh?â

âRegister! What register?â inquired the lady gravely.

âWhy, the register of marriages, to be sure,â replied Parsons, chuckling

at the sally, and glancing at Tottle. Mr. Watkins Tottle thought he

should have fainted for shame, and it is quite impossible to imagine what

effect the joke would have had upon the lady, if dinner had not been, at

that moment, announced. Mr. Watkins Tottle, with an unprecedented effort

of gallantry, offered the tip of his little finger; Miss Lillerton

accepted it gracefully, with maiden modesty; and they proceeded in due

state to the dinner-table, where they were soon deposited side by side.

The room was very snug, the dinner very good, and the little party in

spirits. The conversation became pretty general, and when Mr. Watkins

Tottle had extracted one or two cold observations from his neighbour, and

had taken wine with her, he began to acquire confidence rapidly. The

cloth was removed; Mrs. Gabriel Parsons drank four glasses of port on the

plea of being a nurse just then; and Miss Lillerton took about the same

number of sips, on the plea of not wanting any at all. At length, the

ladies retired, to the great gratification of Mr. Gabriel Parsons, who

had been coughing and frowning at his wife, for half-an-hour

previouslyâsignals which Mrs. Parsons never happened to observe, until

she had been pressed to take her ordinary quantum, which, to avoid giving

trouble, she generally did at once.

âWhat do you think of her?â inquired Mr. Gabriel Parsons of Mr. Watkins

Tottle, in an under-tone.

âI dote on her with enthusiasm already!â replied Mr. Watkins Tottle.

âGentlemen, pray let us drink âthe ladies,ââ said the Reverend Mr.

Timson.

âThe ladies!â said Mr. Watkins Tottle, emptying his glass. In the

fulness of his confidence, he felt as if he could make love to a dozen

ladies, off-hand.

âAh!â said Mr. Gabriel Parsons, âI remember when I was a young manâfill

your glass, Timson.â

âI have this moment emptied it.â

âThen fill again.â

âI will,â said Timson, suiting the action to the word.

âI remember,â resumed Mr. Gabriel Parsons, âwhen I was a younger man,

with what a strange compound of feelings I used to drink that toast, and

how I used to think every woman was an angel.â

âWas that before you were married?â mildly inquired Mr. Watkins Tottle.

âOh! certainly,â replied Mr. Gabriel Parsons. âI have never thought so

since; and a precious milksop I must have been, ever to have thought so

at all. But, you know, I married Fanny under the oddest, and most

ridiculous circumstances possible.â

âWhat were they, if one may inquire?â asked Timson, who had heard the

story, on an average, twice a week for the last six months. Mr. Watkins

Tottle listened attentively, in the hope of picking up some suggestion

that might be useful to him in his new undertaking.

âI spent my wedding-night in a back-kitchen chimney,â said Parsons, by

way of a beginning.

âIn a back-kitchen chimney!â ejaculated Watkins Tottle. âHow dreadful!â

âYes, it wasnât very pleasant,â replied the small host. âThe fact is,

Fannyâs father and mother liked me well enough as an individual, but had

a decided objection to my becoming a husband. You see, I hadnât any

money in those days, and they had; and so they wanted Fanny to pick up

somebody else. However, we managed to discover the state of each otherâs

affections somehow. I used to meet her, at some mutual friendsâ parties;

at first we danced together, and talked, and flirted, and all that sort

of thing; then, I used to like nothing so well as sitting by her sideâwe

didnât talk so much then, but I remember I used to have a great notion of

looking at her out of the extreme corner of my left eyeâand then I got

very miserable and sentimental, and began to write verses, and use

Macassar oil. At last I couldnât bear it any longer, and after I had

walked up and down the sunny side of Oxford-street in tight boots for a

weekâand a devilish hot summer it was tooâin the hope of meeting her, I

sat down and wrote a letter, and begged her to manage to see me

clandestinely, for I wanted to hear her decision from her own mouth. I

said I had discovered, to my perfect satisfaction, that I couldnât live

without her, and that if she didnât have me, I had made up my mind to

take prussic acid, or take to drinking, or emigrate, so as to take myself

off in some way or other. Well, I borrowed a pound, and bribed the

housemaid to give her the note, which she did.â

âAnd what was the reply?â inquired Timson, who had found, before, that to

encourage the repetition of old stories is to get a general invitation.

âOh, the usual one! Fanny expressed herself very miserable; hinted at

the possibility of an early grave; said that nothing should induce her to

swerve from the duty she owed her parents; implored me to forget her, and

find out somebody more deserving, and all that sort of thing. She said

she could, on no account, think of meeting me unknown to her pa and ma;

and entreated me, as she should be in a particular part of Kensington

Gardens at eleven oâclock next morning, not to attempt to meet her

there.â

âYou didnât go, of course?â said Watkins Tottle.

âDidnât I?âOf course I did. There she was, with the identical housemaid

in perspective, in order that there might be no interruption. We walked

about, for a couple of hours; made ourselves delightfully miserable; and

were regularly engaged. Then, we began to âcorrespondââthat is to say,

we used to exchange about four letters a day; what we used to say in âem

I canât imagine. And I used to have an interview, in the kitchen, or the

cellar, or some such place, every evening. Well, things went on in this

way for some time; and we got fonder of each other every day. At last,

as our love was raised to such a pitch, and as my salary had been raised

too, shortly before, we determined on a secret marriage. Fanny arranged

to sleep at a friendâs, on the previous night; we were to be married

early in the morning; and then we were to return to her home and be

pathetic. She was to fall at the old gentlemanâs feet, and bathe his

boots with her tears; and I was to hug the old lady and call her

âmother,â and use my pocket-handkerchief as much as possible. Married we

were, the next morning; two girls-friends of Fannyâsâacting as

bridesmaids; and a man, who was hired for five shillings and a pint of

porter, officiating as father. Now, the old lady unfortunately put off

her return from Ramsgate, where she had been paying a visit, until the

next morning; and as we placed great reliance on her, we agreed to

postpone our confession for four-and-twenty hours. My newly-made wife

returned home, and I spent my wedding-day in strolling about

Hampstead-heath, and execrating my father-in-law. Of course, I went to

comfort my dear little wife at night, as much as I could, with the

assurance that our troubles would soon be over. I opened the

garden-gate, of which I had a key, and was shown by the servant to our

old place of meetingâa back kitchen, with a stone-floor and a dresser:

upon which, in the absence of chairs, we used to sit and make love.â

âMake love upon a kitchen-dresser!â interrupted Mr. Watkins Tottle, whose

ideas of decorum were greatly outraged.

âAh! On a kitchen-dresser!â replied Parsons. âAnd let me tell you, old

fellow, that, if you were really over head-and-ears in love, and had no

other place to make love in, youâd be devilish glad to avail yourself of

such an opportunity. However, let me see;âwhere was I?â

âOn the dresser,â suggested Timson.

âOhâah! Well, here I found poor Fanny, quite disconsolate and

uncomfortable. The old boy had been very cross all day, which made her

feel still more lonely; and she was quite out of spirits. So, I put a

good face on the matter, and laughed it off, and said we should enjoy the

pleasures of a matrimonial life more by contrast; and, at length, poor

Fanny brightened up a little. I stopped there, till about eleven

oâclock, and, just as I was taking my leave for the fourteenth time, the

girl came running down the stairs, without her shoes, in a great fright,

to tell us that the old villainâHeaven forgive me for calling him so, for

he is dead and gone now!âprompted I suppose by the prince of darkness,

was coming down, to draw his own beer for supperâa thing he had not done

before, for six months, to my certain knowledge; for the cask stood in

that very back kitchen. If he discovered me there, explanation would

have been out of the question; for he was so outrageously violent, when

at all excited, that he never would have listened to me. There was only

one thing to be done. The chimney was a very wide one; it had been

originally built for an oven; went up perpendicularly for a few feet, and

then shot backward and formed a sort of small cavern. My hopes and

fortuneâthe means of our joint existence almostâwere at stake. I

scrambled in like a squirrel; coiled myself up in this recess; and, as

Fanny and the girl replaced the deal chimney-board, I could see the light

of the candle which my unconscious father-in-law carried in his hand. I

heard him draw the beer; and I never heard beer run so slowly. He was

just leaving the kitchen, and I was preparing to descend, when down came

the infernal chimney-board with a tremendous crash. He stopped and put

down the candle and the jug of beer on the dresser; he was a nervous old

fellow, and any unexpected noise annoyed him. He coolly observed that

the fire-place was never used, and sending the frightened servant into

the next kitchen for a hammer and nails, actually nailed up the board,

and locked the door on the outside. So, there was I, on my

wedding-night, in the light kerseymere trousers, fancy waistcoat, and

blue coat, that I had been married in in the morning, in a back-kitchen

chimney, the bottom of which was nailed up, and the top of which had been

formerly raised some fifteen feet, to prevent the smoke from annoying the

neighbours. And there,â added Mr. Gabriel Parsons, as he passed the

bottle, âthere I remained till half-past seven the next morning, when the

housemaidâs sweetheart, who was a carpenter, unshelled me. The old dog

had nailed me up so securely, that, to this very hour, I firmly believe

that no one but a carpenter could ever have got me out.â

âAnd what did Mrs. Parsonsâs father say, when he found you were married?â

inquired Watkins Tottle, who, although he never saw a joke, was not

satisfied until he heard a story to the very end.

âWhy, the affair of the chimney so tickled his fancy, that he pardoned us

off-hand, and allowed us something to live on till he went the way of all

flesh. I spent the next night in his second-floor front, much more

comfortably than I had spent the preceding one; for, as you will probably

guessââ

âPlease, sir, missis has made tea,â said a middle-aged female servant,

bobbing into the room.

âThatâs the very housemaid that figures in my story,â said Mr. Gabriel

Parsons. âShe went into Fannyâs service when we were first married, and

has been with us ever since; but I donât think she has felt one atom of

respect for me since the morning she saw me released, when she went into

violent hysterics, to which she has been subject ever since. Now, shall

we join the ladies?â

âIf you please,â said Mr. Watkins Tottle.

âBy all means,â added the obsequious Mr. Timson; and the trio made for

the drawing-room accordingly.

Tea being concluded, and the toast and cups having been duly handed, and

occasionally upset, by Mr. Watkins Tottle, a rubber was proposed. They

cut for partnersâMr. and Mrs. Parsons; and Mr. Watkins Tottle and Miss

Lillerton. Mr. Timson having conscientious scruples on the subject of

card-playing, drank brandy-and-water, and kept up a running spar with Mr.

Watkins Tottle. The evening went off well; Mr. Watkins Tottle was in

high spirits, having some reason to be gratified with his reception by

Miss Lillerton; and before he left, a small party was made up to visit

the Beulah Spa on the following Saturday.

âItâs all right, I think,â said Mr. Gabriel Parsons to Mr. Watkins Tottle

as he opened the garden gate for him.

âI hope so,â he replied, squeezing his friendâs hand.

âYouâll be down by the first coach on Saturday,â said Mr. Gabriel

Parsons.

âCertainly,â replied Mr. Watkins Tottle. âUndoubtedly.â

But fortune had decreed that Mr. Watkins Tottle should not be down by the

first coach on Saturday. His adventures on that day, however, and the

success of his wooing, are subjects for another chapter.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

âThe first coach has not come in yet, has it, Tom?â inquired Mr. Gabriel

Parsons, as he very complacently paced up and down the fourteen feet of

gravel which bordered the âlawn,â on the Saturday morning which had been

fixed upon for the Beulah Spa jaunt.

âNo, sir; I havenât seen it,â replied a gardener in a blue apron, who let

himself out to do the ornamental for half-a-crown a day and his âkeep.â

âTime Tottle was down,â said Mr. Gabriel Parsons, ruminatingââOh, here he

is, no doubt,â added Gabriel, as a cab drove rapidly up the hill; and he

buttoned his dressing-gown, and opened the gate to receive the expected

visitor. The cab stopped, and out jumped a man in a coarse Petersham

great-coat, whity-brown neckerchief, faded black suit, gamboge-coloured

top-boots, and one of those large-crowned hats, formerly seldom met with,

but now very generally patronised by gentlemen and costermongers.

âMr. Parsons?â said the man, looking at the superscription of a note he

held in his hand, and addressing Gabriel with an inquiring air.

â\_My\_ name is Parsons,â responded the sugar-baker.

âIâve brought this here note,â replied the individual in the painted

tops, in a hoarse whisper: âIâve brought this here note from a genâlmân

as come to our house this morninâ.â

âI expected the gentleman at my house,â said Parsons, as he broke the

seal, which bore the impression of her Majestyâs profile as it is seen on

a sixpence.

âIâve no doubt the genâlmân would haâ been here, replied the stranger,

âif he hadnât happened to call at our house first; but we never trusts no

genâlmân furder nor we can see himâno mistake about that thereââadded the

unknown, with a facetious grin; âbeg your pardon, sir, no offence meant,

onlyâonce in, and I wish you mayâcatch the idea, sir?â

Mr. Gabriel Parsons was not remarkable for catching anything suddenly,

but a cold. He therefore only bestowed a glance of profound astonishment

on his mysterious companion, and proceeded to unfold the note of which he

had been the bearer. Once opened and the idea was caught with very

little difficulty. Mr. Watkins Tottle had been suddenly arrested for

33\_l.\_ 10\_s.\_ 4\_d.\_, and dated his communication from a lock-up house in

the vicinity of Chancery-lane.

âUnfortunate affair this!â said Parsons, refolding the note.

âOh! nothinâ ven youâre used to it,â coolly observed the man in the

Petersham.

âTom!â exclaimed Parsons, after a few minutesâ consideration, âjust put

the horse in, will you?âTell the gentleman that I shall be there almost

as soon as you are,â he continued, addressing the sheriff-officerâs

Mercury.

âWerry well,â replied that important functionary; adding, in a

confidential manner, âIâd adwise the genâlmânâs friends to settle. You

see itâs a mere trifle; and, unless the genâlmân means to go up afore the

court, itâs hardly worth while waiting for detainers, you know. Our

governorâs wide awake, he is. Iâll never say nothinâ agin him, nor no

man; but he knows whatâs oâclock, he does, uncommon.â Having delivered

this eloquent, and, to Parsons, particularly intelligible harangue, the

meaning of which was eked out by divers nods and winks, the gentleman in

the boots reseated himself in the cab, which went rapidly off, and was

soon out of sight. Mr. Gabriel Parsons continued to pace up and down the

pathway for some minutes, apparently absorbed in deep meditation. The

result of his cogitations seemed to be perfectly satisfactory to himself,

for he ran briskly into the house; said that business had suddenly

summoned him to town; that he had desired the messenger to inform Mr.

Watkins Tottle of the fact; and that they would return together to

dinner. He then hastily equipped himself for a drive, and mounting his

gig, was soon on his way to the establishment of Mr. Solomon Jacobs,

situate (as Mr. Watkins Tottle had informed him) in Cursitor-street,

Chancery-lane.

When a man is in a violent hurry to get on, and has a specific object in

view, the attainment of which depends on the completion of his journey,

the difficulties which interpose themselves in his way appear not only to

be innumerable, but to have been called into existence especially for the

occasion. The remark is by no means a new one, and Mr. Gabriel Parsons

had practical and painful experience of its justice in the course of his

drive. There are three classes of animated objects which prevent your

driving with any degree of comfort or celerity through streets which are

but little frequentedâthey are pigs, children, and old women. On the

occasion we are describing, the pigs were luxuriating on cabbage-stalks,

and the shuttlecocks fluttered from the little deal battledores, and the

children played in the road; and women, with a basket in one hand, and

the street-door key in the other, \_would\_ cross just before the horseâs

head, until Mr. Gabriel Parsons was perfectly savage with vexation, and

quite hoarse with hoi-ing and imprecating. Then, when he got into

Fleet-street, there was âa stoppage,â in which people in vehicles have

the satisfaction of remaining stationary for half an hour, and envying

the slowest pedestrians; and where policemen rush about, and seize hold

of horsesâ bridles, and back them into shop-windows, by way of clearing

the road and preventing confusion. At length Mr. Gabriel Parsons turned

into Chancery-lane, and having inquired for, and been directed to

Cursitor-street (for it was a locality of which he was quite ignorant),

he soon found himself opposite the house of Mr. Solomon Jacobs.

Confiding his horse and gig to the care of one of the fourteen boys who

had followed him from the other side of Blackfriars-bridge on the chance

of his requiring their services, Mr. Gabriel Parsons crossed the road and

knocked at an inner door, the upper part of which was of glass, grated

like the windows of this inviting mansion with iron barsâpainted white to

look comfortable.

The knock was answered by a sallow-faced, red-haired, sulky boy, who,

after surveying Mr. Gabriel Parsons through the glass, applied a large

key to an immense wooden excrescence, which was in reality a lock, but

which, taken in conjunction with the iron nails with which the panels

were studded, gave the door the appearance of being subject to warts.

âI want to see Mr. Watkins Tottle,â said Parsons.

âItâs the gentleman that come in this morning, Jem,â screamed a voice

from the top of the kitchen-stairs, which belonged to a dirty woman who

had just brought her chin to a level with the passage-floor. âThe

gentlemanâs in the coffee-room.â

âUp-stairs, sir,â said the boy, just opening the door wide enough to let

Parsons in without squeezing him, and double-locking it the moment he had

made his way through the apertureââFirst floorâdoor on the left.â

Mr. Gabriel Parsons thus instructed, ascended the uncarpeted and

ill-lighted staircase, and after giving several subdued taps at the

before-mentioned âdoor on the left,â which were rendered inaudible by the

hum of voices within the room, and the hissing noise attendant on some

frying operations which were carrying on below stairs, turned the handle,

and entered the apartment. Being informed that the unfortunate object of

his visit had just gone up-stairs to write a letter, he had leisure to

sit down and observe the scene before him.

The roomâwhich was a small, confined denâwas partitioned off into boxes,

like the common-room of some inferior eating-house. The dirty floor had

evidently been as long a stranger to the scrubbing-brush as to carpet or

floor-cloth: and the ceiling was completely blackened by the flare of the

oil-lamp by which the room was lighted at night. The gray ashes on the

edges of the tables, and the cigar ends which were plentifully scattered

about the dusty grate, fully accounted for the intolerable smell of

tobacco which pervaded the place; and the empty glasses and

half-saturated slices of lemon on the tables, together with the porter

pots beneath them, bore testimony to the frequent libations in which the

individuals who honoured Mr. Solomon Jacobs by a temporary residence in

his house indulged. Over the mantel-shelf was a paltry looking-glass,

extending about half the width of the chimney-piece; but by way of

counterpoise, the ashes were confined by a rusty fender about twice as

long as the hearth.

From this cheerful room itself, the attention of Mr. Gabriel Parsons was

naturally directed to its inmates. In one of the boxes two men were

playing at cribbage with a very dirty pack of cards, some with blue, some

with green, and some with red backsâselections from decayed packs. The

cribbage board had been long ago formed on the table by some ingenious

visitor with the assistance of a pocket-knife and a two-pronged fork,

with which the necessary number of holes had been made in the table at

proper distances for the reception of the wooden pegs. In another box a

stout, hearty-looking man, of about forty, was eating some dinner which

his wifeâan equally comfortable-looking personageâhad brought him in a

basket: and in a third, a genteel-looking young man was talking

earnestly, and in a low tone, to a young female, whose face was concealed

by a thick veil, but whom Mr. Gabriel Parsons immediately set down in his

own mind as the debtorâs wife. A young fellow of vulgar manners, dressed

in the very extreme of the prevailing fashion, was pacing up and down the

room, with a lighted cigar in his mouth and his hands in his pockets,

ever and anon puffing forth volumes of smoke, and occasionally applying,

with much apparent relish, to a pint pot, the contents of which were

âchillingâ on the hob.

âFourpence more, by gum!â exclaimed one of the cribbage-players, lighting

a pipe, and addressing his adversary at the close of the game; âone âud

think youâd got luck in a pepper-cruet, and shook it out when you wanted

it.â

âWell, that aânât a bad un,â replied the other, who was a horse-dealer

from Islington.

âNo; Iâm blessed if it is,â interposed the jolly-looking fellow, who,

having finished his dinner, was drinking out of the same glass as his

wife, in truly conjugal harmony, some hot gin-and-water. The faithful

partner of his cares had brought a plentiful supply of the

anti-temperance fluid in a large flat stone bottle, which looked like a

half-gallon jar that had been successfully tapped for the dropsy.

âYouâre a rum chap, you are, Mr. Walkerâwill you dip your beak into this,

sir?â

âThankâee, sir,â replied Mr. Walker, leaving his box, and advancing to

the other to accept the proffered glass. âHereâs your health, sir, and

your good âoomanâs here. Gentlemen allâyours, and better luck still.

Well, Mr. Willis,â continued the facetious prisoner, addressing the young

man with the cigar, âyou seem rather down to-dayâfloored, as one may say.

Whatâs the matter, sir? Never say die, you know.â

âOh! Iâm all right,â replied the smoker. âI shall be bailed out

to-morrow.â

âShall you, though?â inquired the other. âDamme, I wish I could say the

same. I am as regularly over head and ears as the Royal George, and

stand about as much chance of being \_bailed out\_. Ha! ha! ha!â

âWhy,â said the young man, stopping short, and speaking in a very loud

key, âlook at me. What dâye think Iâve stopped here two days for?â

ââCause you couldnât get out, I suppose,â interrupted Mr. Walker, winking

to the company. âNot that youâre exactly obliged to stop here, only you

canât help it. No compulsion, you know, only you mustâeh?â

âAânât he a rum un?â inquired the delighted individual, who had offered

the gin-and-water, of his wife.

âOh, he just is!â replied the lady, who was quite overcome by these

flashes of imagination.

âWhy, my case,â frowned the victim, throwing the end of his cigar into

the fire, and illustrating his argument by knocking the bottom of the pot

on the table, at intervals,ââmy case is a very singular one. My fatherâs

a man of large property, and I am his son.â

âThatâs a very strange circumstance!â interrupted the jocose Mr. Walker,

\_en passant\_.

ââI am his son, and have received a liberal education. I donât owe no

man nothingânot the value of a farthing, but I was induced, you see, to

put my name to some bills for a friendâbills to a large amount, I may say

a very large amount, for which I didnât receive no consideration. Whatâs

the consequence?â

âWhy, I suppose the bills went out, and you came in. The acceptances

werenât taken up, and you were, eh?â inquired Walker.

âTo be sure,â replied the liberally educated young gentleman. âTo be

sure; and so here I am, locked up for a matter of twelve hundred pound.â

âWhy donât you ask your old governor to stump up?â inquired Walker, with

a somewhat sceptical air.

âOh! bless you, heâd never do it,â replied the other, in a tone of

expostulationââNever!â

âWell, it is very odd toâbeâsure,â interposed the owner of the flat

bottle, mixing another glass, âbut Iâve been in difficulties, as one may

say, now for thirty year. I went to pieces when I was in a milk-walk,

thirty year ago; arterwards, when I was a fruiterer, and kept a spring

wan; and arter that again in the coal and âtatur lineâbut all that time I

never see a youngish chap come into a place of this kind, who wasnât

going out again directly, and who hadnât been arrested on bills which

heâd given a friend and for which heâd received nothing whatsomeverânot a

fraction.â

âOh! itâs always the cry,â said Walker. âI canât see the use on it;

thatâs what makes me so wild. Why, I should have a much better opinion

of an individual, if heâd say at once in an honourable and gentlemanly

manner as heâd done everybody he possibly could.â

âAy, to be sure,â interposed the horse-dealer, with whose notions of

bargain and sale the axiom perfectly coincided, âso should I.â The young

gentleman, who had given rise to these observations, was on the point of

offering a rather angry reply to these sneers, but the rising of the

young man before noticed, and of the female who had been sitting by him,

to leave the room, interrupted the conversation. She had been weeping

bitterly, and the noxious atmosphere of the room acting upon her excited

feelings and delicate frame, rendered the support of her companion

necessary as they quitted it together.

There was an air of superiority about them both, and something in their

appearance so unusual in such a place, that a respectful silence was

observed until the \_whirrârâbang\_ of the spring door announced that they

were out of hearing. It was broken by the wife of the ex-fruiterer.

âPoor creetur!â said she, quenching a sigh in a rivulet of gin-and-water.

âSheâs very young.â

âSheâs a nice-looking âooman too,â added the horse-dealer.

âWhatâs he in for, Ikey?â inquired Walker, of an individual who was

spreading a cloth with numerous blotches of mustard upon it, on one of

the tables, and whom Mr. Gabriel Parsons had no difficulty in recognising

as the man who had called upon him in the morning.

âVy,â responded the factotum, âitâs one of the rummiest rigs you ever

heard on. He come in here last Vensday, which by-the-bye heâs a-going

over the water to-nightâhowsâever thatâs neither here nor there. You see

Iâve been a going backâards and forâards about his business, and haâ

managed to pick up some of his story from the servants and them; and so

far as I can make it out, it seems to be summat to this here effectââ

âCut it short, old fellow,â interrupted Walker, who knew from former

experience that he of the top-boots was neither very concise nor

intelligible in his narratives.

âLet me alone,â replied Ikey, âand Iâll haâ wound up, and made my lucky

in five seconds. This here young genâlmânâs fatherâso Iâm told, mind

yeâand the father oâ the young voman, have always been on very bad,

out-and-out, rigâlar knock-me-down sort oâ terms; but somehow or another,

when he was a wisitinâ at some gentlefolkâs house, as he knowed at

college, he came into contract with the young lady. He seed her several

times, and then he up and said heâd keep company with her, if so be as

she vos agreeable. Vell, she vos as sweet upon him as he vos upon her,

and so I sâpose they made it all right; for they got married âbout six

months arterwards, unbeknown, mind ye, to the two fathersâleastways so

Iâm told. When they heard on itâmy eyes, there was such a combustion!

Starvation vos the very least that vos to be done to âem. The young

genâlmânâs father cut him off vith a bob, âcos heâd cut himself off vith

a wife; and the young ladyâs father he behaved even worser and more

unnatâral, for he not only blowâd her up dreadful, and swore heâd never

see her again, but he employed a chap as I knowsâand as you knows, Mr.

Valker, a precious sight too wellâto go about and buy up the bills and

them things on which the young husband, thinking his governor âud come

round agin, had raised the vind just to blow himself on vith for a time;

besides vich, he made all the interest he could to set other people agin

him. Consequence vos, that he paid as long as he could; but things he

never expected to have to meet till heâd had time to turn himself round,

come fast upon him, and he vos nabbed. He vos brought here, as I said

afore, last Vensday, and I think thereâs aboutâah, half-a-dozen detainers

agin him down-stairs now. I have been,â added Ikey, âin the purfession

these fifteen year, and I never met vith such windictiveness afore!â

âPoor creeturs!â exclaimed the coal-dealerâs wife once more: again

resorting to the same excellent prescription for nipping a sigh in the

bud. âAh! when theyâve seen as much trouble as I and my old man here

have, theyâll be as comfortable under it as we are.â

âThe young ladyâs a pretty creature,â said Walker, âonly sheâs a little

too delicate for my tasteâthere ainât enough of her. As to the young

cove, he may be very respectable and what not, but heâs too down in the

mouth for meâhe ainât game.â

âGame!â exclaimed Ikey, who had been altering the position of a

green-handled knife and fork at least a dozen times, in order that he

might remain in the room under the pretext of having something to do.

âHeâs game enough ven thereâs anything to be fierce about; but who could

be game as you call it, Mr. Walker, with a pale young creetur like that,

hanging about him?âItâs enough to drive any manâs heart into his boots to

see âem togetherâand no mistake at all about it. I never shall forget

her first cominâ here; he wrote to her on the Thursday to comeâI know he

did, âcos I took the letter. Uncommon fidgety he was all day to be sure,

and in the evening he goes down into the office, and he says to Jacobs,

says he, âSir, can I have the loan of a private room for a few minutes

this evening, without incurring any additional expenseâjust to see my

wife in?â says he. Jacobs looked as much as to sayââStrike me bountiful

if you ainât one of the modest sort!â but as the genâlmân who had been in

the back parlour had just gone out, and had paid for it for that day, he

saysâwerry graveââSir,â says he, âitâs agin our rules to let private

rooms to our lodgers on gratis terms, but,â says he, âfor a gentleman, I

donât mind breaking through them for once.â So then he turns round to

me, and says, âIkey, put two mould candles in the back parlour, and

charge âem to this genâlmânâs account,â vich I did. Vell, by-and-by a

hackney-coach comes up to the door, and there, sure enough, was the young

lady, wrapped up in a hopera-cloak, as it might be, and all alone. I

opened the gate that night, so I went up when the coach come, and he vos

a waitinâ at the parlour doorâand wasnât he a trembling, neither? The

poor creetur see him, and could hardly walk to meet him. âOh, Harry!â

she says, âthat it should have come to this; and all for my sake,â says

she, putting her hand upon his shoulder. So he puts his arm round her

pretty little waist, and leading her gently a little way into the room,

so that he might be able to shut the door, he says, so kind and

soft-likeââWhy, Kate,â says heââ

âHereâs the gentleman you want,â said Ikey, abruptly breaking off in his

story, and introducing Mr. Gabriel Parsons to the crest-fallen Watkins

Tottle, who at that moment entered the room. Watkins advanced with a

wooden expression of passive endurance, and accepted the hand which Mr.

Gabriel Parsons held out.

âI want to speak to you,â said Gabriel, with a look strongly expressive

of his dislike of the company.

âThis way,â replied the imprisoned one, leading the way to the front

drawing-room, where rich debtors did the luxurious at the rate of a

couple of guineas a day.

âWell, here I am,â said Mr. Watkins, as he sat down on the sofa; and

placing the palms of his hands on his knees, anxiously glanced at his

friendâs countenance.

âYes; and here youâre likely to be,â said Gabriel, coolly, as he rattled

the money in his unmentionable pockets, and looked out of the window.

âWhatâs the amount with the costs?â inquired Parsons, after an awkward

pause.

âHave you any money?â

âNine and sixpence halfpenny.â

Mr. Gabriel Parsons walked up and down the room for a few seconds, before

he could make up his mind to disclose the plan he had formed; he was

accustomed to drive hard bargains, but was always most anxious to conceal

his avarice. At length he stopped short, and said, âTottle, you owe me

fifty pounds.â

âI do.â

âAnd from all I see, I infer that you are likely to owe it to me.â

âI fear I am.â

âThough you have every disposition to pay me if you could?â

âCertainly.â

âThen,â said Mr. Gabriel Parsons, âlisten: hereâs my proposition. You

know my way of old. Accept itâyes or noâI will or I wonât. Iâll pay the

debt and costs, and Iâll lend you 10\_l.\_ more (which, added to your

annuity, will enable you to carry on the war well) if youâll give me your

note of hand to pay me one hundred and fifty pounds within six months

after you are married to Miss Lillerton.â

âMy dearââ

âStop a minuteâon one condition; and that is, that you propose to Miss

Lillerton at once.â

âAt once! My dear Parsons, consider.â

âItâs for you to consider, not me. She knows you well from reputation,

though she did not know you personally until lately. Notwithstanding all

her maiden modesty, I think sheâd be devilish glad to get married out of

hand with as little delay as possible. My wife has sounded her on the

subject, and she has confessed.â

âWhatâwhat?â eagerly interrupted the enamoured Watkins.

âWhy,â replied Parsons, âto say exactly what she has confessed, would be

rather difficult, because they only spoke in hints, and so forth; but my

wife, who is no bad judge in these cases, declared to me that what she

had confessed was as good as to say that she was not insensible of your

meritsâin fact, that no other man should have her.â

Mr. Watkins Tottle rose hastily from his seat, and rang the bell.

âWhatâs that for?â inquired Parsons.

âI want to send the man for the bill stamp,â replied Mr. Watkins Tottle.

âThen youâve made up your mind?â

âI have,ââand they shook hands most cordially. The note of hand was

givenâthe debt and costs were paidâIkey was satisfied for his trouble,

and the two friends soon found themselves on that side of Mr. Solomon

Jacobsâs establishment, on which most of his visitors were very happy

when they found themselves once againâto wit, the \_out\_side.

âNow,â said Mr. Gabriel Parsons, as they drove to Norwood togetherââyou

shall have an opportunity to make the disclosure to-night, and mind you

speak out, Tottle.â

âI willâI will!â replied Watkins, valorously.

âHow I should like to see you together,â ejaculated Mr. Gabriel

Parsons.ââWhat fun!â and he laughed so long and so loudly, that he

disconcerted Mr. Watkins Tottle, and frightened the horse.

âThereâs Fanny and your intended walking about on the lawn,â said

Gabriel, as they approached the house. âMind your eye, Tottle.â

âNever fear,â replied Watkins, resolutely, as he made his way to the spot

where the ladies were walking.

âHereâs Mr. Tottle, my dear,â said Mrs. Parsons, addressing Miss

Lillerton. The lady turned quickly round, and acknowledged his courteous

salute with the same sort of confusion that Watkins had noticed on their

first interview, but with something like a slight expression of

disappointment or carelessness.

âDid you see how glad she was to see you?â whispered Parsons to his

friend.

âWhy, I really thought she looked as if she would rather have seen

somebody else,â replied Tottle.

âPooh, nonsense!â whispered Parsons againââitâs always the way with the

women, young or old. They never show how delighted they are to see those

whose presence makes their hearts beat. Itâs the way with the whole sex,

and no man should have lived to your time of life without knowing it.

Fanny confessed it to me, when we were first married, over and over

againâsee what it is to have a wife.â

âCertainly,â whispered Tottle, whose courage was vanishing fast.

âWell, now, youâd better begin to pave the way,â said Parsons, who,

having invested some money in the speculation, assumed the office of

director.

âYes, yes, I willâpresently,â replied Tottle, greatly flurried.

âSay something to her, man,â urged Parsons again. âConfound it! pay her

a compliment, canât you?â

âNo! not till after dinner,â replied the bashful Tottle, anxious to

postpone the evil moment.

âWell, gentlemen,â said Mrs. Parsons, âyou are really very polite; you

stay away the whole morning, after promising to take us out, and when you

do come home, you stand whispering together and take no notice of us.â

âWe were talking of the \_business\_, my dear, which detained us this

morning,â replied Parsons, looking significantly at Tottle.

âDear me! how very quickly the morning has gone,â said Miss Lillerton,

referring to the gold watch, which was wound up on state occasions,

whether it required it or not.

âI think it has passed very slowly,â mildly suggested Tottle.

(âThatâs rightâbravo!â) whispered Parsons.

âIndeed!â said Miss Lillerton, with an air of majestic surprise.

âI can only impute it to my unavoidable absence from your society,

madam,â said Watkins, âand that of Mrs. Parsons.â

During this short dialogue, the ladies had been leading the way to the

house.

âWhat the deuce did you stick Fanny into that last compliment for?â

inquired Parsons, as they followed together; âit quite spoilt the

effect.â

âOh! it really would have been too broad without,â replied Watkins

Tottle, âmuch too broad!â

âHeâs mad!â Parsons whispered his wife, as they entered the drawing-room,

âmad from modesty.â

âDear me!â ejaculated the lady, âI never heard of such a thing.â

âYouâll find we have quite a family dinner, Mr. Tottle,â said Mrs.

Parsons, when they sat down to table: âMiss Lillerton is one of us, and,

of course, we make no stranger of you.â

Mr. Watkins Tottle expressed a hope that the Parsons family never would

make a stranger of him; and wished internally that his bashfulness would

allow him to feel a little less like a stranger himself.

âTake off the covers, Martha,â said Mrs. Parsons, directing the shifting

of the scenery with great anxiety. The order was obeyed, and a pair of

boiled fowls, with tongue and et ceteras, were displayed at the top, and

a fillet of veal at the bottom. On one side of the table two green

sauce-tureens, with ladles of the same, were setting to each other in a

green dish; and on the other was a curried rabbit, in a brown suit,

turned up with lemon.

âMiss Lillerton, my dear,â said Mrs. Parsons, âshall I assist you?â

âThank you, no; I think Iâll trouble Mr. Tottle.â

Watkins startedâtrembledâhelped the rabbitâand broke a tumbler. The

countenance of the lady of the house, which had been all smiles

previously, underwent an awful change.

âExtremely sorry,â stammered Watkins, assisting himself to currie and

parsley and butter, in the extremity of his confusion.

âNot the least consequence,â replied Mrs. Parsons, in a tone which

implied that it was of the greatest consequence possible,âdirecting aside

the researches of the boy, who was groping under the table for the bits

of broken glass.

âI presume,â said Miss Lillerton, âthat Mr. Tottle is aware of the

interest which bachelors usually pay in such cases; a dozen glasses for

one is the lowest penalty.â

Mr. Gabriel Parsons gave his friend an admonitory tread on the toe. Here

was a clear hint that the sooner he ceased to be a bachelor and

emancipated himself from such penalties, the better. Mr. Watkins Tottle

viewed the observation in the same light, and challenged Mrs. Parsons to

take wine, with a degree of presence of mind, which, under all the

circumstances, was really extraordinary.

âMiss Lillerton,â said Gabriel, âmay I have the pleasure?â

âI shall be most happy.â

âTottle, will you assist Miss Lillerton, and pass the decanter. Thank

you.â (The usual pantomimic ceremony of nodding and sipping gone

through)â

âTottle, were you ever in Suffolk?â inquired the master of the house, who

was burning to tell one of his seven stock stories.

âNo,â responded Watkins, adding, by way of a saving clause, âbut Iâve

been in Devonshire.â

âAh!â replied Gabriel, âit was in Suffolk that a rather singular

circumstance happened to me many years ago. Did you ever happen to hear

me mention it?â

Mr. Watkins Tottle \_had\_ happened to hear his friend mention it some four

hundred times. Of course he expressed great curiosity, and evinced the

utmost impatience to hear the story again. Mr. Gabriel Parsons forthwith

attempted to proceed, in spite of the interruptions to which, as our

readers must frequently have observed, the master of the house is often

exposed in such cases. We will attempt to give them an idea of our

meaning.

âWhen I was in Suffolkââ said Mr. Gabriel Parsons.

âTake off the fowls first, Martha,â said Mrs. Parsons. âI beg your

pardon, my dear.â

âWhen I was in Suffolk,â resumed Mr. Parsons, with an impatient glance at

his wife, who pretended not to observe it, âwhich is now years ago,

business led me to the town of Bury St. Edmundâs. I had to stop at the

principal places in my way, and therefore, for the sake of convenience, I

travelled in a gig. I left Sudbury one dark nightâit was winter

timeâabout nine oâclock; the rain poured in torrents, the wind howled

among the trees that skirted the roadside, and I was obliged to proceed

at a foot-pace, for I could hardly see my hand before me, it was so

darkââ

âJohn,â interrupted Mrs. Parsons, in a low, hollow voice, âdonât spill

that gravy.â

âFanny,â said Parsons impatiently, âI wish youâd defer these domestic

reproofs to some more suitable time. Really, my dear, these constant

interruptions are very annoying.â

âMy dear, I didnât interrupt you,â said Mrs. Parsons.

âBut, my dear, you \_did\_ interrupt me,â remonstrated Mr. Parsons.

âHow very absurd you are, my love! I must give directions to the

servants; I am quite sure that if I sat here and allowed John to spill

the gravy over the new carpet, youâd be the first to find fault when you

saw the stain to-morrow morning.â

âWell,â continued Gabriel with a resigned air, as if he knew there was no

getting over the point about the carpet, âI was just saying, it was so

dark that I could hardly see my hand before me. The road was very

lonely, and I assure you, Tottle (this was a device to arrest the

wandering attention of that individual, which was distracted by a

confidential communication between Mrs. Parsons and Martha, accompanied

by the delivery of a large bunch of keys), I assure you, Tottle, I became

somehow impressed with a sense of the loneliness of my situationââ

âPie to your master,â interrupted Mrs. Parsons, again directing the

servant.

âNow, pray, my dear,â remonstrated Parsons once more, very pettishly.

Mrs. P. turned up her hands and eyebrows, and appealed in dumb show to

Miss Lillerton. âAs I turned a corner of the road,â resumed Gabriel,

âthe horse stopped short, and reared tremendously. I pulled up, jumped

out, ran to his head, and found a man lying on his back in the middle of

the road, with his eyes fixed on the sky. I thought he was dead; but no,

he was alive, and there appeared to be nothing the matter with him. He

jumped up, and putting his hand to his chest, and fixing upon me the most

earnest gaze you can imagine, exclaimedââ

âPudding here,â said Mrs. Parsons.

âOh! itâs no use,â exclaimed the host, now rendered desperate. âHere,

Tottle; a glass of wine. Itâs useless to attempt relating anything when

Mrs. Parsons is present.â

This attack was received in the usual way. Mrs. Parsons talked \_to\_ Miss

Lillerton and \_at\_ her better half; expatiated on the impatience of men

generally; hinted that her husband was peculiarly vicious in this

respect, and wound up by insinuating that she must be one of the best

tempers that ever existed, or she never could put up with it. Really

what she had to endure sometimes, was more than any one who saw her in

every-day life could by possibility suppose.âThe story was now a painful

subject, and therefore Mr. Parsons declined to enter into any details,

and contented himself by stating that the man was a maniac, who had

escaped from a neighbouring mad-house.

The cloth was removed; the ladies soon afterwards retired, and Miss

Lillerton played the piano in the drawing-room overhead, very loudly, for

the edification of the visitor. Mr. Watkins Tottle and Mr. Gabriel

Parsons sat chatting comfortably enough, until the conclusion of the

second bottle, when the latter, in proposing an adjournment to the

drawing-room, informed Watkins that he had concerted a plan with his

wife, for leaving him and Miss Lillerton alone, soon after tea.

âI say,â said Tottle, as they went up-stairs, âdonât you think it would

be better if we put it off till-till-to-morrow?â

âDonât \_you\_ think it would have been much better if I had left you in

that wretched hole I found you in this morning?â retorted Parsons

bluntly.

âWellâwellâI only made a suggestion,â said poor Watkins Tottle, with a

deep sigh.

Tea was soon concluded, and Miss Lillerton, drawing a small work-table on

one side of the fire, and placing a little wooden frame upon it,

something like a miniature clay-mill without the horse, was soon busily

engaged in making a watch-guard with brown silk.

âGod bless me!â exclaimed Parsons, starting up with well-feigned

surprise, âIâve forgotten those confounded letters. Tottle, I know

youâll excuse me.â

If Tottle had been a free agent, he would have allowed no one to leave

the room on any pretence, except himself. As it was, however, he was

obliged to look cheerful when Parsons quitted the apartment.

He had scarcely left, when Martha put her head into the room,

withââPlease, maâam, youâre wanted.â

Mrs. Parsons left the room, shut the door carefully after her, and Mr.

Watkins Tottle was left alone with Miss Lillerton.

For the first five minutes there was a dead silence.âMr. Watkins Tottle

was thinking how he should begin, and Miss Lillerton appeared to be

thinking of nothing. The fire was burning low; Mr. Watkins Tottle

stirred it, and put some coals on.

âHem!â coughed Miss Lillerton; Mr. Watkins Tottle thought the fair

creature had spoken. âI beg your pardon,â said he.

âEh?â

âI thought you spoke.â

âNo.â

âOh!â

âThere are some books on the sofa, Mr. Tottle, if you would like to look

at them,â said Miss Lillerton, after the lapse of another five minutes.

âNo, thank you,â returned Watkins; and then he added, with a courage

which was perfectly astonishing, even to himself, âMadam, that is Miss

Lillerton, I wish to speak to you.â

âTo me!â said Miss Lillerton, letting the silk drop from her hands, and

sliding her chair back a few paces.ââSpeakâto me!â

âTo you, madamâand on the subject of the state of your affections.â The

lady hastily rose and would have left the room; but Mr. Watkins Tottle

gently detained her by the hand, and holding it as far from him as the

joint length of their arms would permit, he thus proceeded: âPray do not

misunderstand me, or suppose that I am led to address you, after so short

an acquaintance, by any feeling of my own meritsâfor merits I have none

which could give me a claim to your hand. I hope you will acquit me of

any presumption when I explain that I have been acquainted through Mrs.

Parsons, with the stateâthat is, that Mrs. Parsons has told meâat least,

not Mrs. Parsons, butââ here Watkins began to wander, but Miss Lillerton

relieved him.

âAm I to understand, Mr. Tottle, that Mrs. Parsons has acquainted you

with my feelingâmy affectionâI mean my respect, for an individual of the

opposite sex?â

âShe has.â

âThen, what?â inquired Miss Lillerton, averting her face, with a girlish

air, âwhat could induce \_you\_ to seek such an interview as this? What

can your object be? How can I promote your happiness, Mr. Tottle?â

Here was the time for a flourishââBy allowing me,â replied Watkins,

falling bump on his knees, and breaking two brace-buttons and a

waistcoat-string, in the actââBy allowing me to be your slave, your

servantâin short, by unreservedly making me the confidant of your heartâs

feelingsâmay I say for the promotion of your own happinessâmay I say, in

order that you may become the wife of a kind and affectionate husband?â

âDisinterested creature!â exclaimed Miss Lillerton, hiding her face in a

white pocket-handkerchief with an eyelet-hole border.

Mr. Watkins Tottle thought that if the lady knew all, she might possibly

alter her opinion on this last point. He raised the tip of her middle

finger ceremoniously to his lips, and got off his knees, as gracefully as

he could. âMy information was correct?â he tremulously inquired, when he

was once more on his feet.

âIt was.â Watkins elevated his hands, and looked up to the ornament in

the centre of the ceiling, which had been made for a lamp, by way of

expressing his rapture.

âOur situation, Mr. Tottle,â resumed the lady, glancing at him through

one of the eyelet-holes, âis a most peculiar and delicate one.â

âIt is,â said Mr. Tottle.

âOur acquaintance has been of \_so\_ short duration,â said Miss Lillerton.

âOnly a week,â assented Watkins Tottle.

âOh! more than that,â exclaimed the lady, in a tone of surprise.

âIndeed!â said Tottle.

âMore than a monthâmore than two months!â said Miss Lillerton.

âRather odd, this,â thought Watkins.

âOh!â he said, recollecting Parsonsâs assurance that she had known him

from report, âI understand. But, my dear madam, pray, consider. The

longer this acquaintance has existed, the less reason is there for delay

now. Why not at once fix a period for gratifying the hopes of your

devoted admirer?â

âIt has been represented to me again and again that this is the course I

ought to pursue,â replied Miss Lillerton, âbut pardon my feelings of

delicacy, Mr. Tottleâpray excuse this embarrassmentâI have peculiar ideas

on such subjects, and I am quite sure that I never could summon up

fortitude enough to name the day to my future husband.â

âThen allow \_me\_ to name it,â said Tottle eagerly.

âI should like to fix it myself,â replied Miss Lillerton, bashfully, âbut

I cannot do so without at once resorting to a third party.â

âA third party!â thought Watkins Tottle; âwho the deuce is that to be, I

wonder!â

âMr. Tottle,â continued Miss Lillerton, âyou have made me a most

disinterested and kind offerâthat offer I accept. Will you at once be

the bearer of a note from me toâto Mr. Timson?â

âMr. Timson!â said Watkins.

âAfter what has passed between us,â responded Miss Lillerton, still

averting her head, âyou must understand whom I mean; Mr. Timson,

theâtheâclergyman.â

âMr. Timson, the clergyman!â ejaculated Watkins Tottle, in a state of

inexpressible beatitude, and positive wonder at his own success. âAngel!

Certainlyâthis moment!â

âIâll prepare it immediately,â said Miss Lillerton, making for the door;

âthe events of this day have flurried me so much, Mr. Tottle, that I

shall not leave my room again this evening; I will send you the note by

the servant.â

âStay,âstay,â cried Watkins Tottle, still keeping a most respectful

distance from the lady; âwhen shall we meet again?â

âOh! Mr. Tottle,â replied Miss Lillerton, coquettishly, âwhen \_we\_ are

married, I can never see you too often, nor thank you too much;â and she

left the room.

Mr. Watkins Tottle flung himself into an arm-chair, and indulged in the

most delicious reveries of future bliss, in which the idea of âFive

hundred pounds per annum, with an uncontrolled power of disposing of it

by her last will and testament,â was somehow or other the foremost. He

had gone through the interview so well, and it had terminated so

admirably, that he almost began to wish he had expressly stipulated for

the settlement of the annual five hundred on himself.

âMay I come in?â said Mr. Gabriel Parsons, peeping in at the door.

âYou may,â replied Watkins.

âWell, have you done it?â anxiously inquired Gabriel.

âHave I done it!â said Watkins Tottle. âHushâIâm going to the

clergyman.â

âNo!â said Parsons. âHow well you have managed it!â

âWhere does Timson live?â inquired Watkins.

âAt his uncleâs,â replied Gabriel, âjust round the lane. Heâs waiting

for a living, and has been assisting his uncle here for the last two or

three months. But how well you have done itâI didnât think you could

have carried it off so!â

Mr. Watkins Tottle was proceeding to demonstrate that the Richardsonian

principle was the best on which love could possibly be made, when he was

interrupted by the entrance of Martha, with a little pink note folded

like a fancy cocked-hat.

âMiss Lillertonâs compliments,â said Martha, as she delivered it into

Tottleâs hands, and vanished.

âDo you observe the delicacy?â said Tottle, appealing to Mr. Gabriel

Parsons. â\_Compliments\_, not \_love\_, by the servant, eh?â

Mr. Gabriel Parsons didnât exactly know what reply to make, so he poked

the forefinger of his right hand between the third and fourth ribs of Mr.

Watkins Tottle.

âCome,â said Watkins, when the explosion of mirth, consequent on this

practical jest, had subsided, âweâll be off at onceâletâs lose no time.â

âCapital!â echoed Gabriel Parsons; and in five minutes they were at the

garden-gate of the villa tenanted by the uncle of Mr. Timson.

âIs Mr. Charles Timson at home?â inquired Mr. Watkins Tottle of Mr.

Charles Timsonâs uncleâs man.

âMr. Charles \_is\_ at home,â replied the man, stammering; âbut he desired

me to say he couldnât be interrupted, sir, by any of the parishioners.â

â\_I\_ am not a parishioner,â replied Watkins.

âIs Mr. Charles writing a sermon, Tom?â inquired Parsons, thrusting

himself forward.

âNo, Mr. Parsons, sir; heâs not exactly writing a sermon, but he is

practising the violoncello in his own bedroom, and gave strict orders not

to be disturbed.â

âSay Iâm here,â replied Gabriel, leading the way across the garden; âMr.

Parsons and Mr. Tottle, on private and particular business.â

They were shown into the parlour, and the servant departed to deliver his

message. The distant groaning of the violoncello ceased; footsteps were

heard on the stairs; and Mr. Timson presented himself, and shook hands

with Parsons with the utmost cordiality.

âGame!â exclaimed Ikey, who had been altering the position of a

green-handled knife and fork at least a dozen times, in order that he

might remain in the room under the pretext of having something to do.

âHeâs game enough ven thereâs anything to be fierce about; but who could

be game as you call it, Mr. Walker, with a pale young creetur like that,

hanging about him?âItâs enough to drive any manâs heart into his boots to

see âem togetherâand no mistake at all about it. I never shall forget

her first cominâ here; he wrote to her on the Thursday to comeâI know he

did, âcos I took the letter. Uncommon fidgety he was all day to be sure,

and in the evening he goes down into the office, and he says to Jacobs,

says he, âSir, can I have the loan of a private room for a few minutes

this evening, without incurring any additional expenseâjust to see my

wife in?â says he. Jacobs looked as much as to sayââStrike me bountiful

if you ainât one of the modest sort!â but as the genâlmân who had been in

the back parlour had just gone out, and had paid for it for that day, he

saysâwerry graveââSir,â says he, âitâs agin our rules to let private

rooms to our lodgers on gratis terms, but,â says he, âfor a gentleman, I

donât mind breaking through them for once.â So then he turns found to

me, and says, âIkey, put two mould candles in the back parlour, and

charge âem to this genâlmânâs account,â vich I did. Vell, by-and-by a

hackney-coach comes up to the door, and there, sure enough, was the young

lady, wrapped up in a hopera-cloak, as it might be, and all alone. I

opened the gate that night, so I went up when the coach come, and he vos

a waitinâ at the parlour doorâand wasnât he a trembling, neither? The

poor creetur see him, and could hardly walk to meet him. âOh, Harry!â

she says, âthat it should have come to this; and all for my sake,â says

she, putting her hand upon his shoulder. So he puts his arm round her

pretty little waist, and leading her gently a little way into the room,

so that he might be able to shut the door, he says, so kind and

soft-likeââWhy, Kate,â says heââ

âHereâs the gentleman you want,â said Ikey, abruptly breaking off in his

story, and introducing Mr. Gabriel Parsons to the crest-fallen Watkins

Tottle, who at that moment entered the room. Watkins advanced with a

wooden expression of passive endurance, and accepted the hand which Mr.

Gabriel Parsons held out.

âI want to speak to you,â said Gabriel, with a look strongly expressive

of his dislike of the company.

âThis way,â replied the imprisoned one, leading the way to the front

drawing-room, where rich debtors did the luxurious at the rate of a

couple of guineas a day.

âWell, here I am,â said Mr. Watkins, as he sat down on the sofa; and

placing the palms of his hands on his knees, anxiously glanced at his

friendâs countenance.

âYes; and here youâre likely to be,â said Gabriel, coolly, as he rattled

the money in his unmentionable pockets, and looked out of the window.

âWhatâs the amount with the costs?â inquired Parsons, after an awkward

pause.

âHave you any money?â

âNine and sixpence halfpenny.â

Mr. Gabriel Parsons walked up and down the room for a few seconds, before

he could make up his mind to disclose the plan he had formed; he was

accustomed to drive hard bargains, but was always most anxious to conceal

his avarice. At length he stopped short, and said, âTottle, you owe me

fifty pounds.â

âI do.â

âAnd from all I see, I infer that you are likely to owe it to me.â

âI fear I am.â

âThough you have every disposition to pay me if you could?â

âCertainly.â

âThen,â said Mr. Gabriel Parsons, âlisten: hereâs my proposition. You

know my way of old. Accept itâyes or noâI will or I wonât. Iâll pay the

debt and costs, and Iâll lend you 10\_l.\_ more (which, added to your

annuity, will enable you to carry on the war well) if youâll give me your

note of hand to pay me one hundred and fifty pounds within six months

after you are married to Miss Lillerton.â

âMy dearââ

âStop a minuteâon one condition; and that is, that you propose to Miss

Lillerton at once.â

âAt once! My dear Parsons, consider.â

âItâs for you to consider, not me. She knows you well from reputation,

though she did not know you personally until lately. Notwithstanding all

her maiden modesty, I think sheâd be devilish glad to get married out of

hand with as little delay as possible. My wife has sounded her on the

subject, and she has confessed.â

âWhatâwhat?â eagerly interrupted the enamoured Watkins.

âWhy,â replied Parsons, âto say exactly what she has confessed, would be

rather difficult, because they only spoke in hints, and so forth; but my

wife, who is no bad judge in these cases, declared to me that what she

had confessed was as good as to say that she was not insensible of your

meritsâin fact, that no other man should have her.â

Mr. Watkins Tottle rose hastily from his seat, and rang the bell.

âWhatâs that for?â inquired Parsons.

âI want to send the man for the bill stamp,â replied Mr. Watkins Tottle.

âThen youâve made up your mind?â

âI have,ââand they shook hands most cordially. The note of hand was

givenâthe debt and costs were paidâIkey was satisfied for his trouble,

and the two friends soon found themselves on that side of Mr. Solomon

Jacobsâs establishment, on which most of his visitors were very happy

when they found themselves once againâto wit, the outside.

âNow,â said Mr. Gabriel Parsons, as they drove to Norwood togetherââyou

shall have an opportunity to make the disclosure to-night, and mind you

speak out, Tottle.â

âI willâI will!â replied Watkins, valorously.

âHow I should like to see you together,â ejaculated Mr. Gabriel

Parsons.ââWhat fun!â and he laughed so long and so loudly, that he

disconcerted Mr. Watkins Tottle, and frightened the horse.

âThereâs Fanny and your intended walking about on the lawn,â said

Gabriel, as they approached the house. âMind your eye, Tottle.â

âNever fear,â replied Watkins, resolutely, as he made his way to the spot

where the ladies were walking.

âHereâs Mr. Tottle, my dear,â said Mrs. Parsons, addressing Miss

Lillerton. The lady turned quickly round, and acknowledged his courteous

salute with the same sort of confusion that Watkins had noticed on their

first interview, but with something like a slight expression of

disappointment or carelessness.

âDid you see how glad she was to see you?â whispered Parsons to his

friend.

âWhy, I really thought she looked as if she would rather have seen

somebody else,â replied Tottle.

âPooh, nonsense!â whispered Parsons againââitâs always the way with the

women, young or old. They never show how delighted they are to see those

whose presence makes their hearts beat. Itâs the way with the whole sex,

and no man should have lived to your time of life without knowing it.

Fanny confessed it to me, when we were first married, over and over

againâsee what it is to have a wife.â

âCertainly,â whispered Tottle, whose courage was vanishing fast.

âWell, now, youâd better begin to pave the way,â said Parsons, who,

having invested some money in the speculation, assumed the office of

director.

âYes, yes, I willâpresently,â replied Tottle, greatly flurried.

âSay something to her, man,â urged Parsons again. âConfound it! pay her

a compliment, canât you?â

âNo! not till after dinner,â replied the bashful Tottle, anxious to

postpone the evil moment.

âWell, gentlemen,â said Mrs. Parsons, âyou are really very polite; you

stay away the whole morning, after promising to take us out, and when you

do come home, you stand whispering together and take no notice of us.â

âWe were talking of the \_business\_, my dear, which detained us this

morning,â replied Parsons, looking significantly at Tottle.

âDear me! how very quickly the morning has gone,â said Miss Lillerton,

referring to the gold watch, which was wound up on state occasions,

whether it required it or not.

âI think it has passed very slowly,â mildly suggested Tottle.

(âThatâs rightâbravo!â) whispered Parsons.

âIndeed!â said Miss Lillerton, with an air of majestic surprise.

âI can only impute it to my unavoidable absence from your society,

madam,â said Watkins, âand that of Mrs. Parsons.â

During this short dialogue, the ladies had been leading the way to the

house.

âWhat the deuce did you stick Fanny into that last compliment for?â

inquired Parsons, as they followed together; âit quite spoilt the

effect.â

âOh! it really would have been too broad without,â replied Watkins

Tottle, âmuch too broad!â

âHeâs mad!â Parsons whispered his wife, as they entered the drawing-room,

âmad from modesty.â

âDear me!â ejaculated the lady, âI never heard of such a thing.â

âYouâll find we have quite a family dinner, Mr. Tottle,â said Mrs.

Parsons, when they sat down to table: âMiss Lillerton is one of us, and,

of course, we make no stranger of you.â

Mr. Watkins Tottle expressed a hope that the Parsons family never would

make a stranger of him; and wished internally that his bashfulness would

allow him to feel a little less like a stranger himself.

âTake off the covers, Martha,â said Mrs. Parsons, directing the shifting

of the scenery with great anxiety. The order was obeyed, and a pair of

boiled fowls, with tongue and et ceteras, were displayed at the top, and

a fillet of veal at the bottom. On one side of the table two green

sauce-tureens, with ladles of the same, were setting to each other in a

green dish; and on the other was a curried rabbit, in a brown suit,

turned up with lemon.

âMiss Lillerton, my dear,â said Mrs. Parsons, âshall I assist you?â

âThank you, no; I think Iâll trouble Mr. Tottle.â

Watkins startedâtrembledâhelped the rabbitâand broke a tumbler. The

countenance of the lady of the house, which had been all smiles

previously, underwent an awful change.

âExtremely sorry,â stammered Watkins, assisting himself to currie and

parsley and butter, in the extremity of his confusion.

âNot the least consequence,â replied Mrs. Parsons, in a tone which

implied that it was of the greatest consequence possible,âdirecting aside

the researches of the boy, who was groping under the table for the bits

of broken glass.

âI presume,â said Miss Lillerton, âthat Mr. Tottle is aware of the

interest which bachelors usually pay in such cases; a dozen glasses for

one is the lowest penalty.â

Mr. Gabriel Parsons gave his friend an admonitory tread on the toe. Here

was a clear hint that the sooner he ceased to be a bachelor and

emancipated himself from such penalties, the better. Mr. Watkins Tottle

viewed the observation in the same light, and challenged Mrs. Parsons to

take wine, with a degree of presence of mind, which, under all the

circumstances, was really extraordinary.

âMiss Lillerton,â said Gabriel, âmay I have the pleasure?â

âI shall be most happy.â

âTottle, will you assist Miss Lillerton, and pass the decanter. Thank

you.â (The usual pantomimic ceremony of nodding and sipping gone

through)â

âTottle, were you ever in Suffolk?â inquired the master of the house, who

was burning to tell one of his seven stock stories.

âNo,â responded Watkins, adding, by way of a saving clause, âbut Iâve

been in Devonshire.â

âAh!â replied Gabriel, âit was in Suffolk that a rather singular

circumstance happened to me many years ago. Did you ever happen to hear

me mention it?â

Mr. Watkins Tottle \_had\_ happened to hear his friend mention it some four

hundred times. Of course he expressed great curiosity, and evinced the

utmost impatience to hear the story again. Mr. Gabriel Parsons forthwith

attempted to proceed, in spite of the interruptions to which, as our

readers must frequently have observed, the master of the house is often

exposed in such cases. We will attempt to give them an idea of our

meaning.

âWhen I was in Suffolkââ said Mr. Gabriel Parsons.

âTake off the fowls first, Martha,â said Mrs. Parsons. âI beg your

pardon, my dear.â

âWhen I was in Suffolk,â resumed Mr. Parsons, with an impatient glance at

his wife, who pretended not to observe it, âwhich is now years ago,

business led me to the town of Bury St. Edmundâs. I had to stop at the

principal places in my way, and therefore, for the sake of convenience, I

travelled in a gig. I left Sudbury one dark nightâit was winter

timeâabout nine oâclock; the rain poured in torrents, the wind howled

among the trees that skirted the roadside, and I was obliged to proceed

at a foot-pace, for I could hardly see my hand before me, it was so

darkââ

âJohn,â interrupted Mrs. Parsons, in a low, hollow voice, âdonât spill

that gravy.â

âFanny,â said Parsons impatiently, âI wish youâd defer these domestic

reproofs to some more suitable time. Really, my dear, these constant

interruptions are very annoying.â

âMy dear, I didnât interrupt you,â said Mrs. Parsons.

âBut, my dear, you did interrupt me,â remonstrated Mr. Parsons.

âHow very absurd you are, my love! I must give directions to the

servants; I am quite sure that if I sat here and allowed John to spill

the gravy over the new carpet, youâd be the first to find fault when you

saw the stain to-morrow morning.â

âWell,â continued Gabriel with a resigned air, as if he knew there was no

getting over the point about the carpet, âI was just saying, it was so

dark that I could hardly see my hand before me. The road was very

lonely, and I assure you, Tottle (this was a device to arrest the

wandering attention of that individual, which was distracted by a

confidential communication between Mrs. Parsons and Martha, accompanied

by the delivery of a large bunch of keys), I assure you, Tottle, I became

somehow impressed with a sense of the loneliness of my situationââ

âPie to your master,â interrupted Mrs. Parsons, again directing the

servant.

âNow, pray, my dear,â remonstrated Parsons once more, very pettishly.

Mrs. P. turned up her hands and eyebrows, and appealed in dumb show to

Miss Lillerton. âAs I turned a corner of the road,â resumed Gabriel,

âthe horse stopped short, and reared tremendously. I pulled up, jumped

out, ran to his head, and found a man lying on his back in the middle of

the road, with his eyes fixed on the sky. I thought he was dead; but no,

he was alive, and there appeared to be nothing the matter with him. He

jumped up, and potting his hand to his chest, and fixing upon me the most

earnest gaze you can imagine, exclaimedââPudding here,â said Mrs.

Parsons.

âOh! itâs no use,â exclaimed the host, now rendered desperate. âHere,

Tottle; a glass of wine. Itâs useless to attempt relating anything when

Mrs. Parsons is present.â

This attack was received in the usual way. Mrs. Parsons talked \_to\_ Miss

Lillerton and \_at\_ her better half; expatiated on the impatience of men

generally; hinted that her husband was peculiarly vicious in this

respect, and wound up by insinuating that she must be one of the best

tempers that ever existed, or she never could put up with it. Really

what she had to endure sometimes, was more than any one who saw her in

every-day life could by possibility suppose.âThe story was now a painful

subject, and therefore Mr. Parsons declined to enter into any details,

and contented himself by stating that the man was a maniac, who had

escaped from a neighbouring mad-house.

The cloth was removed; the ladies soon afterwards retired, and Miss

Lillerton played the piano in the drawing-room overhead, very loudly, for

the edification of the visitor. Mr. Watkins Tottle and Mr. Gabriel

Parsons sat chatting comfortably enough, until the conclusion of the

second bottle, when the latter, in proposing an adjournment to the

drawing-room, informed Watkins that he had concerted a plan with his

wife, for leaving him and Miss Lillerton alone, soon after tea.

âI say,â said Tottle, as they went up-stairs, âdonât you think it would

be better if we put it off till-till-to-morrow?â

âDonât \_you\_ think it would have been much better if I had left you in

that wretched hole I found you in this morning?â retorted Parsons

bluntly.

âWellâwellâI only made a suggestion,â said poor Watkins Tottle, with a

deep sigh.

Tea was soon concluded, and Miss Lillerton, drawing a small work-table on

one side of the fire, and placing a little wooden frame upon it,

something like a miniature clay-mill without the horse, was soon busily

engaged in making a watch-guard with brown silk.

âGod bless me!â exclaimed Parsons, starting up with well-feigned

surprise, âIâve forgotten those confounded letters. Tottle, I know

youâll excuse me.â

If Tottle had been a free agent, he would have allowed no one to leave

the room on any pretence, except himself. As it was, however, he was

obliged to look cheerful when Parsons quitted the apartment.

He had scarcely left, when Martha put her head into the room,

withââPlease, maâam, youâre wanted.â

Mrs. Parsons left the room, shut the door carefully after her, and Mr.

Watkins Tottle was left alone with Miss Lillerton.

For the first five minutes there was a dead silence.âMr. Watkins Tottle

was thinking how he should begin, and Miss Lillerton appeared to be

thinking of nothing. The fire was burning low; Mr. Watkins Tottle

stirred it, and put some coals on.

âHem!â coughed Miss Lillerton; Mr. Watkins Tottle thought the fair

creature had spoken. âI beg your pardon,â said he.

âEh?â

âI thought you spoke.â

âNo.â

âOh!â

âThere are some books on the sofa, Mr. Tottle, if you would like to look

at them,â said Miss Lillerton, after the lapse of another five minutes.

âNo, thank you,â returned Watkins; and then he added, with a courage

which was perfectly astonishing, even to himself, âMadam, that is Miss

Lillerton, I wish to speak to you.â

âTo me!â said Miss Lillerton, letting the silk drop from her hands, and

sliding her chair back a few paces.ââSpeakâto me!â

âTo you, madamâand on the subject of the state of your affections.â The

lady hastily rose and would have left the room; but Mr. Watkins Tottle

gently detained her by the hand, and holding it as far from him as the

joint length of their arms would permit, he thus proceeded: âPray do not

misunderstand me, or suppose that I am led to address you, after so short

an acquaintance, by any feeling of my own meritsâfor merits I have none

which could give me a claim to your hand. I hope you will acquit me of

any presumption when I explain that I have been acquainted through Mrs.

Parsons, with the stateâthat is, that Mrs. Parsons has told meâat least,

not Mrs. Parsons, butââ here Watkins began to wander, but Miss Lillerton

relieved him.

âAm I to understand, Mr. Tottle, that Mrs. Parsons has acquainted you

with my feelingâmy affectionâI mean my respect, for an individual of the

opposite sex?â

âShe has.â

âThen, what?â inquired Miss Lillerton, averting her face, with a girlish

air, âwhat could induce \_you\_ to seek such an interview as this? What

can your object be? How can I promote your happiness, Mr. Tottle?â

Here was the time for a flourishââBy allowing me,â replied Watkins,

falling bump on his knees, and breaking two brace-buttons and a

waistcoat-string, in the actââBy allowing me to be your slave, your

servantâin short, by unreservedly making me the confidant of your heartâs

feelingsâmay I say for the promotion of your own happinessâmay I say, in

order that you may become the wife of a kind and affectionate husband?â

âDisinterested creature!â exclaimed Miss Lillerton, hiding her face in a

white pocket-handkerchief with an eyelet-hole border.

Mr. Watkins Tottle thought that if the lady knew all, she might possibly

alter her opinion on this last point. He raised the tip of her middle

finger ceremoniously to his lips, and got off his knees, as gracefully as

he could. âMy information was correct?â he tremulously inquired, when he

was once more on his feet.

âIt was.â Watkins elevated his hands, and looked up to the ornament in

the centre of the ceiling, which had been made for a lamp, by way of

expressing his rapture.

âOur situation, Mr. Tottle,â resumed the lady, glancing at him through

one of the eyelet-holes, âis a most peculiar. and delicate one.â

âIt is,â said Mr. Tottle.

âOur acquaintance has been of \_so\_ short duration,â said Miss Lillerton.

âOnly a week,â assented Watkins Tottle.

âOh! more than that,â exclaimed the lady, in a tone of surprise.

âIndeed!â said Tottle.

âMore than a monthâmore than two months!â said Miss Lillerton.

âRather odd, this,â thought Watkins.

âOh!â he said, recollecting Parsonsâs assurance that she had known him

from report, âI understand. But, my dear madam, pray, consider. The

longer this acquaintance has existed, the less reason is I there for

delay now. Why not at once fix a period for gratifying the hopes of your

devoted admirer?â

âIt has been represented to me again and again that this is the course I

ought to pursue,â replied Miss Lillerton, âbut pardon my feelings of

delicacy, Mr. Tottleâpray excuse this embarrassmentâI have peculiar ideas

on such subjects, and I am quite sure that I never could summon up

fortitude enough to name the day to my future husband.â

âThen allow \_me\_ to name it,â said Tottle eagerly.

âI should like to fix it myself,â replied Miss Lillerton, bashfully, but

I cannot do so without at once resorting to a third party.â

âA third party!â thought Watkins Tottle; âwho the deuce is that to be, I

wonder!â

âMr. Tottle,â continued Miss Lillerton, âyou have made me a most

disinterested and kind offerâthat offer I accept. Will you at once be

the bearer of a note from me toâto Mr. Timson?â

âMr. Timson!â said Watkins.

âAfter what has passed between us,â responded Miss Lillerton, still

averting her head, âyou must understand whom I mean; Mr. Timson,

theâtheâclergyman.â

âMr. Timson, the clergyman!â ejaculated Watkins Tottle, in a state of

inexpressible beatitude, and positive wonder at his own success. âAngel!

Certainlyâthis moment!â

âIâll prepare it immediately,â said Miss Lillerton, making for the door;

âthe events of this day have flurried me so much, Mr. Tottle, that I

shall not leave my room again this evening; I will send you the note by

the servant.â

âStay,âstay,â cried Watkins Tottle, still keeping a most respectful

distance from the lady; âwhen shall we meet again?â

âOh! Mr. Tottle,â replied Miss Lillerton, coquettishly, âwhen we are

married, I can never see you too often, nor thank you too much;â and she

left the room.

Mr. Watkins Tottle flung himself into an arm-chair, and indulged in the

most delicious reveries of future bliss, in which the idea of âFive

hundred pounds per annum, with an uncontrolled power of disposing of it

by her last will and testament,â was somehow or other the foremost. He

had gone through the interview so well, and it had terminated so

admirably, that he almost began to wish he had expressly stipulated for

the settlement of the annual five hundred on himself.

âMay I come in?â said Mr. Gabriel Parsons, peeping in at the door.

âYou may,â replied Watkins.

âWell, have you done it?â anxiously inquired Gabriel.

âHave I done it!â said Watkins Tottle. âHushâIâm going to the

clergyman.â

âNo!â said Parsons. âHow well you have managed it!â

âWhere does Timson live?â inquired Watkins.

âAt his uncleâs,â replied Gabriel, âjust round the lane. Heâs waiting

for a living, and has been assisting his uncle here for the last two or

three months. But how well you have done itâI didnât think you could

have carried it off so!â

Mr. Watkins Tottle was proceeding to demonstrate that the Richardsonian

principle was the best on which love could possibly be made, when he was

interrupted by the entrance of Martha, with a little pink note folded

like a fancy cocked-hat.

âMiss Lillertonâs compliments,â said Martha, as she delivered it into

Tottleâs hands, and vanished.

âDo you observe the delicacy?â said Tottle, appealing to Mr. Gabriel

Parsons. â\_Compliments\_, not \_love\_, by the servant, eh?â

Mr. Gabriel Parsons didnât exactly know what reply to make, so he poked

the forefinger of his right hand between the third and fourth ribs of Mr.

Watkins Tottle.

âCome,â said Watkins, when the explosion of mirth, consequent on this

practical jest, had subsided, âweâll be off at onceâletâs lose no time.â

âCapital!â echoed Gabriel Parsons; and in five minutes they were at the

garden-gate of the villa tenanted by the uncle of Mr. Timson.

âIs Mr. Charles Timson at home?â inquired Mr. Watkins Tottle of Mr.

Charles Timsonâs uncleâs man.

âMr. Charles \_is\_ at home,â replied the man, stammering; âbut he desired

me to say he couldnât be interrupted, sir, by any of the parishioners.â

â\_I\_ am not a parishioner,â replied Watkins.

âIs Mr. Charles writing a sermon, Tom?â inquired Parsons, thrusting

himself forward.

âNo, Mr. Parsons, sir; heâs not exactly writing a sermon, but he is

practising the violoncello in his own bedroom, and gave strict orders not

to be disturbed.â

âSay Iâm here,â replied Gabriel, leading the way across the garden; âMr.

Parsons and Mr. Tottle, on private and particular business.â

They were shown into the parlour, and the servant departed to deliver his

message. The distant groaning of the violoncello ceased; footsteps were

heard on the stairs; and Mr. Timson presented himself, and shook hands

with Parsons with the utmost cordiality.

âHow do you do, sir?â said Watkins Tottle, with great solemnity.

âHow do \_you\_ do, sir?â replied Timson, with as much coldness as if it

were a matter of perfect indifference to him how he did, as it very

likely was.

âI beg to deliver this note to you,â said Watkins Tottle, producing the

cocked-hat.

âFrom Miss Lillerton!â said Timson, suddenly changing colour. âPray sit

down.â

Mr. Watkins Tottle sat down; and while Timson perused the note, fixed his

eyes on an oyster-sauce-coloured portrait of the Archbishop of

Canterbury, which hung over the fireplace.

Mr. Timson rose from his seat when he had concluded the note, and looked

dubiously at Parsons. âMay I ask,â he inquired, appealing to Watkins

Tottle, âwhether our friend here is acquainted with the object of your

visit?â

âOur friend is in \_my\_ confidence,â replied Watkins, with considerable

importance.

âThen, sir,â said Timson, seizing both Tottleâs hands, âallow me in his

presence to thank you most unfeignedly and cordially, for the noble part

you have acted in this affair.â

âHe thinks I recommended him,â thought Tottle. âConfound these fellows!

they never think of anything but their fees.â

âI deeply regret having misunderstood your intentions, my dear sir,â

continued Timson. âDisinterested and manly, indeed! There are very few

men who would have acted as you have done.â

Mr. Watkins Tottle could not help thinking that this last remark was

anything but complimentary. He therefore inquired, rather hastily, âWhen

is it to be?â

âOn Thursday,â replied Timson,ââon Thursday morning at half-past eight.â

âUncommonly early,â observed Watkins Tottle, with an air of triumphant

self-denial. âI shall hardly be able to get down here by that hour.â

(This was intended for a joke.)

âNever mind, my dear fellow,â replied Timson, all suavity, shaking hands

with Tottle again most heartily, âso long as we see you to breakfast, you

knowââ

âEh!â said Parsons, with one of the most extraordinary expressions of

countenance that ever appeared in a human face.

âWhat!â ejaculated Watkins Tottle, at the same moment.

âI say that so long as we see you to breakfast,â replied Timson, âwe will

excuse your being absent from the ceremony, though of course your

presence at it would give us the utmost pleasure.â

Mr. Watkins Tottle staggered against the wall, and fixed his eyes on

Timson with appalling perseverance.

âTimson,â said Parsons, hurriedly brushing his hat with his left arm,

âwhen you say âus,â whom do you mean?â

Mr. Timson looked foolish in his turn, when he replied, âWhyâMrs. Timson

that will be this day week: Miss Lillerton that isââ

âNow donât stare at that idiot in the corner,â angrily exclaimed Parsons,

as the extraordinary convulsions of Watkins Tottleâs countenance excited

the wondering gaze of Timson,ââbut have the goodness to tell me in three

words the contents of that note?â

âThis note,â replied Timson, âis from Miss Lillerton, to whom I have been

for the last five weeks regularly engaged. Her singular scruples and

strange feeling on some points have hitherto prevented my bringing the

engagement to that termination which I so anxiously desire. She informs

me here, that she sounded Mrs. Parsons with the view of making her her

confidante and go-between, that Mrs. Parsons informed this elderly

gentleman, Mr. Tottle, of the circumstance, and that he, in the most kind

and delicate terms, offered to assist us in any way, and even undertook

to convey this note, which contains the promise I have long sought in

vainâan act of kindness for which I can never be sufficiently grateful.â

âGood night, Timson,â said Parsons, hurrying off, and carrying the

bewildered Tottle with him.

âWonât you stayâand have something?â said Timson.

âNo, thank ye,â replied Parsons; âIâve had quite enough;â and away he

went, followed by Watkins Tottle in a state of stupefaction.

Mr. Gabriel Parsons whistled until they had walked some quarter of a mile

past his own gate, when he suddenly stopped, and saidâ

âYou are a clever fellow, Tottle, ainât you?â

âI donât know,â said the unfortunate Watkins.

âI suppose youâll say this is Fannyâs fault, wonât you?â inquired

Gabriel.

âI donât know anything about it,â replied the bewildered Tottle.

âWell,â said Parsons, turning on his heel to go home, âthe next time you

make an offer, you had better speak plainly, and donât throw a chance

away. And the next time youâre locked up in a spunging-house, just wait

there till I come and take you out, thereâs a good fellow.â

How, or at what hour, Mr. Watkins Tottle returned to Cecil-street is

unknown. His boots were seen outside his bedroom-door next morning; but

we have the authority of his landlady for stating that he neither emerged

therefrom nor accepted sustenance for four-and-twenty hours. At the

expiration of that period, and when a council of war was being held in

the kitchen on the propriety of summoning the parochial beadle to break

his door open, he rang his bell, and demanded a cup of milk-and-water.

The next morning he went through the formalities of eating and drinking

as usual, but a week afterwards he was seized with a relapse, while

perusing the list of marriages in a morning paper, from which he never

perfectly recovered.

A few weeks after the last-named occurrence, the body of a gentleman

unknown, was found in the Regentâs canal. In the trousers-pockets were

four shillings and threepence halfpenny; a matrimonial advertisement from

a lady, which appeared to have been cut out of a Sunday paper: a

tooth-pick, and a card-case, which it is confidently believed would have

led to the identification of the unfortunate gentleman, but for the

circumstance of there being none but blank cards in it. Mr. Watkins

Tottle absented himself from his lodgings shortly before. A bill, which

has not been taken up, was presented next morning; and a bill, which has

not been taken down, was soon afterwards affixed in his parlour-window.

CHAPTER XIâTHE BLOOMSBURY CHRISTENING

Mr. Nicodemus Dumps, or, as his acquaintance called him, âlong Dumps,â

was a bachelor, six feet high, and fifty years old: cross, cadaverous,

odd, and ill-natured. He was never happy but when he was miserable; and

always miserable when he had the best reason to be happy. The only real

comfort of his existence was to make everybody about him wretchedâthen he

might be truly said to enjoy life. He was afflicted with a situation in

the Bank worth five hundred a-year, and he rented a âfirst-floor

furnished,â at Pentonville, which he originally took because it commanded

a dismal prospect of an adjacent churchyard. He was familiar with the

face of every tombstone, and the burial service seemed to excite his

strongest sympathy. His friends said he was surlyâhe insisted he was

nervous; they thought him a lucky dog, but he protested that he was âthe

most unfortunate man in the world.â Cold as he was, and wretched as he

declared himself to be, he was not wholly unsusceptible of attachments.

He revered the memory of Hoyle, as he was himself an admirable and

imperturbable whist-player, and he chuckled with delight at a fretful and

impatient adversary. He adored King Herod for his massacre of the

innocents; and if he hated one thing more than another, it was a child.

However, he could hardly be said to hate anything in particular, because

he disliked everything in general; but perhaps his greatest antipathies

were cabs, old women, doors that would not shut, musical amateurs, and

omnibus cads. He subscribed to the âSociety for the Suppression of Viceâ

for the pleasure of putting a stop to any harmless amusements; and he

contributed largely towards the support of two itinerant methodist

parsons, in the amiable hope that if circumstances rendered any people

happy in this world, they might perchance be rendered miserable by fears

for the next.

Mr. Dumps had a nephew who had been married about a year, and who was

somewhat of a favourite with his uncle, because he was an admirable

subject to exercise his misery-creating powers upon. Mr. Charles

Kitterbell was a small, sharp, spare man, with a very large head, and a

broad, good-humoured countenance. He looked like a faded giant, with the

head and face partially restored; and he had a cast in his eye which

rendered it quite impossible for any one with whom he conversed to know

where he was looking. His eyes appeared fixed on the wall, and he was

staring you out of countenance; in short, there was no catching his eye,

and perhaps it is a merciful dispensation of Providence that such eyes

are not catching. In addition to these characteristics, it may be added

that Mr. Charles Kitterbell was one of the most credulous and

matter-of-fact little personages that ever took \_to\_ himself a wife, and

\_for\_ himself a house in Great Russell-street, Bedford-square. (Uncle

Dumps always dropped the âBedford-square,â and inserted in lieu thereof

the dreadful words âTottenham-court-road.â)

âNo, but, uncle, âpon my life you mustâyou must promise to be godfather,â

said Mr. Kitterbell, as he sat in conversation with his respected

relative one morning.

âI cannot, indeed I cannot,â returned Dumps.

âWell, but why not? Jemima will think it very unkind. Itâs very little

trouble.â

âAs to the trouble,â rejoined the most unhappy man in existence, âI donât

mind that; but my nerves are in that stateâI cannot go through the

ceremony. You know I donât like going out.âFor Godâs sake, Charles,

donât fidget with that stool so; youâll drive me mad.â Mr. Kitterbell,

quite regardless of his uncleâs nerves, had occupied himself for some ten

minutes in describing a circle on the floor with one leg of the

office-stool on which he was seated, keeping the other three up in the

air, and holding fast on by the desk.

âI beg your pardon, uncle,â said Kitterbell, quite abashed, suddenly

releasing his hold of the desk, and bringing the three wandering legs

back to the floor, with a force sufficient to drive them through it.

âBut come, donât refuse. If itâs a boy, you know, we must have two

godfathers.â

â\_If\_ itâs a boy!â said Dumps; âwhy canât you say at once whether it \_is\_

a boy or not?â

âI should be very happy to tell you, but itâs impossible I can undertake

to say whether itâs a girl or a boy, if the child isnât born yet.â

âNot born yet!â echoed Dumps, with a gleam of hope lighting up his

lugubrious visage. âOh, well, it \_may\_ be a girl, and then you wonât

want me; or if it is a boy, it \_may\_ die before it is christened.â

âI hope not,â said the father that expected to be, looking very grave.

âI hope not,â acquiesced Dumps, evidently pleased with the subject. He

was beginning to get happy. âI hope not, but distressing cases

frequently occur during the first two or three days of a childâs life;

fits, I am told, are exceedingly common, and alarming convulsions are

almost matters of course.â

âLord, uncle!â ejaculated little Kitterbell, gasping for breath.

âYes; my landlady was confinedâlet me seeâlast Tuesday: an uncommonly

fine boy. On the Thursday night the nurse was sitting with him upon her

knee before the fire, and he was as well as possible. Suddenly he became

black in the face, and alarmingly spasmodic. The medical man was

instantly sent for, and every remedy was tried, butââ

âHow frightful!â interrupted the horror-stricken Kitterbell.

âThe child died, of course. However, your child \_may\_ not die; and if it

should be a boy, and should \_live\_ to be christened, why I suppose I must

be one of the sponsors.â Dumps was evidently good-natured on the faith

of his anticipations.

âThank you, uncle,â said his agitated nephew, grasping his hand as warmly

as if he had done him some essential service. âPerhaps I had better not

tell Mrs. K. what you have mentioned.â

âWhy, if sheâs low-spirited, perhaps you had better not mention the

melancholy case to her,â returned Dumps, who of course had invented the

whole story; âthough perhaps it would be but doing your duty as a husband

to prepare her for the \_worst\_.â

A day or two afterwards, as Dumps was perusing a morning paper at the

chop-house which he regularly frequented, the following-paragraph met his

eyes:â

â\_Births\_.âOn Saturday, the 18th inst., in Great Russell-street, the

lady of Charles Kitterbell, Esq., of a son.â

âIt \_is\_ a boy!â he exclaimed, dashing down the paper, to the

astonishment of the waiters. âIt \_is\_ a boy!â But he speedily regained

his composure as his eye rested on a paragraph quoting the number of

infant deaths from the bills of mortality.

Six weeks passed away, and as no communication had been received from the

Kitterbells, Dumps was beginning to flatter himself that the child was

dead, when the following note painfully resolved his doubts:â

â\_Great Russell-street\_,

\_Monday morning\_.

âDEAR UNCLE,âYou will be delighted to hear that my dear Jemima has

left her room, and that your future godson is getting on capitally.

He was very thin at first, but he is getting much larger, and nurse

says he is filling out every day. He cries a good deal, and is a

very singular colour, which made Jemima and me rather uncomfortable;

but as nurse says itâs natural, and as of course we know nothing

about these things yet, we are quite satisfied with what nurse says.

We think he will be a sharp child; and nurse says sheâs sure he will,

because he never goes to sleep. You will readily believe that we are

all very happy, only weâre a little worn out for want of rest, as he

keeps us awake all night; but this we must expect, nurse says, for

the first six or eight months. He has been vaccinated, but in

consequence of the operation being rather awkwardly performed, some

small particles of glass were introduced into the arm with the

matter. Perhaps this may in some degree account for his being rather

fractious; at least, so nurse says. We propose to have him

christened at twelve oâclock on Friday, at Saint Georgeâs church, in

Hart-street, by the name of Frederick Charles William. Pray donât be

later than a quarter before twelve. We shall have a very few friends

in the evening, when of course we shall see you. I am sorry to say

that the dear boy appears rather restless and uneasy to-day: the

cause, I fear, is fever.

âBelieve me, dear Uncle,

âYours affectionately,

âCHARLES KITTERBELL.

âP.S.âI open this note to say that we have just discovered the cause

of little Frederickâs restlessness. It is not fever, as I

apprehended, but a small pin, which nurse accidentally stuck in his

leg yesterday evening. We have taken it out, and he appears more

composed, though he still sobs a good deal.â

It is almost unnecessary to say that the perusal of the above interesting

statement was no great relief to the mind of the hypochondriacal Dumps.

It was impossible to recede, however, and so he put the best faceâthat is

to say, an uncommonly miserable oneâupon the matter; and purchased a

handsome silver mug for the infant Kitterbell, upon which he ordered the

initials âF. C. W. K.,â with the customary untrained grape-vine-looking

flourishes, and a large full stop, to be engraved forthwith.

Monday was a fine day, Tuesday was delightful, Wednesday was equal to

either, and Thursday was finer than ever; four successive fine days in

London! Hackney-coachmen became revolutionary, and crossing-sweepers

began to doubt the existence of a First Cause. The \_Morning Herald\_

informed its readers that an old woman in Camden Town had been heard to

say that the fineness of the season was âunprecedented in the memory of

the oldest inhabitant;â and Islington clerks, with large families and

small salaries, left off their black gaiters, disdained to carry their

once green cotton umbrellas, and walked to town in the conscious pride of

white stockings and cleanly brushed Bluchers. Dumps beheld all this with

an eye of supreme contemptâhis triumph was at hand. He knew that if it

had been fine for four weeks instead of four days, it would rain when he

went out; he was lugubriously happy in the conviction that Friday would

be a wretched dayâand so it was. âI knew how it would be,â said Dumps,

as he turned round opposite the Mansion-house at half-past eleven oâclock

on the Friday morning. âI knew how it would be. \_I\_ am concerned, and

thatâs enough;ââand certainly the appearance of the day was sufficient to

depress the spirits of a much more buoyant-hearted individual than

himself. It had rained, without a momentâs cessation, since eight

oâclock; everybody that passed up Cheapside, and down Cheapside, looked

wet, cold, and dirty. All sorts of forgotten and long-concealed

umbrellas had been put into requisition. Cabs whisked about, with the

âfareâ as carefully boxed up behind two glazed calico curtains as any

mysterious picture in any one of Mrs. Radcliffeâs castles; omnibus horses

smoked like steam-engines; nobody thought of âstanding upâ under doorways

or arches; they were painfully convinced it was a hopeless case; and so

everybody went hastily along, jumbling and jostling, and swearing and

perspiring, and slipping about, like amateur skaters behind wooden chairs

on the Serpentine on a frosty Sunday.

Dumps paused; he could not think of walking, being rather smart for the

christening. If he took a cab he was sure to be spilt, and a

hackney-coach was too expensive for his economical ideas. An omnibus was

waiting at the opposite cornerâit was a desperate caseâhe had never heard

of an omnibus upsetting or running away, and if the cad did knock him

down, he could âpull him upâ in return.

âNow, sir!â cried the young gentleman who officiated as âcadâ to the

âLads of the Village,â which was the name of the machine just noticed.

Dumps crossed.

âThis vay, sir!â shouted the driver of the âHark-away,â pulling up his

vehicle immediately across the door of the oppositionââThis vay, sirâheâs

full.â Dumps hesitated, whereupon the âLads of the Villageâ commenced

pouring out a torrent of abuse against the âHark-away;â but the conductor

of the âAdmiral Napierâ settled the contest in a most satisfactory

manner, for all parties, by seizing Dumps round the waist, and thrusting

him into the middle of his vehicle which had just come up and only wanted

the sixteenth inside.

âAll right,â said the âAdmiral,â and off the thing thundered, like a

fire-engine at full gallop, with the kidnapped customer inside, standing

in the position of a half doubled-up bootjack, and falling about with

every jerk of the machine, first on the one side, and then on the other,

like a âJack-in-the-green,â on May-day, setting to the lady with a brass

ladle.

âFor Heavenâs sake, where am I to sit?â inquired the miserable man of an

old gentleman, into whose stomach he had just fallen for the fourth time.

âAnywhere but on my \_chest\_, sir,â replied the old gentleman in a surly

tone.

âPerhaps the \_box\_ would suit the gentleman better,â suggested a very

damp lawyerâs clerk, in a pink shirt, and a smirking countenance.

After a great deal of struggling and falling about, Dumps at last managed

to squeeze himself into a seat, which, in addition to the slight

disadvantage of being between a window that would not shut, and a door

that must be open, placed him in close contact with a passenger, who had

been walking about all the morning without an umbrella, and who looked as

if he had spent the day in a full water-buttâonly wetter.

âDonât bang the door so,â said Dumps to the conductor, as he shut it

after letting out four of the passengers; I am very nervousâit destroys

me.â

âDid any genâlmân say anythink?â replied the cad, thrusting in his head,

and trying to look as if he didnât understand the request.

âI told you not to bang the door so!â repeated Dumps, with an expression

of countenance like the knave of clubs, in convulsions.

âOh! vy, itâs rather a singâler circumstance about this here door, sir,

that it vonât shut without banging,â replied the conductor; and he opened

the door very wide, and shut it again with a terrific bang, in proof of

the assertion.

âI beg your pardon, sir,â said a little prim, wheezing old gentleman,

sitting opposite Dumps, âI beg your pardon; but have you ever observed,

when you have been in an omnibus on a wet day, that four people out of

five always come in with large cotton umbrellas, without a handle at the

top, or the brass spike at the bottom?â

âWhy, sir,â returned Dumps, as he heard the clock strike twelve, âit

never struck me before; but now you mention it, IâHollo! hollo!â shouted

the persecuted individual, as the omnibus dashed past Drury-lane, where

he had directed to be set down.ââWhere is the cad?â

âI think heâs on the box, sir,â said the young gentleman before noticed

in the pink shirt, which looked like a white one ruled with red ink.

âI want to be set down!â said Dumps in a faint voice, overcome by his

previous efforts.

âI think these cads want to be \_set down\_,â returned the attorneyâs

clerk, chuckling at his sally.

âHollo!â cried Dumps again.

âHollo!â echoed the passengers. The omnibus passed St. Gilesâs church.

âHold hard!â said the conductor; âIâm blowed if we haânât forgot the

genâlmân as vas to be set down at Doory-lane.âNow, sir, make haste, if

you please,â he added, opening the door, and assisting Dumps out with as

much coolness as if it was âall right.â Dumpsâs indignation was for once

getting the better of his cynical equanimity. âDrury-lane!â he gasped,

with the voice of a boy in a cold bath for the first time.

âDoory-lane, sir?âyes, sir,âthird turning on the right-hand side, sir.â

Dumpsâs passion was paramount: he clutched his umbrella, and was striding

off with the firm determination of not paying the fare. The cad, by a

remarkable coincidence, happened to entertain a directly contrary

opinion, and Heaven knows how far the altercation would have proceeded,

if it had not been most ably and satisfactorily brought to a close by the

driver.

âHollo!â said that respectable person, standing up on the box, and

leaning with one hand on the roof of the omnibus. âHollo, Tom! tell the

gentleman if so be as he feels aggrieved, we will take him up to the

Edge-er (Edgeware) Road for nothing, and set him down at Doory-lane when

we comes back. He canât reject that, anyhow.â

The argument was irresistible: Dumps paid the disputed sixpence, and in a

quarter of an hour was on the staircase of No. 14, Great Russell-street.

Everything indicated that preparations were making for the reception of

âa few friendsâ in the evening. Two dozen extra tumblers, and four ditto

wine-glassesâlooking anything but transparent, with little bits of straw

in them on the slab in the passage, just arrived. There was a great

smell of nutmeg, port wine, and almonds, on the staircase; the covers

were taken off the stair-carpet, and the figure of Venus on the first

landing looked as if she were ashamed of the composition-candle in her

right hand, which contrasted beautifully with the lamp-blacked drapery of

the goddess of love. The female servant (who looked very warm and

bustling) ushered Dumps into a front drawing-room, very prettily

furnished, with a plentiful sprinkling of little baskets, paper

table-mats, china watchmen, pink and gold albums, and rainbow-bound

little books on the different tables.

âAh, uncle!â said Mr. Kitterbell, âhow dâye do? Allow meâJemima, my

dearâmy uncle. I think youâve seen Jemima before, sir?â

âHave had the \_pleasure\_,â returned big Dumps, his tone and look making

it doubtful whether in his life he had ever experienced the sensation.

âIâm sure,â said Mrs. Kitterbell, with a languid smile, and a slight

cough. âIâm sureâhemâany friendâof Charlesâsâhemâmuch less a relation,

isââ

âI knew youâd say so, my love,â said little Kitterbell, who, while he

appeared to be gazing on the opposite houses, was looking at his wife

with a most affectionate air: âBless you!â The last two words were

accompanied with a simper, and a squeeze of the hand, which stirred up

all Uncle Dumpsâs bile.

âJane, tell nurse to bring down baby,â said Mrs. Kitterbell, addressing

the servant. Mrs. Kitterbell was a tall, thin young lady, with very

light hair, and a particularly white faceâone of those young women who

almost invariably, though one hardly knows why, recall to oneâs mind the

idea of a cold fillet of veal. Out went the servant, and in came the

nurse, with a remarkably small parcel in her arms, packed up in a blue

mantle trimmed with white fur.âThis was the baby.

âNow, uncle,â said Mr. Kitterbell, lifting up that part of the mantle

which covered the infantâs face, with an air of great triumph, â\_Who\_ do

you think heâs like?â

âHe! he! Yes, who?â said Mrs. K., putting her arm through her husbandâs,

and looking up into Dumpsâs face with an expression of as much interest

as she was capable of displaying.

âGood God, how small he is!â cried the amiable uncle, starting back with

well-feigned surprise; â\_remarkably\_ small indeed.â

âDo you think so?â inquired poor little Kitterbell, rather alarmed.

âHeâs a monster to what he wasâainât he, nurse?â

âHeâs a dear,â said the nurse, squeezing the child, and evading the

questionânot because she scrupled to disguise the fact, but because she

couldnât afford to throw away the chance of Dumpsâs half-crown.

âWell, but who is he like?â inquired little Kitterbell.

Dumps looked at the little pink heap before him, and only thought at the

moment of the best mode of mortifying the youthful parents.

âI really donât know \_who\_ heâs like,â he answered, very well knowing the

reply expected of him.

âDonât you think heâs like \_me\_?â inquired his nephew with a knowing air.

âOh, \_decidedly\_ not!â returned Dumps, with an emphasis not to be

misunderstood. âDecidedly not like you.âOh, certainly not.â

âLike Jemima?â asked Kitterbell, faintly.

âOh, dear no; not in the least. Iâm no judge, of course, in such cases;

but I really think heâs more like one of those little carved

representations that one sometimes sees blowing a trumpet on a

tombstone!â The nurse stooped down over the child, and with great

difficulty prevented an explosion of mirth. Pa and ma looked almost as

miserable as their amiable uncle.

âWell!â said the disappointed little father, âyouâll be better able to

tell what heâs like by-and-by. You shall see him this evening with his

mantle off.â

âThank you,â said Dumps, feeling particularly grateful.

âNow, my love,â said Kitterbell to his wife, âitâs time we were off.

Weâre to meet the other godfather and the godmother at the church,

uncle,âMr. and Mrs. Wilson from over the wayâuncommonly nice people. My

love, are you well wrapped up?â

âYes, dear.â

âAre you sure you wonât have another shawl?â inquired the anxious

husband.

âNo, sweet,â returned the charming mother, accepting Dumpsâs proffered

arm; and the little party entered the hackney-coach that was to take them

to the church; Dumps amusing Mrs. Kitterbell by expatiating largely on

the danger of measles, thrush, teeth-cutting, and other interesting

diseases to which children are subject.

The ceremony (which occupied about five minutes) passed off without

anything particular occurring. The clergyman had to dine some distance

from town, and had two churchings, three christenings, and a funeral to

perform in something less than an hour. The godfathers and godmother,

therefore, promised to renounce the devil and all his worksââand all that

sort of thingââas little Kitterbell saidââin less than no time;â and with

the exception of Dumps nearly letting the child fall into the font when

he handed it to the clergyman, the whole affair went off in the usual

business-like and matter-of-course manner, and Dumps re-entered the

Bank-gates at two oâclock with a heavy heart, and the painful conviction

that he was regularly booked for an evening party.

Evening cameâand so did Dumpsâs pumps, black silk stockings, and white

cravat which he had ordered to be forwarded, per boy, from Pentonville.

The depressed godfather dressed himself at a friendâs counting-house,

from whence, with his spirits fifty degrees below proof, he sallied

forthâas the weather had cleared up, and the evening was tolerably

fineâto walk to Great Russell-street. Slowly he paced up Cheapside,

Newgate-street, down Snow-hill, and up Holborn ditto, looking as grim as

the figure-head of a man-of-war, and finding out fresh causes of misery

at every step. As he was crossing the corner of Hatton-garden, a man

apparently intoxicated, rushed against him, and would have knocked him

down, had he not been providentially caught by a very genteel young man,

who happened to be close to him at the time. The shock so disarranged

Dumpsâs nerves, as well as his dress, that he could hardly stand. The

gentleman took his arm, and in the kindest manner walked with him as far

as Furnivalâs Inn. Dumps, for about the first time in his life, felt

grateful and polite; and he and the gentlemanly-looking young man parted

with mutual expressions of good will.

âThere are at least some well-disposed men in the world,â ruminated the

misanthropical Dumps, as he proceeded towards his destination.

Ratâtatâta-ra-ra-ra-ra-ratâknocked a hackney-coachman at Kitterbellâs

door, in imitation of a gentlemanâs servant, just as Dumps reached it;

and out came an old lady in a large toque, and an old gentleman in a blue

coat, and three female copies of the old lady in pink dresses, and shoes

to match.

âItâs a large party,â sighed the unhappy godfather, wiping the

perspiration from his forehead, and leaning against the area-railings.

It was some time before the miserable man could muster up courage to

knock at the door, and when he did, the smart appearance of a

neighbouring greengrocer (who had been hired to wait for seven and

sixpence, and whose calves alone were worth double the money), the lamp

in the passage, and the Venus on the landing, added to the hum of many

voices, and the sound of a harp and two violins, painfully convinced him

that his surmises were but too well founded.

âHow are you?â said little Kitterbell, in a greater bustle than ever,

bolting out of the little back parlour with a cork-screw in his hand, and

various particles of sawdust, looking like so many inverted commas, on

his inexpressibles.

âGood God!â said Dumps, turning into the aforesaid parlour to put his

shoes on, which he had brought in his coat-pocket, and still more

appalled by the sight of seven fresh-drawn corks, and a corresponding

number of decanters. âHow many people are there up-stairs?â

âOh, not above thirty-five. Weâve had the carpet taken up in the back

drawing-room, and the piano and the card-tables are in the front. Jemima

thought weâd better have a regular sit-down supper in the front parlour,

because of the speechifying, and all that. But, Lord! uncle, whatâs the

matter?â continued the excited little man, as Dumps stood with one shoe

on, rummaging his pockets with the most frightful distortion of visage.

âWhat have you lost? Your pocket-book?â

âNo,â returned Dumps, diving first into one pocket and then into the

other, and speaking in a voice like Desdemona with the pillow over her

mouth.

âYour card-case? snuff-box? the key of your lodgings?â continued

Kitterbell, pouring question on question with the rapidity of lightning.

âNo! no!â ejaculated Dumps, still diving eagerly into his empty pockets.

âNotânotâthe \_mug\_ you spoke of this morning?â

âYes, the \_mug\_!â replied Dumps, sinking into a chair.

âHow \_could\_ you have done it?â inquired Kitterbell. âAre you sure you

brought it out?â

âYes! yes! I see it all!â said Dumps, starting up as the idea flashed

across his mind; âmiserable dog that I amâI was born to suffer. I see it

all: it was the gentlemanly-looking young man!â

âMr. Dumps!â shouted the greengrocer in a stentorian voice, as he ushered

the somewhat recovered godfather into the drawing-room half an hour after

the above declaration. âMr. Dumps!ââeverybody looked at the door, and in

came Dumps, feeling about as much out of place as a salmon might be

supposed to be on a gravel-walk.

âHappy to see you again,â said Mrs. Kitterbell, quite unconscious of the

unfortunate manâs confusion and misery; âyou must allow me to introduce

you to a few of our friends:âmy mamma, Mr. Dumpsâmy papa and sisters.â

Dumps seized the hand of the mother as warmly as if she was his own

parent, bowed \_to\_ the young ladies, and \_against\_ a gentleman behind

him, and took no notice whatever of the father, who had been bowing

incessantly for three minutes and a quarter.

âUncle,â said little Kitterbell, after Dumps had been introduced to a

select dozen or two, âyou must let me lead you to the other end of the

room, to introduce you to my friend Danton. Such a splendid fellow!âIâm

sure youâll like himâthis way,ââDumps followed as tractably as a tame

bear.

Mr. Danton was a young man of about five-and-twenty, with a considerable

stock of impudence, and a very small share of ideas: he was a great

favourite, especially with young ladies of from sixteen to twenty-six

years of age, both inclusive. He could imitate the French-horn to

admiration, sang comic songs most inimitably, and had the most

insinuating way of saying impertinent nothings to his doting female

admirers. He had acquired, somehow or other, the reputation of being a

great wit, and, accordingly, whenever he opened his mouth, everybody who

knew him laughed very heartily.

The introduction took place in due form. Mr. Danton bowed, and twirled a

ladyâs handkerchief, which he held in his hand, in a most comic way.

Everybody smiled.

âVery warm,â said Dumps, feeling it necessary to say something.

âYes. It was warmer yesterday,â returned the brilliant Mr. Danton.âA

general laugh.

âI have great pleasure in congratulating you on your first appearance in

the character of a father, sir,â he continued, addressing

Dumpsââgodfather, I mean.ââThe young ladies were convulsed, and the

gentlemen in ecstasies.

A general hum of admiration interrupted the conversation, and announced

the entrance of nurse with the baby. An universal rush of the young

ladies immediately took place. (Girls are always \_so\_ fond of babies in

company.)

âOh, you dear!â said one.

âHow sweet!â cried another, in a low tone of the most enthusiastic

admiration.

âHeavenly!â added a third.

âOh! what dear little arms!â said a fourth, holding up an arm and fist

about the size and shape of the leg of a fowl cleanly picked.

âDid you ever!ââsaid a little coquette with a large bustle, who looked

like a French lithograph, appealing to a gentleman in three

waistcoatsââDid you ever!â

âNever, in my life,â returned her admirer, pulling up his collar.

âOh! \_do\_ let me take it, nurse,â cried another young lady. âThe love!â

âCan it open its eyes, nurse?â inquired another, affecting the utmost

innocence.âSuffice it to say, that the single ladies unanimously voted

him an angel, and that the married ones, \_nem. con.\_, agreed that he was

decidedly the finest baby they had ever beheldâexcept their own.

The quadrilles were resumed with great spirit. Mr. Danton was

universally admitted to be beyond himself; several young ladies enchanted

the company and gained admirers by singing âWe metâââI saw her at the

Fancy Fairââand other equally sentimental and interesting ballads. âThe

young men,â as Mrs. Kitterbell said, âmade themselves very agreeable;â

the girls did not lose their opportunity; and the evening promised to go

off excellently. Dumps didnât mind it: he had devised a plan for

himselfâa little bit of fun in his own wayâand he was almost happy! He

played a rubber and lost every point Mr. Danton said he could not have

lost every point, because he made a point of losing: everybody laughed

tremendously. Dumps retorted with a better joke, and nobody smiled, with

the exception of the host, who seemed to consider it his duty to laugh

till he was black in the face, at everything. There was only one

drawbackâthe musicians did not play with quite as much spirit as could

have been wished. The cause, however, was satisfactorily explained; for

it appeared, on the testimony of a gentleman who had come up from

Gravesend in the afternoon, that they had been engaged on board a steamer

all day, and had played almost without cessation all the way to

Gravesend, and all the way back again.

The âsit-down supperâ was excellent; there were four barley-sugar temples

on the table, which would have looked beautiful if they had not melted

away when the supper began; and a water-mill, whose only fault was that

instead of going round, it ran over the table-cloth. Then there were

fowls, and tongue, and trifle, and sweets, and lobster salad, and potted

beefâand everything. And little Kitterbell kept calling out for clean

plates, and the clean plates did not come: and then the gentlemen who

wanted the plates said they didnât mind, theyâd take a ladyâs; and then

Mrs. Kitterbell applauded their gallantry, and the greengrocer ran about

till he thought his seven and sixpence was very hardly earned; and the

young ladies didnât eat much for fear it shouldnât look romantic, and the

married ladies eat as much as possible, for fear they shouldnât have

enough; and a great deal of wine was drunk, and everybody talked and

laughed considerably.

âHush! hush!â said Mr. Kitterbell, rising and looking very important.

âMy love (this was addressed to his wife at the other end of the table),

take care of Mrs. Maxwell, and your mamma, and the rest of the married

ladies; the gentlemen will persuade the young ladies to fill their

glasses, I am sure.â

âLadies and gentlemen,â said long Dumps, in a very sepulchral voice and

rueful accent, rising from his chair like the ghost in Don Juan, âwill

you have the kindness to charge your glasses? I am desirous of proposing

a toast.â

A dead silence ensued, and the glasses were filledâeverybody looked

serious.

âLadies and gentlemen,â slowly continued the ominous Dumps, âIââ(here Mr.

Danton imitated two notes from the French-horn, in a very loud key, which

electrified the nervous toast-proposer, and convulsed his audience).

âOrder! order!â said little Kitterbell, endeavouring to suppress his

laughter.

âOrder!â said the gentlemen.

âDanton, be quiet,â said a particular friend on the opposite side of the

table.

âLadies and gentlemen,â resumed Dumps, somewhat recovered, and not much

disconcerted, for he was always a pretty good hand at a speechââIn

accordance with what is, I believe, the established usage on these

occasions, I, as one of the godfathers of Master Frederick Charles

William Kitterbellâ(here the speakerâs voice faltered, for he remembered

the mug)âventure to rise to propose a toast. I need hardly say that it

is the health and prosperity of that young gentleman, the particular

event of whose early life we are here met to celebrateâ(applause).

Ladies and gentlemen, it is impossible to suppose that our friends here,

whose sincere well-wishers we all are, can pass through life without some

trials, considerable suffering, severe affliction, and heavy

losses!ââHere the arch-traitor paused, and slowly drew forth a long,

white pocket-handkerchiefâhis example was followed by several ladies.

âThat these trials may be long spared them is my most earnest prayer, my

most fervent wish (a distinct sob from the grandmother). I hope and

trust, ladies and gentlemen, that the infant whose christening we have

this evening met to celebrate, may not be removed from the arms of his

parents by premature decay (several cambrics were in requisition): that

his young and now \_apparently\_ healthy form, may not be wasted by

lingering disease. (Here Dumps cast a sardonic glance around, for a

great sensation was manifest among the married ladies.) You, I am sure,

will concur with me in wishing that he may live to be a comfort and a

blessing to his parents. (âHear, hear!â and an audible sob from Mr.

Kitterbell.) But should he not be what we could wishâshould he forget in

after times the duty which he owes to themâshould they unhappily

experience that distracting truth, âhow sharper than a serpentâs tooth it

is to have a thankless childâââHere Mrs. Kitterbell, with her

handkerchief to her eyes, and accompanied by several ladies, rushed from

the room, and went into violent hysterics in the passage, leaving her

better half in almost as bad a condition, and a general impression in

Dumpsâs favour; for people like sentiment, after all.

It need hardly be added, that this occurrence quite put a stop to the

harmony of the evening. Vinegar, hartshorn, and cold water, were now as

much in request as negus, rout-cakes, and \_bon-bons\_ had been a short

time before. Mrs. Kitterbell was immediately conveyed to her apartment,

the musicians were silenced, flirting ceased, and the company slowly

departed. Dumps left the house at the commencement of the bustle, and

walked home with a light step, and (for him) a cheerful heart. His

landlady, who slept in the next room, has offered to make oath that she

heard him laugh, in his peculiar manner, after he had locked his door.

The assertion, however, is so improbable, and bears on the face of it

such strong evidence of untruth, that it has never obtained credence to

this hour.

The family of Mr. Kitterbell has considerably increased since the period

to which we have referred; he has now two sons and a daughter; and as he

expects, at no distant period, to have another addition to his blooming

progeny, he is anxious to secure an eligible godfather for the occasion.

He is determined, however, to impose upon him two conditions. He must

bind himself, by a solemn obligation, not to make any speech after

supper; and it is indispensable that he should be in no way connected

with âthe most miserable man in the world.â

CHAPTER XIIâTHE DRUNKARDâS DEATH

We will be bold to say, that there is scarcely a man in the constant

habit of walking, day after day, through any of the crowded thoroughfares

of London, who cannot recollect among the people whom he âknows by

sight,â to use a familiar phrase, some being of abject and wretched

appearance whom he remembers to have seen in a very different condition,

whom he has observed sinking lower and lower, by almost imperceptible

degrees, and the shabbiness and utter destitution of whose appearance, at

last, strike forcibly and painfully upon him, as he passes by. Is there

any man who has mixed much with society, or whose avocations have caused

him to mingle, at one time or other, with a great number of people, who

cannot call to mind the time when some shabby, miserable wretch, in rags

and filth, who shuffles past him now in all the squalor of disease and

poverty, with a respectable tradesman, or clerk, or a man following some

thriving pursuit, with good prospects, and decent means?âor cannot any of

our readers call to mind from among the list of their \_quondam\_

acquaintance, some fallen and degraded man, who lingers about the

pavement in hungry miseryâfrom whom every one turns coldly away, and who

preserves himself from sheer starvation, nobody knows how? Alas! such

cases are of too frequent occurrence to be rare items in any manâs

experience; and but too often arise from one causeâdrunkennessâthat

fierce rage for the slow, sure poison, that oversteps every other

consideration; that casts aside wife, children, friends, happiness, and

station; and hurries its victims madly on to degradation and death.

Some of these men have been impelled, by misfortune and misery, to the

vice that has degraded them. The ruin of worldly expectations, the death

of those they loved, the sorrow that slowly consumes, but will not break

the heart, has driven them wild; and they present the hideous spectacle

of madmen, slowly dying by their own hands. But by far the greater part

have wilfully, and with open eyes, plunged into the gulf from which the

man who once enters it never rises more, but into which he sinks deeper

and deeper down, until recovery is hopeless.

Such a man as this once stood by the bedside of his dying wife, while his

children knelt around, and mingled loud bursts of grief with their

innocent prayers. The room was scantily and meanly furnished; and it

needed but a glance at the pale form from which the light of life was

fast passing away, to know that grief, and want, and anxious care, had

been busy at the heart for many a weary year. An elderly woman, with her

face bathed in tears, was supporting the head of the dying womanâher

daughterâon her arm. But it was not towards her that the was face

turned; it was not her hand that the cold and trembling fingers clasped;

they pressed the husbandâs arm; the eyes so soon to be closed in death

rested on his face, and the man shook beneath their gaze. His dress was

slovenly and disordered, his face inflamed, his eyes bloodshot and heavy.

He had been summoned from some wild debauch to the bed of sorrow and

death.

A shaded lamp by the bed-side cast a dim light on the figures around, and

left the remainder of the room in thick, deep shadow. The silence of

night prevailed without the house, and the stillness of death was in the

chamber. A watch hung over the mantel-shelf; its low ticking was the

only sound that broke the profound quiet, but it was a solemn one, for

well they knew, who heard it, that before it had recorded the passing of

another hour, it would beat the knell of a departed spirit.

It is a dreadful thing to wait and watch for the approach of death; to

know that hope is gone, and recovery impossible; and to sit and count the

dreary hours through long, long nightsâsuch nights as only watchers by

the bed of sickness know. It chills the blood to hear the dearest

secrets of the heartâthe pent-up, hidden secrets of many yearsâpoured

forth by the unconscious, helpless being before you; and to think how

little the reserve and cunning of a whole life will avail, when fever and

delirium tear off the mask at last. Strange tales have been told in the

wanderings of dying men; tales so full of guilt and crime, that those who

stood by the sick personâs couch have fled in horror and affright, lest

they should be scared to madness by what they heard and saw; and many a

wretch has died alone, raving of deeds the very name of which has driven

the boldest man away.

But no such ravings were to be heard at the bed-side by which the

children knelt. Their half-stifled sobs and moaning alone broke the

silence of the lonely chamber. And when at last the motherâs grasp

relaxed, and, turning one look from the children to the father, she

vainly strove to speak, and fell backward on the pillow, all was so calm

and tranquil that she seemed to sink to sleep. They leant over her; they

called upon her name, softly at first, and then in the loud and piercing

tones of desperation. But there was no reply. They listened for her

breath, but no sound came. They felt for the palpitation of the heart,

but no faint throb responded to the touch. That heart was broken, and

she was dead!

The husband sunk into a chair by the bed-side, and clasped his hands upon

his burning forehead. He gazed from child to child, but when a weeping

eye met his, he quailed beneath its look. No word of comfort was

whispered in his ear, no look of kindness lighted on his face. All

shrunk from and avoided him; and when at last he staggered from the room,

no one sought to follow or console the widower.

The time had been when many a friend would have crowded round him in his

affliction, and many a heartfelt condolence would have met him in his

grief. Where were they now? One by one, friends, relations, the

commonest acquaintance even, had fallen off from and deserted the

drunkard. His wife alone had clung to him in good and evil, in sickness

and poverty, and how had he rewarded her? He had reeled from the tavern

to her bed-side in time to see her die.

He rushed from the house, and walked swiftly through the streets.

Remorse, fear, shame, all crowded on his mind. Stupefied with drink, and

bewildered with the scene he had just witnessed, he re-entered the tavern

he had quitted shortly before. Glass succeeded glass. His blood

mounted, and his brain whirled round. Death! Every one must die, and

why not \_she\_? She was too good for him; her relations had often told

him so. Curses on them! Had they not deserted her, and left her to

whine away the time at home? Wellâshe was dead, and happy perhaps. It

was better as it was. Another glassâone more! Hurrah! It was a merry

life while it lasted; and he would make the most of it.

Time went on; the three children who were left to him, grew up, and were

children no longer. The father remained the sameâpoorer, shabbier, and

more dissolute-looking, but the same confirmed and irreclaimable

drunkard. The boys had, long ago, run wild in the streets, and left him;

the girl alone remained, but she worked hard, and words or blows could

always procure him something for the tavern. So he went on in the old

course, and a merry life he led.

One night, as early as ten oâclockâfor the girl had been sick for many

days, and there was, consequently, little to spend at the public-houseâhe

bent his steps homeward, bethinking himself that if he would have her

able to earn money, it would be as well to apply to the parish surgeon,

or, at all events, to take the trouble of inquiring what ailed her, which

he had not yet thought it worth while to do. It was a wet December

night; the wind blew piercing cold, and the rain poured heavily down. He

begged a few halfpence from a passer-by, and having bought a small loaf

(for it was his interest to keep the girl alive, if he could), he

shuffled onwards as fast as the wind and rain would let him.

At the back of Fleet-street, and lying between it and the water-side, are

several mean and narrow courts, which form a portion of Whitefriars: it

was to one of these that he directed his steps.

The alley into which he turned, might, for filth and misery, have

competed with the darkest corner of this ancient sanctuary in its

dirtiest and most lawless time. The houses, varying from two stories in

height to four, were stained with every indescribable hue that long

exposure to the weather, damp, and rottenness can impart to tenements

composed originally of the roughest and coarsest materials. The windows

were patched with paper, and stuffed with the foulest rags; the doors

were falling from their hinges; poles with lines on which to dry clothes,

projected from every casement, and sounds of quarrelling or drunkenness

issued from every room.

The solitary oil lamp in the centre of the court had been blown out,

either by the violence of the wind or the act of some inhabitant who had

excellent reasons for objecting to his residence being rendered too

conspicuous; and the only light which fell upon the broken and uneven

pavement, was derived from the miserable candles that here and there

twinkled in the rooms of such of the more fortunate residents as could

afford to indulge in so expensive a luxury. A gutter ran down the centre

of the alleyâall the sluggish odours of which had been called forth by

the rain; and as the wind whistled through the old houses, the doors and

shutters creaked upon their hinges, and the windows shook in their

frames, with a violence which every moment seemed to threaten the

destruction of the whole place.

The man whom we have followed into this den, walked on in the darkness,

sometimes stumbling into the main gutter, and at others into some branch

repositories of garbage which had been formed by the rain, until he

reached the last house in the court. The door, or rather what was left

of it, stood ajar, for the convenience of the numerous lodgers; and he

proceeded to grope his way up the old and broken stair, to the attic

story.

He was within a step or two of his room door, when it opened, and a girl,

whose miserable and emaciated appearance was only to be equalled by that

of the candle which she shaded with her hand, peeped anxiously out.

âIs that you, father?â said the girl.

âWho else should it be?â replied the man gruffly. âWhat are you

trembling at? Itâs little enough that Iâve had to drink to-day, for

thereâs no drink without money, and no money without work. What the

devilâs the matter with the girl?â

âI am not well, fatherânot at all well,â said the girl, bursting into

tears.

âAh!â replied the man, in the tone of a person who is compelled to admit

a very unpleasant fact, to which he would rather remain blind, if he

could. âYou must get better somehow, for we must have money. You must

go to the parish doctor, and make him give you some medicine. Theyâre

paid for it, damn âem. What are you standing before the door for? Let

me come in, canât you?â

âFather,â whispered the girl, shutting the door behind her, and placing

herself before it, âWilliam has come back.â

âWho!â said the man with a start.

âHush,â replied the girl, âWilliam; brother William.â

âAnd what does he want?â said the man, with an effort at

composureââmoney? meat? drink? Heâs come to the wrong shop for that, if

he does. Give me the candleâgive me the candle, foolâI ainât going to

hurt him.â He snatched the candle from her hand, and walked into the

room.

Sitting on an old box, with his head resting on his hand, and his eyes

fixed on a wretched cinder fire that was smouldering on the hearth, was a

young man of about two-and-twenty, miserably clad in an old coarse jacket

and trousers. He started up when his father entered.

âFasten the door, Mary,â said the young man hastilyââFasten the door.

You look as if you didnât know me, father. Itâs long enough, since you

drove me from home; you may well forget me.â

âAnd what do you want here, now?â said the father, seating himself on a

stool, on the other side of the fireplace. âWhat do you want here, now?â

âShelter,â replied the son. âIâm in trouble: thatâs enough. If Iâm

caught I shall swing; thatâs certain. Caught I shall be, unless I stop

here; thatâs \_as\_ certain. And thereâs an end of it.â

âYou mean to say, youâve been robbing, or murdering, then?â said the

father.

âYes, I do,â replied the son. âDoes it surprise you, father?â He looked

steadily in the manâs face, but he withdrew his eyes, and bent them on

the ground.

âWhereâs your brothers?â he said, after a long pause.

âWhere theyâll never trouble you,â replied his son: âJohnâs gone to

America, and Henryâs dead.â

âDead!â said the father, with a shudder, which even he could not express.

âDead,â replied the young man. âHe died in my armsâshot like a dog, by a

gamekeeper. He staggered back, I caught him, and his blood trickled down

my hands. It poured out from his side like water. He was weak, and it

blinded him, but he threw himself down on his knees, on the grass, and

prayed to God, that if his mother was in heaven, He would hear her

prayers for pardon for her youngest son. âI was her favourite boy,

Will,â he said, âand I am glad to think, now, that when she was dying,

though I was a very young child then, and my little heart was almost

bursting, I knelt down at the foot of the bed, and thanked God for having

made me so fond of her as to have never once done anything to bring the

tears into her eyes. O Will, why was she taken away, and father left?â

Thereâs his dying words, father,â said the young man; âmake the best you

can of âem. You struck him across the face, in a drunken fit, the

morning we ran away; and hereâs the end of it.â

The girl wept aloud; and the father, sinking his head upon his knees,

rocked himself to and fro.

âIf I am taken,â said the young man, âI shall be carried back into the

country, and hung for that manâs murder. They cannot trace me here,

without your assistance, father. For aught I know, you may give me up to

justice; but unless you do, here I stop, until I can venture to escape

abroad.â

For two whole days, all three remained in the wretched room, without

stirring out. On the third evening, however, the girl was worse than she

had been yet, and the few scraps of food they had were gone. It was

indispensably necessary that somebody should go out; and as the girl was

too weak and ill, the father went, just at nightfall.

He got some medicine for the girl, and a trifle in the way of pecuniary

assistance. On his way back, he earned sixpence by holding a horse; and

he turned homewards with enough money to supply their most pressing wants

for two or three days to come. He had to pass the public-house. He

lingered for an instant, walked past it, turned back again, lingered once

more, and finally slunk in. Two men whom he had not observed, were on

the watch. They were on the point of giving up their search in despair,

when his loitering attracted their attention; and when he entered the

public-house, they followed him.

âYouâll drink with me, master,â said one of them, proffering him a glass

of liquor.

âAnd me too,â said the other, replenishing the glass as soon as it was

drained of its contents.

The man thought of his hungry children, and his sonâs danger. But they

were nothing to the drunkard. He \_did\_ drink; and his reason left him.

âA wet night, Warden,â whispered one of the men in his ear, as he at

length turned to go away, after spending in liquor one-half of the money

on which, perhaps, his daughterâs life depended.

âThe right sort of night for our friends in hiding, Master Warden,â

whispered the other.

âSit down here,â said the one who had spoken first, drawing him into a

corner. âWe have been looking arter the young un. We came to tell him,

itâs all right now, but we couldnât find him âcause we hadnât got the

precise direction. But that ainât strange, for I donât think he knowâd

it himself, when he come to London, did he?â

âNo, he didnât,â replied the father.

The two men exchanged glances.

âThereâs a vessel down at the docks, to sail at midnight, when itâs high

water,â resumed the first speaker, âand weâll put him on board. His

passage is taken in another name, and whatâs better than that, itâs paid

for. Itâs lucky we met you.â

âVery,â said the second.

âCapital luck,â said the first, with a wink to his companion.

âGreat,â replied the second, with a slight nod of intelligence.

âAnother glass here; quickââsaid the first speaker. And in five minutes

more, the father had unconsciously yielded up his own son into the

hangmanâs hands.

Slowly and heavily the time dragged along, as the brother and sister, in

their miserable hiding-place, listened in anxious suspense to the

slightest sound. At length, a heavy footstep was heard upon the stair;

it approached nearer; it reached the landing; and the father staggered

into the room.

The girl saw that he was intoxicated, and advanced with the candle in her

hand to meet him; she stopped short, gave a loud scream, and fell

senseless on the ground. She had caught sight of the shadow of a man

reflected on the floor. They both rushed in, and in another instant the

young man was a prisoner, and handcuffed.

âVery quietly done,â said one of the men to his companion, âthanks to the

old man. Lift up the girl, Tomâcome, come, itâs no use crying, young

woman. Itâs all over now, and canât be helped.â

The young man stooped for an instant over the girl, and then turned

fiercely round upon his father, who had reeled against the wall, and was

gazing on the group with drunken stupidity.

âListen to me, father,â he said, in a tone that made the drunkardâs flesh

creep. âMy brotherâs blood, and mine, is on your head: I never had kind

look, or word, or care, from you, and alive or dead, I never will forgive

you. Die when you will, or how, I will be with you. I speak as a dead

man now, and I warn you, father, that as surely as you must one day stand

before your Maker, so surely shall your children be there, hand in hand,

to cry for judgment against you.â He raised his manacled hands in a

threatening attitude, fixed his eyes on his shrinking parent, and slowly

left the room; and neither father nor sister ever beheld him more, on

this side of the grave.

When the dim and misty light of a winterâs morning penetrated into the

narrow court, and struggled through the begrimed window of the wretched

room, Warden awoke from his heavy sleep, and found himself alone. He

rose, and looked round him; the old flock mattress on the floor was

undisturbed; everything was just as he remembered to have seen it last:

and there were no signs of any one, save himself, having occupied the

room during the night. He inquired of the other lodgers, and of the

neighbours; but his daughter had not been seen or heard of. He rambled

through the streets, and scrutinised each wretched face among the crowds

that thronged them, with anxious eyes. But his search was fruitless, and

he returned to his garret when night came on, desolate and weary.

For many days he occupied himself in the same manner, but no trace of his

daughter did he meet with, and no word of her reached his ears. At

length he gave up the pursuit as hopeless. He had long thought of the

probability of her leaving him, and endeavouring to gain her bread in

quiet, elsewhere. She had left him at last to starve alone. He ground

his teeth, and cursed her!

He begged his bread from door to door. Every halfpenny he could wring

from the pity or credulity of those to whom he addressed himself, was

spent in the old way. A year passed over his head; the roof of a jail

was the only one that had sheltered him for many months. He slept under

archways, and in brickfieldsâanywhere, where there was some warmth or

shelter from the cold and rain. But in the last stage of poverty,

disease, and houseless want, he was a drunkard still.

At last, one bitter night, he sunk down on a door-step faint and ill.

The premature decay of vice and profligacy had worn him to the bone. His

cheeks were hollow and livid; his eyes were sunken, and their sight was

dim. His legs trembled beneath his weight, and a cold shiver ran through

every limb.

And now the long-forgotten scenes of a misspent life crowded thick and

fast upon him. He thought of the time when he had a homeâa happy,

cheerful homeâand of those who peopled it, and flocked about him then,

until the forms of his elder children seemed to rise from the grave, and

stand about himâso plain, so clear, and so distinct they were that he

could touch and feel them. Looks that he had long forgotten were fixed

upon him once more; voices long since hushed in death sounded in his ears

like the music of village bells. But it was only for an instant. The

rain beat heavily upon him; and cold and hunger were gnawing at his heart

again.

He rose, and dragged his feeble limbs a few paces further. The street

was silent and empty; the few passengers who passed by, at that late

hour, hurried quickly on, and his tremulous voice was lost in the

violence of the storm. Again that heavy chill struck through his frame,

and his blood seemed to stagnate beneath it. He coiled himself up in a

projecting doorway, and tried to sleep.

But sleep had fled from his dull and glazed eyes. His mind wandered

strangely, but he was awake, and conscious. The well-known shout of

drunken mirth sounded in his ear, the glass was at his lips, the board

was covered with choice rich foodâthey were before him: he could see them

all, he had but to reach out his hand, and take themâand, though the

illusion was reality itself, he knew that he was sitting alone in the

deserted street, watching the rain-drops as they pattered on the stones;

that death was coming upon him by inchesâand that there were none to care

for or help him.

Suddenly he started up, in the extremity of terror. He had heard his own

voice shouting in the night air, he knew not what, or why. Hark! A

groan!âanother! His senses were leaving him: half-formed and incoherent

words burst from his lips; and his hands sought to tear and lacerate his

flesh. He was going mad, and he shrieked for help till his voice failed

him.

He raised his head, and looked up the long dismal street. He recollected

that outcasts like himself, condemned to wander day and night in those

dreadful streets, had sometimes gone distracted with their own

loneliness. He remembered to have heard many years before that a

homeless wretch had once been found in a solitary corner, sharpening a

rusty knife to plunge into his own heart, preferring death to that

endless, weary, wandering to and fro. In an instant his resolve was

taken, his limbs received new life; he ran quickly from the spot, and

paused not for breath until he reached the river-side.

He crept softly down the steep stone stairs that lead from the

commencement of Waterloo Bridge, down to the waterâs level. He crouched

into a corner, and held his breath, as the patrol passed. Never did

prisonerâs heart throb with the hope of liberty and life half so eagerly

as did that of the wretched man at the prospect of death. The watch

passed close to him, but he remained unobserved; and after waiting till

the sound of footsteps had died away in the distance, he cautiously

descended, and stood beneath the gloomy arch that forms the landing-place

from the river.

The tide was in, and the water flowed at his feet. The rain had ceased,

the wind was lulled, and all was, for the moment, still and quietâso

quiet, that the slightest sound on the opposite bank, even the rippling

of the water against the barges that were moored there, was distinctly

audible to his ear. The stream stole languidly and sluggishly on.

Strange and fantastic forms rose to the surface, and beckoned him to

approach; dark gleaming eyes peered from the water, and seemed to mock

his hesitation, while hollow murmurs from behind, urged him onwards. He

retreated a few paces, took a short run, desperate leap, and plunged into

the river.

Not five seconds had passed when he rose to the waterâs surfaceâbut what

a change had taken place in that short time, in all his thoughts and

feelings! Lifeâlife in any form, poverty, misery, starvationâanything

but death. He fought and struggled with the water that closed over his

head, and screamed in agonies of terror. The curse of his own son rang

in his ears. The shoreâbut one foot of dry groundâhe could almost touch

the step. One handâs breadth nearer, and he was savedâbut the tide bore

him onward, under the dark arches of the bridge, and he sank to the

bottom.

Again he rose, and struggled for life. For one instantâfor one brief

instantâthe buildings on the riverâs banks, the lights on the bridge

through which the current had borne him, the black water, and the

fast-flying clouds, were distinctly visibleâonce more he sunk, and once

again he rose. Bright flames of fire shot up from earth to heaven, and

reeled before his eyes, while the water thundered in his ears, and

stunned him with its furious roar.

A week afterwards the body was washed ashore, some miles down the river,

a swollen and disfigured mass. Unrecognised and unpitied, it was borne

to the grave; and there it has long since mouldered away!

SKETCHES OF YOUNG GENTLEMEN

TO THE YOUNG LADIES

OF THE

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland;

ALSO

THE YOUNG LADIES

OF

THE PRINCIPALITY OF WALES,

AND LIKEWISE

THE YOUNG LADIES

RESIDENT IN THE ISLES OF

GUERNSEY, JERSEY, ALDERNEY, AND SARK,

THE HUMBLE DEDICATION OF THEIR DEVOTED ADMIRER,

SHEWETH,â

THAT your Dedicator has perused, with feelings of virtuous indignation, a

work purporting to be âSketches of Young Ladies;â written by Quiz,

illustrated by Phiz, and published in one volume, square twelvemo.

THAT after an attentive and vigilant perusal of the said work, your

Dedicator is humbly of opinion that so many libels, upon your Honourable

sex, were never contained in any previously published work, in twelvemo

or any other mo.

THAT in the title page and preface to the said work, your Honourable sex

are described and classified as animals; and although your Dedicator is

not at present prepared to deny that you \_are\_ animals, still he humbly

submits that it is not polite to call you so.

THAT in the aforesaid preface, your Honourable sex are also described as

Troglodites, which, being a hard word, may, for aught your Honourable sex

or your Dedicator can say to the contrary, be an injurious and

disrespectful appellation.

THAT the author of the said work applied himself to his task in malice

prepense and with wickedness aforethought; a fact which, your Dedicator

contends, is sufficiently demonstrated, by his assuming the name of Quiz,

which, your Dedicator submits, denotes a foregone conclusion, and implies

an intention of quizzing.

THAT in the execution of his evil design, the said Quiz, or author of the

said work, must have betrayed some trust or confidence reposed in him by

some members of your Honourable sex, otherwise he never could have

acquired so much information relative to the manners and customs of your

Honourable sex in general.

THAT actuated by these considerations, and further moved by various

slanders and insinuations respecting your Honourable sex contained in the

said work, square twelvemo, entitled âSketches of Young Ladies,â your

Dedicator ventures to produce another work, square twelvemo, entitled

âSketches of Young Gentlemen,â of which he now solicits your acceptance

and approval.

THAT as the Young Ladies are the best companions of the Young Gentlemen,

so the Young Gentlemen should be the best companions of the Young Ladies;

and extending the comparison from animals (to quote the disrespectful

language of the said Quiz) to inanimate objects, your Dedicator humbly

suggests, that such of your Honourable sex as purchased the bane should

possess themselves of the antidote, and that those of your Honourable sex

who were not rash enough to take the first, should lose no time in

swallowing the last,âprevention being in all cases better than cure, as

we are informed upon the authority, not only of general acknowledgment,

but also of traditionary wisdom.

THAT with reference to the said bane and antidote, your Dedicator has no

further remarks to make, than are comprised in the printed directions

issued with Doctor Morisonâs pills; namely, that whenever your Honourable

sex take twenty-five of Number, 1, you will be pleased to take fifty of

Number 2, without delay.

And your Dedicator shall ever pray, &c.

THE BASHFUL YOUNG GENTLEMAN

We found ourself seated at a small dinner party the other day, opposite a

stranger of such singular appearance and manner, that he irresistibly

attracted our attention.

This was a fresh-coloured young gentleman, with as good a promise of

light whisker as one might wish to see, and possessed of a very

velvet-like, soft-looking countenance. We do not use the latter term

invidiously, but merely to denote a pair of smooth, plump,

highly-coloured cheeks of capacious dimensions, and a mouth rather

remarkable for the fresh hue of the lips than for any marked or striking

expression it presented. His whole face was suffused with a crimson

blush, and bore that downcast, timid, retiring look, which betokens a man

ill at ease with himself.

There was nothing in these symptoms to attract more than a passing

remark, but our attention had been originally drawn to the bashful young

gentleman, on his first appearance in the drawing-room above-stairs, into

which he was no sooner introduced, than making his way towards us who

were standing in a window, and wholly neglecting several persons who

warmly accosted him, he seized our hand with visible emotion, and pressed

it with a convulsive grasp for a good couple of minutes, after which he

dived in a nervous manner across the room, oversetting in his way a fine

little girl of six years and a quarter oldâand shrouding himself behind

some hangings, was seen no more, until the eagle eye of the hostess

detecting him in his concealment, on the announcement of dinner, he was

requested to pair off with a lively single lady, of two or three and

thirty.

This most flattering salutation from a perfect stranger, would have

gratified us not a little as a token of his having held us in high

respect, and for that reason been desirous of our acquaintance, if we had

not suspected from the first, that the young gentleman, in making a

desperate effort to get through the ceremony of introduction, had, in the

bewilderment of his ideas, shaken hands with us at random. This

impression was fully confirmed by the subsequent behaviour of the bashful

young gentleman in question, which we noted particularly, with the view

of ascertaining whether we were right in our conjecture.

The young gentleman seated himself at table with evident misgivings, and

turning sharp round to pay attention to some observation of his

loquacious neighbour, overset his bread. There was nothing very bad in

this, and if he had had the presence of mind to let it go, and say

nothing about it, nobody but the man who had laid the cloth would have

been a bit the wiser; but the young gentleman in various semi-successful

attempts to prevent its fall, played with it a little, as gentlemen in

the streets may be seen to do with their hats on a windy day, and then

giving the roll a smart rap in his anxiety to catch it, knocked it with

great adroitness into a tureen of white soup at some distance, to the

unspeakable terror and disturbance of a very amiable bald gentleman, who

was dispensing the contents. We thought the bashful young gentleman

would have gone off in an apoplectic fit, consequent upon the violent

rush of blood to his face at the occurrence of this catastrophe.

From this moment we perceived, in the phraseology of the fancy, that it

was âall upâ with the bashful young gentleman, and so indeed it was.

Several benevolent persons endeavoured to relieve his embarrassment by

taking wine with him, but finding that it only augmented his sufferings,

and that after mingling sherry, champagne, hock, and moselle together, he

applied the greater part of the mixture externally, instead of

internally, they gradually dropped off, and left him to the exclusive

care of the talkative lady, who, not noting the wildness of his eye,

firmly believed she had secured a listener. He broke a glass or two in

the course of the meal, and disappeared shortly afterwards; it is

inferred that he went away in some confusion, inasmuch as he left the

house in another gentlemanâs coat, and the footmanâs hat.

This little incident led us to reflect upon the most prominent

characteristics of bashful young gentlemen in the abstract; and as this

portable volume will be the great text-book of young ladies in all future

generations, we record them here for their guidance and behoof.

If the bashful young gentleman, in turning a street corner, chance to

stumble suddenly upon two or three young ladies of his acquaintance,

nothing can exceed his confusion and agitation. His first impulse is to

make a great variety of bows, and dart past them, which he does until,

observing that they wish to stop, but are uncertain whether to do so or

not, he makes several feints of returning, which causes them to do the

same; and at length, after a great quantity of unnecessary dodging and

falling up against the other passengers, he returns and shakes hands most

affectionately with all of them, in doing which he knocks out of their

grasp sundry little parcels, which he hastily picks up, and returns very

muddy and disordered. The chances are that the bashful young gentleman

then observes it is very fine weather, and being reminded that it has

only just left off raining for the first time these three days, he

blushes very much, and smiles as if he had said a very good thing. The

young lady who was most anxious to speak, here inquires, with an air of

great commiseration, how his dear sister Harriet is to-day; to which the

young gentleman, without the slightest consideration, replies with many

thanks, that she is remarkably well. âWell, Mr. Hopkins!â cries the

young lady, âwhy, we heard she was bled yesterday evening, and have been

perfectly miserable about her.â âOh, ah,â says the young gentleman, âso

she was. Oh, sheâs very ill, very ill indeed.â The young gentleman then

shakes his head, and looks very desponding (he has been smiling

perpetually up to this time), and after a short pause, gives his glove a

great wrench at the wrist, and says, with a strong emphasis on the

adjective, â\_Good\_ morning, \_good\_ morning.â And making a great number

of bows in acknowledgment of several little messages to his sister, walks

backward a few paces, and comes with great violence against a lamp-post,

knocking his hat off in the contact, which in his mental confusion and

bodily pain he is going to walk away without, until a great roar from a

carter attracts his attention, when he picks it up, and tries to smile

cheerfully to the young ladies, who are looking back, and who, he has the

satisfaction of seeing, are all laughing heartily.

At a quadrille party, the bashful young gentleman always remains as near

the entrance of the room as possible, from which position he smiles at

the people he knows as they come in, and sometimes steps forward to shake

hands with more intimate friends: a process which on each repetition

seems to turn him a deeper scarlet than before. He declines dancing the

first set or two, observing, in a faint voice, that he would rather wait

a little; but at length is absolutely compelled to allow himself to be

introduced to a partner, when he is led, in a great heat and blushing

furiously, across the room to a spot where half-a-dozen unknown ladies

are congregated together.

âMiss Lambert, let me introduce Mr. Hopkins for the next quadrille.â

Miss Lambert inclines her head graciously. Mr. Hopkins bows, and his

fair conductress disappears, leaving Mr. Hopkins, as he too well knows,

to make himself agreeable. The young lady more than half expects that

the bashful young gentleman will say something, and the bashful young

gentleman feeling this, seriously thinks whether he has got anything to

say, which, upon mature reflection, he is rather disposed to conclude he

has not, since nothing occurs to him. Meanwhile, the young lady, after

several inspections of her \_bouquet\_, all made in the expectation that

the bashful young gentleman is going to talk, whispers her mamma, who is

sitting next her, which whisper the bashful young gentleman immediately

suspects (and possibly with very good reason) must be about \_him\_. In

this comfortable condition he remains until it is time to âstand up,â

when murmuring a âWill you allow me?â he gives the young lady his arm,

and after inquiring where she will stand, and receiving a reply that she

has no choice, conducts her to the remotest corner of the quadrille, and

making one attempt at conversation, which turns out a desperate failure,

preserves a profound silence until it is all over, when he walks her

twice round the room, deposits her in her old seat, and retires in

confusion.

A married bashful gentlemanâfor these bashful gentlemen do get married

sometimes; how it is ever brought about, is a mystery to usâa married

bashful gentleman either causes his wife to appear bold by contrast, or

merges her proper importance in his own insignificance. Bashful young

gentlemen should be cured, or avoided. They are never hopeless, and

never will be, while female beauty and attractions retain their

influence, as any young lady will find, who may think it worth while on

this confident assurance to take a patient in hand.

THE OUT-AND-OUT YOUNG GENTLEMAN

Out-and-out young gentlemen may be divided into two classesâthose who

have something to do, and those who have nothing. I shall commence with

the former, because that species come more frequently under the notice of

young ladies, whom it is our province to warn and to instruct.

The out-and-out young gentleman is usually no great dresser, his

instructions to his tailor being all comprehended in the one general

direction to âmake that whatâs-a-name a regular bang-up sort of thing.â

For some years past, the favourite costume of the out-and-out young

gentleman has been a rough pilot coat, with two gilt hooks and eyes to

the velvet collar; buttons somewhat larger than crown-pieces; a black or

fancy neckerchief, loosely tied; a wide-brimmed hat, with a low crown;

tightish inexpressibles, and iron-shod boots. Out of doors he sometimes

carries a large ash stick, but only on special occasions, for he prefers

keeping his hands in his coat pockets. He smokes at all hours, of

course, and swears considerably.

The out-and-out young gentleman is employed in a city counting-house or

solicitorâs office, in which he does as little as he possibly can: his

chief places of resort are, the streets, the taverns, and the theatres.

In the streets at evening time, out-and-out young gentlemen have a

pleasant custom of walking six or eight abreast, thus driving females and

other inoffensive persons into the road, which never fails to afford them

the highest satisfaction, especially if there be any immediate danger of

their being run over, which enhances the fun of the thing materially. In

all places of public resort, the out-and-outers are careful to select

each a seat to himself, upon which he lies at full length, and (if the

weather be very dirty, but not in any other case) he lies with his knees

up, and the soles of his boots planted firmly on the cushion, so that if

any low fellow should ask him to make room for a lady, he takes ample

revenge upon her dress, without going at all out of his way to do it. He

always sits with his hat on, and flourishes his stick in the air while

the play is proceeding, with a dignified contempt of the performance; if

it be possible for one or two out-and-out young gentlemen to get up a

little crowding in the passages, they are quite in their element,

squeezing, pushing, whooping, and shouting in the most humorous manner

possible. If they can only succeed in irritating the gentleman who has a

family of daughters under his charge, they are like to die with laughing,

and boast of it among their companions for a week afterwards, adding,

that one or two of them were âdevilish fine girls,â and that they really

thought the youngest would have fainted, which was the only thing wanted

to render the joke complete.

If the out-and-out young gentleman have a mother and sisters, of course

he treats them with becoming contempt, inasmuch as they (poor things!)

having no notion of life or gaiety, are far too weak-spirited and moping

for him. Sometimes, however, on a birth-day or at Christmas-time, he

cannot very well help accompanying them to a party at some old friendâs,

with which view he comes home when they have been dressed an hour or two,

smelling very strongly of tobacco and spirits, and after exchanging his

rough coat for some more suitable attire (in which however he loses

nothing of the out-and-outer), gets into the coach and grumbles all the

way at his own good nature: his bitter reflections aggravated by the

recollection, that Tom Smith has taken the chair at a little impromptu

dinner at a fighting manâs, and that a set-to was to take place on a

dining-table, between the fighting man and his brother-in-law, which is

probably âcoming offâ at that very instant.

As the out-and-out young gentleman is by no means at his ease in ladiesâ

society, he shrinks into a corner of the drawing-room when they reach the

friendâs, and unless one of his sisters is kind enough to talk to him,

remains there without being much troubled by the attentions of other

people, until he espies, lingering outside the door, another gentleman,

whom he at once knows, by his air and manner (for there is a kind of

free-masonry in the craft), to be a brother out-and-outer, and towards

whom he accordingly makes his way. Conversation being soon opened by

some casual remark, the second out-and-outer confidentially informs the

first, that he is one of the rough sort and hates that kind of thing,

only he couldnât very well be off coming; to which the other replies,

that thatâs just his caseââand Iâll tell you what,â continues the

out-and-outer in a whisper, âI should like a glass of warm brandy and

water just now,âââOr a pint of stout and a pipe,â suggests the other

out-and-outer.

The discovery is at once made that they are sympathetic souls; each of

them says at the same moment, that he sees the other understands whatâs

what: and they become fast friends at once, more especially when it

appears, that the second out-and-outer is no other than a gentleman, long

favourably known to his familiars as âMr. Warmint Blake,â who upon divers

occasions has distinguished himself in a manner that would not have

disgraced the fighting man, and whoâhaving been a pretty long time about

townâhad the honour of once shaking hands with the celebrated Mr.

Thurtell himself.

At supper, these gentlemen greatly distinguish themselves, brightening up

very much when the ladies leave the table, and proclaiming aloud their

intention of beginning to spend the eveningâa process which is generally

understood to be satisfactorily performed, when a great deal of wine is

drunk and a great deal of noise made, both of which feats the out-and-out

young gentlemen execute to perfection. Having protracted their sitting

until long after the host and the other guests have adjourned to the

drawing-room, and finding that they have drained the decanters empty,

they follow them thither with complexions rather heightened, and faces

rather bloated with wine; and the agitated lady of the house whispers her

friends as they waltz together, to the great terror of the whole room,

that âboth Mr. Blake and Mr. Dummins are very nice sort of young men in

their way, only they are eccentric persons, and unfortunately \_rather too

wild\_!â

The remaining class of out-and-out young gentlemen is composed of

persons, who, having no money of their own and a soul above earning any,

enjoy similar pleasures, nobody knows how. These respectable gentlemen,

without aiming quite so much at the out-and-out in external appearance,

are distinguished by all the same amiable and attractive characteristics,

in an equal or perhaps greater degree, and now and then find their way

into society, through the medium of the other class of out-and-out young

gentlemen, who will sometimes carry them home, and who usually pay their

tavern bills. As they are equally gentlemanly, clever, witty,

intelligent, wise, and well-bred, we need scarcely have recommended them

to the peculiar consideration of the young ladies, if it were not that

some of the gentle creatures whom we hold in such high respect, are

perhaps a little too apt to confound a great many heavier terms with the

light word eccentricity, which we beg them henceforth to take in a

strictly Johnsonian sense, without any liberality or latitude of

construction.

THE VERY FRIENDLY YOUNG GENTLEMAN

We knowâand all people knowâso many specimens of this class, that in

selecting the few heads our limits enable us to take from a great number,

we have been induced to give the very friendly young gentleman the

preference over many others, to whose claims upon a more cursory view of

the question we had felt disposed to assign the priority.

The very friendly young gentleman is very friendly to everybody, but he

attaches himself particularly to two, or at most to three families:

regulating his choice by their dinners, their circle of acquaintance, or

some other criterion in which he has an immediate interest. He is of any

age between twenty and forty, unmarried of course, must be fond of

children, and is expected to make himself generally useful if possible.

Let us illustrate our meaning by an example, which is the shortest mode

and the clearest.

We encountered one day, by chance, an old friend of whom we had lost

sight for some years, and whoâexpressing a strong anxiety to renew our

former intimacyâurged us to dine with him on an early day, that we might

talk over old times. We readily assented, adding, that we hoped we

should be alone. âOh, certainly, certainly,â said our friend, ânot a

soul with us but Mincin.â âAnd who is Mincin?â was our natural inquiry.

âO donât mind him,â replied our friend, âheâs a most particular friend of

mine, and a very friendly fellow you will find him;â and so he left us.

âWe thought no more about Mincin until we duly presented ourselves at the

house next day, when, after a hearty welcome, our friend motioned towards

a gentleman who had been previously showing his teeth by the fireplace,

and gave us to understand that it was Mr. Mincin, of whom he had spoken.

It required no great penetration on our part to discover at once that Mr.

Mincin was in every respect a very friendly young gentleman.

âI am delighted,â said Mincin, hastily advancing, and pressing our hand

warmly between both of his, âI am delighted, I am sure, to make your

acquaintanceâ(here he smiled)âvery much delighted indeedâ(here he

exhibited a little emotion)âI assure you that I have looked forward to it

anxiously for a very long time:â here he released our hands, and rubbing

his own, observed, that the day was severe, but that he was delighted to

perceive from our appearance that it agreed with us wonderfully; and then

went on to observe, that, notwithstanding the coldness of the weather, he

had that morning seen in the paper an exceedingly curious paragraph, to

the effect, that there was now in the garden of Mr. Wilkins of

Chichester, a pumpkin, measuring four feet in height, and eleven feet

seven inches in circumference, which he looked upon as a very

extraordinary piece of intelligence. We ventured to remark, that we had

a dim recollection of having once or twice before observed a similar

paragraph in the public prints, upon which Mr. Mincin took us

confidentially by the button, and said, Exactly, exactly, to be sure, we

were very right, and he wondered what the editors meant by putting in

such things. Who the deuce, he should like to know, did they suppose

cared about them? that struck him as being the best of it.

The lady of the house appeared shortly afterwards, and Mr. Mincinâs

friendliness, as will readily be supposed, suffered no diminution in

consequence; he exerted much strength and skill in wheeling a large

easy-chair up to the fire, and the lady being seated in it, carefully

closed the door, stirred the fire, and looked to the windows to see that

they admitted no air; having satisfied himself upon all these points, he

expressed himself quite easy in his mind, and begged to know how she

found herself to-day. Upon the ladyâs replying very well, Mr. Mincin

(who it appeared was a medical gentleman) offered some general remarks

upon the nature and treatment of colds in the head, which occupied us

agreeably until dinner-time. During the meal, he devoted himself to

complimenting everybody, not forgetting himself, so that we were an

uncommonly agreeable quartette.

âIâll tell you what, Capper,â said Mr. Mincin to our host, as he closed

the room door after the lady had retired, âyou have very great reason to

be fond of your wife. Sweet woman, Mrs. Capper, sir!â âNay, MincinâI

beg,â interposed the host, as we were about to reply that Mrs. Capper

unquestionably was particularly sweet. âPray, Mincin, donât.â âWhy

not?â exclaimed Mr. Mincin, âwhy not? Why should you feel any delicacy

before your old friendâ\_our\_ old friend, if I may be allowed to call you

so, sir; why should you, I ask?â We of course wished to know why he

should also, upon which our friend admitted that Mrs. Capper \_was\_ a very

sweet woman, at which admission Mr. Mincin cried âBravo!â and begged to

propose Mrs. Capper with heartfelt enthusiasm, whereupon our host said,

âThank you, Mincin,â with deep feeling; and gave us, in a low voice, to

understand, that Mincin had saved Mrs. Capperâs cousinâs life no less

than fourteen times in a year and a half, which he considered no common

circumstanceâan opinion to which we most cordially subscribed.

Now that we three were left to entertain ourselves with conversation, Mr.

Mincinâs extreme friendliness became every moment more apparent; he was

so amazingly friendly, indeed, that it was impossible to talk about

anything in which he had not the chief concern. We happened to allude to

some affairs in which our friend and we had been mutually engaged nearly

fourteen years before, when Mr. Mincin was all at once reminded of a joke

which our friend had made on that day four years, which he positively

must insist upon tellingâand which he did tell accordingly, with many

pleasant recollections of what he said, and what Mrs. Capper said, and

how he well remembered that they had been to the play with orders on the

very night previous, and had seen Romeo and Juliet, and the pantomime,

and how Mrs. Capper being faint had been led into the lobby, where she

smiled, said it was nothing after all, and went back again, with many

other interesting and absorbing particulars: after which the friendly

young gentleman went on to assure us, that our friend had experienced a

marvellously prophetic opinion of that same pantomime, which was of such

an admirable kind, that two morning papers took the same view next day:

to this our friend replied, with a little triumph, that in that instance

he had some reason to think he had been correct, which gave the friendly

young gentleman occasion to believe that our friend was always correct;

and so we went on, until our friend, filling a bumper, said he must drink

one glass to his dear friend Mincin, than whom he would say no man saved

the lives of his acquaintances more, or had a more friendly heart.

Finally, our friend having emptied his glass, said, âGod bless you,

Mincin,ââand Mr. Mincin and he shook hands across the table with much

affection and earnestness.

But great as the friendly young gentleman is, in a limited scene like

this, he plays the same part on a larger scale with increased \_Ã©clat\_.

Mr. Mincin is invited to an evening party with his dear friends the

Martins, where he meets his dear friends the Cappers, and his dear

friends the Watsons, and a hundred other dear friends too numerous to

mention. He is as much at home with the Martins as with the Cappers; but

how exquisitely he balances his attentions, and divides them among his

dear friends! If he flirts with one of the Miss Watsons, he has one

little Martin on the sofa pulling his hair, and the other little Martin

on the carpet riding on his foot. He carries Mrs. Watson down to supper

on one arm, and Miss Martin on the other, and takes wine so judiciously,

and in such exact order, that it is impossible for the most punctilious

old lady to consider herself neglected. If any young lady, being

prevailed upon to sing, become nervous afterwards, Mr. Mincin leads her

tenderly into the next room, and restores her with port wine, which she

must take medicinally. If any gentleman be standing by the piano during

the progress of the ballad, Mr. Mincin seizes him by the arm at one point

of the melody, and softly beating time the while with his head, expresses

in dumb show his intense perception of the delicacy of the passage. If

anybodyâs self-love is to be flattered, Mr. Mincin is at hand. If

anybodyâs overweening vanity is to be pampered, Mr. Mincin will surfeit

it. What wonder that people of all stations and ages recognise Mr.

Mincinâs friendliness; that he is universally allowed to be handsome as

amiable; that mothers think him an oracle, daughters a dear, brothers a

beau, and fathers a wonder! And who would not have the reputation of the

very friendly young gentleman?

THE MILITARY YOUNG GENTLEMAN

We are rather at a loss to imagine how it has come to pass that military

young gentlemen have obtained so much favour in the eyes of the young

ladies of this kingdom. We cannot think so lightly of them as to suppose

that the mere circumstance of a manâs wearing a red coat ensures him a

ready passport to their regard; and even if this were the case, it would

be no satisfactory explanation of the circumstance, because, although the

analogy may in some degree hold good in the case of mail coachmen and

guards, still general postmen wear red coats, and \_they\_ are not to our

knowledge better received than other men; nor are firemen either, who

wear (or used to wear) not only red coats, but very resplendent and

massive badges besidesâmuch larger than epaulettes. Neither do the

twopenny post-office boys, if the result of our inquiries be correct,

find any peculiar favour in womanâs eyes, although they wear very bright

red jackets, and have the additional advantage of constantly appearing in

public on horseback, which last circumstance may be naturally supposed to

be greatly in their favour.

We have sometimes thought that this phenomenon may take its rise in the

conventional behaviour of captains and colonels and other gentlemen in

red coats on the stage, where they are invariably represented as fine

swaggering fellows, talking of nothing but charming girls, their king and

country, their honour, and their debts, and crowing over the inferior

classes of the community, whom they occasionally treat with a little

gentlemanly swindling, no less to the improvement and pleasure of the

audience, than to the satisfaction and approval of the choice spirits who

consort with them. But we will not devote these pages to our

speculations upon the subject, inasmuch as our business at the present

moment is not so much with the young ladies who are bewitched by her

Majestyâs livery as with the young gentlemen whose heads are turned by

it. For âheadsâ we had written âbrains;â but upon consideration, we

think the former the more appropriate word of the two.

These young gentlemen may be divided into two classesâyoung gentlemen who

are actually in the army, and young gentlemen who, having an intense and

enthusiastic admiration for all things appertaining to a military life,

are compelled by adverse fortune or adverse relations to wear out their

existence in some ignoble counting-house. We will take this latter

description of military young gentlemen first.

The whole heart and soul of the military young gentleman are concentrated

in his favourite topic. There is nothing that he is so learned upon as

uniforms; he will tell you, without faltering for an instant, what the

habiliments of any one regiment are turned up with, what regiment wear

stripes down the outside and inside of the leg, and how many buttons the

Tenth had on their coats; he knows to a fraction how many yards and odd

inches of gold lace it takes to make an ensign in the Guards; is deeply

read in the comparative merits of different bands, and the apparelling of

trumpeters; and is very luminous indeed in descanting upon âcrack

regiments,â and the âcrackâ gentlemen who compose them, of whose

mightiness and grandeur he is never tired of telling.

We were suggesting to a military young gentleman only the other day,

after he had related to us several dazzling instances of the profusion of

half-a-dozen honourable ensign somebodies or nobodies in the articles of

kid gloves and polished boots, that possibly âcrackedâ regiments would be

an improvement upon âcrack,â as being a more expressive and appropriate

designation, when he suddenly interrupted us by pulling out his watch,

and observing that he must hurry off to the Park in a cab, or he would be

too late to hear the band play. Not wishing to interfere with so

important an engagement, and being in fact already slightly overwhelmed

by the anecdotes of the honourable ensigns afore-mentioned, we made no

attempt to detain the military young gentleman, but parted company with

ready good-will.

Some three or four hours afterwards, we chanced to be walking down

Whitehall, on the Admiralty side of the way, when, as we drew near to one

of the little stone places in which a couple of horse soldiers mount

guard in the daytime, we were attracted by the motionless appearance and

eager gaze of a young gentleman, who was devouring both man and horse

with his eyes, so eagerly, that he seemed deaf and blind to all that was

passing around him. We were not much surprised at the discovery that it

was our friend, the military young gentleman, but we \_were\_ a little

astonished when we returned from a walk to South Lambeth to find him

still there, looking on with the same intensity as before. As it was a

very windy day, we felt bound to awaken the young gentleman from his

reverie, when he inquired of us with great enthusiasm, whether âthat was

not a glorious spectacle,â and proceeded to give us a detailed account of

the weight of every article of the spectacleâs trappings, from the manâs

gloves to the horseâs shoes.

We have made it a practice since, to take the Horse Guards in our daily

walk, and we find it is the custom of military young gentlemen to plant

themselves opposite the sentries, and contemplate them at leisure, in

periods varying from fifteen minutes to fifty, and averaging twenty-five.

We were much struck a day or two since, by the behaviour of a very

promising young butcher who (evincing an interest in the service, which

cannot be too strongly commanded or encouraged), after a prolonged

inspection of the sentry, proceeded to handle his boots with great

curiosity, and as much composure and indifference as if the man were

wax-work.

But the really military young gentleman is waiting all this time, and at

the very moment that an apology rises to our lips, he emerges from the

barrack gate (he is quartered in a garrison town), and takes the way

towards the high street. He wears his undress uniform, which somewhat

mars the glory of his outward man; but still how great, how grand, he is!

What a happy mixture of ease and ferocity in his gait and carriage, and

how lightly he carries that dreadful sword under his arm, making no more

ado about it than if it were a silk umbrella! The lion is sleeping: only

think if an enemy were in sight, how soon heâd whip it out of the

scabbard, and what a terrible fellow he would be!

But he walks on, thinking of nothing less than blood and slaughter; and

now he comes in sight of three other military young gentlemen,

arm-in-arm, who are bearing down towards him, clanking their iron heels

on the pavement, and clashing their swords with a noise, which should

cause all peaceful men to quail at heart. They stop to talk. See how

the flaxen-haired young gentleman with the weak legsâhe who has his

pocket-handkerchief thrust into the breast of his coat-glares upon the

fainthearted civilians who linger to look upon his glory; how the next

young gentleman elevates his head in the air, and majestically places his

arms a-kimbo, while the third stands with his legs very wide apart, and

clasps his hands behind him. Well may we inquireânot in familiar jest,

but in respectful earnestâif you call that nothing. Oh! if some

encroaching foreign powerâthe Emperor of Russia, for instance, or any of

those deep fellows, could only see those military young gentlemen as they

move on together towards the billiard-room over the way, wouldnât he

tremble a little!

And then, at the Theatre at night, when the performances are by command

of Colonel Fitz-Sordust and the officers of the garrisonâwhat a splendid

sight it is! How sternly the defenders of their country look round the

house as if in mute assurance to the audience, that they may make

themselves comfortable regarding any foreign invasion, for they (the

military young gentlemen) are keeping a sharp look-out, and are ready for

anything. And what a contrast between them, and that stage-box full of

grey-headed officers with tokens of many battles about them, who have

nothing at all in common with the military young gentlemen, and whoâbut

for an old-fashioned kind of manly dignity in their looks and

bearingâmight be common hard-working soldiers for anything they take the

pains to announce to the contrary!

Ah! here is a family just come in who recognise the flaxen-headed young

gentleman; and the flaxen-headed young gentleman recognises them too,

only he doesnât care to show it just now. Very well done indeed! He

talks louder to the little group of military young gentlemen who are

standing by him, and coughs to induce some ladies in the next box but one

to look round, in order that their faces may undergo the same ordeal of

criticism to which they have subjected, in not a wholly inaudible tone,

the majority of the female portion of the audience. Oh! a gentleman in

the same box looks round as if he were disposed to resent this as an

impertinence; and the flaxen-headed young gentleman sees his friends at

once, and hurries away to them with the most charming cordiality.

Three young ladies, one young man, and the mamma of the party, receive

the military young gentleman with great warmth and politeness, and in

five minutes afterwards the military young gentleman, stimulated by the

mamma, introduces the two other military young gentlemen with whom he was

walking in the morning, who take their seats behind the young ladies and

commence conversation; whereat the mamma bestows a triumphant bow upon a

rival mamma, who has not succeeded in decoying any military young

gentlemen, and prepares to consider her visitors from that moment three

of the most elegant and superior young gentlemen in the whole world.

THE POLITICAL YOUNG GENTLEMAN

Once upon a timeâ\_not\_ in the days when pigs drank wine, but in a more

recent period of our historyâit was customary to banish politics when

ladies were present. If this usage still prevailed, we should have had

no chapter for political young gentlemen, for ladies would have neither

known nor cared what kind of monster a political young gentleman was.

But as this good custom in common with many others has âgone out,â and

left no word when it is likely to be home again; as political young

ladies are by no means rare, and political young gentlemen the very

reverse of scarce, we are bound in the strict discharge of our most

responsible duty not to neglect this natural division of our subject.

If the political young gentleman be resident in a country town (and there

\_are\_ political young gentlemen in country towns sometimes), he is wholly

absorbed in his politics; as a pair of purple spectacles communicate the

same uniform tint to all objects near and remote, so the political

glasses, with which the young gentleman assists his mental vision, give

to everything the hue and tinge of party feeling. The political young

gentleman would as soon think of being struck with the beauty of a young

lady in the opposite interest, as he would dream of marrying his sister

to the opposite member.

If the political young gentleman be a Conservative, he has usually some

vague ideas about Ireland and the Pope which he cannot very clearly

explain, but which he knows are the right sort of thing, and not to be

very easily got over by the other side. He has also some choice

sentences regarding church and state, culled from the banners in use at

the last election, with which he intersperses his conversation at

intervals with surprising effect. But his great topic is the

constitution, upon which he will declaim, by the hour together, with much

heat and fury; not that he has any particular information on the subject,

but because he knows that the constitution is somehow church and state,

and church and state somehow the constitution, and that the fellows on

the other side say it isnât, which is quite a sufficient reason for him

to say it is, and to stick to it.

Perhaps his greatest topic of all, though, is the people. If a fight

takes place in a populous town, in which many noses are broken, and a few

windows, the young gentleman throws down the newspaper with a triumphant

air, and exclaims, âHereâs your precious people!â If half-a-dozen boys

run across the course at race time, when it ought to be kept clear, the

young gentleman looks indignantly round, and begs you to observe the

conduct of the people; if the gallery demand a hornpipe between the play

and the afterpiece, the same young gentleman cries âNoâ and âShameâ till

he is hoarse, and then inquires with a sneer what you think of popular

moderation \_now\_; in short, the people form a never-failing theme for

him; and when the attorney, on the side of his candidate, dwells upon it

with great power of eloquence at election time, as he never fails to do,

the young gentleman and his friends, and the body they head, cheer with

great violence against \_the other people\_, with whom, of course, they

have no possible connexion. In much the same manner the audience at a

theatre never fail to be highly amused with any jokes at the expense of

the publicâalways laughing heartily at some other public, and never at

themselves.

If the political young gentleman be a Radical, he is usually a very

profound person indeed, having great store of theoretical questions to

put to you, with an infinite variety of possible cases and logical

deductions therefrom. If he be of the utilitarian school, too, which is

more than probable, he is particularly pleasant company, having many

ingenious remarks to offer upon the voluntary principle and various

cheerful disquisitions connected with the population of the country, the

position of Great Britain in the scale of nations, and the balance of

power. Then he is exceedingly well versed in all doctrines of political

economy as laid down in the newspapers, and knows a great many

parliamentary speeches by heart; nay, he has a small stock of aphorisms,

none of them exceeding a couple of lines in length, which will settle the

toughest question and leave you nothing to say. He gives all the young

ladies to understand, that Miss Martineau is the greatest woman that ever

lived; and when they praise the good looks of Mr. Hawkins the new member,

says heâs very well for a representative, all things considered, but he

wants a little calling to account, and he is more than half afraid it

will be necessary to bring him down on his knees for that vote on the

miscellaneous estimates. At this, the young ladies express much

wonderment, and say surely a Member of Parliament is not to be brought

upon his knees so easily; in reply to which the political young gentleman

smiles sternly, and throws out dark hints regarding the speedy arrival of

that day, when Members of Parliament will be paid salaries, and required

to render weekly accounts of their proceedings, at which the young ladies

utter many expressions of astonishment and incredulity, while their

lady-mothers regard the prophecy as little else than blasphemous.

It is extremely improving and interesting to hear two political young

gentlemen, of diverse opinions, discuss some great question across a

dinner-table; such as, whether, if the public were admitted to

Westminster Abbey for nothing, they would or would not convey small

chisels and hammers in their pockets, and immediately set about chipping

all the noses off the statues; or whether, if they once got into the

Tower for a shilling, they would not insist upon trying the crown on

their own heads, and loading and firing off all the small arms in the

armoury, to the great discomposure of Whitechapel and the Minories. Upon

these, and many other momentous questions which agitate the public mind

in these desperate days, they will discourse with great vehemence and

irritation for a considerable time together, both leaving off precisely

where they began, and each thoroughly persuaded that he has got the

better of the other.

In society, at assemblies, balls, and playhouses, these political young

gentlemen are perpetually on the watch for a political allusion, or

anything which can be tortured or construed into being one; when,

thrusting themselves into the very smallest openings for their favourite

discourse, they fall upon the unhappy company tooth and nail. They have

recently had many favourable opportunities of opening in churches, but as

there the clergyman has it all his own way, and must not be contradicted,

whatever politics he preaches, they are fain to hold their tongues until

they reach the outer door, though at the imminent risk of bursting in the

effort.

As such discussions can please nobody but the talkative parties

concerned, we hope they will henceforth take the hint and discontinue

them, otherwise we now give them warning, that the ladies have our advice

to discountenance such talkers altogether.

THE DOMESTIC YOUNG GENTLEMAN

Let us make a slight sketch of our amiable friend, Mr. Felix Nixon. We

are strongly disposed to think, that if we put him in this place, he will

answer our purpose without another word of comment.

Felix, then, is a young gentleman who lives at home with his mother, just

within the twopenny-post office circle of three miles from St.

Martin-le-Grand. He wears Indiarubber goloshes when the weather is at

all damp, and always has a silk handkerchief neatly folded up in the

right-hand pocket of his great-coat, to tie over his mouth when he goes

home at night; moreover, being rather near-sighted, he carries spectacles

for particular occasions, and has a weakish tremulous voice, of which he

makes great use, for he talks as much as any old lady breathing.

The two chief subjects of Felixâs discourse, are himself and his mother,

both of whom would appear to be very wonderful and interesting persons.

As Felix and his mother are seldom apart in body, so Felix and his mother

are scarcely ever separate in spirit. If you ask Felix how he finds

himself to-day, he prefaces his reply with a long and minute bulletin of

his motherâs state of health; and the good lady in her turn, edifies her

acquaintance with a circumstantial and alarming account, how he sneezed

four times and coughed once after being out in the rain the other night,

but having his feet promptly put into hot water, and his head into a

flannel-something, which we will not describe more particularly than by

this delicate allusion, was happily brought round by the next morning,

and enabled to go to business as usual.

Our friend is not a very adventurous or hot-headed person, but he has

passed through many dangers, as his mother can testify: there is one

great story in particular, concerning a hackney coachman who wanted to

overcharge him one night for bringing them home from the play, upon which

Felix gave the aforesaid coachman a look which his mother thought would

have crushed him to the earth, but which did not crush him quite, for he

continued to demand another sixpence, notwithstanding that Felix took out

his pocket-book, and, with the aid of a flat candle, pointed out the fare

in print, which the coachman obstinately disregarding, he shut the

street-door with a slam which his mother shudders to think of; and then,

roused to the most appalling pitch of passion by the coachman knocking a

double knock to show that he was by no means convinced, he broke with

uncontrollable force from his parent and the servant girl, and running

into the street without his hat, actually shook his fist at the coachman,

and came back again with a face as white, Mrs. Nixon says, looking about

her for a simile, as white as that ceiling. She never will forget his

fury that night, Never!

To this account Felix listens with a solemn face, occasionally looking at

you to see how it affects you, and when his mother has made an end of it,

adds that he looked at every coachman he met for three weeks afterwards,

in hopes that he might see the scoundrel; whereupon Mrs. Nixon, with an

exclamation of terror, requests to know what he would have done to him if

he \_had\_ seen him, at which Felix smiling darkly and clenching his right

fist, she exclaims, âGoodness gracious!â with a distracted air, and

insists upon extorting a promise that he never will on any account do

anything so rash, which her dutiful sonâit being something more than

three years since the offence was committedâreluctantly concedes, and his

mother, shaking her head prophetically, fears with a sigh that his spirit

will lead him into something violent yet. The discourse then, by an easy

transition, turns upon the spirit which glows within the bosom of Felix,

upon which point Felix himself becomes eloquent, and relates a thrilling

anecdote of the time when he used to sit up till two oâclock in the

morning reading French, and how his mother used to say, âFelix, you will

make yourself ill, I know you will;â and how \_he\_ used to say, âMother, I

donât careâI will do it;â and how at last his mother privately procured a

doctor to come and see him, who declared, the moment he felt his pulse,

that if he had gone on reading one night moreâonly one night moreâhe must

have put a blister on each temple, and another between his shoulders; and

who, as it was, sat down upon the instant, and writing a prescription for

a blue pill, said it must be taken immediately, or he wouldnât answer for

the consequences. The recital of these and many other moving perils of

the like nature, constantly harrows up the feelings of Mr. Nixonâs

friends.

Mrs. Nixon has a tolerably extensive circle of female acquaintance, being

a good-humoured, talkative, bustling little body, and to the unmarried

girls among them she is constantly vaunting the virtues of her son,

hinting that she will be a very happy person who wins him, but that they

must mind their Pâs and Qâs, for he is very particular, and terribly

severe upon young ladies. At this last caution the young ladies resident

in the same row, who happen to be spending the evening there, put their

pocket-handkerchiefs before their mouths, and are troubled with a short

cough; just then Felix knocks at the door, and his mother drawing the

tea-table nearer the fire, calls out to him as he takes off his boots in

the back parlour that he neednât mind coming in in his slippers, for

there are only the two Miss Greys and Miss Thompson, and she is quite

sure they will excuse \_him\_, and nodding to the two Miss Greys, she adds,

in a whisper, that Julia Thompson is a great favourite with Felix, at

which intelligence the short cough comes again, and Miss Thompson in

particular is greatly troubled with it, till Felix coming in, very faint

for want of his tea, changes the subject of discourse, and enables her to

laugh out boldly and tell Amelia Grey not to be so foolish. Here they

all three laugh, and Mrs. Nixon says they are giddy girls; in which stage

of the proceedings, Felix, who has by this time refreshened himself with

the grateful herb that âcheers but not inebriates,â removes his cup from

his countenance and says with a knowing smile, that all girls are;

whereat his admiring mamma pats him on the back and tells him not to be

sly, which calls forth a general laugh from the young ladies, and another

smile from Felix, who, thinking he looks very sly indeed, is perfectly

satisfied.

Tea being over, the young ladies resume their work, and Felix insists

upon holding a skein of silk while Miss Thompson winds it on a card.

This process having been performed to the satisfaction of all parties, he

brings down his flute in compliance with a request from the youngest Miss

Grey, and plays divers tunes out of a very small music-book till

supper-time, when he is very facetious and talkative indeed. Finally,

after half a tumblerful of warm sherry and water, he gallantly puts on

his goloshes over his slippers, and telling Miss Thompsonâs servant to

run on first and get the door open, escorts that young lady to her house,

five doors off: the Miss Greys who live in the next house but one

stopping to peep with merry faces from their own door till he comes back

again, when they call out âVery well, Mr. Felix,â and trip into the

passage with a laugh more musical than any flute that was ever played.

Felix is rather prim in his appearance, and perhaps a little priggish

about his books and flute, and so forth, which have all their peculiar

corners of peculiar shelves in his bedroom; indeed all his female

acquaintance (and they are good judges) have long ago set him down as a

thorough old bachelor. He is a favourite with them however, in a certain

way, as an honest, inoffensive, kind-hearted creature; and as his

peculiarities harm nobody, not even himself, we are induced to hope that

many who are not personally acquainted with him will take our good word

in his behalf, and be content to leave him to a long continuance of his

harmless existence.

THE CENSORIOUS YOUNG GENTLEMAN

There is an amiable kind of young gentleman going about in society, upon

whom, after much experience of him, and considerable turning over of the

subject in our mind, we feel it our duty to affix the above appellation.

Young ladies mildly call him a âsarcasticâ young gentleman, or a âsevereâ

young gentleman. We, who know better, beg to acquaint them with the

fact, that he is merely a censorious young gentleman, and nothing else.

The censorious young gentleman has the reputation among his familiars of

a remarkably clever person, which he maintains by receiving all

intelligence and expressing all opinions with a dubious sneer,

accompanied with a half smile, expressive of anything you please but

good-humour. This sets people about thinking what on earth the

censorious young gentleman means, and they speedily arrive at the

conclusion that he means something very deep indeed; for they reason in

this wayââThis young gentleman looks so very knowing that he must mean

something, and as I am by no means a dull individual, what a very deep

meaning he must have if I canât find it out!â It is extraordinary how

soon a censorious young gentleman may make a reputation in his own small

circle if he bear this in his mind, and regulate his proceedings

accordingly.

As young ladies are generallyânot curious, but laudably desirous to

acquire information, the censorious young gentleman is much talked about

among them, and many surmises are hazarded regarding him. âI wonder,â

exclaims the eldest Miss Greenwood, laying down her work to turn up the

lamp, âI wonder whether Mr. Fairfax will ever be married.â âBless me,

dear,â cries Miss Marshall, âwhat ever made you think of him?â âReally I

hardly know,â replies Miss Greenwood; âhe is such a very mysterious

person, that I often wonder about him.â âWell, to tell you the truth,â

replies Miss Marshall, âand so do I.â Here two other young ladies

profess that they are constantly doing the like, and all present appear

in the same condition except one young lady, who, not scrupling to state

that she considers Mr. Fairfax âa horror,â draws down all the opposition

of the others, which having been expressed in a great many ejaculatory

passages, such as âWell, did I ever!ââand âLor, Emily, dear!â ma takes up

the subject, and gravely states, that she must say she does not think Mr.

Fairfax by any means a horror, but rather takes him to be a young man of

very great ability; âand I am quite sure,â adds the worthy lady, âhe

always means a great deal more than he says.â

The door opens at this point of the disclosure, and who of all people

alive walks into the room, but the very Mr. Fairfax, who has been the

subject of conversation! âWell, it really is curious,â cries ma, âwe

were at that very moment talking about you.â âYou did me great honour,â

replies Mr. Fairfax; âmay I venture to ask what you were saying?â âWhy,

if you must know,â returns the eldest girl, âwe were remarking what a

very mysterious man you are.â âAy, ay!â observes Mr. Fairfax, âIndeed!â

Now Mr. Fairfax says this ay, ay, and indeed, which are slight words

enough in themselves, with so very unfathomable an air, and accompanies

them with such a very equivocal smile, that ma and the young ladies are

more than ever convinced that he means an immensity, and so tell him he

is a very dangerous man, and seems to be always thinking ill of somebody,

which is precisely the sort of character the censorious young gentleman

is most desirous to establish; wherefore he says, âOh, dear, no,â in a

tone, obviously intended to mean, âYou have me there,â and which gives

them to understand that they have hit the right nail on the very centre

of its head.

When the conversation ranges from the mystery overhanging the censorious

young gentlemanâs behaviour, to the general topics of the day, he

sustains his character to admiration. He considers the new tragedy well

enough for a new tragedy, but Lord bless usâwell, no matter; he could say

a great deal on that point, but he would rather not, lest he should be

thought ill-natured, as he knows he would be. âBut is not Mr.

So-and-soâs performance truly charming?â inquires a young lady.

âCharming!â replies the censorious young gentleman. âOh, dear, yes,

certainly; very charmingâoh, very charming indeed.â After this, he stirs

the fire, smiling contemptuously all the while: and a modest young

gentleman, who has been a silent listener, thinks what a great thing it

must be, to have such a critical judgment. Of music, pictures, books,

and poetry, the censorious young gentleman has an equally fine

conception. As to men and women, he can tell all about them at a glance.

âNow let us hear your opinion of young Mrs. Barker,â says some great

believer in the powers of Mr. Fairfax, âbut donât be too severe.â âI

never am severe,â replies the censorious young gentleman. âWell, never

mind that now. She is very lady-like, is she not?â âLady-like!â repeats

the censorious young gentleman (for he always repeats when he is at a

loss for anything to say). âDid you observe her manner? Bless my heart

and soul, Mrs. Thompson, did you observe her manner?âthatâs all I ask.â

âI thought I had done so,â rejoins the poor lady, much perplexed; âI did

not observe it very closely perhaps.â âOh, not very closely,â rejoins

the censorious young gentleman, triumphantly. âVery good; then \_I\_ did.

Let us talk no more about her.â The censorious young gentleman purses up

his lips, and nods his head sagely, as he says this; and it is forthwith

whispered about, that Mr. Fairfax (who, though he is a little prejudiced,

must be admitted to be a very excellent judge) has observed something

exceedingly odd in Mrs. Barkerâs manner.

THE FUNNY YOUNG GENTLEMAN

As one funny young gentleman will serve as a sample of all funny young

Gentlemen we purpose merely to note down the conduct and behaviour of an

individual specimen of this class, whom we happened to meet at an annual

family Christmas party in the course of this very last Christmas that

ever came.

We were all seated round a blazing fire which crackled pleasantly as the

guests talked merrily and the urn steamed cheerilyâfor, being an

old-fashioned party, there \_was\_ an urn, and a teapot besidesâwhen there

came a postmanâs knock at the door, so violent and sudden, that it

startled the whole circle, and actually caused two or three very

interesting and most unaffected young ladies to scream aloud and to

exhibit many afflicting symptoms of terror and distress, until they had

been several times assured by their respective adorers, that they were in

no danger. We were about to remark that it was surely beyond post-time,

and must have been a runaway knock, when our host, who had hitherto been

paralysed with wonder, sank into a chair in a perfect ecstasy of

laughter, and offered to lay twenty pounds that it was that droll dog

Griggins. He had no sooner said this, than the majority of the company

and all the children of the house burst into a roar of laughter too, as

if some inimitable joke flashed upon them simultaneously, and gave vent

to various exclamations ofâTo be sure it must be Griggins, and How like

him that was, and What spirits he was always in! with many other

commendatory remarks of the like nature.

Not having the happiness to know Griggins, we became extremely desirous

to see so pleasant a fellow, the more especially as a stout gentleman

with a powdered head, who was sitting with his breeches buckles almost

touching the hob, whispered us he was a wit of the first water, when the

door opened, and Mr. Griggins being announced, presented himself, amidst

another shout of laughter and a loud clapping of hands from the younger

branches. This welcome he acknowledged by sundry contortions of

countenance, imitative of the clown in one of the new pantomimes, which

were so extremely successful, that one stout gentleman rolled upon an

ottoman in a paroxysm of delight, protesting, with many gasps, that if

somebody didnât make that fellow Griggins leave off, he would be the

death of him, he knew. At this the company only laughed more

boisterously than before, and as we always like to accommodate our tone

and spirit if possible to the humour of any society in which we find

ourself, we laughed with the rest, and exclaimed, âOh! capital, capital!â

as loud as any of them.

When he had quite exhausted all beholders, Mr. Griggins received the

welcomes and congratulations of the circle, and went through the needful

introductions with much ease and many puns. This ceremony over, he

avowed his intention of sitting in somebodyâs lap unless the young ladies

made room for him on the sofa, which being done, after a great deal of

tittering and pleasantry, he squeezed himself among them, and likened his

condition to that of love among the roses. At this novel jest we all

roared once more. âYou should consider yourself highly honoured, sir,â

said we. âSir,â replied Mr. Griggins, âyou do me proud.â Here everybody

laughed again; and the stout gentleman by the fire whispered in our ear

that Griggins was making a dead set at us.

The tea-things having been removed, we all sat down to a round game, and

here Mr. Griggins shone forth with peculiar brilliancy, abstracting other

peopleâs fish, and looking over their hands in the most comical manner.

He made one most excellent joke in snuffing a candle, which was neither

more nor less than setting fire to the hair of a pale young gentleman who

sat next him, and afterwards begging his pardon with considerable humour.

As the young gentleman could not see the joke however, possibly in

consequence of its being on the top of his own head, it did not go off

quite as well as it might have done; indeed, the young gentleman was

heard to murmur some general references to âimpertinence,â and a

ârascal,â and to state the number of his lodgings in an angry toneâa turn

of the conversation which might have been productive of slaughterous

consequences, if a young lady, betrothed to the young gentleman, had not

used her immediate influence to bring about a reconciliation:

emphatically declaring in an agitated whisper, intended for his peculiar

edification but audible to the whole table, that if he went on in that

way, she never would think of him otherwise than as a friend, though as

that she must always regard him. At this terrible threat the young

gentleman became calm, and the young lady, overcome by the revulsion of

feeling, instantaneously fainted.

Mr. Grigginsâs spirits were slightly depressed for a short period by this

unlooked-for result of such a harmless pleasantry, but being promptly

elevated by the attentions of the host and several glasses of wine, he

soon recovered, and became even more vivacious than before, insomuch that

the stout gentleman previously referred to, assured us that although he

had known him since he was \_that\_ high (something smaller than a

nutmeg-grater), he had never beheld him in such excellent cue.

When the round game and several games at blind manâs buff which followed

it were all over, and we were going down to supper, the inexhaustible Mr.

Griggins produced a small sprig of mistletoe from his waistcoat pocket,

and commenced a general kissing of the assembled females, which

occasioned great commotion and much excitement. We observed that several

young gentlemenâincluding the young gentleman with the pale

countenanceâwere greatly scandalised at this indecorous proceeding, and

talked very big among themselves in corners; and we observed too, that

several young ladies when remonstrated with by the aforesaid young

gentlemen, called each other to witness how they had struggled, and

protested vehemently that it was very rude, and that they were surprised

at Mrs. Brownâs allowing it, and that they couldnât bear it, and had no

patience with such impertinence. But such is the gentle and forgiving

nature of woman, that although we looked very narrowly for it, we could

not detect the slightest harshness in the subsequent treatment of Mr.

Griggins. Indeed, upon the whole, it struck us that among the ladies he

seemed rather more popular than before!

To recount all the drollery of Mr. Griggins at supper, would fill such a

tiny volume as this, {429} to the very bottom of the outside cover. How

he drank out of other peopleâs glasses, and ate of other peopleâs bread,

how he frightened into screaming convulsions a little boy who was sitting

up to supper in a high chair, by sinking below the table and suddenly

reappearing with a mask on; how the hostess was really surprised that

anybody could find a pleasure in tormenting children, and how the host

frowned at the hostess, and felt convinced that Mr. Griggins had done it

with the very best intentions; how Mr. Griggins explained, and how

everybodyâs good-humour was restored but the childâs;âto tell these and a

hundred other things ever so briefly, would occupy more of our room and

our readersâ patience, than either they or we can conveniently spare.

Therefore we change the subject, merely observing that we have offered no

description of the funny young gentlemanâs personal appearance, believing

that almost every society has a Griggins of its own, and leaving all

readers to supply the deficiency, according to the particular

circumstances of their particular case.

THE THEATRICAL YOUNG GENTLEMAN

All gentlemen who love the dramaâand there are few gentlemen who are not

attached to the most intellectual and rational of all our amusementsâdo

not come within this definition. As we have no mean relish for

theatrical entertainments ourself, we are disinterestedly anxious that

this should be perfectly understood.

The theatrical young gentleman has early and important information on all

theatrical topics. âWell,â says he, abruptly, when you meet him in the

street, âhereâs a pretty to-do. Flimkins has thrown up his part in the

melodrama at the Surrey.âââAnd whatâs to be done?â you inquire with as

much gravity as you can counterfeit. âAh, thatâs the point,â replies the

theatrical young gentleman, looking very serious; âBoozle declines it;

positively declines it. From all I am told, I should say it was

decidedly in Boozleâs line, and that he would be very likely to make a

great hit in it; but he objects on the ground of Flimkins having been put

up in the part first, and says no earthly power shall induce him to take

the character. Itâs a fine part, tooâexcellent business, Iâm told. He

has to kill six people in the course of the piece, and to fight over a

bridge in red fire, which is as safe a card, you know, as can be. Donât

mention it; but I hear that the last scene, when he is first poisoned,

and then stabbed, by Mrs. Flimkins as Vengedora, will be the greatest

thing that has been done these many years.â With this piece of news, and

laying his finger on his lips as a caution for you not to excite the town

with it, the theatrical young gentleman hurries away.

The theatrical young gentleman, from often frequenting the different

theatrical establishments, has pet and familiar names for them all. Thus

Covent-Garden is the garden, Drury-Lane the lane, the Victoria the vic,

and the Olympic the pic. Actresses, too, are always designated by their

surnames only, as Taylor, Nisbett, Faucit, Honey; that talented and

lady-like girl Sheriff, that clever little creature Horton, and so on.

In the same manner he prefixes Christian names when he mentions actors,

as Charley Young, Jemmy Buckstone, Fred. Yates, Paul Bedford. When he is

at a loss for a Christian name, the word âoldâ applied indiscriminately

answers quite as well: as old Charley Matthews at Vestrisâs, old Harley,

and old Braham. He has a great knowledge of the private proceedings of

actresses, especially of their getting married, and can tell you in a

breath half-a-dozen who have changed their names without avowing it.

Whenever an alteration of this kind is made in the playbills, he will

remind you that he let you into the secret six months ago.

The theatrical young gentleman has a great reverence for all that is

connected with the stage department of the different theatres. He would,

at any time, prefer going a street or two out of his way, to omitting to

pass a stage-entrance, into which he always looks with a curious and

searching eye. If he can only identify a popular actor in the street, he

is in a perfect transport of delight; and no sooner meets him, than he

hurries back, and walks a few paces in front of him, so that he can turn

round from time to time, and have a good stare at his features. He looks

upon a theatrical-fund dinner as one of the most enchanting festivities

ever known; and thinks that to be a member of the Garrick Club, and see

so many actors in their plain clothes, must be one of the highest

gratifications the world can bestow.

The theatrical young gentleman is a constant half-price visitor at one or

other of the theatres, and has an infinite relish for all pieces which

display the fullest resources of the establishment. He likes to place

implicit reliance upon the play-bills when he goes to see a show-piece,

and works himself up to such a pitch of enthusiasm, as not only to

believe (if the bills say so) that there are three hundred and

seventy-five people on the stage at one time in the last scene, but is

highly indignant with you, unless you believe it also. He considers that

if the stage be opened from the foot-lights to the back wall, in any new

play, the piece is a triumph of dramatic writing, and applauds

accordingly. He has a great notion of trap-doors too; and thinks any

character going down or coming up a trap (no matter whether he be an

angel or a demonâthey both do it occasionally) one of the most

interesting feats in the whole range of scenic illusion.

Besides these acquirements, he has several veracious accounts to

communicate of the private manners and customs of different actors,

which, during the pauses of a quadrille, he usually communicates to his

partner, or imparts to his neighbour at a supper table. Thus he is

advised, that Mr. Liston always had a footman in gorgeous livery waiting

at the side-scene with a brandy bottle and tumbler, to administer half a

pint or so of spirit to him every time he came off, without which

assistance he must infallibly have fainted. He knows for a fact, that,

after an arduous part, Mr. George Bennett is put between two feather

beds, to absorb the perspiration; and is credibly informed, that Mr.

Baker has, for many years, submitted to a course of lukewarm

toast-and-water, to qualify him to sustain his favourite characters. He

looks upon Mr. Fitz Ball as the principal dramatic genius and poet of the

day; but holds that there are great writers extant besides him,âin proof

whereof he refers you to various dramas and melodramas recently produced,

of which he takes in all the sixpenny and three-penny editions as fast as

they appear.

The theatrical young gentleman is a great advocate for violence of

emotion and redundancy of action. If a father has to curse a child upon

the stage, he likes to see it done in the thorough-going style, with no

mistake about it: to which end it is essential that the child should

follow the father on her knees, and be knocked violently over on her face

by the old gentleman as he goes into a small cottage, and shuts the door

behind him. He likes to see a blessing invoked upon the young lady, when

the old gentleman repents, with equal earnestness, and accompanied by the

usual conventional forms, which consist of the old gentleman looking

anxiously up into the clouds, as if to see whether it rains, and then

spreading an imaginary tablecloth in the air over the young ladyâs

headâsoft music playing all the while. Upon these, and other points of a

similar kind, the theatrical young gentleman is a great critic indeed.

He is likewise very acute in judging of natural expressions of the

passions, and knows precisely the frown, wink, nod, or leer, which stands

for any one of them, or the means by which it may be converted into any

other: as jealousy, with a good stamp of the right foot, becomes anger;

or wildness, with the hands clasped before the throat, instead of tearing

the wig, is passionate love. If you venture to express a doubt of the

accuracy of any of these portraitures, the theatrical young gentleman

assures you, with a haughty smile, that it always has been done in that

way, and he supposes they are not going to change it at this time of day

to please you; to which, of course, you meekly reply that you suppose

not.

There are innumerable disquisitions of this nature, in which the

theatrical young gentleman is very profound, especially to ladies whom he

is most in the habit of entertaining with them; but as we have no space

to recapitulate them at greater length, we must rest content with calling

the attention of the young ladies in general to the theatrical young

gentlemen of their own acquaintance.

THE POETICAL YOUNG GENTLEMAN

Time was, and not very long ago either, when a singular epidemic raged

among the young gentlemen, vast numbers of whom, under the influence of

the malady, tore off their neckerchiefs, turned down their shirt collars,

and exhibited themselves in the open streets with bare throats and

dejected countenances, before the eyes of an astonished public. These

were poetical young gentlemen. The custom was gradually found to be

inconvenient, as involving the necessity of too much clean linen and too

large washing bills, and these outward symptoms have consequently passed

away; but we are disposed to think, notwithstanding, that the number of

poetical young gentlemen is considerably on the increase.

We know a poetical young gentlemanâa very poetical young gentleman. We

do not mean to say that he is troubled with the gift of poesy in any

remarkable degree, but his countenance is of a plaintive and melancholy

cast, his manner is abstracted and bespeaks affliction of soul: he seldom

has his hair cut, and often talks about being an outcast and wanting a

kindred spirit; from which, as well as from many general observations in

which he is wont to indulge, concerning mysterious impulses, and

yearnings of the heart, and the supremacy of intellect gilding all

earthly things with the glowing magic of immortal verse, it is clear to

all his friends that he has been stricken poetical.

The favourite attitude of the poetical young gentleman is lounging on a

sofa with his eyes fixed upon the ceiling, or sitting bolt upright in a

high-backed chair, staring with very round eyes at the opposite wall.

When he is in one of these positions, his mother, who is a worthy,

affectionate old soul, will give you a nudge to bespeak your attention

without disturbing the abstracted one, and whisper with a shake of the

head, that Johnâs imagination is at some extraordinary work or other, you

may take her word for it. Hereupon John looks more fiercely intent upon

vacancy than before, and suddenly snatching a pencil from his pocket,

puts down three words, and a cross on the back of a card, sighs deeply,

paces once or twice across the room, inflicts a most unmerciful slap upon

his head, and walks moodily up to his dormitory.

The poetical young gentleman is apt to acquire peculiar notions of things

too, which plain ordinary people, unblessed with a poetical obliquity of

vision, would suppose to be rather distorted. For instance, when the

sickening murder and mangling of a wretched woman was affording delicious

food wherewithal to gorge the insatiable curiosity of the public, our

friend the poetical young gentleman was in ecstasiesânot of disgust, but

admiration. âHeavens!â cried the poetical young gentleman, âhow grand;

how great!â We ventured deferentially to inquire upon whom these

epithets were bestowed: our humble thoughts oscillating between the

police officer who found the criminal, and the lock-keeper who found the

head. âUpon whom!â exclaimed the poetical young gentleman in a frenzy of

poetry, âUpon whom should they be bestowed but upon the murderer!ââand

thereupon it came out, in a fine torrent of eloquence, that the murderer

was a great spirit, a bold creature full of daring and nerve, a man of

dauntless heart and determined courage, and withal a great casuist and

able reasoner, as was fully demonstrated in his philosophical colloquies

with the great and noble of the land. We held our peace, and meekly

signified our indisposition to controvert these opinionsâfirstly, because

we were no match at quotation for the poetical young gentleman; and

secondly, because we felt it would be of little use our entering into any

disputation, if we were: being perfectly convinced that the respectable

and immoral hero in question is not the first and will not be the last

hanged gentleman upon whom false sympathy or diseased curiosity will be

plentifully expended.

This was a stern mystic flight of the poetical young gentleman. In his

milder and softer moments he occasionally lays down his neckcloth, and

pens stanzas, which sometimes find their way into a Ladyâs Magazine, or

the âPoetsâ Cornerâ of some country newspaper; or which, in default of

either vent for his genius, adorn the rainbow leaves of a ladyâs album.

These are generally written upon some such occasions as contemplating the

Bank of England by midnight, or beholding Saint Paulâs in a snow-storm;

and when these gloomy objects fail to afford him inspiration, he pours

forth his soul in a touching address to a violet, or a plaintive lament

that he is no longer a child, but has gradually grown up.

The poetical young gentleman is fond of quoting passages from his

favourite authors, who are all of the gloomy and desponding school. He

has a great deal to say too about the world, and is much given to

opining, especially if he has taken anything strong to drink, that there

is nothing in it worth living for. He gives you to understand, however,

that for the sake of society, he means to bear his part in the tiresome

play, manfully resisting the gratification of his own strong desire to

make a premature exit; and consoles himself with the reflection, that

immortality has some chosen nook for himself and the other great spirits

whom earth has chafed and wearied.

When the poetical young gentleman makes use of adjectives, they are all

superlatives. Everything is of the grandest, greatest, noblest,

mightiest, loftiest; or the lowest, meanest, obscurest, vilest, and most

pitiful. He knows no medium: for enthusiasm is the soul of poetry; and

who so enthusiastic as a poetical young gentleman? âMr. Milkwash,â says

a young lady as she unlocks her album to receive the young gentlemanâs

original impromptu contribution, âhow very silent you are! I think you

must be in love.â âLove!â cries the poetical young gentleman, starting

from his seat by the fire and terrifying the cat who scampers off at full

speed, âLove! that burning, consuming passion; that ardour of the soul,

that fierce glowing of the heart. Love! The withering, blighting

influence of hope misplaced and affection slighted. Love did you say!

Ha! ha! ha!â

With this, the poetical young gentleman laughs a laugh belonging only to

poets and Mr. O. Smith of the Adelphi Theatre, and sits down, pen in

hand, to throw off a page or two of verse in the biting, semi-atheistical

demoniac style, which, like the poetical young gentleman himself, is full

of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

THE âTHROWING-OFFâ YOUNG GENTLEMAN

There is a certain kind of impostorâa bragging, vaunting, puffing young

gentlemanâagainst whom we are desirous to warn that fairer part of the

creation, to whom we more peculiarly devote these our labours. And we

are particularly induced to lay especial stress upon this division of our

subject, by a little dialogue we held some short time ago, with an

esteemed young lady of our acquaintance, touching a most gross specimen

of this class of men. We had been urging all the absurdities of his

conduct and conversation, and dwelling upon the impossibilities he

constantly recountedâto which indeed we had not scrupled to prefix a

certain hard little word of one syllable and three lettersâwhen our fair

friend, unable to maintain the contest any longer, reluctantly cried,

âWell; he certainly has a habit of throwing-off, but thenââ What then?

Throw him off yourself, said we. And so she did, but not at our

instance, for other reasons appeared, and it might have been better if

she had done so at first.

The throwing-off young gentleman has so often a father possessed of vast

property in some remote district of Ireland, that we look with some

suspicion upon all young gentlemen who volunteer this description of

themselves. The deceased grandfather of the throwing-off young gentleman

was a man of immense possessions, and untold wealth; the throwing-off

young gentleman remembers, as well as if it were only yesterday, the

deceased baronetâs library, with its long rows of scarce and valuable

books in superbly embossed bindings, arranged in cases, reaching from the

lofty ceiling to the oaken floor; and the fine antique chairs and tables,

and the noble old castle of Ballykillbabaloo, with its splendid prospect

of hill and dale, and wood, and rich wild scenery, and the fine hunting

stables and the spacious court-yards, âandâandâeverything upon the same

magnificent scale,â says the throwing-off young gentleman, âprincely;

quite princely. Ah!â And he sighs as if mourning over the fallen

fortunes of his noble house.

The throwing-off young gentleman is a universal genius; at walking,

running, rowing, swimming, and skating, he is unrivalled; at all games of

chance or skill, at hunting, shooting, fishing, riding, driving, or

amateur theatricals, no one can touch himâthat is \_could\_ not, because he

gives you carefully to understand, lest there should be any opportunity

of testing his skill, that he is quite out of practice just now, and has

been for some years. If you mention any beautiful girl of your common

acquaintance in his hearing, the throwing-off young gentleman starts,

smiles, and begs you not to mind him, for it was quite involuntary:

people do say indeed that they were once engaged, but noâalthough she is

a very fine girl, he was so situated at that time that he couldnât

possibly encourage theââbut itâs of no use talking about it!â he adds,

interrupting himself. âShe has got over it now, and I firmly hope and

trust is happy.â With this benevolent aspiration he nods his head in a

mysterious manner, and whistling the first part of some popular air,

thinks perhaps it will be better to change the subject.

There is another great characteristic of the throwing-off young

gentleman, which is, that he âhappens to be acquaintedâ with a most

extraordinary variety of people in all parts of the world. Thus in all

disputed questions, when the throwing-off young gentleman has no argument

to bring forward, he invariably happens to be acquainted with some

distant person, intimately connected with the subject, whose testimony

decides the point against you, to the greatâmay we say itâto the great

admiration of three young ladies out of every four, who consider the

throwing-off young gentleman a very highly-connected young man, and a

most charming person.

Sometimes the throwing-off young gentleman happens to look in upon a

little family circle of young ladies who are quietly spending the evening

together, and then indeed is he at the very height and summit of his

glory; for it is to be observed that he by no means shines to equal

advantage in the presence of men as in the society of over-credulous

young ladies, which is his proper element. It is delightful to hear the

number of pretty things the throwing-off young gentleman gives utterance

to, during tea, and still more so to observe the ease with which, from

long practice and study, he delicately blends one compliment to a lady

with two for himself. âDid you ever see a more lovely blue than this

flower, Mr. Caveton?â asks a young lady who, truth to tell, is rather

smitten with the throwing-off young gentleman. âNever,â he replies,

bending over the object of admiration, ânever but in your eyes.â âOh,

Mr. Caveton,â cries the young lady, blushing of course. âIndeed I speak

the truth,â replies the throwing-off young gentleman, âI never saw any

approach to them. I used to think my cousinâs blue eyes lovely, but they

grow dim and colourless beside yours.â âOh! a beautiful cousin, Mr.

Caveton!â replies the young lady, with that perfect artlessness which is

the distinguishing characteristic of all young ladies; âan affair, of

course.â âNo; indeed, indeed you wrong me,â rejoins the throwing-off

young gentleman with great energy. âI fervently hope that her attachment

towards me may be nothing but the natural result of our close intimacy in

childhood, and that in change of scene and among new faces she may soon

overcome it. \_I\_ love her! Think not so meanly of me, Miss Lowfield, I

beseech, as to suppose that title, lands, riches, and beauty, can

influence \_my\_ choice. The heart, the heart, Miss Lowfield.â Here the

throwing-off young gentleman sinks his voice to a still lower whisper;

and the young lady duly proclaims to all the other young ladies when they

go up-stairs, to put their bonnets on, that Mr. Cavetonâs relations are

all immensely rich, and that he is hopelessly beloved by title, lands,

riches, and beauty.

We have seen a throwing-off young gentleman who, to our certain

knowledge, was innocent of a note of music, and scarcely able to

recognise a tune by ear, volunteer a Spanish air upon the guitar when he

had previously satisfied himself that there was not such an instrument

within a mile of the house.

We have heard another throwing-off young gentleman, after striking a note

or two upon the piano, and accompanying it correctly (by dint of

laborious practice) with his voice, assure a circle of wondering

listeners that so acute was his ear that he was wholly unable to sing out

of tune, let him try as he would. We have lived to witness the unmasking

of another throwing-off young gentleman, who went out a visiting in a

military cap with a gold band and tassel, and who, after passing

successfully for a captain and being lauded to the skies for his red

whiskers, his bravery, his soldierly bearing and his pride, turned out to

be the dishonest son of an honest linen-draper in a small country town,

and whom, if it were not for this fortunate exposure, we should not yet

despair of encountering as the fortunate husband of some rich heiress.

Ladies, ladies, the throwing-off young gentlemen are often swindlers, and

always fools. So pray you avoid them.

THE YOUNG LADIESâ YOUNG GENTLEMAN

This young gentleman has several titles. Some young ladies consider him

âa nice young man,â others âa fine young man,â others âquite a ladyâs

man,â others âa handsome man,â others âa remarkably good-looking young

man.â With some young ladies he is âa perfect angel,â and with others

âquite a love.â He is likewise a charming creature, a duck, and a dear.

The young ladiesâ young gentleman has usually a fresh colour and very

white teeth, which latter articles, of course, he displays on every

possible opportunity. He has brown or black hair, and whiskers of the

same, if possible; but a slight tinge of red, or the hue which is

vulgarly known as \_sandy\_, is not considered an objection. If his head

and face be large, his nose prominent, and his figure square, he is an

uncommonly fine young man, and worshipped accordingly. Should his

whiskers meet beneath his chin, so much the better, though this is not

absolutely insisted on; but he must wear an under-waistcoat, and smile

constantly.

There was a great party got up by some party-loving friends of ours last

summer, to go and dine in Epping Forest. As we hold that such wild

expeditions should never be indulged in, save by people of the smallest

means, who have no dinner at home, we should indubitably have excused

ourself from attending, if we had not recollected that the projectors of

the excursion were always accompanied on such occasions by a choice

sample of the young ladiesâ young gentleman, whom we were very anxious to

have an opportunity of meeting. This determined us, and we went.

We were to make for Chigwell in four glass coaches, each with a trifling

company of six or eight inside, and a little boy belonging to the

projectors on the boxâand to start from the residence of the projectors,

Woburn-place, Russell-square, at half-past ten precisely. We arrived at

the place of rendezvous at the appointed time, and found the glass

coaches and the little boys quite ready, and divers young ladies and

young gentlemen looking anxiously over the breakfast-parlour blinds, who

appeared by no means so much gratified by our approach as we might have

expected, but evidently wished we had been somebody else. Observing that

our arrival in lieu of the unknown occasioned some disappointment, we

ventured to inquire who was yet to come, when we found from the hasty

reply of a dozen voices, that it was no other than the young ladiesâ

young gentleman.

âI cannot imagine,â said the mamma, âwhat has become of Mr. Balimâalways

so punctual, always so pleasant and agreeable. I am sure I can-\_not\_

think.â As these last words were uttered in that measured, emphatic

manner which painfully announces that the speaker has not quite made up

his or her mind what to say, but is determined to talk on nevertheless,

the eldest daughter took up the subject, and hoped no accident had

happened to Mr. Balim, upon which there was a general chorus of âDear Mr.

Balim!â and one young lady, more adventurous than the rest, proposed that

an express should be straightway sent to dear Mr. Balimâs lodgings.

This, however, the papa resolutely opposed, observing, in what a short

young lady behind us termed âquite a bearish way,â that if Mr. Balim

didnât choose to come, he might stop at home. At this all the daughters

raised a murmur of âOh pa!â except one sprightly little girl of eight or

ten years old, who, taking advantage of a pause in the discourse,

remarked, that perhaps Mr. Balim might have been married that morningâfor

which impertinent suggestion she was summarily ejected from the room by

her eldest sister.

We were all in a state of great mortification and uneasiness, when one of

the little boys, running into the room as airily as little boys usually

run who have an unlimited allowance of animal food in the holidays, and

keep their hands constantly forced down to the bottoms of very deep

trouser-pockets when they take exercise, joyfully announced that Mr.

Balim was at that moment coming up the street in a hackney-cab; and the

intelligence was confirmed beyond all doubt a minute afterwards by the

entry of Mr. Balim himself, who was received with repeated cries of

âWhere have you been, you naughty creature?â whereunto the naughty

creature replied, that he had been in bed, in consequence of a late party

the night before, and had only just risen. The acknowledgment awakened a

variety of agonizing fears that he had taken no breakfast; which

appearing after a slight cross-examination to be the real state of the

case, breakfast for one was immediately ordered, notwithstanding Mr.

Balimâs repeated protestations that he couldnât think of it. He did

think of it though, and thought better of it too, for he made a

remarkably good meal when it came, and was assiduously served by a select

knot of young ladies. It was quite delightful to see how he ate and

drank, while one pair of fair hands poured out his coffee, and another

put in the sugar, and another the milk; the rest of the company ever and

anon casting angry glances at their watches, and the glass coaches,âand

the little boys looking on in an agony of apprehension lest it should

begin to rain before we set out; it might have rained all day, after we

were once too far to turn back again, and welcome, for aught they cared.

However, the cavalcade moved at length, every coachman being accommodated

with a hamper between his legs something larger than a wheelbarrow; and

the company being packed as closely as they possibly could in the

carriages, âaccording,â as one married lady observed, âto the immemorial

custom, which was half the diversion of gipsy parties.â Thinking it very

likely it might be (we have never been able to discover the other half),

we submitted to be stowed away with a cheerful aspect, and were fortunate

enough to occupy one corner of a coach in which were one old lady, four

young ladies, and the renowned Mr. Balim the young ladiesâ young

gentleman.

We were no sooner fairly off, than the young ladiesâ young gentleman

hummed a fragment of an air, which induced a young lady to inquire

whether he had danced to that the night before. âBy Heaven, then, I

did,â replied the young gentleman, âand with a lovely heiress; a superb

creature, with twenty thousand pounds.â âYou seem rather struck,â

observed another young lady. ââGad she was a sweet creature,â returned

the young gentleman, arranging his hair. âOf course \_she\_ was struck

too?â inquired the first young lady. âHow can you ask, love?â interposed

the second; âcould she fail to be?â âWell, honestly I think she was,â

observed the young gentleman. At this point of the dialogue, the young

lady who had spoken first, and who sat on the young gentlemanâs right,

struck him a severe blow on the arm with a rosebud, and said he was a

vain manâwhereupon the young gentleman insisted on having the rosebud,

and the young lady appealing for help to the other young ladies, a

charming struggle ensued, terminating in the victory of the young

gentleman, and the capture of the rosebud. This little skirmish over,

the married lady, who was the mother of the rosebud, smiled sweetly upon

the young gentleman, and accused him of being a flirt; the young

gentleman pleading not guilty, a most interesting discussion took place

upon the important point whether the young gentleman was a flirt or not,

which being an agreeable conversation of a light kind, lasted a

considerable time. At length, a short silence occurring, the young

ladies on either side of the young gentleman fell suddenly fast asleep;

and the young gentleman, winking upon us to preserve silence, won a pair

of gloves from each, thereby causing them to wake with equal suddenness

and to scream very loud. The lively conversation to which this

pleasantry gave rise, lasted for the remainder of the ride, and would

have eked out a much longer one.

We dined rather more comfortably than people usually do under such

circumstances, nothing having been left behind but the cork-screw and the

bread. The married gentlemen were unusually thirsty, which they

attributed to the heat of the weather; the little boys ate to

inconvenience; mammas were very jovial, and their daughters very

fascinating; and the attendants being well-behaved men, got exceedingly

drunk at a respectful distance.

We had our eye on Mr. Balim at dinner-time, and perceived that he

flourished wonderfully, being still surrounded by a little group of young

ladies, who listened to him as an oracle, while he ate from their plates

and drank from their glasses in a manner truly captivating from its

excessive playfulness. His conversation, too, was exceedingly brilliant.

In fact, one elderly lady assured us, that in the course of a little

lively \_badinage\_ on the subject of ladiesâ dresses, he had evinced as

much knowledge as if he had been born and bred a milliner.

As such of the fat people who did not happen to fall asleep after dinner

entered upon a most vigorous game at ball, we slipped away alone into a

thicker part of the wood, hoping to fall in with Mr. Balim, the greater

part of the young people having dropped off in twos and threes and the

young ladiesâ young gentleman among them. Nor were we disappointed, for

we had not walked far, when, peeping through the trees, we discovered him

before us, and truly it was a pleasant thing to contemplate his

greatness.

The young ladiesâ young gentleman was seated upon the ground, at the feet

of a few young ladies who were reclining on a bank; he was so profusely

decked with scarfs, ribands, flowers, and other pretty spoils, that he

looked like a lambâor perhaps a calf would be a better simileâadorned for

the sacrifice. One young lady supported a parasol over his interesting

head, another held his hat, and a third his neck-cloth, which in romantic

fashion he had thrown off; the young gentleman himself, with his hand

upon his breast, and his face moulded into an expression of the most

honeyed sweetness, was warbling forth some choice specimens of vocal

music in praise of female loveliness, in a style so exquisitely perfect,

that we burst into an involuntary shout of laughter, and made a hasty

retreat.

What charming fellows these young ladiesâ young gentlemen are! Ducks,

dears, loves, angels, are all terms inadequate to express their merit.

They are such amazingly, uncommonly, wonderfully, nice men.

CONCLUSION

As we have placed before the young ladies so many specimens of young

gentlemen, and have also in the dedication of this volume given them to

understand how much we reverence and admire their numerous virtues and

perfections; as we have given them such strong reasons to treat us with

confidence, and to banish, in our case, all that reserve and distrust of

the male sex which, as a point of general behaviour, they cannot do

better than preserve and maintainâwe say, as we have done all this, we

feel that now, when we have arrived at the close of our task, they may

naturally press upon us the inquiry, what particular description of young

gentlemen we can conscientiously recommend.

Here we are at a loss. We look over our list, and can neither recommend

the bashful young gentleman, nor the out-and-out young gentleman, nor the

very friendly young gentleman, nor the military young gentleman, nor the

political young gentleman, nor the domestic young gentleman, nor the

censorious young gentleman, nor the funny young gentleman, nor the

theatrical young gentleman, nor the poetical young gentleman, nor the

throwing-off young gentleman, nor the young ladiesâ young gentleman.

As there are some good points about many of them, which still are not

sufficiently numerous to render any one among them eligible, as a whole,

our respectful advice to the young ladies is, to seek for a young

gentleman who unites in himself the best qualities of all, and the worst

weaknesses of none, and to lead him forthwith to the hymeneal altar,

whether he will or no. And to the young lady who secures him, we beg to

tender one short fragment of matrimonial advice, selected from many sound

passages of a similar tendency, to be found in a letter written by Dean

Swift to a young lady on her marriage.

âThe grand affair of your life will be, to gain and preserve the esteem

of your husband. Neither good-nature nor virtue will suffer him to

\_esteem\_ you against his judgment; and although he is not capable of

using you ill, yet you will in time grow a thing indifferent and perhaps

contemptible; unless you can supply the loss of youth and beauty with

more durable qualities. You have but a very few years to be young and

handsome in the eyes of the world; and as few months to be so in the eyes

of a husband who is not a fool; for I hope you do not still dream of

charms and raptures, which marriage ever did, and ever will, put a sudden

end to.â

From the anxiety we express for the proper behaviour of the fortunate

lady after marriage, it may possibly be inferred that the young gentleman

to whom we have so delicately alluded, is no other than ourself. Without

in any way committing ourself upon this point, we have merely to observe,

that we are ready to receive sealed offers containing a full

specification of age, temper, appearance, and condition; but we beg it to

be distinctly understood that we do not pledge ourself to accept the

highest bidder.

These offers may be forwarded to the Publishers, Messrs. Chapman and

Hall, London; to whom all pieces of plate and other testimonials of

approbation from the young ladies generally, are respectfully requested

to be addressed.

SKETCHES OF YOUNG COUPLES

AN URGENT REMONSTRANCE, &c.

TO THE GENTLEMEN OF ENGLAND,

(BEING BACHELORS OR WIDOWERS,)

THE REMONSTRANCE OF THEIR FAITHFUL FELLOW-SUBJECT,

SHEWETH,â

THAT Her Most Gracious Majesty, Victoria, by the Grace of God of the

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland Queen, Defender of the Faith,

did, on the 23rd day of November last past, declare and pronounce to Her

Most Honourable Privy Council, Her Majestyâs Most Gracious intention of

entering into the bonds of wedlock.

THAT Her Most Gracious Majesty, in so making known Her Most Gracious

intention to Her Most Honourable Privy Council as aforesaid, did use and

employ the wordsââIt is my intention to ally myself in marriage with

Prince Albert of Saxe Coburg and Gotha.â

THAT the present is Bissextile, or Leap Year, in which it is held and

considered lawful for any lady to offer and submit proposals of marriage

to any gentleman, and to enforce and insist upon acceptance of the same,

under pain of a certain fine or penalty; to wit, one silk or satin dress

of the first quality, to be chosen by the lady and paid (or owed) for, by

the gentleman.

THAT these and other the horrors and dangers with which the said

Bissextile, or Leap Year, threatens the gentlemen of England on every

occasion of its periodical return, have been greatly aggravated and

augmented by the terms of Her Majestyâs said Most Gracious communication,

which have filled the heads of divers young ladies in this Realm with

certain new ideas destructive to the peace of mankind, that never entered

their imagination before.

THAT a case has occurred in Camberwell, in which a young lady informed

her Papa that âshe intended to ally herself in marriageâ with Mr. Smith

of Stepney; and that another, and a very distressing case, has occurred

at Tottenham, in which a young lady not only stated her intention of

allying herself in marriage with her cousin John, but, taking violent

possession of her said cousin, actually married him.

THAT similar outrages are of constant occurrence, not only in the capital

and its neighbourhood, but throughout the kingdom, and that unless the

excited female populace be speedily checked and restrained in their

lawless proceedings, most deplorable results must ensue therefrom; among

which may be anticipated a most alarming increase in the population of

the country, with which no efforts of the agricultural or manufacturing

interest can possibly keep pace.

THAT there is strong reason to suspect the existence of a most extensive

plot, conspiracy, or design, secretly contrived by vast numbers of single

ladies in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and now

extending its ramifications in every quarter of the land; the object and

intent of which plainly appears to be the holding and solemnising of an

enormous and unprecedented number of marriages, on the day on which the

nuptials of Her said Most Gracious Majesty are performed.

THAT such plot, conspiracy, or design, strongly savours of Popery, as

tending to the discomfiture of the Clergy of the Established Church, by

entailing upon them great mental and physical exhaustion; and that such

Popish plots are fomented and encouraged by Her Majestyâs Ministers,

which clearly appearsânot only from Her Majestyâs principal Secretary of

State for Foreign Affairs traitorously getting married while holding

office under the Crown; but from Mr. OâConnell having been heard to

declare and avow that, if he had a daughter to marry, she should be

married on the same day as Her said Most Gracious Majesty.

THAT such arch plots, conspiracies, and designs, besides being fraught

with danger to the Established Church, and (consequently) to the State,

cannot fail to bring ruin and bankruptcy upon a large class of Her

Majestyâs subjects; as a great and sudden increase in the number of

married men occasioning the comparative desertion (for a time) of

Taverns, Hotels, Billiard-rooms, and Gaming-Houses, will deprive the

Proprietors of their accustomed profits and returns. And in further

proof of the depth and baseness of such designs, it may be here observed,

that all proprietors of Taverns, Hotels, Billiard-rooms, and

Gaming-Houses, are (especially the last) solemnly devoted to the

Protestant religion.

FOR all these reasons, and many others of no less gravity and import, an

urgent appeal is made to the gentlemen of England (being bachelors or

widowers) to take immediate steps for convening a Public meeting; To

consider of the best and surest means of averting the dangers with which

they are threatened by the recurrence of Bissextile, or Leap Year, and

the additional sensation created among single ladies by the terms of Her

Majestyâs Most Gracious Declaration; To take measures, without delay, for

resisting the said single Ladies, and counteracting their evil designs;

And to pray Her Majesty to dismiss her present Ministers, and to summon

to her Councils those distinguished Gentlemen in various Honourable

Professions who, by insulting on all occasions the only Lady in England

who can be insulted with safety, have given a sufficient guarantee to Her

Majestyâs Loving Subjects that they, at least, are qualified to make war

with women, and are already expert in the use of those weapons which are

common to the lowest and most abandoned of the sex.

THE YOUNG COUPLE

There is to be a wedding this morning at the corner house in the terrace.

The pastry-cookâs people have been there half-a-dozen times already; all

day yesterday there was a great stir and bustle, and they were up this

morning as soon as it was light. Miss Emma Fielding is going to be

married to young Mr. Harvey.

Heaven alone can tell in what bright colours this marriage is painted

upon the mind of the little housemaid at number six, who has hardly slept

a wink all night with thinking of it, and now stands on the unswept

door-steps leaning upon her broom, and looking wistfully towards the

enchanted house. Nothing short of omniscience can divine what visions of

the baker, or the green-grocer, or the smart and most insinuating

butterman, are flitting across her mindâwhat thoughts of how she would

dress on such an occasion, if she were a ladyâof how she would dress, if

she were only a brideâof how cook would dress, being bridesmaid,

conjointly with her sister âin placeâ at Fulham, and how the clergyman,

deeming them so many ladies, would be quite humbled and respectful. What

day-dreams of hope and happinessâof life being one perpetual holiday,

with no master and no mistress to grant or withhold itâof every Sunday

being a Sunday outâof pure freedom as to curls and ringlets, and no

obligation to hide fine heads of hair in capsâwhat pictures of happiness,

vast and immense to her, but utterly ridiculous to us, bewilder the brain

of the little housemaid at number six, all called into existence by the

wedding at the corner!

We smile at such things, and so we should, though perhaps for a better

reason than commonly presents itself. It should be pleasant to us to

know that there are notions of happiness so moderate and limited, since

upon those who entertain them, happiness and lightness of heart are very

easily bestowed.

But the little housemaid is awakened from her reverie, for forth from the

door of the magical corner house there runs towards her, all fluttering

in smart new dress and streaming ribands, her friend Jane Adams, who

comes all out of breath to redeem a solemn promise of taking her in,

under cover of the confusion, to see the breakfast table spread forth in

state, andâsight of sights!âher young mistress ready dressed for church.

And there, in good truth, when they have stolen up-stairs on tip-toe and

edged themselves in at the chamber-doorâthere is Miss Emma âlooking like

the sweetest picter,â in a white chip bonnet and orange flowers, and all

other elegancies becoming a bride, (with the make, shape, and quality of

every article of which the girl is perfectly familiar in one moment, and

never forgets to her dying day)âand there is Miss Emmaâs mamma in tears,

and Miss Emmaâs papa comforting her, and saying how that of course she

has been long looking forward to this, and how happy she ought to beâand

there too is Miss Emmaâs sister with her arms round her neck, and the

other bridesmaid all smiles and tears, quieting the children, who would

cry more but that they are so finely dressed, and yet sob for fear sister

Emma should be taken awayâand it is all so affecting, that the two

servant-girls cry more than anybody; and Jane Adams, sitting down upon

the stairs, when they have crept away, declares that her legs tremble so

that she donât know what to do, and that she will say for Miss Emma, that

she never had a hasty word from her, and that she does hope and pray she

may be happy.

But Jane soon comes round again, and then surely there never was anything

like the breakfast table, glittering with plate and china, and set out

with flowers and sweets, and long-necked bottles, in the most sumptuous

and dazzling manner. In the centre, too, is the mighty charm, the cake,

glistening with frosted sugar, and garnished beautifully. They agree

that there ought to be a little Cupid under one of the barley-sugar

temples, or at least two hearts and an arrow; but, with this exception,

there is nothing to wish for, and a table could not be handsomer. As

they arrive at this conclusion, who should come in but Mr. John! to whom

Jane says that its only Anne from number six; and John says \_he\_ knows,

for heâs often winked his eye down the area, which causes Anne to blush

and look confused. She is going away, indeed; when Mr. John will have it

that she must drink a glass of wine, and he says never mind itâs being

early in the morning, it wonât hurt her: so they shut the door and pour

out the wine; and Anne drinking laneâs health, and adding, âand hereâs

wishing you yours, Mr. John,â drinks it in a great many sips,âMr. John

all the time making jokes appropriate to the occasion. At last Mr. John,

who has waxed bolder by degrees, pleads the usage at weddings, and claims

the privilege of a kiss, which he obtains after a great scuffle; and

footsteps being now heard on the stairs, they disperse suddenly.

By this time a carriage has driven up to convey the bride to church, and

Anne of number six prolonging the process of âcleaning her door,â has the

satisfaction of beholding the bride and bridesmaids, and the papa and

mamma, hurry into the same and drive rapidly off. Nor is this all, for

soon other carriages begin to arrive with a posse of company all

beautifully dressed, at whom she could stand and gaze for ever; but

having something else to do, is compelled to take one last long look and

shut the street-door.

And now the company have gone down to breakfast, and tears have given

place to smiles, for all the corks are out of the long-necked bottles,

and their contents are disappearing rapidly. Miss Emmaâs papa is at the

top of the table; Miss Emmaâs mamma at the bottom; and beside the latter

are Miss Emma herself and her husband,âadmitted on all hands to be the

handsomest and most interesting young couple ever known. All down both

sides of the table, too, are various young ladies, beautiful to see, and

various young gentlemen who seem to think so; and there, in a post of

honour, is an unmarried aunt of Miss Emmaâs, reported to possess

unheard-of riches, and to have expressed vast testamentary intentions

respecting her favourite niece and new nephew. This lady has been very

liberal and generous already, as the jewels worn by the bride abundantly

testify, but that is nothing to what she means to do, or even to what she

has done, for she put herself in close communication with the dressmaker

three months ago, and prepared a wardrobe (with some articles worked by

her own hands) fit for a Princess. People may call her an old maid, and

so she may be, but she is neither cross nor ugly for all that; on the

contrary, she is very cheerful and pleasant-looking, and very kind and

tender-hearted: which is no matter of surprise except to those who yield

to popular prejudices without thinking why, and will never grow wiser and

never know better.

Of all the company though, none are more pleasant to behold or better

pleased with themselves than two young children, who, in honour of the

day, have seats among the guests. Of these, one is a little fellow of

six or eight years old, brother to the bride,âand the other a girl of the

same age, or something younger, whom he calls âhis wife.â The real bride

and bridegroom are not more devoted than they: he all love and attention,

and she all blushes and fondness, toying with a little bouquet which he

gave her this morning, and placing the scattered rose-leaves in her bosom

with natureâs own coquettishness. They have dreamt of each other in

their quiet dreams, these children, and their little hearts have been

nearly broken when the absent one has been dispraised in jest. When will

there come in after-life a passion so earnest, generous, and true as

theirs; what, even in its gentlest realities, can have the grace and

charm that hover round such fairy lovers!

By this time the merriment and happiness of the feast have gained their

height; certain ominous looks begin to be exchanged between the

bridesmaids, and somehow it gets whispered about that the carriage which

is to take the young couple into the country has arrived. Such members

of the party as are most disposed to prolong its enjoyments, affect to

consider this a false alarm, but it turns out too true, being speedily

confirmed, first by the retirement of the bride and a select file of

intimates who are to prepare her for the journey, and secondly by the

withdrawal of the ladies generally. To this there ensues a particularly

awkward pause, in which everybody essays to be facetious, and nobody

succeeds; at length the bridegroom makes a mysterious disappearance in

obedience to some equally mysterious signal; and the table is deserted.

Now, for at least six weeks last past it has been solemnly devised and

settled that the young couple should go away in secret; but they no

sooner appear without the door than the drawing-room windows are blocked

up with ladies waving their handkerchiefs and kissing their hands, and

the dining-room panes with gentlemenâs faces beaming farewell in every

queer variety of its expression. The hall and steps are crowded with

servants in white favours, mixed up with particular friends and relations

who have darted out to say good-bye; and foremost in the group are the

tiny lovers arm in arm, thinking, with fluttering hearts, what happiness

it would be to dash away together in that gallant coach, and never part

again.

The bride has barely time for one hurried glance at her old home, when

the steps rattle, the door slams, the horses clatter on the pavement, and

they have left it far away.

A knot of women servants still remain clustered in the hall, whispering

among themselves, and there of course is Anne from number six, who has

made another escape on some plea or other, and been an admiring witness

of the departure. There are two points on which Anne expatiates over and

over again, without the smallest appearance of fatigue or intending to

leave off; one is, that she ânever see in all her life such aâoh such a

angel of a gentleman as Mr. Harveyââand the other, that she âcanât tell

how it is, but it donât seem a bit like a work-a-day, or a Sunday

neitherâitâs all so unsettled and unregular.â

THE FORMAL COUPLE

The formal couple are the most prim, cold, immovable, and unsatisfactory

people on the face of the earth. Their faces, voices, dress, house,

furniture, walk, and manner, are all the essence of formality, unrelieved

by one redeeming touch of frankness, heartiness, or nature.

Everything with the formal couple resolves itself into a matter of form.

They donât call upon you on your account, but their own; not to see how

you are, but to show how they are: it is not a ceremony to do honour to

you, but to themselves,ânot due to your position, but to theirs. If one

of a friendâs children die, the formal couple are as sure and punctual in

sending to the house as the undertaker; if a friendâs family be

increased, the monthly nurse is not more attentive than they. The formal

couple, in fact, joyfully seize all occasions of testifying their

good-breeding and precise observance of the little usages of society; and

for you, who are the means to this end, they care as much as a man does

for the tailor who has enabled him to cut a figure, or a woman for the

milliner who has assisted her to a conquest.

Having an extensive connexion among that kind of people who make

acquaintances and eschew friends, the formal gentleman attends from time

to time a great many funerals, to which he is formally invited, and to

which he formally goes, as returning a call for the last time. Here his

deportment is of the most faultless description; he knows the exact pitch

of voice it is proper to assume, the sombre look he ought to wear, the

melancholy tread which should be his gait for the day. He is perfectly

acquainted with all the dreary courtesies to be observed in a

mourning-coach; knows when to sigh, and when to hide his nose in the

white handkerchief; and looks into the grave and shakes his head when the

ceremony is concluded, with the sad formality of a mute.

âWhat kind of funeral was it?â says the formal lady, when he returns

home. âOh!â replies the formal gentleman, âthere never was such a gross

and disgusting impropriety; there were no feathers.â âNo feathers!â

cries the lady, as if on wings of black feathers dead people fly to

Heaven, and, lacking them, they must of necessity go elsewhere. Her

husband shakes his head; and further adds, that they had seed-cake

instead of plum-cake, and that it was all white wine. âAll white wine!â

exclaims his wife. âNothing but sherry and madeira,â says the husband.

âWhat! no port?â âNot a drop.â No port, no plums, and no feathers!

âYou will recollect, my dear,â says the formal lady, in a voice of

stately reproof, âthat when we first met this poor man who is now dead

and gone, and he took that very strange course of addressing me at dinner

without being previously introduced, I ventured to express my opinion

that the family were quite ignorant of etiquette, and very imperfectly

acquainted with the decencies of life. You have now had a good

opportunity of judging for yourself, and all I have to say is, that I

trust you will never go to a funeral \_there\_ again.â âMy dear,â replies

the formal gentleman, âI never will.â So the informal deceased is cut in

his grave; and the formal couple, when they tell the story of the

funeral, shake their heads, and wonder what some peopleâs feelings \_are\_

made of, and what their notions of propriety \_can\_ be!

If the formal couple have a family (which they sometimes have), they are

not children, but little, pale, sour, sharp-nosed men and women; and so

exquisitely brought up, that they might be very old dwarfs for anything

that appeareth to the contrary. Indeed, they are so acquainted with

forms and conventionalities, and conduct themselves with such strict

decorum, that to see the little girl break a looking-glass in some wild

outbreak, or the little boy kick his parents, would be to any visitor an

unspeakable relief and consolation.

The formal couple are always sticklers for what is rigidly proper, and

have a great readiness in detecting hidden impropriety of speech or

thought, which by less scrupulous people would be wholly unsuspected.

Thus, if they pay a visit to the theatre, they sit all night in a perfect

agony lest anything improper or immoral should proceed from the stage;

and if anything should happen to be said which admits of a double

construction, they never fail to take it up directly, and to express by

their looks the great outrage which their feelings have sustained.

Perhaps this is their chief reason for absenting themselves almost

entirely from places of public amusement. They go sometimes to the

Exhibition of the Royal Academy;âbut that is often more shocking than the

stage itself, and the formal lady thinks that it really is high time Mr.

Etty was prosecuted and made a public example of.

We made one at a christening party not long since, where there were

amongst the guests a formal couple, who suffered the acutest torture from

certain jokes, incidental to such an occasion, cutâand very likely dried

alsoâby one of the godfathers; a red-faced elderly gentleman, who, being

highly popular with the rest of the company, had it all his own way, and

was in great spirits. It was at supper-time that this gentleman came out

in full force. Weâbeing of a grave and quiet demeanourâhad been chosen

to escort the formal lady down-stairs, and, sitting beside her, had a

favourable opportunity of observing her emotions.

We have a shrewd suspicion that, in the very beginning, and in the first

blushâliterally the first blushâof the matter, the formal lady had not

felt quite certain whether the being present at such a ceremony, and

encouraging, as it were, the public exhibition of a baby, was not an act

involving some degree of indelicacy and impropriety; but certain we are

that when that babyâs health was drunk, and allusions were made, by a

grey-headed gentleman proposing it, to the time when he had dandled in

his arms the young Christianâs mother,âcertain we are that then the

formal lady took the alarm, and recoiled from the old gentleman as from a

hoary profligate. Still she bore it; she fanned herself with an

indignant air, but still she bore it. A comic song was sung, involving a

confession from some imaginary gentleman that he had kissed a female, and

yet the formal lady bore it. But when at last, the health of the

godfather before-mentioned being drunk, the godfather rose to return

thanks, and in the course of his observations darkly hinted at babies yet

unborn, and even contemplated the possibility of the subject of that

festival having brothers and sisters, the formal lady could endure no

more, but, bowing slightly round, and sweeping haughtily past the

offender, left the room in tears, under the protection of the formal

gentleman.

THE LOVING COUPLE

There cannot be a better practical illustration of the wise saw and

ancient instance, that there may be too much of a good thing, than is

presented by a loving couple. Undoubtedly it is meet and proper that two

persons joined together in holy matrimony should be loving, and

unquestionably it is pleasant to know and see that they are so; but there

is a time for all things, and the couple who happen to be always in a

loving state before company, are well-nigh intolerable.

And in taking up this position we would have it distinctly understood

that we do not seek alone the sympathy of bachelors, in whose objection

to loving couples we recognise interested motives and personal

considerations. We grant that to that unfortunate class of society there

may be something very irritating, tantalising, and provoking, in being

compelled to witness those gentle endearments and chaste interchanges

which to loving couples are quite the ordinary business of life. But

while we recognise the natural character of the prejudice to which these

unhappy men are subject, we can neither receive their biassed evidence,

nor address ourself to their inflamed and angered minds. Dispassionate

experience is our only guide; and in these moral essays we seek no less

to reform hymeneal offenders than to hold out a timely warning to all

rising couples, and even to those who have not yet set forth upon their

pilgrimage towards the matrimonial market.

Let all couples, present or to come, therefore profit by the example of

Mr. and Mrs. Leaver, themselves a loving couple in the first degree.

Mr. and Mrs. Leaver are pronounced by Mrs. Starling, a widow lady who

lost her husband when she was young, and lost herself about the

same-timeâfor by her own count she has never since grown five years

olderâto be a perfect model of wedded felicity. âYou would suppose,â

says the romantic lady, âthat they were lovers only just now engaged.

Never was such happiness! They are so tender, so affectionate, so

attached to each other, so enamoured, that positively nothing can be more

charming!â

âAugusta, my soul,â says Mr. Leaver. âAugustus, my life,â replies Mrs.

Leaver. âSing some little ballad, darling,â quoth Mr. Leaver. âI

couldnât, indeed, dearest,â returns Mrs. Leaver. âDo, my dove,â says Mr.

Leaver. âI couldnât possibly, my love,â replies Mrs. Leaver; âand itâs

very naughty of you to ask me.â âNaughty, darling!â cries Mr. Leaver.

âYes, very naughty, and very cruel,â returns Mrs. Leaver, âfor you know I

have a sore throat, and that to sing would give me great pain. Youâre a

monster, and I hate you. Go away!â Mrs. Leaver has said âgo away,â

because Mr. Leaver has tapped her under the chin: Mr. Leaver not doing as

he is bid, but on the contrary, sitting down beside her, Mrs. Leaver

slaps Mr. Leaver; and Mr. Leaver in return slaps Mrs. Leaver, and it

being now time for all persons present to look the other way, they look

the other way, and hear a still small sound as of kissing, at which Mrs.

Starling is thoroughly enraptured, and whispers her neighbour that if all

married couples were like that, what a heaven this earth would be!

The loving couple are at home when this occurs, and maybe only three or

four friends are present, but, unaccustomed to reserve upon this

interesting point, they are pretty much the same abroad. Indeed upon

some occasions, such as a pic-nic or a water-party, their lovingness is

even more developed, as we had an opportunity last summer of observing in

person.

There was a great water-party made up to go to Twickenham and dine, and

afterwards dance in an empty villa by the river-side, hired expressly for

the purpose. Mr. and Mrs. Leaver were of the company; and it was our

fortune to have a seat in the same boat, which was an eight-oared galley,

manned by amateurs, with a blue striped awning of the same pattern as

their Guernsey shirts, and a dingy red flag of the same shade as the

whiskers of the stroke oar. A coxswain being appointed, and all other

matters adjusted, the eight gentlemen threw themselves into strong

paroxysms, and pulled up with the tide, stimulated by the compassionate

remarks of the ladies, who one and all exclaimed, that it seemed an

immense exertionâas indeed it did. At first we raced the other boat,

which came alongside in gallant style; but this being found an unpleasant

amusement, as giving rise to a great quantity of splashing, and rendering

the cold pies and other viands very moist, it was unanimously voted down,

and we were suffered to shoot a-head, while the second boat followed

ingloriously in our wake.

It was at this time that we first recognised Mr. Leaver. There were two

firemen-watermen in the boat, lying by until somebody was exhausted; and

one of them, who had taken upon himself the direction of affairs, was

heard to cry in a gruff voice, âPull away, number twoâgive it her, number

twoâtake a longer reach, number twoânow, number two, sir, think youâre

winning a boat.â The greater part of the company had no doubt begun to

wonder which of the striped Guernseys it might be that stood in need of

such encouragement, when a stifled shriek from Mrs. Leaver confirmed the

doubtful and informed the ignorant; and Mr. Leaver, still further

disguised in a straw hat and no neckcloth, was observed to be in a

fearful perspiration, and failing visibly. Nor was the general

consternation diminished at this instant by the same gentleman (in the

performance of an accidental aquatic feat, termed âcatching a crabâ)

plunging suddenly backward, and displaying nothing of himself to the

company, but two violently struggling legs. Mrs. Leaver shrieked again

several times, and cried piteouslyââIs he dead? Tell me the worst. Is

he dead?â

Now, a momentâs reflection might have convinced the loving wife, that

unless her husband were endowed with some most surprising powers of

muscular action, he never could be dead while he kicked so hard; but

still Mrs. Leaver cried, âIs he dead? is he dead?â and still everybody

else criedââNo, no, no,â until such time as Mr. Leaver was replaced in a

sitting posture, and his oar (which had been going through all kinds of

wrong-headed performances on its own account) was once more put in his

hand, by the exertions of the two firemen-watermen. Mr. Leaver then

exclaimed, âAugustus, my child, come to me;â and Mr. Leaver said,

âAugusta, my love, compose yourself, I am not injured.â But Mrs. Leaver

cried again more piteously than before, âAugustus, my child, come to me;â

and now the company generally, who seemed to be apprehensive that if Mr.

Leaver remained where he was, he might contribute more than his proper

share towards the drowning of the party, disinterestedly took part with

Mrs. Leaver, and said he really ought to go, and that he was not strong

enough for such violent exercise, and ought never to have undertaken it.

Reluctantly, Mr. Leaver went, and laid himself down at Mrs. Leaverâs

feet, and Mrs. Leaver stooping over him, said, âOh Augustus, how could

you terrify me so?â and Mr. Leaver said, âAugusta, my sweet, I never

meant to terrify you;â and Mrs. Leaver said, âYou are faint, my dear;â

and Mr. Leaver said, âI am rather so, my love;â and they were very loving

indeed under Mrs. Leaverâs veil, until at length Mr. Leaver came forth

again, and pleasantly asked if he had not heard something said about

bottled stout and sandwiches.

Mrs. Starling, who was one of the party, was perfectly delighted with

this scene, and frequently murmured half-aside, âWhat a loving couple you

are!â or âHow delightful it is to see man and wife so happy together!â

To us she was quite poetical, (for we are a kind of cousins,) observing

that hearts beating in unison like that made life a paradise of sweets;

and that when kindred creatures were drawn together by sympathies so fine

and delicate, what more than mortal happiness did not our souls partake!

To all this we answered âCertainly,â or âVery true,â or merely sighed, as

the case might be. At every new act of the loving couple, the widowâs

admiration broke out afresh; and when Mrs. Leaver would not permit Mr.

Leaver to keep his hat off, lest the sun should strike to his head, and

give him a brain fever, Mrs. Starling actually shed tears, and said it

reminded her of Adam and Eve.

The loving couple were thus loving all the way to Twickenham, but when we

arrived there (by which time the amateur crew looked very thirsty and

vicious) they were more playful than ever, for Mrs. Leaver threw stones

at Mr. Leaver, and Mr. Leaver ran after Mrs. Leaver on the grass, in a

most innocent and enchanting manner. At dinner, too, Mr. Leaver \_would\_

steal Mrs. Leaverâs tongue, and Mrs. Leaver \_would\_ retaliate upon Mr.

Leaverâs fowl; and when Mrs. Leaver was going to take some lobster salad,

Mr. Leaver wouldnât let her have any, saying that it made her ill, and

she was always sorry for it afterwards, which afforded Mrs. Leaver an

opportunity of pretending to be cross, and showing many other

prettinesses. But this was merely the smiling surface of their loves,

not the mighty depths of the stream, down to which the company, to say

the truth, dived rather unexpectedly, from the following accident. It

chanced that Mr. Leaver took upon himself to propose the bachelors who

had first originated the notion of that entertainment, in doing which, he

affected to regret that he was no longer of their body himself, and

pretended grievously to lament his fallen state. This Mrs. Leaverâs

feelings could not brook, even in jest, and consequently, exclaiming

aloud, âHe loves me not, he loves me not!â she fell in a very pitiable

state into the arms of Mrs. Starling, and, directly becoming insensible,

was conveyed by that lady and her husband into another room. Presently

Mr. Leaver came running back to know if there was a medical gentleman in

company, and as there was, (in what company is there not?) both Mr.

Leaver and the medical gentleman hurried away together.

The medical gentleman was the first who returned, and among his intimate

friends he was observed to laugh and wink, and look as unmedical as might

be; but when Mr. Leaver came back he was very solemn, and in answer to

all inquiries, shook his head, and remarked that Augusta was far too

sensitive to be trifled withâan opinion which the widow subsequently

confirmed. Finding that she was in no imminent peril, however, the rest

of the party betook themselves to dancing on the green, and very merry

and happy they were, and a vast quantity of flirtation there was; the

last circumstance being no doubt attributable, partly to the fineness of

the weather, and partly to the locality, which is well known to be

favourable to all harmless recreations.

In the bustle of the scene, Mr. and Mrs. Leaver stole down to the boat,

and disposed themselves under the awning, Mrs. Leaver reclining her head

upon Mr. Leaverâs shoulder, and Mr. Leaver grasping her hand with great

fervour, and looking in her face from time to time with a melancholy and

sympathetic aspect. The widow sat apart, feigning to be occupied with a

book, but stealthily observing them from behind her fan; and the two

firemen-watermen, smoking their pipes on the bank hard by, nudged each

other, and grinned in enjoyment of the joke. Very few of the party

missed the loving couple; and the few who did, heartily congratulated

each other on their disappearance.

THE CONTRADICTORY COUPLE

One would suppose that two people who are to pass their whole lives

together, and must necessarily be very often alone with each other, could

find little pleasure in mutual contradiction; and yet what is more common

than a contradictory couple?

The contradictory couple agree in nothing but contradiction. They return

home from Mrs. Bluebottleâs dinner-party, each in an opposite corner of

the coach, and do not exchange a syllable until they have been seated for

at least twenty minutes by the fireside at home, when the gentleman,

raising his eyes from the stove, all at once breaks silence:

âWhat a very extraordinary thing it is,â says he, âthat you \_will\_

contradict, Charlotte!â â\_I\_ contradict!â cries the lady, âbut thatâs

just like you.â âWhatâs like me?â says the gentleman sharply. âSaying

that I contradict you,â replies the lady. âDo you mean to say that you

do \_not\_ contradict me?â retorts the gentleman; âdo you mean to say that

you have not been contradicting me the whole of this day?â âDo you mean

to tell me now, that you have not? I mean to tell you nothing of the

kind,â replies the lady quietly; âwhen you are wrong, of course I shall

contradict you.â

During this dialogue the gentleman has been taking his brandy-and-water

on one side of the fire, and the lady, with her dressing-case on the

table, has been curling her hair on the other. She now lets down her

back hair, and proceeds to brush it; preserving at the same time an air

of conscious rectitude and suffering virtue, which is intended to

exasperate the gentlemanâand does so.

âI do believe,â he says, taking the spoon out of his glass, and tossing

it on the table, âthat of all the obstinate, positive, wrong-headed

creatures that were ever born, you are the most so, Charlotte.â

âCertainly, certainly, have it your own way, pray. You see how much \_I\_

contradict you,â rejoins the lady. âOf course, you didnât contradict me

at dinner-timeâoh no, not you!â says the gentleman. âYes, I did,â says

the lady. âOh, you did,â cries the gentleman âyou admit that?â âIf you

call that contradiction, I do,â the lady answers; âand I say again,

Edward, that when I know you are wrong, I will contradict you. I am not

your slave.â âNot my slave!â repeats the gentleman bitterly; âand you

still mean to say that in the Blackburnsâ new house there are not more

than fourteen doors, including the door of the wine-cellar!â âI mean to

say,â retorts the lady, beating time with her hair-brush on the palm of

her hand, âthat in that house there are fourteen doors and no more.â

âWell thenââ cries the gentleman, rising in despair, and pacing the room

with rapid strides. âBy G-, this is enough to destroy a manâs intellect,

and drive him mad!â

By and by the gentleman comes-to a little, and passing his hand gloomily

across his forehead, reseats himself in his former chair. There is a

long silence, and this time the lady begins. âI appealed to Mr. Jenkins,

who sat next to me on the sofa in the drawing-room during teaââ âMorgan,

you mean,â interrupts the gentleman. âI do not mean anything of the

kind,â answers the lady. âNow, by all that is aggravating and impossible

to bear,â cries the gentleman, clenching his hands and looking upwards in

agony, âshe is going to insist upon it that Morgan is Jenkins!â âDo you

take me for a perfect fool?â exclaims the lady; âdo you suppose I donât

know the one from the other? Do you suppose I donât know that the man in

the blue coat was Mr. Jenkins?â âJenkins in a blue coat!â cries the

gentleman with a groan; âJenkins in a blue coat! a man who would suffer

death rather than wear anything but brown!â âDo you dare to charge me

with telling an untruth?â demands the lady, bursting into tears. âI

charge you, maâam,â retorts the gentleman, starting up, âwith being a

monster of contradiction, a monster of aggravation, aâaâaâJenkins in a

blue coat!âwhat have I done that I should be doomed to hear such

statements!â

Expressing himself with great scorn and anguish, the gentleman takes up

his candle and stalks off to bed, where feigning to be fast asleep when

the lady comes up-stairs drowned in tears, murmuring lamentations over

her hard fate and indistinct intentions of consulting her brothers, he

undergoes the secret torture of hearing her exclaim between whiles, âI

know there are only fourteen doors in the house, I know it was Mr.

Jenkins, I know he had a blue coat on, and I would say it as positively

as I do now, if they were the last words I had to speak!â

If the contradictory couple are blessed with children, they are not the

less contradictory on that account. Master James and Miss Charlotte

present themselves after dinner, and being in perfect good humour, and

finding their parents in the same amiable state, augur from these

appearances half a glass of wine a-piece and other extraordinary

indulgences. But unfortunately Master James, growing talkative upon such

prospects, asks his mamma how tall Mrs. Parsons is, and whether she is

not six feet high; to which his mamma replies, âYes, she should think she

was, for Mrs. Parsons is a very tall lady indeed; quite a giantess.â

âFor Heavenâs sake, Charlotte,â cries her husband, âdo not tell the child

such preposterous nonsense. Six feet high!â âWell,â replies the lady,

âsurely I may be permitted to have an opinion; my opinion is, that she is

six feet highâat least six feet.â âNow you know, Charlotte,â retorts the

gentleman sternly, âthat that is \_not\_ your opinionâthat you have no such

ideaâand that you only say this for the sake of contradiction.â âYou are

exceedingly polite,â his wife replies; âto be wrong about such a paltry

question as anybodyâs height, would be no great crime; but I say again,

that I believe Mrs. Parsons to be six feetâmore than six feet; nay, I

believe you know her to be full six feet, and only say she is not,

because I say she is.â This taunt disposes the gentleman to become

violent, but he cheeks himself, and is content to mutter, in a haughty

tone, âSix feetâha! ha! Mrs. Parsons six feet!â and the lady answers,

âYes, six feet. I am sure I am glad you are amused, and Iâll say it

againâsix feet.â Thus the subject gradually drops off, and the

contradiction begins to be forgotten, when Master James, with some

undefined notion of making himself agreeable, and putting things to

rights again, unfortunately asks his mamma what the moonâs made of; which

gives her occasion to say that he had better not ask her, for she is

always wrong and never can be right; that he only exposes her to

contradiction by asking any question of her; and that he had better ask

his papa, who is infallible, and never can be wrong. Papa, smarting

under this attack, gives a terrible pull at the bell, and says, that if

the conversation is to proceed in this way, the children had better be

removed. Removed they are, after a few tears and many struggles; and Pa

having looked at Ma sideways for a minute or two, with a baleful eye,

draws his pocket-handkerchief over his face, and composes himself for his

after-dinner nap.

The friends of the contradictory couple often deplore their frequent

disputes, though they rather make light of them at the same time:

observing, that there is no doubt they are very much attached to each

other, and that they never quarrel except about trifles. But neither the

friends of the contradictory couple, nor the contradictory couple

themselves, reflect, that as the most stupendous objects in nature are

but vast collections of minute particles, so the slightest and least

considered trifles make up the sum of human happiness or misery.

THE COUPLE WHO DOTE UPON THEIR CHILDREN

The couple who dote upon their children have usually a great many of

them: six or eight at least. The children are either the healthiest in

all the world, or the most unfortunate in existence. In either case,

they are equally the theme of their doting parents, and equally a source

of mental anguish and irritation to their doting parentsâ friends.

The couple who dote upon their children recognise no dates but those

connected with their births, accidents, illnesses, or remarkable deeds.

They keep a mental almanack with a vast number of Innocentsâ-days, all in

red letters. They recollect the last coronation, because on that day

little Tom fell down the kitchen stairs; the anniversary of the Gunpowder

Plot, because it was on the fifth of November that Ned asked whether

wooden legs were made in heaven and cocked hats grew in gardens. Mrs.

Whiffler will never cease to recollect the last day of the old year as

long as she lives, for it was on that day that the baby had the four red

spots on its nose which they took for measles: nor Christmas-day, for

twenty-one days after Christmas-day the twins were born; nor Good Friday,

for it was on a Good Friday that she was frightened by the donkey-cart

when she was in the family way with Georgiana. The movable feasts have

no motion for Mr. and Mrs. Whiffler, but remain pinned down tight and

fast to the shoulders of some small child, from whom they can never be

separated any more. Time was made, according to their creed, not for

slaves but for girls and boys; the restless sands in his glass are but

little children at play.

As we have already intimated, the children of this couple can know no

medium. They are either prodigies of good health or prodigies of bad

health; whatever they are, they must be prodigies. Mr. Whiffler must

have to describe at his office such excruciating agonies constantly

undergone by his eldest boy, as nobody elseâs eldest boy ever underwent;

or he must be able to declare that there never was a child endowed with

such amazing health, such an indomitable constitution, and such a

cast-iron frame, as his child. His children must be, in some respect or

other, above and beyond the children of all other people. To such an

extent is this feeling pushed, that we were once slightly acquainted with

a lady and gentleman who carried their heads so high and became so proud

after their youngest child fell out of a two-pair-of-stairs window

without hurting himself much, that the greater part of their friends were

obliged to forego their acquaintance. But perhaps this may be an extreme

case, and one not justly entitled to be considered as a precedent of

general application.

If a friend happen to dine in a friendly way with one of these couples

who dote upon their children, it is nearly impossible for him to divert

the conversation from their favourite topic. Everything reminds Mr.

Whiffler of Ned, or Mrs. Whiffler of Mary Anne, or of the time before Ned

was born, or the time before Mary Anne was thought of. The slightest

remark, however harmless in itself, will awaken slumbering recollections

of the twins. It is impossible to steer clear of them. They will come

uppermost, let the poor man do what he may. Ned has been known to be

lost sight of for half an hour, Dick has been forgotten, the name of Mary

Anne has not been mentioned, but the twins will out. Nothing can keep

down the twins.

âItâs a very extraordinary thing, Saunders,â says Mr. Whiffler to the

visitor, âbutâyou have seen our little babies, theâtheâtwins?â The

friendâs heart sinks within him as he answers, âOh, yesâoften.â âYour

talking of the Pyramids,â says Mr. Whiffler, quite as a matter of course,

âreminds me of the twins. Itâs a very extraordinary thing about those

babiesâwhat colour should you say their eyes were?â âUpon my word,â the

friend stammers, âI hardly know how to answerââthe fact being, that

except as the friend does not remember to have heard of any departure

from the ordinary course of nature in the instance of these twins, they

might have no eyes at all for aught he has observed to the contrary.

âYou wouldnât say they were red, I suppose?â says Mr. Whiffler. The

friend hesitates, and rather thinks they are; but inferring from the

expression of Mr. Whifflerâs face that red is not the colour, smiles with

some confidence, and says, âNo, no! very different from that.â âWhat

should you say to blue?â says Mr. Whiffler. The friend glances at him,

and observing a different expression in his face, ventures to say, âI

should say they \_were\_ blueâa decided blue.â âTo be sure!â cries Mr.

Whiffler, triumphantly, âI knew you would! But what should you say if I

was to tell you that the boyâs eyes are blue and the girlâs hazel, eh?â

âImpossible!â exclaims the friend, not at all knowing why it should be

impossible. âA fact, notwithstanding,â cries Mr. Whiffler; âand let me

tell you, Saunders, \_thatâs\_ not a common thing in twins, or a

circumstance thatâll happen every day.â

In this dialogue Mrs. Whiffler, as being deeply responsible for the

twins, their charms and singularities, has taken no share; but she now

relates, in broken English, a witticism of little Dickâs bearing upon the

subject just discussed, which delights Mr. Whiffler beyond measure, and

causes him to declare that he would have sworn that was Dickâs if he had

heard it anywhere. Then he requests that Mrs. Whiffler will tell

Saunders what Tom said about mad bulls; and Mrs. Whiffler relating the

anecdote, a discussion ensues upon the different character of Tomâs wit

and Dickâs wit, from which it appears that Dickâs humour is of a lively

turn, while Tomâs style is the dry and caustic. This discussion being

enlivened by various illustrations, lasts a long time, and is only

stopped by Mrs. Whiffler instructing the footman to ring the nursery

bell, as the children were promised that they should come down and taste

the pudding.

The friend turns pale when this order is given, and paler still when it

is followed up by a great pattering on the staircase, (not unlike the

sound of rain upon a skylight,) a violent bursting open of the

dining-room door, and the tumultuous appearance of six small children,

closely succeeded by a strong nursery-maid with a twin in each arm. As

the whole eight are screaming, shouting, or kickingâsome influenced by a

ravenous appetite, some by a horror of the stranger, and some by a

conflict of the two feelingsâa pretty long space elapses before all their

heads can be ranged round the table and anything like order restored; in

bringing about which happy state of things both the nurse and footman are

severely scratched. At length Mrs. Whiffler is heard to say, âMr.

Saunders, shall I give you some pudding?â A breathless silence ensues,

and sixteen small eyes are fixed upon the guest in expectation of his

reply. A wild shout of joy proclaims that he has said âNo, thank you.â

Spoons are waved in the air, legs appear above the table-cloth in

uncontrollable ecstasy, and eighty short fingers dabble in damson syrup.

While the pudding is being disposed of, Mr. and Mrs. Whiffler look on

with beaming countenances, and Mr. Whiffler nudging his friend Saunders,

begs him to take notice of Tomâs eyes, or Dickâs chin, or Nedâs nose, or

Mary Anneâs hair, or Emilyâs figure, or little Bobâs calves, or Fannyâs

mouth, or Carryâs head, as the case may be. Whatever the attention of

Mr. Saunders is called to, Mr. Saunders admires of course; though he is

rather confused about the sex of the youngest branches and looks at the

wrong children, turning to a girl when Mr. Whiffler directs his attention

to a boy, and falling into raptures with a boy when he ought to be

enchanted with a girl. Then the dessert comes, and there is a vast deal

of scrambling after fruit, and sudden spirting forth of juice out of

tight oranges into infant eyes, and much screeching and wailing in

consequence. At length it becomes time for Mrs. Whiffler to retire, and

all the children are by force of arms compelled to kiss and love Mr.

Saunders before going up-stairs, except Tom, who, lying on his back in

the hall, proclaims that Mr. Saunders âis a naughty beast;â and Dick, who

having drunk his fatherâs wine when he was looking another way, is found

to be intoxicated and is carried out, very limp and helpless.

Mr. Whiffler and his friend are left alone together, but Mr. Whifflerâs

thoughts are still with his family, if his family are not with him.

âSaunders,â says he, after a short silence, âif you please, weâll drink

Mrs. Whiffler and the children.â Mr. Saunders feels this to be a

reproach against himself for not proposing the same sentiment, and drinks

it in some confusion. âAh!â Mr. Whiffler sighs, âthese children,

Saunders, make one quite an old man.â Mr. Saunders thinks that if they

were his, they would make him a very old man; but he says nothing. âAnd

yet,â pursues Mr. Whiffler, âwhat can equal domestic happiness? what can

equal the engaging ways of children! Saunders, why donât you get

married?â Now, this is an embarrassing question, because Mr. Saunders

has been thinking that if he had at any time entertained matrimonial

designs, the revelation of that day would surely have routed them for

ever. âI am glad, however,â says Mr. Whiffler, âthat you \_are\_ a

bachelor,âglad on one account, Saunders; a selfish one, I admit. Will

you do Mrs. Whiffler and myself a favour?â Mr. Saunders is

surprisedâevidently surprised; but he replies, âwith the greatest

pleasure.â âThen, will you, Saunders,â says Mr. Whiffler, in an

impressive manner, âwill you cement and consolidate our friendship by

coming into the family (so to speak) as a godfather?â âI shall be proud

and delighted,â replies Mr. Saunders: âwhich of the children is it?

really, I thought they were all christened; orââ âSaunders,â Mr.

Whiffler interposes, âthey \_are\_ all christened; you are right. The fact

is, that Mrs. Whiffler isâin short, we expect another.â âNot a ninth!â

cries the friend, all aghast at the idea. âYes, Saunders,â rejoins Mr.

Whiffler, solemnly, âa ninth. Did we drink Mrs. Whifflerâs health? Let

us drink it again, Saunders, and wish her well over it!â

Doctor Johnson used to tell a story of a man who had but one idea, which

was a wrong one. The couple who dote upon their children are in the same

predicament: at home or abroad, at all times, and in all places, their

thoughts are bound up in this one subject, and have no sphere beyond.

They relate the clever things their offspring say or do, and weary every

company with their prolixity and absurdity. Mr. Whiffler takes a friend

by the button at a street corner on a windy day to tell him a \_bon mot\_

of his youngest boyâs; and Mrs. Whiffler, calling to see a sick

acquaintance, entertains her with a cheerful account of all her own past

sufferings and present expectations. In such cases the sins of the

fathers indeed descend upon the children; for people soon come to regard

them as predestined little bores. The couple who dote upon their

children cannot be said to be actuated by a general love for these

engaging little people (which would be a great excuse); for they are apt

to underrate and entertain a jealousy of any children but their own. If

they examined their own hearts, they would, perhaps, find at the bottom

of all this, more self-love and egotism than they think of. Self-love

and egotism are bad qualities, of which the unrestrained exhibition,

though it may be sometimes amusing, never fails to be wearisome and

unpleasant. Couples who dote upon their children, therefore, are best

avoided.

THE COOL COUPLE

There is an old-fashioned weather-glass representing a house with two

doorways, in one of which is the figure of a gentleman, in the other the

figure of a lady. When the weather is to be fine the lady comes out and

the gentleman goes in; when wet, the gentleman comes out and the lady

goes in. They never seek each otherâs society, are never elevated and

depressed by the same cause, and have nothing in common. They are the

model of a cool couple, except that there is something of politeness and

consideration about the behaviour of the gentleman in the weather-glass,

in which, neither of the cool couple can be said to participate.

The cool couple are seldom alone together, and when they are, nothing can

exceed their apathy and dulness: the gentleman being for the most part

drowsy, and the lady silent. If they enter into conversation, it is

usually of an ironical or recriminatory nature. Thus, when the gentleman

has indulged in a very long yawn and settled himself more snugly in his

easy-chair, the lady will perhaps remark, âWell, I am sure, Charles! I

hope youâre comfortable.â To which the gentleman replies, âOh yes, heâs

quite comfortable quite.â âThere are not many married men, I hope,â

returns the lady, âwho seek comfort in such selfish gratifications as you

do.â âNor many wives who seek comfort in such selfish gratifications as

\_you\_ do, I hope,â retorts the gentleman. âWhose fault is that?â demands

the lady. The gentleman becoming more sleepy, returns no answer. âWhose

fault is that?â the lady repeats. The gentleman still returning no

answer, she goes on to say that she believes there never was in all this

world anybody so attached to her home, so thoroughly domestic, so

unwilling to seek a momentâs gratification or pleasure beyond her own

fireside as she. God knows that before she was married she never thought

or dreamt of such a thing; and she remembers that her poor papa used to

say again and again, almost every day of his life, âOh, my dear Louisa,

if you only marry a man who understands you, and takes the trouble to

consider your happiness and accommodate himself a very little to your

disposition, what a treasure he will find in you!â She supposes her papa

knew what her disposition wasâhe had known her long enoughâhe ought to

have been acquainted with it, but what can she do? If her home is always

dull and lonely, and her husband is always absent and finds no pleasure

in her society, she is naturally sometimes driven (seldom enough, she is

sure) to seek a little recreation elsewhere; she is not expected to pine

and mope to death, she hopes. âThen come, Louisa,â says the gentleman,

waking up as suddenly as he fell asleep, âstop at home this evening, and

so will I.â âI should be sorry to suppose, Charles, that you took a

pleasure in aggravating me,â replies the lady; âbut you know as well as I

do that I am particularly engaged to Mrs. Mortimer, and that it would be

an act of the grossest rudeness and ill-breeding, after accepting a seat

in her box and preventing her from inviting anybody else, not to go.â

âAh! there it is!â says the gentleman, shrugging his shoulders, âI knew

that perfectly well. I knew you couldnât devote an evening to your own

home. Now all I have to say, Louisa, is thisârecollect that \_I\_ was

quite willing to stay at home, and that itâs no fault of \_mine\_ we are

not oftener together.â

With that the gentleman goes away to keep an old appointment at his club,

and the lady hurries off to dress for Mrs. Mortimerâs; and neither thinks

of the other until by some odd chance they find themselves alone again.

But it must not be supposed that the cool couple are habitually a

quarrelsome one. Quite the contrary. These differences are only

occasions for a little self-excuse,ânothing more. In general they are as

easy and careless, and dispute as seldom, as any common acquaintances

may; for it is neither worth their while to put each other out of the

way, nor to ruffle themselves.

When they meet in society, the cool couple are the best-bred people in

existence. The lady is seated in a corner among a little knot of lady

friends, one of whom exclaims, âWhy, I vow and declare there is your

husband, my dear!â âWhose?âmine?â she says, carelessly. âAy, yours, and

coming this way too.â âHow very odd!â says the lady, in a languid tone,

âI thought he had been at Dover.â The gentleman coming up, and speaking

to all the other ladies and nodding slightly to his wife, it turns out

that he has been at Dover, and has just now returned. âWhat a strange

creature you are!â cries his wife; âand what on earth brought you here, I

wonder?â âI came to look after you, \_of course\_,â rejoins her husband.

This is so pleasant a jest that the lady is mightily amused, as are all

the other ladies similarly situated who are within hearing; and while

they are enjoying it to the full, the gentleman nods again, turns upon

his heel, and saunters away.

There are times, however, when his company is not so agreeable, though

equally unexpected; such as when the lady has invited one or two

particular friends to tea and scandal, and he happens to come home in the

very midst of their diversion. It is a hundred chances to one that he

remains in the house half an hour, but the lady is rather disturbed by

the intrusion, notwithstanding, and reasons within herself,ââI am sure I

never interfere with him, and why should he interfere with me? It can

scarcely be accidental; it never happens that I have a particular reason

for not wishing him to come home, but he always comes. Itâs very

provoking and tiresome; and I am sure when he leaves me so much alone for

his own pleasure, the least he could do would be to do as much for mine.â

Observing what passes in her mind, the gentleman, who has come home for

his own accommodation, makes a merit of it with himself; arrives at the

conclusion that it is the very last place in which he can hope to be

comfortable; and determines, as he takes up his hat and cane, never to be

so virtuous again.

Thus a great many cool couples go on until they are cold couples, and the

grave has closed over their folly and indifference. Loss of name,

station, character, life itself, has ensued from causes as slight as

these, before now; and when gossips tell such tales, and aggravate their

deformities, they elevate their hands and eyebrows, and call each other

to witness what a cool couple Mr. and Mrs. So-and-so always were, even in

the best of times.

THE PLAUSIBLE COUPLE

The plausible couple have many titles. They are âa delightful couple,â

an âaffectionate couple,â âa most agreeable couple, âa good-hearted

couple,â and âthe best-natured couple in existence.â The truth is, that

the plausible couple are people of the world; and either the way of

pleasing the world has grown much easier than it was in the days of the

old man and his ass, or the old man was but a bad hand at it, and knew

very little of the trade.

âBut is it really possible to please the world!â says some doubting

reader. It is indeed. Nay, it is not only very possible, but very easy.

The ways are crooked, and sometimes foul and low. What then? A man need

but crawl upon his hands and knees, know when to close his eyes and when

his ears, when to stoop and when to stand upright; and if by the world is

meant that atom of it in which he moves himself, he shall please it,

never fear.

Now, it will be readily seen, that if a plausible man or woman have an

easy means of pleasing the world by an adaptation of self to all its

twistings and twinings, a plausible man \_and\_ woman, or, in other words,

a plausible couple, playing into each otherâs hands, and acting in

concert, have a manifest advantage. Hence it is that plausible couples

scarcely ever fail of success on a pretty large scale; and hence it is

that if the reader, laying down this unwieldy volume at the next full

stop, will have the goodness to review his or her circle of acquaintance,

and to search particularly for some man and wife with a large connexion

and a good name, not easily referable to their abilities or their wealth,

he or she (that is, the male or female reader) will certainly find that

gentleman or lady, on a very short reflection, to be a plausible couple.

The plausible couple are the most ecstatic people living: the most

sensitive peopleâto meritâon the face of the earth. Nothing clever or

virtuous escapes them. They have microscopic eyes for such endowments,

and can find them anywhere. The plausible couple never fawnâoh no! They

donât even scruple to tell their friends of their faults. One is too

generous, another too candid; a third has a tendency to think all people

like himself, and to regard mankind as a company of angels; a fourth is

kind-hearted to a fault. âWe never flatter, my dear Mrs. Jackson,â say

the plausible couple; âwe speak our minds. Neither you nor Mr. Jackson

have faults enough. It may sound strangely, but it is true. You have

not faults enough. You know our way,âwe must speak out, and always do.

Quarrel with us for saying so, if you will; but we repeat it,âyou have

not faults enough!â

The plausible couple are no less plausible to each other than to third

parties. They are always loving and harmonious. The plausible gentleman

calls his wife âdarling,â and the plausible lady addresses him as

âdearest.â If it be Mr. and Mrs. Bobtail Widger, Mrs. Widger is

âLavinia, darling,â and Mr. Widger is âBobtail, dearest.â Speaking of

each other, they observe the same tender form. Mrs. Widger relates what

âBobtailâ said, and Mr. Widger recounts what âdarlingâ thought and did.

If you sit next to the plausible lady at a dinner-table, she takes the

earliest opportunity of expressing her belief that you are acquainted

with the Clickits; she is sure she has heard the Clickits speak of

youâshe must not tell you in what terms, or you will take her for a

flatterer. You admit a knowledge of the Clickits; the plausible lady

immediately launches out in their praise. She quite loves the Clickits.

Were there ever such true-hearted, hospitable, excellent peopleâsuch a

gentle, interesting little woman as Mrs. Clickit, or such a frank,

unaffected creature as Mr. Clickit? were there ever two people, in short,

so little spoiled by the world as they are? âAs who, darling?â cries Mr.

Widger, from the opposite side of the table. âThe Clickits, dearest,â

replies Mrs. Widger. âIndeed you are right, darling,â Mr. Widger

rejoins; âthe Clickits are a very high-minded, worthy, estimable couple.â

Mrs. Widger remarking that Bobtail always grows quite eloquent upon this

subject, Mr. Widger admits that he feels very strongly whenever such

people as the Clickits and some other friends of his (here he glances at

the host and hostess) are mentioned; for they are an honour to human

nature, and do one good to think of. â\_You\_ know the Clickits, Mrs.

Jackson?â he says, addressing the lady of the house. âNo, indeed; we

have not that pleasure,â she replies. âYou astonish me!â exclaims Mr.

Widger: ânot know the Clickits! why, you are the very people of all

others who ought to be their bosom friends. You are kindred beings; you

are one and the same thing:ânot know the Clickits! Now \_will\_ you know

the Clickits? Will you make a point of knowing them? Will you meet them

in a friendly way at our house one evening, and be acquainted with them?â

Mrs. Jackson will be quite delighted; nothing would give her more

pleasure. âThen, Lavinia, my darling,â says Mr. Widger, âmind you donât

lose sight of that; now, pray take care that Mr. and Mrs. Jackson know

the Clickits without loss of time. Such people ought not to be strangers

to each other.â Mrs. Widger books both families as the centre of

attraction for her next party; and Mr. Widger, going on to expatiate upon

the virtues of the Clickits, adds to their other moral qualities, that

they keep one of the neatest phaetons in town, and have two thousand a

year.

As the plausible couple never laud the merits of any absent person,

without dexterously contriving that their praises shall reflect upon

somebody who is present, so they never depreciate anything or anybody,

without turning their depreciation to the same account. Their friend,

Mr. Slummery, say they, is unquestionably a clever painter, and would no

doubt be very popular, and sell his pictures at a very high price, if

that cruel Mr. Fithers had not forestalled him in his department of art,

and made it thoroughly and completely his own;âFithers, it is to be

observed, being present and within hearing, and Slummery elsewhere. Is

Mrs. Tabblewick really as beautiful as people say? Why, there indeed you

ask them a very puzzling question, because there is no doubt that she is

a very charming woman, and they have long known her intimately. She is

no doubt beautiful, very beautiful; they once thought her the most

beautiful woman ever seen; still if you press them for an honest answer,

they are bound to say that this was before they had ever seen our lovely

friend on the sofa, (the sofa is hard by, and our lovely friend canât

help hearing the whispers in which this is said;) since that time,

perhaps, they have been hardly fair judges; Mrs. Tabblewick is no doubt

extremely handsome,âvery like our friend, in fact, in the form of the

features,âbut in point of expression, and soul, and figure, and air

altogetherâoh dear!

But while the plausible couple depreciate, they are still careful to

preserve their character for amiability and kind feeling; indeed the

depreciation itself is often made to grow out of their excessive sympathy

and good will. The plausible lady calls on a lady who dotes upon her

children, and is sitting with a little girl upon her knee, enraptured by

her artless replies, and protesting that there is nothing she delights in

so much as conversing with these fairies; when the other lady inquires if

she has seen young Mrs. Finching lately, and whether the baby has turned

out a finer one than it promised to be. âOh dear!â cries the plausible

lady, âyou cannot think how often Bobtail and I have talked about poor

Mrs. Finchingâshe is such a dear soul, and was so anxious that the baby

should be a fine childâand very naturally, because she was very much here

at one time, and there is, you know, a natural emulation among

mothersâthat it is impossible to tell you how much we have felt for her.â

âIs it weak or plain, or what?â inquires the other. âWeak or plain, my

love,â returns the plausible lady, âitâs a frightâa perfect little

fright; you never saw such a miserable creature in all your days.

Positively you must not let her see one of these beautiful dears again,

or youâll break her heart, you will indeed.âHeaven bless this child, see

how she is looking in my face! can you conceive anything prettier than

that? If poor Mrs. Finching could only hopeâbut thatâs impossibleâand

the gifts of Providence, you knowâWhat \_did\_ I do with my

pocket-handkerchief!â

What prompts the mother, who dotes upon her children, to comment to her

lord that evening on the plausible ladyâs engaging qualities and feeling

heart, and what is it that procures Mr. and Mrs. Bobtail Widger an

immediate invitation to dinner?

THE NICE LITTLE COUPLE

A custom once prevailed in old-fashioned circles, that when a lady or

gentleman was unable to sing a song, he or she should enliven the company

with a story. As we find ourself in the predicament of not being able to

describe (to our own satisfaction) nice little couples in the abstract,

we purpose telling in this place a little story about a nice little

couple of our acquaintance.

Mr. and Mrs. Chirrup are the nice little couple in question. Mr. Chirrup

has the smartness, and something of the brisk, quick manner of a small

bird. Mrs. Chirrup is the prettiest of all little women, and has the

prettiest little figure conceivable. She has the neatest little foot,

and the softest little voice, and the pleasantest little smile, and the

tidiest little curls, and the brightest little eyes, and the quietest

little manner, and is, in short, altogether one of the most engaging of

all little women, dead or alive. She is a condensation of all the

domestic virtues,âa pocket edition of the young manâs best companion,âa

little woman at a very high pressure, with an amazing quantity of

goodness and usefulness in an exceedingly small space. Little as she is,

Mrs. Chirrup might furnish forth matter for the moral equipment of a

score of housewives, six feet high in their stockingsâif, in the presence

of ladies, we may be allowed the expressionâand of corresponding

robustness.

Nobody knows all this better than Mr. Chirrup, though he rather takes on

that he donât. Accordingly he is very proud of his better-half, and

evidently considers himself, as all other people consider him, rather

fortunate in having her to wife. We say evidently, because Mr. Chirrup

is a warm-hearted little fellow; and if you catch his eye when he has

been slyly glancing at Mrs. Chirrup in company, there is a certain

complacent twinkle in it, accompanied, perhaps, by a half-expressed toss

of the head, which as clearly indicates what has been passing in his mind

as if he had put it into words, and shouted it out through a

speaking-trumpet. Moreover, Mr. Chirrup has a particularly mild and

bird-like manner of calling Mrs. Chirrup âmy dear;â andâfor he is of a

jocose turnâof cutting little witticisms upon her, and making her the

subject of various harmless pleasantries, which nobody enjoys more

thoroughly than Mrs. Chirrup herself. Mr. Chirrup, too, now and then

affects to deplore his bachelor-days, and to bemoan (with a marvellously

contented and smirking face) the loss of his freedom, and the sorrow of

his heart at having been taken captive by Mrs. Chirrupâall of which

circumstances combine to show the secret triumph and satisfaction of Mr.

Chirrupâs soul.

We have already had occasion to observe that Mrs. Chirrup is an

incomparable housewife. In all the arts of domestic arrangement and

management, in all the mysteries of confectionery-making, pickling, and

preserving, never was such a thorough adept as that nice little body.

She is, besides, a cunning worker in muslin and fine linen, and a special

hand at marketing to the very best advantage. But if there be one branch

of housekeeping in which she excels to an utterly unparalleled and

unprecedented extent, it is in the important one of carving. A roast

goose is universally allowed to be the great stumbling-block in the way

of young aspirants to perfection in this department of science; many

promising carvers, beginning with legs of mutton, and preserving a good

reputation through fillets of veal, sirloins of beef, quarters of lamb,

fowls, and even ducks, have sunk before a roast goose, and lost caste and

character for ever. To Mrs. Chirrup the resolving a goose into its

smallest component parts is a pleasant pastimeâa practical jokeâa thing

to be done in a minute or so, without the smallest interruption to the

conversation of the time. No handing the dish over to an unfortunate man

upon her right or left, no wild sharpening of the knife, no hacking and

sawing at an unruly joint, no noise, no splash, no heat, no leaving off

in despair; all is confidence and cheerfulness. The dish is set upon the

table, the cover is removed; for an instant, and only an instant, you

observe that Mrs. Chirrupâs attention is distracted; she smiles, but

heareth not. You proceed with your story; meanwhile the glittering knife

is slowly upraised, both Mrs. Chirrupâs wrists are slightly but not

ungracefully agitated, she compresses her lips for an instant, then

breaks into a smile, and all is over. The legs of the bird slide gently

down into a pool of gravy, the wings seem to melt from the body, the

breast separates into a row of juicy slices, the smaller and more

complicated parts of his anatomy are perfectly developed, a cavern of

stuffing is revealed, and the goose is gone!

To dine with Mr. and Mrs. Chirrup is one of the pleasantest things in the

world. Mr. Chirrup has a bachelor friend, who lived with him in his own

days of single blessedness, and to whom he is mightily attached.

Contrary to the usual custom, this bachelor friend is no less a friend of

Mrs. Chirrupâs, and, consequently, whenever you dine with Mr. and Mrs.

Chirrup, you meet the bachelor friend. It would put any

reasonably-conditioned mortal into good-humour to observe the entire

unanimity which subsists between these three; but there is a quiet

welcome dimpling in Mrs. Chirrupâs face, a bustling hospitality oozing as

it were out of the waistcoat-pockets of Mr. Chirrup, and a patronising

enjoyment of their cordiality and satisfaction on the part of the

bachelor friend, which is quite delightful. On these occasions Mr.

Chirrup usually takes an opportunity of rallying the friend on being

single, and the friend retorts on Mr. Chirrup for being married, at which

moments some single young ladies present are like to die of laughter; and

we have more than once observed them bestow looks upon the friend, which

convinces us that his position is by no means a safe one, as, indeed, we

hold no bachelorâs to be who visits married friends and cracks jokes on

wedlock, for certain it is that such men walk among traps and nets and

pitfalls innumerable, and often find themselves down upon their knees at

the altar rails, taking M. or N. for their wedded wives, before they know

anything about the matter.

However, this is no business of Mr. Chirrupâs, who talks, and laughs, and

drinks his wine, and laughs again, and talks more, until it is time to

repair to the drawing-room, where, coffee served and over, Mrs. Chirrup

prepares for a round game, by sorting the nicest possible little fish

into the nicest possible little pools, and calling Mr. Chirrup to assist

her, which Mr. Chirrup does. As they stand side by side, you find that

Mr. Chirrup is the least possible shadow of a shade taller than Mrs.

Chirrup, and that they are the neatest and best-matched little couple

that can be, which the chances are ten to one against your observing with

such effect at any other time, unless you see them in the street

arm-in-arm, or meet them some rainy day trotting along under a very small

umbrella. The round game (at which Mr. Chirrup is the merriest of the

party) being done and over, in course of time a nice little tray appears,

on which is a nice little supper; and when that is finished likewise, and

you have said âGood night,â you find yourself repeating a dozen times, as

you ride home, that there never was such a nice little couple as Mr. and

Mrs. Chirrup.

Whether it is that pleasant qualities, being packed more closely in small

bodies than in large, come more readily to hand than when they are

diffused over a wider space, and have to be gathered together for use, we

donât know, but as a general rule,âstrengthened like all other rules by

its exceptions,âwe hold that little people are sprightly and

good-natured. The more sprightly and good-natured people we have, the

better; therefore, let us wish well to all nice little couples, and hope

that they may increase and multiply.

THE EGOTISTICAL COUPLE

Egotism in couples is of two kinds.âIt is our purpose to show this by two

examples.

The egotistical couple may be young, old, middle-aged, well to do, or ill

to do; they may have a small family, a large family, or no family at all.

There is no outward sign by which an egotistical couple may be known and

avoided. They come upon you unawares; there is no guarding against them.

No man can of himself be forewarned or forearmed against an egotistical

couple.

The egotistical couple have undergone every calamity, and experienced

every pleasurable and painful sensation of which our nature is

susceptible. You cannot by possibility tell the egotistical couple

anything they donât know, or describe to them anything they have not

felt. They have been everything but dead. Sometimes we are tempted to

wish they had been even that, but only in our uncharitable moments, which

are few and far between.

We happened the other day, in the course of a morning call, to encounter

an egotistical couple, nor were we suffered to remain long in ignorance

of the fact, for our very first inquiry of the lady of the house brought

them into active and vigorous operation. The inquiry was of course

touching the ladyâs health, and the answer happened to be, that she had

not been very well. âOh, my dear!â said the egotistical lady, âdonât

talk of not being well. We have been in \_such\_ a state since we saw you

last!ââThe lady of the house happening to remark that her lord had not

been well either, the egotistical gentleman struck in: âNever let Briggs

complain of not being wellânever let Briggs complain, my dear Mrs.

Briggs, after what I have undergone within these six weeks. He doesnât

know what it is to be ill, he hasnât the least idea of it; not the

faintest conception.âââMy dear,â interposed his wife smiling, âyou talk

as if it were almost a crime in Mr. Briggs not to have been as ill as we

have been, instead of feeling thankful to Providence that both he and our

dear Mrs. Briggs are in such blissful ignorance of real suffering.âââMy

love,â returned the egotistical gentleman, in a low and pious voice, âyou

mistake me;âI feel gratefulâvery grateful. I trust our friends may never

purchase their experience as dearly as we have bought ours; I hope they

never may!â

Having put down Mrs. Briggs upon this theme, and settled the question

thus, the egotistical gentleman turned to us, and, after a few

preliminary remarks, all tending towards and leading up to the point he

had in his mind, inquired if we happened to be acquainted with the

Dowager Lady Snorflerer. On our replying in the negative, he presumed we

had often met Lord Slang, or beyond all doubt, that we were on intimate

terms with Sir Chipkins Glogwog. Finding that we were equally unable to

lay claim to either of these distinctions, he expressed great

astonishment, and turning to his wife with a retrospective smile,

inquired who it was that had told that capital story about the mashed

potatoes. âWho, my dear?â returned the egotistical lady, âwhy Sir

Chipkins, of course; how can you ask! Donât you remember his applying it

to our cook, and saying that you and I were so like the Prince and

Princess, that he could almost have sworn we were they?â âTo be sure, I

remember that,â said the egotistical gentleman, âbut are you quite

certain that didnât apply to the other anecdote about the Emperor of

Austria and the pump?â âUpon my word then, I think it did,â replied his

wife. âTo be sure it did,â said the egotistical gentleman, âit was

Slangâs story, I remember now, perfectly.â However, it turned out, a few

seconds afterwards, that the egotistical gentlemanâs memory was rather

treacherous, as he began to have a misgiving that the story had been told

by the Dowager Lady Snorflerer the very last time they dined there; but

there appearing, on further consideration, strong circumstantial evidence

tending to show that this couldnât be, inasmuch as the Dowager Lady

Snorflerer had been, on the occasion in question, wholly engrossed by the

egotistical lady, the egotistical gentleman recanted this opinion; and

after laying the story at the doors of a great many great people, happily

left it at last with the Duke of Scuttlewig:âobserving that it was not

extraordinary he had forgotten his Grace hitherto, as it often happened

that the names of those with whom we were upon the most familiar footing

were the very last to present themselves to our thoughts.

It not only appeared that the egotistical couple knew everybody, but that

scarcely any event of importance or notoriety had occurred for many years

with which they had not been in some way or other connected. Thus we

learned that when the well-known attempt upon the life of George the

Third was made by Hatfield in Drury Lane theatre, the egotistical

gentlemanâs grandfather sat upon his right hand and was the first man who

collared him; and that the egotistical ladyâs aunt, sitting within a few

boxes of the royal party, was the only person in the audience who heard

his Majesty exclaim, âCharlotte, Charlotte, donât be frightened, donât be

frightened; theyâre letting off squibs, theyâre letting off squibs.â

When the fire broke out, which ended in the destruction of the two Houses

of Parliament, the egotistical couple, being at the time at a

drawing-room window on Blackheath, then and there simultaneously

exclaimed, to the astonishment of a whole partyââItâs the House of

Lords!â Nor was this a solitary instance of their peculiar discernment,

for chancing to be (as by a comparison of dates and circumstances they

afterwards found) in the same omnibus with Mr. Greenacre, when he carried

his victimâs head about town in a blue bag, they both remarked a singular

twitching in the muscles of his countenance; and walking down Fish Street

Hill, a few weeks since, the egotistical gentleman said to his

ladyâslightly casting up his eyes to the top of the MonumentââThereâs a

boy up there, my dear, reading a Bible. Itâs very strange. I donât like

it.âIn five seconds afterwards, Sir,â says the egotistical gentleman,

bringing his hands together with one violent clapââthe lad was over!â

Diversifying these topics by the introduction of many others of the same

kind, and entertaining us between whiles with a minute account of what

weather and diet agreed with them, and what weather and diet disagreed

with them, and at what time they usually got up, and at what time went to

bed, with many other particulars of their domestic economy too numerous

to mention; the egotistical couple at length took their leave, and

afforded us an opportunity of doing the same.

Mr. and Mrs. Sliverstone are an egotistical couple of another class, for

all the ladyâs egotism is about her husband, and all the gentlemanâs

about his wife. For example:âMr. Sliverstone is a clerical gentleman,

and occasionally writes sermons, as clerical gentlemen do. If you happen

to obtain admission at the street-door while he is so engaged, Mrs.

Sliverstone appears on tip-toe, and speaking in a solemn whisper, as if

there were at least three or four particular friends up-stairs, all upon

the point of death, implores you to be very silent, for Mr. Sliverstone

is composing, and she need not say how very important it is that he

should not be disturbed. Unwilling to interrupt anything so serious, you

hasten to withdraw, with many apologies; but this Mrs. Sliverstone will

by no means allow, observing, that she knows you would like to see him,

as it is very natural you should, and that she is determined to make a

trial for you, as you are a great favourite. So you are led

up-stairsâstill on tip-toeâto the door of a little back room, in which,

as the lady informs you in a whisper, Mr. Sliverstone always writes. No

answer being returned to a couple of soft taps, the lady opens the door,

and there, sure enough, is Mr. Sliverstone, with dishevelled hair,

powdering away with pen, ink, and paper, at a rate which, if he has any

power of sustaining it, would settle the longest sermon in no time. At

first he is too much absorbed to be roused by this intrusion; but

presently looking up, says faintly, âAh!â and pointing to his desk with a

weary and languid smile, extends his hand, and hopes youâll forgive him.

Then Mrs. Sliverstone sits down beside him, and taking his hand in hers,

tells you how that Mr. Sliverstone has been shut up there ever since nine

oâclock in the morning, (it is by this time twelve at noon,) and how she

knows it cannot be good for his health, and is very uneasy about it.

Unto this Mr. Sliverstone replies firmly, that âIt must be done;â which

agonizes Mrs. Sliverstone still more, and she goes on to tell you that

such were Mr. Sliverstoneâs labours last weekâwhat with the buryings,

marryings, churchings, christenings, and all together,âthat when he was

going up the pulpit stairs on Sunday evening, he was obliged to hold on

by the rails, or he would certainly have fallen over into his own pew.

Mr. Sliverstone, who has been listening and smiling meekly, says, âNot

quite so bad as that, not quite so bad!â he admits though, on

cross-examination, that he \_was\_ very near falling upon the verger who

was following him up to bolt the door; but adds, that it was his duty as

a Christian to fall upon him, if need were, and that he, Mr. Sliverstone,

and (possibly the verger too) ought to glory in it.

This sentiment communicates new impulse to Mrs. Sliverstone, who launches

into new praises of Mr. Sliverstoneâs worth and excellence, to which he

listens in the same meek silence, save when he puts in a word of

self-denial relative to some question of fact, asââNot seventy-two

christenings that week, my dear. Only seventy-one, only seventy-one.â

At length his lady has quite concluded, and then he says, Why should he

repine, why should he give way, why should he suffer his heart to sink

within him? Is it he alone who toils and suffers? What has she gone

through, he should like to know? What does she go through every day for

him and for society?

With such an exordium Mr. Sliverstone launches out into glowing praises

of the conduct of Mrs. Sliverstone in the production of eight young

children, and the subsequent rearing and fostering of the same; and thus

the husband magnifies the wife, and the wife the husband.

This would be well enough if Mr. and Mrs. Sliverstone kept it to

themselves, or even to themselves and a friend or two; but they do not.

The more hearers they have, the more egotistical the couple become, and

the more anxious they are to make believers in their merits. Perhaps

this is the worst kind of egotism. It has not even the poor excuse of

being spontaneous, but is the result of a deliberate system and malice

aforethought. Mere empty-headed conceit excites our pity, but

ostentatious hypocrisy awakens our disgust.

THE COUPLE WHO CODDLE THEMSELVES

Mrs. Merrywinkleâs maiden name was Chopper. She was the only child of

Mr. and Mrs. Chopper. Her father died when she was, as the play-books

express it, âyet an infant;â and so old Mrs. Chopper, when her daughter

married, made the house of her son-in-law her home from that time

henceforth, and set up her staff of rest with Mr. and Mrs. Merrywinkle.

Mr. and Mrs. Merrywinkle are a couple who coddle themselves; and the

venerable Mrs. Chopper is an aider and abettor in the same.

Mr. Merrywinkle is a rather lean and long-necked gentleman, middle-aged

and middle-sized, and usually troubled with a cold in the head. Mrs.

Merrywinkle is a delicate-looking lady, with very light hair, and is

exceedingly subject to the same unpleasant disorder. The venerable Mrs.

Chopperâwho is strictly entitled to the appellation, her daughter not

being very young, otherwise than by courtesy, at the time of her

marriage, which was some years agoâis a mysterious old lady who lurks

behind a pair of spectacles, and is afflicted with a chronic disease,

respecting which she has taken a vast deal of medical advice, and

referred to a vast number of medical books, without meeting any

definition of symptoms that at all suits her, or enables her to say,

âThatâs my complaint.â Indeed, the absence of authentic information upon

the subject of this complaint would seem to be Mrs. Chopperâs greatest

ill, as in all other respects she is an uncommonly hale and hearty

gentlewoman.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Chopper wear an extraordinary quantity of flannel, and

have a habit of putting their feet in hot water to an unnatural extent.

They likewise indulge in chamomile tea and such-like compounds, and rub

themselves on the slightest provocation with camphorated spirits and

other lotions applicable to mumps, sore-throat, rheumatism, or lumbago.

Mr. Merrywinkleâs leaving home to go to business on a damp or wet morning

is a very elaborate affair. He puts on wash-leather socks over his

stockings, and India-rubber shoes above his boots, and wears under his

waistcoat a cuirass of hare-skin. Besides these precautions, he winds a

thick shawl round his throat, and blocks up his mouth with a large silk

handkerchief. Thus accoutred, and furnished besides with a great-coat

and umbrella, he braves the dangers of the streets; travelling in severe

weather at a gentle trot, the better to preserve the circulation, and

bringing his mouth to the surface to take breath, but very seldom, and

with the utmost caution. His office-door opened, he shoots past his

clerk at the same pace, and diving into his own private room, closes the

door, examines the window-fastenings, and gradually unrobes himself:

hanging his pocket-handkerchief on the fender to air, and determining to

write to the newspapers about the fog, which, he says, âhas really got to

that pitch that it is quite unbearable.â

In this last opinion Mrs. Merrywinkle and her respected mother fully

concur; for though not present, their thoughts and tongues are occupied

with the same subject, which is their constant theme all day. If anybody

happens to call, Mrs. Merrywinkle opines that they must assuredly be mad,

and her first salutation is, âWhy, what in the name of goodness can bring

you out in such weather? You know you \_must\_ catch your death.â This

assurance is corroborated by Mrs. Chopper, who adds, in further

confirmation, a dismal legend concerning an individual of her

acquaintance who, making a call under precisely parallel circumstances,

and being then in the best health and spirits, expired in forty-eight

hours afterwards, of a complication of inflammatory disorders. The

visitor, rendered not altogether comfortable perhaps by this and other

precedents, inquires very affectionately after Mr. Merrywinkle, but by so

doing brings about no change of the subject; for Mr. Merrywinkleâs name

is inseparably connected with his complaints, and his complaints are

inseparably connected with Mrs. Merrywinkleâs; and when these are done

with, Mrs. Chopper, who has been biding her time, cuts in with the

chronic disorderâa subject upon which the amiable old lady never leaves

off speaking until she is left alone, and very often not then.

But Mr. Merrywinkle comes home to dinner. He is received by Mrs.

Merrywinkle and Mrs. Chopper, who, on his remarking that he thinks his

feet are damp, turn pale as ashes and drag him up-stairs, imploring him

to have them rubbed directly with a dry coarse towel. Rubbed they are,

one by Mrs. Merrywinkle and one by Mrs. Chopper, until the friction

causes Mr. Merrywinkle to make horrible faces, and look as if he had been

smelling very powerful onions; when they desist, and the patient,

provided for his better security with thick worsted stockings and list

slippers, is borne down-stairs to dinner. Now, the dinner is always a

good one, the appetites of the diners being delicate, and requiring a

little of what Mrs. Merrywinkle calls âtittivation;â the secret of which

is understood to lie in good cookery and tasteful spices, and which

process is so successfully performed in the present instance, that both

Mr. and Mrs. Merrywinkle eat a remarkably good dinner, and even the

afflicted Mrs. Chopper wields her knife and fork with much of the spirit

and elasticity of youth. But Mr. Merrywinkle, in his desire to gratify

his appetite, is not unmindful of his health, for he has a bottle of

carbonate of soda with which to qualify his porter, and a little pair of

scales in which to weigh it out. Neither in his anxiety to take care of

his body is he unmindful of the welfare of his immortal part, as he

always prays that for what he is going to receive he may be made truly

thankful; and in order that he may be as thankful as possible, eats and

drinks to the utmost.

Either from eating and drinking so much, or from being the victim of this

constitutional infirmity, among others, Mr. Merrywinkle, after two or

three glasses of wine, falls fast asleep; and he has scarcely closed his

eyes, when Mrs. Merrywinkle and Mrs. Chopper fall asleep likewise. It is

on awakening at tea-time that their most alarming symptoms prevail; for

then Mr. Merrywinkle feels as if his temples were tightly bound round

with the chain of the street-door, and Mrs. Merrywinkle as if she had

made a hearty dinner of half-hundredweights, and Mrs. Chopper as if cold

water were running down her back, and oyster-knives with sharp points

were plunging of their own accord into her ribs. Symptoms like these are

enough to make people peevish, and no wonder that they remain so until

supper-time, doing little more than doze and complain, unless Mr.

Merrywinkle calls out very loudly to a servant âto keep that draught

out,â or rushes into the passage to flourish his fist in the countenance

of the twopenny-postman, for daring to give such a knock as he had just

performed at the door of a private gentleman with nerves.

Supper, coming after dinner, should consist of some gentle provocative;

and therefore the tittivating art is again in requisition, and againâdone

honour to by Mr. and Mrs. Merrywinkle, still comforted and abetted by

Mrs. Chopper. After supper, it is ten to one but the last-named old lady

becomes worse, and is led off to bed with the chronic complaint in full

vigour. Mr. and Mrs. Merrywinkle, having administered to her a warm

cordial, which is something of the strongest, then repair to their own

room, where Mr. Merrywinkle, with his legs and feet in hot water,

superintends the mulling of some wine which he is to drink at the very

moment he plunges into bed, while Mrs. Merrywinkle, in garments whose

nature is unknown to and unimagined by all but married men, takes four

small pills with a spasmodic look between each, and finally comes to

something hot and fragrant out of another little saucepan, which serves

as her composing-draught for the night.

There is another kind of couple who coddle themselves, and who do so at a

cheaper rate and on more spare diet, because they are niggardly and

parsimonious; for which reason they are kind enough to coddle their

visitors too. It is unnecessary to describe them, for our readers may

rest assured of the accuracy of these general principles:âthat all

couples who coddle themselves are selfish and slothful,âthat they charge

upon every wind that blows, every rain that falls, and every vapour that

hangs in the air, the evils which arise from their own imprudence or the

gloom which is engendered in their own tempers,âand that all men and

women, in couples or otherwise, who fall into exclusive habits of

self-indulgence, and forget their natural sympathy and close connexion

with everybody and everything in the world around them, not only neglect

the first duty of life, but, by a happy retributive justice, deprive

themselves of its truest and best enjoyment.

THE OLD COUPLE

They are grandfather and grandmother to a dozen grown people and have

great-grandchildren besides; their bodies are bent, their hair is grey,

their step tottering and infirm. Is this the lightsome pair whose

wedding was so merry, and have the young couple indeed grown old so soon!

It seems but yesterdayâand yet what a host of cares and griefs are

crowded into the intervening time which, reckoned by them, lengthens out

into a century! How many new associations have wreathed themselves about

their hearts since then! The old time is gone, and a new time has come

for othersânot for them. They are but the rusting link that feebly joins

the two, and is silently loosening its hold and dropping asunder.

It seems but yesterdayâand yet three of their children have sunk into the

grave, and the tree that shades it has grown quite old. One was an

infantâthey wept for him; the next a girl, a slight young thing too

delicate for earthâher loss was hard indeed to bear. The third, a man.

That was the worst of all, but even that grief is softened now.

It seems but yesterdayâand yet how the gay and laughing faces of that

bright morning have changed and vanished from above ground! Faint

likenesses of some remain about them yet, but they are very faint and

scarcely to be traced. The rest are only seen in dreams, and even they

are unlike what they were, in eyes so old and dim.

One or two dresses from the bridal wardrobe are yet preserved. They are

of a quaint and antique fashion, and seldom seen except in pictures.

White has turned yellow, and brighter hues have faded. Do you wonder,

child? The wrinkled face was once as smooth as yours, the eyes as

bright, the shrivelled skin as fair and delicate. It is the work of

hands that have been dust these many years.

Where are the fairy lovers of that happy day whose annual return comes

upon the old man and his wife, like the echo of some village bell which

has long been silent? Let yonder peevish bachelor, racked by rheumatic

pains, and quarrelling with the world, let him answer to the question.

He recollects something of a favourite playmate; her name was Lucyâso

they tell him. He is not sure whether she was married, or went abroad,

or died. It is a long while ago, and he donât remember.

Is nothing as it used to be; does no one feel, or think, or act, as in

days of yore? Yes. There is an aged woman who once lived servant with

the old ladyâs father, and is sheltered in an alms-house not far off.

She is still attached to the family, and loves them all; she nursed the

children in her lap, and tended in their sickness those who are no more.

Her old mistress has still something of youth in her eyes; the young

ladies are like what she was but not quite so handsome, nor are the

gentlemen as stately as Mr. Harvey used to be. She has seen a great deal

of trouble; her husband and her son died long ago; but she has got over

that, and is happy nowâquite happy.

If ever her attachment to her old protectors were disturbed by fresher

cares and hopes, it has long since resumed its former current. It has

filled the void in the poor creatureâs heart, and replaced the love of

kindred. Death has not left her alone, and this, with a roof above her

head, and a warm hearth to sit by, makes her cheerful and contented.

Does she remember the marriage of great-grandmamma? Ay, that she does,

as wellâas if it was only yesterday. You wouldnât think it to look at

her now, and perhaps she ought not to say so of herself, but she was as

smart a young girl then as youâd wish to see. She recollects she took a

friend of hers up-stairs to see Miss Emma dressed for church; her name

wasâah! she forgets the name, but she remembers that she was a very

pretty girl, and that she married not long afterwards, and livedâit has

quite passed out of her mind where she lived, but she knows she had a bad

husband who used her ill, and that she died in Lambeth work-house. Dear,

dear, in Lambeth workhouse!

And the old coupleâhave they no comfort or enjoyment of existence? See

them among their grandchildren and great-grandchildren; how garrulous

they are, how they compare one with another, and insist on likenesses

which no one else can see; how gently the old lady lectures the girls on

points of breeding and decorum, and points the moral by anecdotes of

herself in her young daysâhow the old gentleman chuckles over boyish

feats and roguish tricks, and tells long stories of a âbarring-outâ

achieved at the school he went to: which was very wrong, he tells the

boys, and never to be imitated of course, but which he cannot help

letting them know was very pleasant tooâespecially when he kissed the

masterâs niece. This last, however, is a point on which the old lady is

very tender, for she considers it a shocking and indelicate thing to talk

about, and always says so whenever it is mentioned, never failing to

observe that he ought to be very penitent for having been so sinful. So

the old gentleman gets no further, and what the schoolmasterâs niece said

afterwards (which he is always going to tell) is lost to posterity.

The old gentleman is eighty years old, to-dayââEighty years old, Crofts,

and never had a headache,â he tells the barber who shaves him (the barber

being a young fellow, and very subject to that complaint). âThatâs a

great age, Crofts,â says the old gentleman. âI donât think itâs sich a

wery great age, Sir,â replied the barber. âCrofts,â rejoins the old

gentleman, âyouâre talking nonsense to me. Eighty not a great age?â

âItâs a wery great age, Sir, for a gentleman to be as healthy and active

as you are,â returns the barber; âbut my grandfather, Sir, he was

ninety-four.â âYou donât mean that, Crofts?â says the old gentleman. âI

do indeed, Sir,â retorts the barber, âand as wiggerous as Julius Caesar,

my grandfather was.â The old gentleman muses a little time, and then

says, âWhat did he die of, Crofts?â âHe died accidentally, Sir,â returns

the barber; âhe didnât mean to do it. He always would go a running about

the streetsâwalking never satisfied \_his\_ spiritâand he run against a

post and died of a hurt in his chest.â The old gentleman says no more

until the shaving is concluded, and then he gives Crofts half-a-crown to

drink his health. He is a little doubtful of the barberâs veracity

afterwards, and telling the anecdote to the old lady, affects to make

very light of itâthough to be sure (he adds) there was old Parr, and in

some parts of England, ninety-five or so is a common age, quite a common

age.

This morning the old couple are cheerful but serious, recalling old times

as well as they can remember them, and dwelling upon many passages in

their past lives which the day brings to mind. The old lady reads aloud,

in a tremulous voice, out of a great Bible, and the old gentleman with

his hand to his ear, listens with profound respect. When the book is

closed, they sit silent for a short space, and afterwards resume their

conversation, with a reference perhaps to their dead children, as a

subject not unsuited to that they have just left. By degrees they are

led to consider which of those who survive are the most like those

dearly-remembered objects, and so they fall into a less solemn strain,

and become cheerful again.

How many people in all, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and one or

two intimate friends of the family, dine together to-day at the eldest

sonâs to congratulate the old couple, and wish them many happy returns,

is a calculation beyond our powers; but this we know, that the old couple

no sooner present themselves, very sprucely and carefully attired, than

there is a violent shouting and rushing forward of the younger branches

with all manner of presents, such as pocket-books, pencil-cases,

pen-wipers, watch-papers, pin-cushions, sleeve-buckles, worked-slippers,

watch-guards, and even a nutmeg-grater: the latter article being

presented by a very chubby and very little boy, who exhibits it in great

triumph as an extraordinary variety. The old coupleâs emotion at these

tokens of remembrance occasions quite a pathetic scene, of which the

chief ingredients are a vast quantity of kissing and hugging, and

repeated wipings of small eyes and noses with small square

pocket-handkerchiefs, which donât come at all easily out of small

pockets. Even the peevish bachelor is moved, and he says, as he presents

the old gentleman with a queer sort of antique ring from his own finger,

that heâll be deâed if he doesnât think he looks younger than he did ten

years ago.

But the great time is after dinner, when the dessert and wine are on the

table, which is pushed back to make plenty of room, and they are all

gathered in a large circle round the fire, for it is thenâthe glasses

being filled, and everybody ready to drink the toastâthat two

great-grandchildren rush out at a given signal, and presently return,

dragging in old Jane Adams leaning upon her crutched stick, and trembling

with age and pleasure. Who so popular as poor old Jane, nurse and

story-teller in ordinary to two generations; and who so happy as she,

striving to bend her stiff limbs into a curtsey, while tears of pleasure

steal down her withered cheeks!

The old couple sit side by side, and the old time seems like yesterday

indeed. Looking back upon the path they have travelled, its dust and

ashes disappear; the flowers that withered long ago, show brightly again

upon its borders, and they grow young once more in the youth of those

about them.

CONCLUSION

We have taken for the subjects of the foregoing moral essays, twelve

samples of married couples, carefully selected from a large stock on

hand, open to the inspection of all comers. These samples are intended

for the benefit of the rising generation of both sexes, and, for their

more easy and pleasant information, have been separately ticketed and

labelled in the manner they have seen.

We have purposely excluded from consideration the couple in which the

lady reigns paramount and supreme, holding such cases to be of a very

unnatural kind, and like hideous births and other monstrous deformities,

only to be discreetly and sparingly exhibited.

And here our self-imposed task would have ended, but that to those young

ladies and gentlemen who are yet revolving singly round the church,

awaiting the advent of that time when the mysterious laws of attraction

shall draw them towards it in couples, we are desirous of addressing a

few last words.

Before marriage and afterwards, let them learn to centre all their hopes

of real and lasting happiness in their own fireside; let them cherish the

faith that in home, and all the English virtues which the love of home

engenders, lies the only true source of domestic felicity; let them

believe that round the household gods, contentment and tranquillity

cluster in their gentlest and most graceful forms; and that many weary

hunters of happiness through the noisy world, have learnt this truth too

late, and found a cheerful spirit and a quiet mind only at home at last.

How much may depend on the education of daughters and the conduct of

mothers; how much of the brightest part of our old national character may

be perpetuated by their wisdom or frittered away by their follyâhow much

of it may have been lost already, and how much more in danger of

vanishing every dayâare questions too weighty for discussion here, but

well deserving a little serious consideration from all young couples

nevertheless.

To that one young couple on whose bright destiny the thoughts of nations

are fixed, may the youth of England look, and not in vain, for an

example. From that one young couple, blessed and favoured as they are,

may they learn that even the glare and glitter of a court, the splendour

of a palace, and the pomp and glory of a throne, yield in their power of

conferring happiness, to domestic worth and virtue. From that one young

couple may they learn that the crown of a great empire, costly and

jewelled though it be, gives place in the estimation of a Queen to the

plain gold ring that links her womanâs nature to that of tens of

thousands of her humble subjects, and guards in her womanâs heart one

secret store of tenderness, whose proudest boast shall be that it knows

no Royalty save Natureâs own, and no pride of birth but being the child

of heaven!

So shall the highest young couple in the land for once hear the truth,

when men throw up their caps, and cry with loving shoutsâ

GOD BLESS THEM.

THE MUDFOG AND OTHER SKETCHES

PUBLIC LIFE OF MR. TULRUMBLEâONCE MAYOR OF MUDFOG

Mudfog is a pleasant townâa remarkably pleasant townâsituated in a

charming hollow by the side of a river, from which river, Mudfog derives

an agreeable scent of pitch, tar, coals, and rope-yarn, a roving

population in oilskin hats, a pretty steady influx of drunken bargemen,

and a great many other maritime advantages. There is a good deal of

water about Mudfog, and yet it is not exactly the sort of town for a

watering-place, either. Water is a perverse sort of element at the best

of times, and in Mudfog it is particularly so. In winter, it comes

oozing down the streets and tumbling over the fields,ânay, rushes into

the very cellars and kitchens of the houses, with a lavish prodigality

that might well be dispensed with; but in the hot summer weather it

\_will\_ dry up, and turn green: and, although green is a very good colour

in its way, especially in grass, still it certainly is not becoming to

water; and it cannot be denied that the beauty of Mudfog is rather

impaired, even by this trifling circumstance. Mudfog is a healthy

placeâvery healthy;âdamp, perhaps, but none the worse for that. Itâs

quite a mistake to suppose that damp is unwholesome: plants thrive best

in damp situations, and why shouldnât men? The inhabitants of Mudfog are

unanimous in asserting that there exists not a finer race of people on

the face of the earth; here we have an indisputable and veracious

contradiction of the vulgar error at once. So, admitting Mudfog to be

damp, we distinctly state that it is salubrious.

The town of Mudfog is extremely picturesque. Limehouse and Ratcliff

Highway are both something like it, but they give you a very faint idea

of Mudfog. There are a great many more public-houses in Mudfogâmore than

in Ratcliff Highway and Limehouse put together. The public buildings,

too, are very imposing. We consider the town-hall one of the finest

specimens of shed architecture, extant: it is a combination of the

pig-sty and tea-garden-box orders; and the simplicity of its design is of

surpassing beauty. The idea of placing a large window on one side of the

door, and a small one on the other, is particularly happy. There is a

fine old Doric beauty, too, about the padlock and scraper, which is

strictly in keeping with the general effect.

In this room do the mayor and corporation of Mudfog assemble together in

solemn council for the public weal. Seated on the massive wooden

benches, which, with the table in the centre, form the only furniture of

the whitewashed apartment, the sage men of Mudfog spend hour after hour

in grave deliberation. Here they settle at what hour of the night the

public-houses shall be closed, at what hour of the morning they shall be

permitted to open, how soon it shall be lawful for people to eat their

dinner on church-days, and other great political questions; and

sometimes, long after silence has fallen on the town, and the distant

lights from the shops and houses have ceased to twinkle, like far-off

stars, to the sight of the boatmen on the river, the illumination in the

two unequal-sized windows of the town-hall, warns the inhabitants of

Mudfog that its little body of legislators, like a larger and

better-known body of the same genus, a great deal more noisy, and not a

whit more profound, are patriotically dozing away in company, far into

the night, for their countryâs good.

Among this knot of sage and learned men, no one was so eminently

distinguished, during many years, for the quiet modesty of his appearance

and demeanour, as Nicholas Tulrumble, the well-known coal-dealer.

However exciting the subject of discussion, however animated the tone of

the debate, or however warm the personalities exchanged, (and even in

Mudfog we get personal sometimes,) Nicholas Tulrumble was always the

same. To say truth, Nicholas, being an industrious man, and always up

betimes, was apt to fall asleep when a debate began, and to remain asleep

till it was over, when he would wake up very much refreshed, and give his

vote with the greatest complacency. The fact was, that Nicholas

Tulrumble, knowing that everybody there had made up his mind beforehand,

considered the talking as just a long botheration about nothing at all;

and to the present hour it remains a question, whether, on this point at

all events, Nicholas Tulrumble was not pretty near right.

Time, which strews a manâs head with silver, sometimes fills his pockets

with gold. As he gradually performed one good office for Nicholas

Tulrumble, he was obliging enough, not to omit the other. Nicholas began

life in a wooden tenement of four feet square, with a capital of two and

ninepence, and a stock in trade of three bushels and a-half of coals,

exclusive of the large lump which hung, by way of sign-board, outside.

Then he enlarged the shed, and kept a truck; then he left the shed, and

the truck too, and started a donkey and a Mrs. Tulrumble; then he moved

again and set up a cart; the cart was soon afterwards exchanged for a

waggon; and so he went on like his great predecessor Whittingtonâonly

without a cat for a partnerâincreasing in wealth and fame, until at last

he gave up business altogether, and retired with Mrs. Tulrumble and

family to Mudfog Hall, which he had himself erected, on something which

he attempted to delude himself into the belief was a hill, about a

quarter of a mile distant from the town of Mudfog.

About this time, it began to be murmured in Mudfog that Nicholas

Tulrumble was growing vain and haughty; that prosperity and success had

corrupted the simplicity of his manners, and tainted the natural goodness

of his heart; in short, that he was setting up for a public character,

and a great gentleman, and affected to look down upon his old companions

with compassion and contempt. Whether these reports were at the time

well-founded, or not, certain it is that Mrs. Tulrumble very shortly

afterwards started a four-wheel chaise, driven by a tall postilion in a

yellow cap,âthat Mr. Tulrumble junior took to smoking cigars, and calling

the footman a âfeller,ââand that Mr. Tulrumble from that time forth, was

no more seen in his old seat in the chimney-corner of the Lightermanâs

Arms at night. This looked bad; but, more than this, it began to be

observed that Mr. Nicholas Tulrumble attended the corporation meetings

more frequently than heretofore; and he no longer went to sleep as he had

done for so many years, but propped his eyelids open with his two

forefingers; that he read the newspapers by himself at home; and that he

was in the habit of indulging abroad in distant and mysterious allusions

to âmasses of people,â and âthe property of the country,â and âproductive

power,â and âthe monied interest:â all of which denoted and proved that

Nicholas Tulrumble was either mad, or worse; and it puzzled the good

people of Mudfog amazingly.

At length, about the middle of the month of October, Mr. Tulrumble and

family went up to London; the middle of October being, as Mrs. Tulrumble

informed her acquaintance in Mudfog, the very height of the fashionable

season.

Somehow or other, just about this time, despite the health-preserving air

of Mudfog, the Mayor died. It was a most extraordinary circumstance; he

had lived in Mudfog for eighty-five years. The corporation didnât

understand it at all; indeed it was with great difficulty that one old

gentleman, who was a great stickler for forms, was dissuaded from

proposing a vote of censure on such unaccountable conduct. Strange as it

was, however, die he did, without taking the slightest notice of the

corporation; and the corporation were imperatively called upon to elect

his successor. So, they met for the purpose; and being very full of

Nicholas Tulrumble just then, and Nicholas Tulrumble being a very

important man, they elected him, and wrote off to London by the very next

post to acquaint Nicholas Tulrumble with his new elevation.

Now, it being November time, and Mr. Nicholas Tulrumble being in the

capital, it fell out that he was present at the Lord Mayorâs show and

dinner, at sight of the glory and splendour whereof, he, Mr. Tulrumble,

was greatly mortified, inasmuch as the reflection would force itself on

his mind, that, had he been born in London instead of in Mudfog, he might

have been a Lord Mayor too, and have patronized the judges, and been

affable to the Lord Chancellor, and friendly with the Premier, and coldly

condescending to the Secretary to the Treasury, and have dined with a

flag behind his back, and done a great many other acts and deeds which

unto Lord Mayors of London peculiarly appertain. The more he thought of

the Lord Mayor, the more enviable a personage he seemed. To be a King

was all very well; but what was the King to the Lord Mayor! When the

King made a speech, everybody knew it was somebody elseâs writing;

whereas here was the Lord Mayor, talking away for half an hour-all out of

his own headâamidst the enthusiastic applause of the whole company, while

it was notorious that the King might talk to his parliament till he was

black in the face without getting so much as a single cheer. As all

these reflections passed through the mind of Mr. Nicholas Tulrumble, the

Lord Mayor of London appeared to him the greatest sovereign on the face

of the earth, beating the Emperor of Russia all to nothing, and leaving

the Great Mogul immeasurably behind.

Mr. Nicholas Tulrumble was pondering over these things, and inwardly

cursing the fate which had pitched his coal-shed in Mudfog, when the

letter of the corporation was put into his hand. A crimson flush mantled

over his face as he read it, for visions of brightness were already

dancing before his imagination.

âMy dear,â said Mr. Tulrumble to his wife, âthey have elected me, Mayor

of Mudfog.â

âLor-a-mussy!â said Mrs. Tulrumble: âwhy whatâs become of old Sniggs?â

âThe late Mr. Sniggs, Mrs. Tulrumble,â said Mr. Tulrumble sharply, for he

by no means approved of the notion of unceremoniously designating a

gentleman who filled the high office of Mayor, as âOld Sniggs,âââThe late

Mr. Sniggs, Mrs. Tulrumble, is dead.â

The communication was very unexpected; but Mrs. Tulrumble only ejaculated

âLor-a-mussy!â once again, as if a Mayor were a mere ordinary Christian,

at which Mr. Tulrumble frowned gloomily.

âWhat a pity âtanât in London, ainât it?â said Mrs. Tulrumble, after a

short pause; âwhat a pity âtanât in London, where you might have had a

show.â

âI \_might\_ have a show in Mudfog, if I thought proper, I apprehend,â said

Mr. Tulrumble mysteriously.

âLor! so you might, I declare,â replied Mrs. Tulrumble.

âAnd a good one too,â said Mr. Tulrumble.

âDelightful!â exclaimed Mrs. Tulrumble.

âOne which would rather astonish the ignorant people down there,â said

Mr. Tulrumble.

âIt would kill them with envy,â said Mrs. Tulrumble.

So it was agreed that his Majestyâs lieges in Mudfog should be astonished

with splendour, and slaughtered with envy, and that such a show should

take place as had never been seen in that town, or in any other town

before,âno, not even in London itself.

On the very next day after the receipt of the letter, down came the tall

postilion in a post-chaise,ânot upon one of the horses, but

insideâactually inside the chaise,âand, driving up to the very door of

the town-hall, where the corporation were assembled, delivered a letter,

written by the Lord knows who, and signed by Nicholas Tulrumble, in which

Nicholas said, all through four sides of closely-written, gilt-edged,

hot-pressed, Bath post letter paper, that he responded to the call of his

fellow-townsmen with feelings of heartfelt delight; that he accepted the

arduous office which their confidence had imposed upon him; that they

would never find him shrinking from the discharge of his duty; that he

would endeavour to execute his functions with all that dignity which

their magnitude and importance demanded; and a great deal more to the

same effect. But even this was not all. The tall postilion produced

from his right-hand top-boot, a damp copy of that afternoonâs number of

the county paper; and there, in large type, running the whole length of

the very first column, was a long address from Nicholas Tulrumble to the

inhabitants of Mudfog, in which he said that he cheerfully complied with

their requisition, and, in short, as if to prevent any mistake about the

matter, told them over again what a grand fellow he meant to be, in very

much the same terms as those in which he had already told them all about

the matter in his letter.

The corporation stared at one another very hard at all this, and then

looked as if for explanation to the tall postilion, but as the tall

postilion was intently contemplating the gold tassel on the top of his

yellow cap, and could have afforded no explanation whatever, even if his

thoughts had been entirely disengaged, they contented themselves with

coughing very dubiously, and looking very grave. The tall postilion then

delivered another letter, in which Nicholas Tulrumble informed the

corporation, that he intended repairing to the town-hall, in grand state

and gorgeous procession, on the Monday afternoon next ensuing. At this

the corporation looked still more solemn; but, as the epistle wound up

with a formal invitation to the whole body to dine with the Mayor on that

day, at Mudfog Hall, Mudfog Hill, Mudfog, they began to see the fun of

the thing directly, and sent back their compliments, and theyâd be sure

to come.

Now there happened to be in Mudfog, as somehow or other there does happen

to be, in almost every town in the British dominions, and perhaps in

foreign dominions tooâwe think it very likely, but, being no great

traveller, cannot distinctly sayâthere happened to be, in Mudfog, a

merry-tempered, pleasant-faced, good-for-nothing sort of vagabond, with

an invincible dislike to manual labour, and an unconquerable attachment

to strong beer and spirits, whom everybody knew, and nobody, except his

wife, took the trouble to quarrel with, who inherited from his ancestors

the appellation of Edward Twigger, and rejoiced in the \_sobriquet\_ of

Bottle-nosed Ned. He was drunk upon the average once a day, and penitent

upon an equally fair calculation once a month; and when he was penitent,

he was invariably in the very last stage of maudlin intoxication. He was

a ragged, roving, roaring kind of fellow, with a burly form, a sharp wit,

and a ready head, and could turn his hand to anything when he chose to do

it. He was by no means opposed to hard labour on principle, for he would

work away at a cricket-match by the day together,ârunning, and catching,

and batting, and bowling, and revelling in toil which would exhaust a

galley-slave. He would have been invaluable to a fire-office; never was

a man with such a natural taste for pumping engines, running up ladders,

and throwing furniture out of two-pair-of-stairsâ windows: nor was this

the only element in which he was at home; he was a humane society in

himself, a portable drag, an animated life-preserver, and had saved more

people, in his time, from drowning, than the Plymouth life-boat, or

Captain Manbyâs apparatus. With all these qualifications,

notwithstanding his dissipation, Bottle-nosed Ned was a general

favourite; and the authorities of Mudfog, remembering his numerous

services to the population, allowed him in return to get drunk in his own

way, without the fear of stocks, fine, or imprisonment. He had a general

licence, and he showed his sense of the compliment by making the most of

it.

We have been thus particular in describing the character and avocations

of Bottle-nosed Ned, because it enables us to introduce a fact politely,

without hauling it into the readerâs presence with indecent haste by the

head and shoulders, and brings us very naturally to relate, that on the

very same evening on which Mr. Nicholas Tulrumble and family returned to

Mudfog, Mr. Tulrumbleâs new secretary, just imported from London, with a

pale face and light whiskers, thrust his head down to the very bottom of

his neckcloth-tie, in at the tap-room door of the Lightermanâs Arms, and

inquiring whether one Ned Twigger was luxuriating within, announced

himself as the bearer of a message from Nicholas Tulrumble, Esquire,

requiring Mr. Twiggerâs immediate attendance at the hall, on private and

particular business. It being by no means Mr. Twiggerâs interest to

affront the Mayor, he rose from the fireplace with a slight sigh, and

followed the light-whiskered secretary through the dirt and wet of Mudfog

streets, up to Mudfog Hall, without further ado.

Mr. Nicholas Tulrumble was seated in a small cavern with a skylight,

which he called his library, sketching out a plan of the procession on a

large sheet of paper; and into the cavern the secretary ushered Ned

Twigger.

âWell, Twigger!â said Nicholas Tulrumble, condescendingly.

There was a time when Twigger would have replied, âWell, Nick!â but that

was in the days of the truck, and a couple of years before the donkey;

so, he only bowed.

âI want you to go into training, Twigger,â said Mr. Tulrumble.

âWhat for, sir?â inquired Ned, with a stare.

âHush, hush, Twigger!â said the Mayor. âShut the door, Mr. Jennings.

Look here, Twigger.â

As the Mayor said this, he unlocked a high closet, and disclosed a

complete suit of brass armour, of gigantic dimensions.

âI want you to wear this next Monday, Twigger,â said the Mayor.

âBless your heart and soul, sir!â replied Ned, âyou might as well ask me

to wear a seventy-four pounder, or a cast-iron boiler.â

âNonsense, Twigger, nonsense!â said the Mayor.

âI couldnât stand under it, sir,â said Twigger; âit would make mashed

potatoes of me, if I attempted it.â

âPooh, pooh, Twigger!â returned the Mayor. âI tell you I have seen it

done with my own eyes, in London, and the man wasnât half such a man as

you are, either.â

âI should as soon have thought of a manâs wearing the case of an

eight-day clock to save his linen,â said Twigger, casting a look of

apprehension at the brass suit.

âItâs the easiest thing in the world,â rejoined the Mayor.

âItâs nothing,â said Mr. Jennings.

âWhen youâre used to it,â added Ned.

âYou do it by degrees,â said the Mayor. âYou would begin with one piece

to-morrow, and two the next day, and so on, till you had got it all on.

Mr. Jennings, give Twigger a glass of rum. Just try the breast-plate,

Twigger. Stay; take another glass of rum first. Help me to lift it, Mr.

Jennings. Stand firm, Twigger! There!âit isnât half as heavy as it

looks, is it?â

Twigger was a good strong, stout fellow; so, after a great deal of

staggering, he managed to keep himself up, under the breastplate, and

even contrived, with the aid of another glass of rum, to walk about in

it, and the gauntlets into the bargain. He made a trial of the helmet,

but was not equally successful, inasmuch as he tipped over instantly,âan

accident which Mr. Tulrumble clearly demonstrated to be occasioned by his

not having a counteracting weight of brass on his legs.

âNow, wear that with grace and propriety on Monday next,â said Tulrumble,

âand Iâll make your fortune.â

âIâll try what I can do, sir,â said Twigger.

âIt must be kept a profound secret,â said Tulrumble.

âOf course, sir,â replied Twigger.

âAnd you must be sober,â said Tulrumble; âperfectly sober.â Mr. Twigger

at once solemnly pledged himself to be as sober as a judge, and Nicholas

Tulrumble was satisfied, although, had we been Nicholas, we should

certainly have exacted some promise of a more specific nature; inasmuch

as, having attended the Mudfog assizes in the evening more than once, we

can solemnly testify to having seen judges with very strong symptoms of

dinner under their wigs. However, thatâs neither here nor there.

The next day, and the day following, and the day after that, Ned Twigger

was securely locked up in the small cavern with the sky-light, hard at

work at the armour. With every additional piece he could manage to stand

upright in, he had an additional glass of rum; and at last, after many

partial suffocations, he contrived to get on the whole suit, and to

stagger up and down the room in it, like an intoxicated effigy from

Westminster Abbey.

Never was man so delighted as Nicholas Tulrumble; never was woman so

charmed as Nicholas Tulrumbleâs wife. Here was a sight for the common

people of Mudfog! A live man in brass armour! Why, they would go wild

with wonder!

The dayâ\_the\_ Mondayâarrived.

If the morning had been made to order, it couldnât have been better

adapted to the purpose. They never showed a better fog in London on Lord

Mayorâs day, than enwrapped the town of Mudfog on that eventful occasion.

It had risen slowly and surely from the green and stagnant water with the

first light of morning, until it reached a little above the lamp-post

tops; and there it had stopped, with a sleepy, sluggish obstinacy, which

bade defiance to the sun, who had got up very blood-shot about the eyes,

as if he had been at a drinking-party over-night, and was doing his dayâs

work with the worst possible grace. The thick damp mist hung over the

town like a huge gauze curtain. All was dim and dismal. The church

steeples had bidden a temporary adieu to the world below; and every

object of lesser importanceâhouses, barns, hedges, trees, and bargesâhad

all taken the veil.

The church-clock struck one. A cracked trumpet from the front garden of

Mudfog Hall produced a feeble flourish, as if some asthmatic person had

coughed into it accidentally; the gate flew open, and out came a

gentleman, on a moist-sugar coloured charger, intended to represent a

herald, but bearing a much stronger resemblance to a court-card on

horseback. This was one of the Circus people, who always came down to

Mudfog at that time of the year, and who had been engaged by Nicholas

Tulrumble expressly for the occasion. There was the horse, whisking his

tail about, balancing himself on his hind-legs, and flourishing away with

his fore-feet, in a manner which would have gone to the hearts and souls

of any reasonable crowd. But a Mudfog crowd never was a reasonable one,

and in all probability never will be. Instead of scattering the very fog

with their shouts, as they ought most indubitably to have done, and were

fully intended to do, by Nicholas Tulrumble, they no sooner recognized

the herald, than they began to growl forth the most unqualified

disapprobation at the bare notion of his riding like any other man. If

he had come out on his head indeed, or jumping through a hoop, or flying

through a red-hot drum, or even standing on one leg with his other foot

in his mouth, they might have had something to say to him; but for a

professional gentleman to sit astride in the saddle, with his feet in the

stirrups, was rather too good a joke. So, the herald was a decided

failure, and the crowd hooted with great energy, as he pranced

ingloriously away.

On the procession came. We are afraid to say how many supernumeraries

there were, in striped shirts and black velvet caps, to imitate the

London watermen, or how many base imitations of running-footmen, or how

many banners, which, owing to the heaviness of the atmosphere, could by

no means be prevailed on to display their inscriptions: still less do we

feel disposed to relate how the men who played the wind instruments,

looking up into the sky (we mean the fog) with musical fervour, walked

through pools of water and hillocks of mud, till they covered the

powdered heads of the running-footmen aforesaid with splashes, that

looked curious, but not ornamental; or how the barrel-organ performer put

on the wrong stop, and played one tune while the band played another; or

how the horses, being used to the arena, and not to the streets, would

stand still and dance, instead of going on and prancing;âall of which are

matters which might be dilated upon to great advantage, but which we have

not the least intention of dilating upon, notwithstanding.

Oh! it was a grand and beautiful sight to behold a corporation in glass

coaches, provided at the sole cost and charge of Nicholas Tulrumble,

coming rolling along, like a funeral out of mourning, and to watch the

attempts the corporation made to look great and solemn, when Nicholas

Tulrumble himself, in the four-wheel chaise, with the tall postilion,

rolled out after them, with Mr. Jennings on one side to look like a

chaplain, and a supernumerary on the other, with an old life-guardsmanâs

sabre, to imitate the sword-bearer; and to see the tears rolling down the

faces of the mob as they screamed with merriment. This was beautiful!

and so was the appearance of Mrs. Tulrumble and son, as they bowed with

grave dignity out of their coach-window to all the dirty faces that were

laughing around them: but it is not even with this that we have to do,

but with the sudden stopping of the procession at another blast of the

trumpet, whereat, and whereupon, a profound silence ensued, and all eyes

were turned towards Mudfog Hall, in the confident anticipation of some

new wonder.

âThey wonât laugh now, Mr. Jennings,â said Nicholas Tulrumble.

âI think not, sir,â said Mr. Jennings.

âSee how eager they look,â said Nicholas Tulrumble. âAha! the laugh will

be on our side now; eh, Mr. Jennings?â

âNo doubt of that, sir,â replied Mr. Jennings; and Nicholas Tulrumble, in

a state of pleasurable excitement, stood up in the four-wheel chaise, and

telegraphed gratification to the Mayoress behind.

While all this was going forward, Ned Twigger had descended into the

kitchen of Mudfog Hall for the purpose of indulging the servants with a

private view of the curiosity that was to burst upon the town; and,

somehow or other, the footman was so companionable, and the housemaid so

kind, and the cook so friendly, that he could not resist the offer of the

first-mentioned to sit down and take somethingâjust to drink success to

master in.

So, down Ned Twigger sat himself in his brass livery on the top of the

kitchen-table; and in a mug of something strong, paid for by the

unconscious Nicholas Tulrumble, and provided by the companionable

footman, drank success to the Mayor and his procession; and, as Ned laid

by his helmet to imbibe the something strong, the companionable footman

put it on his own head, to the immeasurable and unrecordable delight of

the cook and housemaid. The companionable footman was very facetious to

Ned, and Ned was very gallant to the cook and housemaid by turns. They

were all very cosy and comfortable; and the something strong went briskly

round.

At last Ned Twigger was loudly called for, by the procession people: and,

having had his helmet fixed on, in a very complicated manner, by the

companionable footman, and the kind housemaid, and the friendly cook, he

walked gravely forth, and appeared before the multitude.

The crowd roaredâit was not with wonder, it was not with surprise; it was

most decidedly and unquestionably with laughter.

âWhat!â said Mr. Tulrumble, starting up in the four-wheel chaise.

âLaughing? If they laugh at a man in real brass armour, theyâd laugh

when their own fathers were dying. Why doesnât he go into his place, Mr.

Jennings? Whatâs he rolling down towards us for? he has no business

here!â

âI am afraid, sirââ faltered Mr. Jennings.

âAfraid of what, sir?â said Nicholas Tulrumble, looking up into the

secretaryâs face.

âI am afraid heâs drunk, sir,â replied Mr. Jennings.

Nicholas Tulrumble took one look at the extraordinary figure that was

bearing down upon them; and then, clasping his secretary by the arm,

uttered an audible groan in anguish of spirit.

It is a melancholy fact that Mr. Twigger having full licence to demand a

single glass of rum on the putting on of every piece of the armour, got,

by some means or other, rather out of his calculation in the hurry and

confusion of preparation, and drank about four glasses to a piece instead

of one, not to mention the something strong which went on the top of it.

Whether the brass armour checked the natural flow of perspiration, and

thus prevented the spirit from evaporating, we are not scientific enough

to know; but, whatever the cause was, Mr. Twigger no sooner found himself

outside the gate of Mudfog Hall, than he also found himself in a very

considerable state of intoxication; and hence his extraordinary style of

progressing. This was bad enough, but, as if fate and fortune had

conspired against Nicholas Tulrumble, Mr. Twigger, not having been

penitent for a good calendar month, took it into his head to be most

especially and particularly sentimental, just when his repentance could

have been most conveniently dispensed with. Immense tears were rolling

down his cheeks, and he was vainly endeavouring to conceal his grief by

applying to his eyes a blue cotton pocket-handkerchief with white

spots,âan article not strictly in keeping with a suit of armour some

three hundred years old, or thereabouts.

âTwigger, you villain!â said Nicholas Tulrumble, quite forgetting his

dignity, âgo back.â

âNever,â said Ned. âIâm a miserable wretch. Iâll never leave you.â

The by-standers of course received this declaration with acclamations of

âThatâs right, Ned; donât!â

âI donât intend it,â said Ned, with all the obstinacy of a very tipsy

man. âIâm very unhappy. Iâm the wretched father of an unfortunate

family; but I am very faithful, sir. Iâll never leave you.â Having

reiterated this obliging promise, Ned proceeded in broken words to

harangue the crowd upon the number of years he had lived in Mudfog, the

excessive respectability of his character, and other topics of the like

nature.

âHere! will anybody lead him away?â said Nicholas: âif theyâll call on me

afterwards, Iâll reward them well.â

Two or three men stepped forward, with the view of bearing Ned off, when

the secretary interposed.

âTake care! take care!â said Mr. Jennings. âI beg your pardon, sir; but

theyâd better not go too near him, because, if he falls over, heâll

certainly crush somebody.â

At this hint the crowd retired on all sides to a very respectful

distance, and left Ned, like the Duke of Devonshire, in a little circle

of his own.

âBut, Mr. Jennings,â said Nicholas Tulrumble, âheâll be suffocated.â

âIâm very sorry for it, sir,â replied Mr. Jennings; âbut nobody can get

that armour off, without his own assistance. Iâm quite certain of it

from the way he put it on.â

Here Ned wept dolefully, and shook his helmeted head, in a manner that

might have touched a heart of stone; but the crowd had not hearts of

stone, and they laughed heartily.

âDear me, Mr. Jennings,â said Nicholas, turning pale at the possibility

of Nedâs being smothered in his antique costumeââDear me, Mr. Jennings,

can nothing be done with him?â

âNothing at all,â replied Ned, ânothing at all. Gentlemen, Iâm an

unhappy wretch. Iâm a body, gentlemen, in a brass coffin.â At this

poetical idea of his own conjuring up, Ned cried so much that the people

began to get sympathetic, and to ask what Nicholas Tulrumble meant by

putting a man into such a machine as that; and one individual in a hairy

waistcoat like the top of a trunk, who had previously expressed his

opinion that if Ned hadnât been a poor man, Nicholas wouldnât have dared

do it, hinted at the propriety of breaking the four-wheel chaise, or

Nicholasâs head, or both, which last compound proposition the crowd

seemed to consider a very good notion.

It was not acted upon, however, for it had hardly been broached, when Ned

Twiggerâs wife made her appearance abruptly in the little circle before

noticed, and Ned no sooner caught a glimpse of her face and form, than

from the mere force of habit he set off towards his home just as fast as

his legs could carry him; and that was not very quick in the present

instance either, for, however ready they might have been to carry \_him\_,

they couldnât get on very well under the brass armour. So, Mrs. Twigger

had plenty of time to denounce Nicholas Tulrumble to his face: to express

her opinion that he was a decided monster; and to intimate that, if her

ill-used husband sustained any personal damage from the brass armour, she

would have the law of Nicholas Tulrumble for manslaughter. When she had

said all this with due vehemence, she posted after Ned, who was dragging

himself along as best he could, and deploring his unhappiness in most

dismal tones.

What a wailing and screaming Nedâs children raised when he got home at

last! Mrs. Twigger tried to undo the armour, first in one place, and

then in another, but she couldnât manage it; so she tumbled Ned into bed,

helmet, armour, gauntlets, and all. Such a creaking as the bedstead

made, under Nedâs weight in his new suit! It didnât break down though;

and there Ned lay, like the anonymous vessel in the Bay of Biscay, till

next day, drinking barley-water, and looking miserable: and every time he

groaned, his good lady said it served him right, which was all the

consolation Ned Twigger got.

Nicholas Tulrumble and the gorgeous procession went on together to the

town-hall, amid the hisses and groans of all the spectators, who had

suddenly taken it into their heads to consider poor Ned a martyr.

Nicholas was formally installed in his new office, in acknowledgment of

which ceremony he delivered himself of a speech, composed by the

secretary, which was very long, and no doubt very good, only the noise of

the people outside prevented anybody from hearing it, but Nicholas

Tulrumble himself. After which, the procession got back to Mudfog Hall

any how it could; and Nicholas and the corporation sat down to dinner.

But the dinner was flat, and Nicholas was disappointed. They were such

dull sleepy old fellows, that corporation. Nicholas made quite as long

speeches as the Lord Mayor of London had done, nay, he said the very same

things that the Lord Mayor of London had said, and the deuce a cheer the

corporation gave him. There was only one man in the party who was

thoroughly awake; and he was insolent, and called him Nick. Nick! What

would be the consequence, thought Nicholas, of anybody presuming to call

the Lord Mayor of London âNick!â He should like to know what the

sword-bearer would say to that; or the recorder, or the toast-master, or

any other of the great officers of the city. Theyâd nick him.

But these were not the worst of Nicholas Tulrumbleâs doings. If they had

been, he might have remained a Mayor to this day, and have talked till he

lost his voice. He contracted a relish for statistics, and got

philosophical; and the statistics and the philosophy together, led him

into an act which increased his unpopularity and hastened his downfall.

At the very end of the Mudfog High-street, and abutting on the

river-side, stands the Jolly Boatmen, an old-fashioned low-roofed,

bay-windowed house, with a bar, kitchen, and tap-room all in one, and a

large fireplace with a kettle to correspond, round which the working men

have congregated time out of mind on a winterâs night, refreshed by

draughts of good strong beer, and cheered by the sounds of a fiddle and

tambourine: the Jolly Boatmen having been duly licensed by the Mayor and

corporation, to scrape the fiddle and thumb the tambourine from time,

whereof the memory of the oldest inhabitants goeth not to the contrary.

Now Nicholas Tulrumble had been reading pamphlets on crime, and

parliamentary reports,âor had made the secretary read them to him, which

is the same thing in effect,âand he at once perceived that this fiddle

and tambourine must have done more to demoralize Mudfog, than any other

operating causes that ingenuity could imagine. So he read up for the

subject, and determined to come out on the corporation with a burst, the

very next time the licence was applied for.

The licensing day came, and the red-faced landlord of the Jolly Boatmen

walked into the town-hall, looking as jolly as need be, having actually

put on an extra fiddle for that night, to commemorate the anniversary of

the Jolly Boatmenâs music licence. It was applied for in due form, and

was just about to be granted as a matter of course, when up rose Nicholas

Tulrumble, and drowned the astonished corporation in a torrent of

eloquence. He descanted in glowing terms upon the increasing depravity

of his native town of Mudfog, and the excesses committed by its

population. Then, he related how shocked he had been, to see barrels of

beer sliding down into the cellar of the Jolly Boatmen week after week;

and how he had sat at a window opposite the Jolly Boatmen for two days

together, to count the people who went in for beer between the hours of

twelve and one oâclock aloneâwhich, by-the-bye, was the time at which the

great majority of the Mudfog people dined. Then, he went on to state,

how the number of people who came out with beer-jugs, averaged twenty-one

in five minutes, which, being multiplied by twelve, gave two hundred and

fifty-two people with beer-jugs in an hour, and multiplied again by

fifteen (the number of hours during which the house was open daily)

yielded three thousand seven hundred and eighty people with beer-jugs per

day, or twenty-six thousand four hundred and sixty people with beer-jugs,

per week. Then he proceeded to show that a tambourine and moral

degradation were synonymous terms, and a fiddle and vicious propensities

wholly inseparable. All these arguments he strengthened and demonstrated

by frequent references to a large book with a blue cover, and sundry

quotations from the Middlesex magistrates; and in the end, the

corporation, who were posed with the figures, and sleepy with the speech,

and sadly in want of dinner into the bargain, yielded the palm to

Nicholas Tulrumble, and refused the music licence to the Jolly Boatmen.

But although Nicholas triumphed, his triumph was short. He carried on

the war against beer-jugs and fiddles, forgetting the time when he was

glad to drink out of the one, and to dance to the other, till the people

hated, and his old friends shunned him. He grew tired of the lonely

magnificence of Mudfog Hall, and his heart yearned towards the

Lightermanâs Arms. He wished he had never set up as a public man, and

sighed for the good old times of the coal-shop, and the chimney corner.

At length old Nicholas, being thoroughly miserable, took heart of grace,

paid the secretary a quarterâs wages in advance, and packed him off to

London by the next coach. Having taken this step, he put his hat on his

head, and his pride in his pocket, and walked down to the old room at the

Lightermanâs Arms. There were only two of the old fellows there, and

they looked coldly on Nicholas as he proffered his hand.

âAre you going to put down pipes, Mr. Tulrumble?â said one.

âOr trace the progress of crime to âbacca?â growled another.

âNeither,â replied Nicholas Tulrumble, shaking hands with them both,

whether they would or not. âIâve come down to say that Iâm very sorry

for having made a fool of myself, and that I hope youâll give me up the

old chair, again.â

The old fellows opened their eyes, and three or four more old fellows

opened the door, to whom Nicholas, with tears in his eyes, thrust out his

hand too, and told the same story. They raised a shout of joy, that made

the bells in the ancient church-tower vibrate again, and wheeling the old

chair into the warm corner, thrust old Nicholas down into it, and ordered

in the very largest-sized bowl of hot punch, with an unlimited number of

pipes, directly.

The next day, the Jolly Boatmen got the licence, and the next night, old

Nicholas and Ned Twiggerâs wife led off a dance to the music of the

fiddle and tambourine, the tone of which seemed mightily improved by a

little rest, for they never had played so merrily before. Ned Twigger

was in the very height of his glory, and he danced hornpipes, and

balanced chairs on his chin, and straws on his nose, till the whole

company, including the corporation, were in raptures of admiration at the

brilliancy of his acquirements.

Mr. Tulrumble, junior, couldnât make up his mind to be anything but

magnificent, so he went up to London and drew bills on his father; and

when he had overdrawn, and got into debt, he grew penitent, and came home

again.

As to old Nicholas, he kept his word, and having had six weeks of public

life, never tried it any more. He went to sleep in the town-hall at the

very next meeting; and, in full proof of his sincerity, has requested us

to write this faithful narrative. We wish it could have the effect of

reminding the Tulrumbles of another sphere, that puffed-up conceit is not

dignity, and that snarling at the little pleasures they were once glad to

enjoy, because they would rather forget the times when they were of lower

station, renders them objects of contempt and ridicule.

This is the first time we have published any of our gleanings from this

particular source. Perhaps, at some future period, we may venture to

open the chronicles of Mudfog.

FULL REPORT OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE MUDFOG ASSOCIATION

FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF EVERYTHING

We have made the most unparalleled and extraordinary exertions to place

before our readers a complete and accurate account of the proceedings at

the late grand meeting of the Mudfog Association, holden in the town of

Mudfog; it affords us great happiness to lay the result before them, in

the shape of various communications received from our able, talented, and

graphic correspondent, expressly sent down for the purpose, who has

immortalized us, himself, Mudfog, and the association, all at one and the

same time. We have been, indeed, for some days unable to determine who

will transmit the greatest name to posterity; ourselves, who sent our

correspondent down; our correspondent, who wrote an account of the

matter; or the association, who gave our correspondent something to write

about. We rather incline to the opinion that we are the greatest man of

the party, inasmuch as the notion of an exclusive and authentic report

originated with us; this may be prejudice: it may arise from a

prepossession on our part in our own favour. Be it so. We have no doubt

that every gentleman concerned in this mighty assemblage is troubled with

the same complaint in a greater or less degree; and it is a consolation

to us to know that we have at least this feeling in common with the great

scientific stars, the brilliant and extraordinary luminaries, whose

speculations we record.

We give our correspondentâs letters in the order in which they reached

us. Any attempt at amalgamating them into one beautiful whole, would

only destroy that glowing tone, that dash of wildness, and rich vein of

picturesque interest, which pervade them throughout.

â\_Mudfog\_, \_Monday night\_, \_seven oâclock\_.

âWe are in a state of great excitement here. Nothing is spoken of, but

the approaching meeting of the association. The inn-doors are thronged

with waiters anxiously looking for the expected arrivals; and the

numerous bills which are wafered up in the windows of private houses,

intimating that there are beds to let within, give the streets a very

animated and cheerful appearance, the wafers being of a great variety of

colours, and the monotony of printed inscriptions being relieved by every

possible size and style of hand-writing. It is confidently rumoured that

Professors Snore, Doze, and Wheezy have engaged three beds and a

sitting-room at the Pig and Tinder-box. I give you the rumour as it has

reached me; but I cannot, as yet, vouch for its accuracy. The moment I

have been enabled to obtain any certain information upon this interesting

point, you may depend upon receiving it.â

â\_Half-past seven\_.

I have just returned from a personal interview with the landlord of the

Pig and Tinder-box. He speaks confidently of the probability of

Professors Snore, Doze, and Wheezy taking up their residence at his house

during the sitting of the association, but denies that the beds have been

yet engaged; in which representation he is confirmed by the chambermaidâa

girl of artless manners, and interesting appearance. The boots denies

that it is at all likely that Professors Snore, Doze, and Wheezy will put

up here; but I have reason to believe that this man has been suborned by

the proprietor of the Original Pig, which is the opposition hotel.

Amidst such conflicting testimony it is difficult to arrive at the real

truth; but you may depend upon receiving authentic information upon this

point the moment the fact is ascertained. The excitement still

continues. A boy fell through the window of the pastrycookâs shop at the

corner of the High-street about half an hour ago, which has occasioned

much confusion. The general impression is, that it was an accident.

Pray heaven it may prove so!â

â\_Tuesday\_, \_noon\_.

âAt an early hour this morning the bells of all the churches struck seven

oâclock; the effect of which, in the present lively state of the town,

was extremely singular. While I was at breakfast, a yellow gig, drawn by

a dark grey horse, with a patch of white over his right eyelid, proceeded

at a rapid pace in the direction of the Original Pig stables; it is

currently reported that this gentleman has arrived here for the purpose

of attending the association, and, from what I have heard, I consider it

extremely probable, although nothing decisive is yet known regarding him.

You may conceive the anxiety with which we are all looking forward to the

arrival of the four oâclock coach this afternoon.

âNotwithstanding the excited state of the populace, no outrage has yet

been committed, owing to the admirable discipline and discretion of the

police, who are nowhere to be seen. A barrel-organ is playing opposite

my window, and groups of people, offering fish and vegetables for sale,

parade the streets. With these exceptions everything is quiet, and I

trust will continue so.â

â\_Five oâclock\_.

âIt is now ascertained, beyond all doubt, that Professors Snore, Doze,

and Wheezy will \_not\_ repair to the Pig and Tinder-box, but have actually

engaged apartments at the Original Pig. This intelligence is

\_exclusive\_; and I leave you and your readers to draw their own

inferences from it. Why Professor Wheezy, of all people in the world,

should repair to the Original Pig in preference to the Pig and

Tinder-box, it is not easy to conceive. The professor is a man who

should be above all such petty feelings. Some people here openly impute

treachery, and a distinct breach of faith to Professors Snore and Doze;

while others, again, are disposed to acquit them of any culpability in

the transaction, and to insinuate that the blame rests solely with

Professor Wheezy. I own that I incline to the latter opinion; and

although it gives me great pain to speak in terms of censure or

disapprobation of a man of such transcendent genius and acquirements,

still I am bound to say that, if my suspicions be well founded, and if

all the reports which have reached my ears be true, I really do not well

know what to make of the matter.

âMr. Slug, so celebrated for his statistical researches, arrived this

afternoon by the four oâclock stage. His complexion is a dark purple,

and he has a habit of sighing constantly. He looked extremely well, and

appeared in high health and spirits. Mr. Woodensconce also came down in

the same conveyance. The distinguished gentleman was fast asleep on his

arrival, and I am informed by the guard that he had been so the whole

way. He was, no doubt, preparing for his approaching fatigues; but what

gigantic visions must those be that flit through the brain of such a man

when his body is in a state of torpidity!

âThe influx of visitors increases every moment. I am told (I know not

how truly) that two post-chaises have arrived at the Original Pig within

the last half-hour, and I myself observed a wheelbarrow, containing three

carpet bags and a bundle, entering the yard of the Pig and Tinder-box no

longer ago than five minutes since. The people are still quietly

pursuing their ordinary occupations; but there is a wildness in their

eyes, and an unwonted rigidity in the muscles of their countenances,

which shows to the observant spectator that their expectations are

strained to the very utmost pitch. I fear, unless some very

extraordinary arrivals take place to-night, that consequences may arise

from this popular ferment, which every man of sense and feeling would

deplore.â

â\_Twenty minutes past six\_.

âI have just heard that the boy who fell through the pastrycookâs window

last night has died of the fright. He was suddenly called upon to pay

three and sixpence for the damage done, and his constitution, it seems,

was not strong enough to bear up against the shock. The inquest, it is

said, will be held to-morrow.â

â\_Three-quarters part seven\_.

âProfessors Muff and Nogo have just driven up to the hotel door; they at

once ordered dinner with great condescension. We are all very much

delighted with the urbanity of their manners, and the ease with which

they adapt themselves to the forms and ceremonies of ordinary life.

Immediately on their arrival they sent for the head waiter, and privately

requested him to purchase a live dog,âas cheap a one as he could meet

with,âand to send him up after dinner, with a pie-board, a knife and

fork, and a clean plate. It is conjectured that some experiments will be

tried upon the dog to-night; if any particulars should transpire, I will

forward them by express.â

â\_Half-past eight\_.

âThe animal has been procured. He is a pug-dog, of rather intelligent

appearance, in good condition, and with very short legs. He has been

tied to a curtain-peg in a dark room, and is howling dreadfully.â

â\_Ten minutes to nine\_.

âThe dog has just been rung for. With an instinct which would appear

almost the result of reason, the sagacious animal seized the waiter by

the calf of the leg when he approached to take him, and made a desperate,

though ineffectual resistance. I have not been able to procure admission

to the apartment occupied by the scientific gentlemen; but, judging from

the sounds which reached my ears when I stood upon the landing-place

outside the door, just now, I should be disposed to say that the dog had

retreated growling beneath some article of furniture, and was keeping the

professors at bay. This conjecture is confirmed by the testimony of the

ostler, who, after peeping through the keyhole, assures me that he

distinctly saw Professor Nogo on his knees, holding forth a small bottle

of prussic acid, to which the animal, who was crouched beneath an

arm-chair, obstinately declined to smell. You cannot imagine the

feverish state of irritation we are in, lest the interests of science

should be sacrificed to the prejudices of a brute creature, who is not

endowed with sufficient sense to foresee the incalculable benefits which

the whole human race may derive from so very slight a concession on his

part.â

â\_Nine oâclock\_.

âThe dogâs tail and ears have been sent down-stairs to be washed; from

which circumstance we infer that the animal is no more. His forelegs

have been delivered to the boots to be brushed, which strengthens the

supposition.â

â\_Half after ten\_.

âMy feelings are so overpowered by what has taken place in the course of

the last hour and a half, that I have scarcely strength to detail the

rapid succession of events which have quite bewildered all those who are

cognizant of their occurrence. It appears that the pug-dog mentioned in

my last was surreptitiously obtained,âstolen, in fact,âby some person

attached to the stable department, from an unmarried lady resident in

this town. Frantic on discovering the loss of her favourite, the lady

rushed distractedly into the street, calling in the most heart-rending

and pathetic manner upon the passengers to restore her, her Augustus,âfor

so the deceased was named, in affectionate remembrance of a former lover

of his mistress, to whom he bore a striking personal resemblance, which

renders the circumstances additionally affecting. I am not yet in a

condition to inform you what circumstance induced the bereaved lady to

direct her steps to the hotel which had witnessed the last struggles of

her \_protÃ©gÃ©\_. I can only state that she arrived there, at the very

instant when his detached members were passing through the passage on a

small tray. Her shrieks still reverberate in my ears! I grieve to say

that the expressive features of Professor Muff were much scratched and

lacerated by the injured lady; and that Professor Nogo, besides

sustaining several severe bites, has lost some handfuls of hair from the

same cause. It must be some consolation to these gentlemen to know that

their ardent attachment to scientific pursuits has alone occasioned these

unpleasant consequences; for which the sympathy of a grateful country

will sufficiently reward them. The unfortunate lady remains at the Pig

and Tinder-box, and up to this time is reported in a very precarious

state.

âI need scarcely tell you that this unlooked-for catastrophe has cast a

damp and gloom upon us in the midst of our exhilaration; natural in any

case, but greatly enhanced in this, by the amiable qualities of the

deceased animal, who appears to have been much and deservedly respected

by the whole of his acquaintance.â

â\_Twelve oâclock\_.

âI take the last opportunity before sealing my parcel to inform you that

the boy who fell through the pastrycookâs window is not dead, as was

universally believed, but alive and well. The report appears to have had

its origin in his mysterious disappearance. He was found half an hour

since on the premises of a sweet-stuff maker, where a raffle had been

announced for a second-hand seal-skin cap and a tambourine; and whereâa

sufficient number of members not having been obtained at firstâhe had

patiently waited until the list was completed. This fortunate discovery

has in some degree restored our gaiety and cheerfulness. It is proposed

to get up a subscription for him without delay.

âEverybody is nervously anxious to see what to-morrow will bring forth.

If any one should arrive in the course of the night, I have left strict

directions to be called immediately. I should have sat up, indeed, but

the agitating events of this day have been too much for me.

âNo news yet of either of the Professors Snore, Doze, or Wheezy. It is

very strange!â

â\_Wednesday afternoon\_.

âAll is now over; and, upon one point at least, I am at length enabled to

set the minds of your readers at rest. The three professors arrived at

ten minutes after two oâclock, and, instead of taking up their quarters

at the Original Pig, as it was universally understood in the course of

yesterday that they would assuredly have done, drove straight to the Pig

and Tinder-box, where they threw off the mask at once, and openly

announced their intention of remaining. Professor Wheezy may reconcile

this very extraordinary conduct with \_his\_ notions of fair and equitable

dealing, but I would recommend Professor Wheezy to be cautious how he

presumes too far upon his well-earned reputation. How such a man as

Professor Snore, or, which is still more extraordinary, such an

individual as Professor Doze, can quietly allow himself to be mixed up

with such proceedings as these, you will naturally inquire. Upon this

head, rumour is silent; I have my speculations, but forbear to give

utterance to them just now.â

â\_Four oâclock\_.

âThe town is filling fast; eighteenpence has been offered for a bed and

refused. Several gentlemen were under the necessity last night of

sleeping in the brick fields, and on the steps of doors, for which they

were taken before the magistrates in a body this morning, and committed

to prison as vagrants for various terms. One of these persons I

understand to be a highly-respectable tinker, of great practical skill,

who had forwarded a paper to the President of Section D. Mechanical

Science, on the construction of pipkins with copper bottoms and

safety-values, of which report speaks highly. The incarceration of this

gentleman is greatly to be regretted, as his absence will preclude any

discussion on the subject.

âThe bills are being taken down in all directions, and lodgings are being

secured on almost any terms. I have heard of fifteen shillings a week

for two rooms, exclusive of coals and attendance, but I can scarcely

believe it. The excitement is dreadful. I was informed this morning

that the civil authorities, apprehensive of some outbreak of popular

feeling, had commanded a recruiting sergeant and two corporals to be

under arms; and that, with the view of not irritating the people

unnecessarily by their presence, they had been requested to take up their

position before daybreak in a turnpike, distant about a quarter of a mile

from the town. The vigour and promptness of these measures cannot be too

highly extolled.

âIntelligence has just been brought me, that an elderly female, in a

state of inebriety, has declared in the open street her intention to âdoâ

for Mr. Slug. Some statistical returns compiled by that gentleman,

relative to the consumption of raw spirituous liquors in this place, are

supposed to be the cause of the wretchâs animosity. It is added that

this declaration was loudly cheered by a crowd of persons who had

assembled on the spot; and that one man had the boldness to designate Mr.

Slug aloud by the opprobrious epithet of âStick-in-the-mud!â It is

earnestly to be hoped that now, when the moment has arrived for their

interference, the magistrates will not shrink from the exercise of that

power which is vested in them by the constitution of our common country.â

â\_Half-past ten\_.

âThe disturbance, I am happy to inform you, has been completely quelled,

and the ringleader taken into custody. She had a pail of cold water

thrown over her, previous to being locked up, and expresses great

contrition and uneasiness. We are all in a fever of anticipation about

to-morrow; but, now that we are within a few hours of the meeting of the

association, and at last enjoy the proud consciousness of having its

illustrious members amongst us, I trust and hope everything may go off

peaceably. I shall send you a full report of to-morrowâs proceedings by

the night coach.â

â\_Eleven oâclock\_.

âI open my letter to say that nothing whatever has occurred since I

folded it up.â

â\_Thursday\_.

âThe sun rose this morning at the usual hour. I did not observe anything

particular in the aspect of the glorious planet, except that he appeared

to me (it might have been a delusion of my heightened fancy) to shine

with more than common brilliancy, and to shed a refulgent lustre upon the

town, such as I had never observed before. This is the more

extraordinary, as the sky was perfectly cloudless, and the atmosphere

peculiarly fine. At half-past nine oâclock the general committee

assembled, with the last yearâs president in the chair. The report of

the council was read; and one passage, which stated that the council had

corresponded with no less than three thousand five hundred and

seventy-one persons, (all of whom paid their own postage,) on no fewer

than seven thousand two hundred and forty-three topics, was received with

a degree of enthusiasm which no efforts could suppress. The various

committees and sections having been appointed, and the more formal

business transacted, the great proceedings of the meeting commenced at

eleven oâclock precisely. I had the happiness of occupying a most

eligible position at that time, in

âSECTION A.âZOOLOGY AND BOTANY.

GREAT ROOM, PIG AND TINDER-BOX.

\_President\_âProfessor Snore. \_Vice-Presidents\_âProfessors Doze and

Wheezy.

âThe scene at this moment was particularly striking. The sun streamed

through the windows of the apartments, and tinted the whole scene with

its brilliant rays, bringing out in strong relief the noble visages of

the professors and scientific gentlemen, who, some with bald heads, some

with red heads, some with brown heads, some with grey heads, some with

black heads, some with block heads, presented a \_coup dâoeil\_ which no

eye-witness will readily forget. In front of these gentlemen were papers

and inkstands; and round the room, on elevated benches extending as far

as the forms could reach, were assembled a brilliant concourse of those

lovely and elegant women for which Mudfog is justly acknowledged to be

without a rival in the whole world. The contrast between their fair

faces and the dark coats and trousers of the scientific gentlemen I shall

never cease to remember while Memory holds her seat.

âTime having been allowed for a slight confusion, occasioned by the

falling down of the greater part of the platforms, to subside, the

president called on one of the secretaries to read a communication

entitled, âSome remarks on the industrious fleas, with considerations on

the importance of establishing infant-schools among that numerous class

of society; of directing their industry to useful and practical ends; and

of applying the surplus fruits thereof, towards providing for them a

comfortable and respectable maintenance in their old age.â

âThe author stated, that, having long turned his attention to the moral

and social condition of these interesting animals, he had been induced to

visit an exhibition in Regent-street, London, commonly known by the

designation of âThe Industrious Fleas.â He had there seen many fleas,

occupied certainly in various pursuits and avocations, but occupied, he

was bound to add, in a manner which no man of well-regulated mind could

fail to regard with sorrow and regret. One flea, reduced to the level of

a beast of burden, was drawing about a miniature gig, containing a

particularly small effigy of His Grace the Duke of Wellington; while

another was staggering beneath the weight of a golden model of his great

adversary Napoleon Bonaparte. Some, brought up as mountebanks and

ballet-dancers, were performing a figure-dance (he regretted to observe,

that, of the fleas so employed, several were females); others were in

training, in a small card-board box, for pedestrians,âmere sporting

charactersâand two were actually engaged in the cold-blooded and

barbarous occupation of duelling; a pursuit from which humanity recoiled

with horror and disgust. He suggested that measures should be

immediately taken to employ the labour of these fleas as part and parcel

of the productive power of the country, which might easily be done by the

establishment among them of infant schools and houses of industry, in

which a system of virtuous education, based upon sound principles, should

be observed, and moral precepts strictly inculcated. He proposed that

every flea who presumed to exhibit, for hire, music, or dancing, or any

species of theatrical entertainment, without a licence, should be

considered a vagabond, and treated accordingly; in which respect he only

placed him upon a level with the rest of mankind. He would further

suggest that their labour should be placed under the control and

regulation of the state, who should set apart from the profits, a fund

for the support of superannuated or disabled fleas, their widows and

orphans. With this view, he proposed that liberal premiums should be

offered for the three best designs for a general almshouse; from whichâas

insect architecture was well known to be in a very advanced and perfect

stateâwe might possibly derive many valuable hints for the improvement of

our metropolitan universities, national galleries, and other public

edifices.

âTHE PRESIDENT wished to be informed how the ingenious gentleman proposed

to open a communication with fleas generally, in the first instance, so

that they might be thoroughly imbued with a sense of the advantages they

must necessarily derive from changing their mode of life, and applying

themselves to honest labour. This appeared to him, the only difficulty.

âTHE AUTHOR submitted that this difficulty was easily overcome, or rather

that there was no difficulty at all in the case. Obviously the course to

be pursued, if Her Majestyâs government could be prevailed upon to take

up the plan, would be, to secure at a remunerative salary the individual

to whom he had alluded as presiding over the exhibition in Regent-street

at the period of his visit. That gentleman would at once be able to put

himself in communication with the mass of the fleas, and to instruct them

in pursuance of some general plan of education, to be sanctioned by

Parliament, until such time as the more intelligent among them were

advanced enough to officiate as teachers to the rest.

âThe President and several members of the section highly complimented the

author of the paper last read, on his most ingenious and important

treatise. It was determined that the subject should be recommended to

the immediate consideration of the council.

âMR. WIGSBY produced a cauliflower somewhat larger than a

chaise-umbrella, which had been raised by no other artificial means than

the simple application of highly carbonated soda-water as manure. He

explained that by scooping out the head, which would afford a new and

delicious species of nourishment for the poor, a parachute, in principle

something similar to that constructed by M. Garnerin, was at once

obtained; the stalk of course being kept downwards. He added that he was

perfectly willing to make a descent from a height of not less than three

miles and a quarter; and had in fact already proposed the same to the

proprietors of Vauxhall Gardens, who in the handsomest manner at once

consented to his wishes, and appointed an early day next summer for the

undertaking; merely stipulating that the rim of the cauliflower should be

previously broken in three or four places to ensure the safety of the

descent.

âTHE PRESIDENT congratulated the public on the \_grand gala\_ in store for

them, and warmly eulogised the proprietors of the establishment alluded

to, for their love of science, and regard for the safety of human life,

both of which did them the highest honour.

âA Member wished to know how many thousand additional lamps the royal

property would be illuminated with, on the night after the descent.

âMR. WIGSBY replied that the point was not yet finally decided; but he

believed it was proposed, over and above the ordinary illuminations, to

exhibit in various devices eight millions and a-half of additional lamps.

âThe Member expressed himself much gratified with this announcement.

âMR. BLUNDERUM delighted the section with a most interesting and valuable

paper âon the last moments of the learned pig,â which produced a very

strong impression on the assembly, the account being compiled from the

personal recollections of his favourite attendant. The account stated in

the most emphatic terms that the animalâs name was not Toby, but Solomon;

and distinctly proved that he could have no near relatives in the

profession, as many designing persons had falsely stated, inasmuch as his

father, mother, brothers and sisters, had all fallen victims to the

butcher at different times. An uncle of his indeed, had with very great

labour been traced to a sty in Somers Town; but as he was in a very

infirm state at the time, being afflicted with measles, and shortly

afterwards disappeared, there appeared too much reason to conjecture that

he had been converted into sausages. The disorder of the learned pig was

originally a severe cold, which, being aggravated by excessive trough

indulgence, finally settled upon the lungs, and terminated in a general

decay of the constitution. A melancholy instance of a presentiment

entertained by the animal of his approaching dissolution, was recorded.

After gratifying a numerous and fashionable company with his

performances, in which no falling off whatever was visible, he fixed his

eyes on the biographer, and, turning to the watch which lay on the floor,

and on which he was accustomed to point out the hour, deliberately passed

his snout twice round the dial. In precisely four-and-twenty hours from

that time he had ceased to exist!

âPROFESSOR WHEEZY inquired whether, previous to his demise, the animal

had expressed, by signs or otherwise, any wishes regarding the disposal

of his little property.

âMR. BLUNDERUM replied, that, when the biographer took up the pack of

cards at the conclusion of the performance, the animal grunted several

times in a significant manner, and nodding his head as he was accustomed

to do, when gratified. From these gestures it was understood that he

wished the attendant to keep the cards, which he had ever since done. He

had not expressed any wish relative to his watch, which had accordingly

been pawned by the same individual.

âTHE PRESIDENT wished to know whether any Member of the section had ever

seen or conversed with the pig-faced lady, who was reported to have worn

a black velvet mask, and to have taken her meals from a golden trough.

âAfter some hesitation a Member replied that the pig-faced lady was his

mother-in-law, and that he trusted the President would not violate the

sanctity of private life.

âTHE PRESIDENT begged pardon. He had considered the pig-faced lady a

public character. Would the honourable member object to state, with a

view to the advancement of science, whether she was in any way connected

with the learned pig?

âThe Member replied in the same low tone, that, as the question appeared

to involve a suspicion that the learned pig might be his half-brother, he

must decline answering it.

âSECTION B.âANATOMY AND MEDICINE.

COACH-HOUSE, PIG AND TINDER-BOX.

\_President\_âDr. Toorell. \_Vice-Presidents\_âProfessors Muff and Nogo.

DR. KUTANKUMAGEN (of Moscow) read to the section a report of a case which

had occurred within his own practice, strikingly illustrative of the

power of medicine, as exemplified in his successful treatment of a

virulent disorder. He had been called in to visit the patient on the 1st

of April, 1837. He was then labouring under symptoms peculiarly alarming

to any medical man. His frame was stout and muscular, his step firm and

elastic, his cheeks plump and red, his voice loud, his appetite good, his

pulse full and round. He was in the constant habit of eating three meals

\_per diem\_, and of drinking at least one bottle of wine, and one glass of

spirituous liquors diluted with water, in the course of the

four-and-twenty hours. He laughed constantly, and in so hearty a manner

that it was terrible to hear him. By dint of powerful medicine, low

diet, and bleeding, the symptoms in the course of three days perceptibly

decreased. A rigid perseverance in the same course of treatment for only

one week, accompanied with small doses of water-gruel, weak broth, and

barley-water, led to their entire disappearance. In the course of a

month he was sufficiently recovered to be carried down-stairs by two

nurses, and to enjoy an airing in a close carriage, supported by soft

pillows. At the present moment he was restored so far as to walk about,

with the slight assistance of a crutch and a boy. It would perhaps be

gratifying to the section to learn that he ate little, drank little,

slept little, and was never heard to laugh by any accident whatever.

âDR. W. R. FEE, in complimenting the honourable member upon the

triumphant cure he had effected, begged to ask whether the patient still

bled freely?

âDR. KUTANKUMAGEN replied in the affirmative.

âDR. W. R. FEE.âAnd you found that he bled freely during the whole course

of the disorder?

âDR. KUTANKUMAGEN.âOh dear, yes; most freely.

âDR. NEESHAWTS supposed, that if the patient had not submitted to be bled

with great readiness and perseverance, so extraordinary a cure could

never, in fact, have been accomplished. Dr. Kutankumagen rejoined,

certainly not.

âMR. KNIGHT BELL (M.R.C.S.) exhibited a wax preparation of the interior

of a gentleman who in early life had inadvertently swallowed a door-key.

It was a curious fact that a medical student of dissipated habits, being

present at the \_post mortem\_ examination, found means to escape

unobserved from the room, with that portion of the coats of the stomach

upon which an exact model of the instrument was distinctly impressed,

with which he hastened to a locksmith of doubtful character, who made a

new key from the pattern so shown to him. With this key the medical

student entered the house of the deceased gentleman, and committed a

burglary to a large amount, for which he was subsequently tried and

executed.

âTHE PRESIDENT wished to know what became of the original key after the

lapse of years. Mr. Knight Bell replied that the gentleman was always

much accustomed to punch, and it was supposed the acid had gradually

devoured it.

âDR. NEESHAWTS and several of the members were of opinion that the key

must have lain very cold and heavy upon the gentlemanâs stomach.

âMR. KNIGHT BELL believed it did at first. It was worthy of remark,

perhaps, that for some years the gentleman was troubled with a

night-mare, under the influence of which he always imagined himself a

wine-cellar door.

âPROFESSOR MUFF related a very extraordinary and convincing proof of the

wonderful efficacy of the system of infinitesimal doses, which the

section were doubtless aware was based upon the theory that the very

minutest amount of any given drug, properly dispersed through the human

frame, would be productive of precisely the same result as a very large

dose administered in the usual manner. Thus, the fortieth part of a

grain of calomel was supposed to be equal to a five-grain calomel pill,

and so on in proportion throughout the whole range of medicine. He had

tried the experiment in a curious manner upon a publican who had been

brought into the hospital with a broken head, and was cured upon the

infinitesimal system in the incredibly short space of three months. This

man was a hard drinker. He (Professor Muff) had dispersed three drops of

rum through a bucket of water, and requested the man to drink the whole.

What was the result? Before he had drunk a quart, he was in a state of

beastly intoxication; and five other men were made dead drunk with the

remainder.

âTHE PRESIDENT wished to know whether an infinitesimal dose of soda-water

would have recovered them? Professor Muff replied that the twenty-fifth

part of a teaspoonful, properly administered to each patient, would have

sobered him immediately. The President remarked that this was a most

important discovery, and he hoped the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen

would patronize it immediately.

âA Member begged to be informed whether it would be possible to

administerâsay, the twentieth part of a grain of bread and cheese to all

grown-up paupers, and the fortieth part to children, with the same

satisfying effect as their present allowance.

âPROFESSOR MUFF was willing to stake his professional reputation on the

perfect adequacy of such a quantity of food to the support of human

lifeâin workhouses; the addition of the fifteenth part of a grain of

pudding twice a week would render it a high diet.

âPROFESSOR NOGO called the attention of the section to a very

extraordinary case of animal magnetism. A private watchman, being merely

looked at by the operator from the opposite side of a wide street, was at

once observed to be in a very drowsy and languid state. He was followed

to his box, and being once slightly rubbed on the palms of the hands,

fell into a sound sleep, in which he continued without intermission for

ten hours.

âSECTION C.âSTATISTICS.

HAY-LOFT, ORIGINAL PIG.

\_President\_âMr. Woodensconce. \_Vice-Presidents\_âMr. Ledbrain and Mr.

Timbered.

âMR. SLUG stated to the section the result of some calculations he had

made with great difficulty and labour, regarding the state of infant

education among the middle classes of London. He found that, within a

circle of three miles from the Elephant and Castle, the following were

the names and numbers of childrenâs books principally in circulation:â

âJack the Giant-killer 7,943

Ditto and Bean-stalk 8,621

Ditto and Eleven Brothers 2,845

Ditto and Jill 1,998

Total 21,407

âHe found that the proportion of Robinson Crusoes to Philip Quarlls was

as four and a half to one; and that the preponderance of Valentine and

Orsons over Goody Two Shoeses was as three and an eighth of the former to

half a one of the latter; a comparison of Seven Champions with Simple

Simons gave the same result. The ignorance that prevailed, was

lamentable. One child, on being asked whether he would rather be Saint

George of England or a respectable tallow-chandler, instantly replied,

âTaint George of Ingling.â Another, a little boy of eight years old, was

found to be firmly impressed with a belief in the existence of dragons,

and openly stated that it was his intention when he grew up, to rush

forth sword in hand for the deliverance of captive princesses, and the

promiscuous slaughter of giants. Not one child among the number

interrogated had ever heard of Mungo Park,âsome inquiring whether he was

at all connected with the black man that swept the crossing; and others

whether he was in any way related to the Regentâs Park. They had not the

slightest conception of the commonest principles of mathematics, and

considered Sindbad the Sailor the most enterprising voyager that the

world had ever produced.

âA Member strongly deprecating the use of all the other books mentioned,

suggested that Jack and Jill might perhaps be exempted from the general

censure, inasmuch as the hero and heroine, in the very outset of the

tale, were depicted as going \_up\_ a hill to fetch a pail of water, which

was a laborious and useful occupation,âsupposing the family linen was

being washed, for instance.

âMR. SLUG feared that the moral effect of this passage was more than

counterbalanced by another in a subsequent part of the poem, in which

very gross allusion was made to the mode in which the heroine was

personally chastised by her mother

ââFor laughing at Jackâs disaster;â

besides, the whole work had this one great fault, \_it was not true\_.

âTHE PRESIDENT complimented the honourable member on the excellent

distinction he had drawn. Several other Members, too, dwelt upon the

immense and urgent necessity of storing the minds of children with

nothing but facts and figures; which process the President very forcibly

remarked, had made them (the section) the men they were.

âMR. SLUG then stated some curious calculations respecting the dogsâ-meat

barrows of London. He found that the total number of small carts and

barrows engaged in dispensing provision to the cats and dogs of the

metropolis was, one thousand seven hundred and forty-three. The average

number of skewers delivered daily with the provender, by each dogsâ-meat

cart or barrow, was thirty-six. Now, multiplying the number of skewers

so delivered by the number of barrows, a total of sixty-two thousand

seven hundred and forty-eight skewers daily would be obtained. Allowing

that, of these sixty-two thousand seven hundred and forty-eight skewers,

the odd two thousand seven hundred and forty-eight were accidentally

devoured with the meat, by the most voracious of the animals supplied, it

followed that sixty thousand skewers per day, or the enormous number of

twenty-one millions nine hundred thousand skewers annually, were wasted

in the kennels and dustholes of London; which, if collected and

warehoused, would in ten yearsâ time afford a mass of timber more than

sufficient for the construction of a first-rate vessel of war for the use

of her Majestyâs navy, to be called âThe Royal Skewer,â and to become

under that name the terror of all the enemies of this island.

âMR. X. LEDBRAIN read a very ingenious communication, from which it

appeared that the total number of legs belonging to the manufacturing

population of one great town in Yorkshire was, in round numbers, forty

thousand, while the total number of chair and stool legs in their houses

was only thirty thousand, which, upon the very favourable average of

three legs to a seat, yielded only ten thousand seats in all. From this

calculation it would appear,ânot taking wooden or cork legs into the

account, but allowing two legs to every person,âthat ten thousand

individuals (one-half of the whole population) were either destitute of

any rest for their legs at all, or passed the whole of their leisure time

in sitting upon boxes.

âSECTION D.âMECHANICAL SCIENCE.

COACH-HOUSE, ORIGINAL PIG.

\_President\_âMr. Carter. \_Vice-Presidents\_âMr. Truck and Mr. Waghorn.

âPROFESSOR QUEERSPECK exhibited an elegant model of a portable railway,

neatly mounted in a green case, for the waistcoat pocket. By attaching

this beautiful instrument to his boots, any Bank or public-office clerk

could transport himself from his place of residence to his place of

business, at the easy rate of sixty-five miles an hour, which, to

gentlemen of sedentary pursuits, would be an incalculable advantage.

âTHE PRESIDENT was desirous of knowing whether it was necessary to have a

level surface on which the gentleman was to run.

âPROFESSOR QUEERSPECK explained that City gentlemen would run in trains,

being handcuffed together to prevent confusion or unpleasantness. For

instance, trains would start every morning at eight, nine, and ten

oâclock, from Camden Town, Islington, Camberwell, Hackney, and various

other places in which City gentlemen are accustomed to reside. It would

be necessary to have a level, but he had provided for this difficulty by

proposing that the best line that the circumstances would admit of,

should be taken through the sewers which undermine the streets of the

metropolis, and which, well lighted by jets from the gas pipes which run

immediately above them, would form a pleasant and commodious arcade,

especially in winter-time, when the inconvenient custom of carrying

umbrellas, now so general, could be wholly dispensed with. In reply to

another question, Professor Queerspeck stated that no substitute for the

purposes to which these arcades were at present devoted had yet occurred

to him, but that he hoped no fanciful objection on this head would be

allowed to interfere with so great an undertaking.

âMR. JOBBA produced a forcing-machine on a novel plan, for bringing

joint-stock railway shares prematurely to a premium. The instrument was

in the form of an elegant gilt weather-glass, of most dazzling

appearance, and was worked behind, by strings, after the manner of a

pantomime trick, the strings being always pulled by the directors of the

company to which the machine belonged. The quicksilver was so

ingeniously placed, that when the acting directors held shares in their

pockets, figures denoting very small expenses and very large returns

appeared upon the glass; but the moment the directors parted with these

pieces of paper, the estimate of needful expenditure suddenly increased

itself to an immense extent, while the statements of certain profits

became reduced in the same proportion. Mr. Jobba stated that the machine

had been in constant requisition for some months past, and he had never

once known it to fail.

âA Member expressed his opinion that it was extremely neat and pretty.

He wished to know whether it was not liable to accidental derangement?

Mr. Jobba said that the whole machine was undoubtedly liable to be blown

up, but that was the only objection to it.

âPROFESSOR NOGO arrived from the anatomical section to exhibit a model of

a safety fire-escape, which could be fixed at any time, in less than half

an hour, and by means of which, the youngest or most infirm persons

(successfully resisting the progress of the flames until it was quite

ready) could be preserved if they merely balanced themselves for a few

minutes on the sill of their bedroom window, and got into the escape

without falling into the street. The Professor stated that the number of

boys who had been rescued in the daytime by this machine from houses

which were not on fire, was almost incredible. Not a conflagration had

occurred in the whole of London for many months past to which the escape

had not been carried on the very next day, and put in action before a

concourse of persons.

âTHE PRESIDENT inquired whether there was not some difficulty in

ascertaining which was the top of the machine, and which the bottom, in

cases of pressing emergency.

âPROFESSOR NOGO explained that of course it could not be expected to act

quite as well when there was a fire, as when there was not a fire; but in

the former case he thought it would be of equal service whether the top

were up or down.â

\* \* \* \* \*

With the last section our correspondent concludes his most able and

faithful Report, which will never cease to reflect credit upon him for

his scientific attainments, and upon us for our enterprising spirit. It

is needless to take a review of the subjects which have been discussed;

of the mode in which they have been examined; of the great truths which

they have elicited. They are now before the world, and we leave them to

read, to consider, and to profit.

The place of meeting for next year has undergone discussion, and has at

length been decided, regard being had to, and evidence being taken upon,

the goodness of its wines, the supply of its markets, the hospitality of

its inhabitants, and the quality of its hotels. We hope at this next

meeting our correspondent may again be present, and that we may be once

more the means of placing his communications before the world. Until

that period we have been prevailed upon to allow this number of our

Miscellany to be retailed to the public, or wholesaled to the trade,

without any advance upon our usual price.

We have only to add, that the committees are now broken up, and that

Mudfog is once again restored to its accustomed tranquillity,âthat

Professors and Members have had balls, and \_soirÃ©es\_, and suppers, and

great mutual complimentations, and have at length dispersed to their

several homes,âwhither all good wishes and joys attend them, until next

year!

Signed BOZ.

FULL REPORT OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE MUDFOG ASSOCIATION

FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF EVERYTHING

In October last, we did ourselves the immortal credit of recording, at an

enormous expense, and by dint of exertions unnpralleled in the history of

periodical publication, the proceedings of the Mudfog Association for the

Advancement of Everything, which in that month held its first great

half-yearly meeting, to the wonder and delight of the whole empire. We

announced at the conclusion of that extraordinary and most remarkable

Report, that when the Second Meeting of the Society should take place, we

should be found again at our post, renewing our gigantic and spirited

endeavours, and once more making the world ring with the accuracy,

authenticity, immeasurable superiority, and intense remarkability of our

account of its proceedings. In redemption of this pledge, we caused to

be despatched per steam to Oldcastle (at which place this second meeting

of the Society was held on the 20th instant), the same

superhumanly-endowed gentleman who furnished the former report, and

who,âgifted by nature with transcendent abilities, and furnished by us

with a body of assistants scarcely inferior to himself,âhas forwarded a

series of letters, which, for faithfulness of description, power of

language, fervour of thought, happiness of expression, and importance of

subject-matter, have no equal in the epistolary literature of any age or

country. We give this gentlemanâs correspondence entire, and in the

order in which it reached our office.

â\_Saloon of Steamer\_, \_Thursday night\_, \_half-past eight\_.

âWhen I left New Burlington Street this evening in the hackney cabriolet,

number four thousand two hundred and eighty-five, I experienced

sensations as novel as they were oppressive. A sense of the importance

of the task I had undertaken, a consciousness that I was leaving London,

and, stranger still, going somewhere else, a feeling of loneliness and a

sensation of jolting, quite bewildered my thoughts, and for a time

rendered me even insensible to the presence of my carpet-bag and hat-box.

I shall ever feel grateful to the driver of a Blackwall omnibus who, by

thrusting the pole of his vehicle through the small door of the

cabriolet, awakened me from a tumult of imaginings that are wholly

indescribable. But of such materials is our imperfect nature composed!

âI am happy to say that I am the first passenger on board, and shall thus

be enabled to give you an account of all that happens in the order of its

occurrence. The chimney is smoking a good deal, and so are the crew; and

the captain, I am informed, is very drunk in a little house upon deck,

something like a black turnpike. I should infer from all I hear that he

has got the steam up.

âYou will readily guess with what feelings I have just made the discovery

that my berth is in the same closet with those engaged by Professor

Woodensconce, Mr. Slug, and Professor Grime. Professor Woodensconce has

taken the shelf above me, and Mr. Slug and Professor Grime the two

shelves opposite. Their luggage has already arrived. On Mr. Slugâs bed

is a long tin tube of about three inches in diameter, carefully closed at

both ends. What can this contain? Some powerful instrument of a new

construction, doubtless.â

â\_Ten minutes past nine\_.

âNobody has yet arrived, nor has anything fresh come in my way except

several joints of beef and mutton, from which I conclude that a good

plain dinner has been provided for to-morrow. There is a singular smell

below, which gave me some uneasiness at first; but as the steward says it

is always there, and never goes away, I am quite comfortable again. I

learn from this man that the different sections will be distributed at

the Black Boy and Stomach-ache, and the Boot-jack and Countenance. If

this intelligence be true (and I have no reason to doubt it), your

readers will draw such conclusions as their different opinions may

suggest.

âI write down these remarks as they occur to me, or as the facts come to

my knowledge, in order that my first impressions may lose nothing of

their original vividness. I shall despatch them in small packets as

opportunities arise.â

â\_Half past nine\_.

âSome dark object has just appeared upon the wharf. I think it is a

travelling carriage.â

â\_A quarter to ten\_.

âNo, it isnât.â

â\_Half-past ten\_.

The passengers are pouring in every instant. Four omnibuses full have

just arrived upon the wharf, and all is bustle and activity. The noise

and confusion are very great. Cloths are laid in the cabins, and the

steward is placing blue platesâfull of knobs of cheese at equal distances

down the centre of the tables. He drops a great many knobs; but, being

used to it, picks them up again with great dexterity, and, after wiping

them on his sleeve, throws them back into the plates. He is a young man

of exceedingly prepossessing appearanceâeither dirty or a mulatto, but I

think the former.

âAn interesting old gentleman, who came to the wharf in an omnibus, has

just quarrelled violently with the porters, and is staggering towards the

vessel with a large trunk in his arms. I trust and hope that he may

reach it in safety; but the board he has to cross is narrow and slippery.

Was that a splash? Gracious powers!

âI have just returned from the deck. The trunk is standing upon the

extreme brink of the wharf, but the old gentleman is nowhere to be seen.

The watchman is not sure whether he went down or not, but promises to

drag for him the first thing to-morrow morning. May his humane efforts

prove successful!

âProfessor Nogo has this moment arrived with his nightcap on under his

hat. He has ordered a glass of cold brandy and water, with a hard

biscuit and a basin, and has gone straight to bed. What can this mean?

âThe three other scientific gentlemen to whom I have already alluded have

come on board, and have all tried their beds, with the exception of

Professor Woodensconce, who sleeps in one of the top ones, and canât get

into it. Mr. Slug, who sleeps in the other top one, is unable to get out

of his, and is to have his supper handed up by a boy. I have had the

honour to introduce myself to these gentlemen, and we have amicably

arranged the order in which we shall retire to rest; which it is

necessary to agree upon, because, although the cabin is very comfortable,

there is not room for more than one gentleman to be out of bed at a time,

and even he must take his boots off in the passage.

âAs I anticipated, the knobs of cheese were provided for the passengersâ

supper, and are now in course of consumption. Your readers will be

surprised to hear that Professor Woodensconce has abstained from cheese

for eight years, although he takes butter in considerable quantities.

Professor Grime having lost several teeth, is unable, I observe, to eat

his crusts without previously soaking them in his bottled porter. How

interesting are these peculiarities!â

â\_Half-past eleven\_.

âProfessors Woodensconce and Grime, with a degree of good humour that

delights us all, have just arranged to toss for a bottle of mulled port.

There has been some discussion whether the payment should be decided by

the first toss or the best out of three. Eventually the latter course

has been determined on. Deeply do I wish that both gentlemen could win;

but that being impossible, I own that my personal aspirations (I speak as

an individual, and do not compromise either you or your readers by this

expression of feeling) are with Professor Woodensconce. I have backed

that gentleman to the amount of eighteenpence.â

â\_Twenty minutes to twelve\_.

âProfessor Grime has inadvertently tossed his half-crown out of one of

the cabin-windows, and it has been arranged that the steward shall toss

for him. Bets are offered on any side to any amount, but there are no

takers.

âProfessor Woodensconce has just called âwoman;â but the coin having

lodged in a beam, is a long time coming down again. The interest and

suspense of this one moment are beyond anything that can be imagined.â

â\_Twelve oâclock\_.

âThe mulled port is smoking on the table before me, and Professor Grime

has won. Tossing is a game of chance; but on every ground, whether of

public or private character, intellectual endowments, or scientific

attainments, I cannot help expressing my opinion that Professor

Woodensconce \_ought\_ to have come off victorious. There is an exultation

about Professor Grime incompatible, I fear, with true greatness.â

â\_A quarter past twelve\_.

âProfessor Grime continues to exult, and to boast of his victory in no

very measured terms, observing that he always does win, and that he knew

it would be a âheadâ beforehand, with many other remarks of a similar

nature. Surely this gentleman is not so lost to every feeling of decency

and propriety as not to feel and know the superiority of Professor

Woodensconce? Is Professor Grime insane? or does he wish to be reminded

in plain language of his true position in society, and the precise level

of his acquirements and abilities? Professor Grime will do well to look

to this.â

â\_One oâclock\_.

âI am writing in bed. The small cabin is illuminated by the feeble light

of a flickering lamp suspended from the ceiling; Professor Grime is lying

on the opposite shelf on the broad of his back, with his mouth wide open.

The scene is indescribably solemn. The rippling of the tide, the noise

of the sailorsâ feet overhead, the gruff voices on the river, the dogs on

the shore, the snoring of the passengers, and a constant creaking of

every plank in the vessel, are the only sounds that meet the ear. With

these exceptions, all is profound silence.

âMy curiosity has been within the last moment very much excited. Mr.

Slug, who lies above Professor Grime, has cautiously withdrawn the

curtains of his berth, and, after looking anxiously out, as if to satisfy

himself that his companions are asleep, has taken up the tin tube of

which I have before spoken, and is regarding it with great interest.

What rare mechanical combination can be contained in that mysterious

case? It is evidently a profound secret to all.â

â\_A quarter past one\_.

âThe behaviour of Mr. Slug grows more and more mysterious. He has

unscrewed the top of the tube, and now renews his observations upon his

companions, evidently to make sure that he is wholly unobserved. He is

clearly on the eve of some great experiment. Pray heaven that it be not

a dangerous one; but the interests of science must be promoted, and I am

prepared for the worst.â

â\_Five minutes later\_.

âHe has produced a large pair of scissors, and drawn a roll of some

substance, not unlike parchment in appearance, from the tin case. The

experiment is about to begin. I must strain my eyes to the utmost, in

the attempt to follow its minutest operation.â

â\_Twenty minutes before two\_.

âI have at length been enabled to ascertain that the tin tube contains a

few yards of some celebrated plaster, recommendedâas I discover on

regarding the label attentively through my eye-glassâas a preservative

against sea-sickness. Mr. Slug has cut it up into small portions, and is

now sticking it over himself in every direction.â

â\_Three oâclock\_.

âPrecisely a quarter of an hour ago we weighed anchor, and the machinery

was suddenly put in motion with a noise so appalling, that Professor

Woodensconce (who had ascended to his berth by means of a platform of

carpet-bags arranged by himself on geometrical principals) darted from

his shelf head foremost, and, gaining his feet with all the rapidity of

extreme terror, ran wildly into the ladiesâ cabin, under the impression

that we were sinking, and uttering loud cries for aid. I am assured that

the scene which ensued baffles all description. There were one hundred

and forty-seven ladies in their respective berths at the time.

âMr. Slug has remarked, as an additional instance of the extreme

ingenuity of the steam-engine as applied to purposes of navigation, that

in whatever part of the vessel a passengerâs berth may be situated, the

machinery always appears to be exactly under his pillow. He intends

stating this very beautiful, though simple discovery, to the

association.â

â\_Half-past ten\_.

âWe are still in smooth water; that is to say, in as smooth water as a

steam-vessel ever can be, for, as Professor Woodensconce (who has just

woke up) learnedly remarks, another great point of ingenuity about a

steamer is, that it always carries a little storm with it. You can

scarcely conceive how exciting the jerking pulsation of the ship becomes.

It is a matter of positive difficulty to get to sleep.â

â\_Friday afternoon\_, \_six oâclock\_.

âI regret to inform you that Mr. Slugâs plaster has proved of no avail.

He is in great agony, but has applied several large, additional pieces

notwithstanding. How affecting is this extreme devotion to science and

pursuit of knowledge under the most trying circumstances!

âWe were extremely happy this morning, and the breakfast was one of the

most animated description. Nothing unpleasant occurred until noon, with

the exception of Doctor Foxeyâs brown silk umbrella and white hat

becoming entangled in the machinery while he was explaining to a knot of

ladies the construction of the steam-engine. I fear the gravy soup for

lunch was injudicious. We lost a great many passengers almost

immediately afterwards.â

â\_Half-past six\_.

âI am again in bed. Anything so heart-rending as Mr. Slugâs sufferings

it has never yet been my lot to witness.â

â\_Seven oâclock\_.

âA messenger has just come down for a clean pocket-handkerchief from

Professor Woodensconceâs bag, that unfortunate gentleman being quite

unable to leave the deck, and imploring constantly to be thrown

overboard. From this man I understand that Professor Nogo, though in a

state of utter exhaustion, clings feebly to the hard biscuit and cold

brandy and water, under the impression that they will yet restore him.

Such is the triumph of mind over matter.

âProfessor Grime is in bed, to all appearance quite well; but he \_will\_

eat, and it is disagreeable to see him. Has this gentleman no sympathy

with the sufferings of his fellow-creatures? If he has, on what

principle can he call for mutton-chopsâand smile?â

â\_Black Boy and Stomach-ache\_,

\_Oldcastle\_, \_Saturday noon\_.

âYou will be happy to learn that I have at length arrived here in safety.

The town is excessively crowded, and all the private lodgings and hotels

are filled with \_savans\_ of both sexes. The tremendous assemblage of

intellect that one encounters in every street is in the last degree

overwhelming.

âNotwithstanding the throng of people here, I have been fortunate enough

to meet with very comfortable accommodation on very reasonable terms,

having secured a sofa in the first-floor passage at one guinea per night,

which includes permission to take my meals in the bar, on condition that

I walk about the streets at all other times, to make room for other

gentlemen similarly situated. I have been over the outhouses intended to

be devoted to the reception of the various sections, both here and at the

Boot-jack and Countenance, and am much delighted with the arrangements.

Nothing can exceed the fresh appearance of the saw-dust with which the

floors are sprinkled. The forms are of unplaned deal, and the general

effect, as you can well imagine, is extremely beautiful.â

â\_Half-past nine\_.

âThe number and rapidity of the arrivals are quite bewildering. Within

the last ten minutes a stage-coach has driven up to the door, filled

inside and out with distinguished characters, comprising Mr.

Muddlebranes, Mr. Drawley, Professor Muff, Mr. X. Misty, Mr. X. X. Misty,

Mr. Purblind, Professor Rummun, The Honourable and Reverend Mr. Long

Eers, Professor John Ketch, Sir William Joltered, Doctor Buffer, Mr.

Smith (of London), Mr. Brown (of Edinburgh), Sir Hookham Snivey, and

Professor Pumpkinskull. The ten last-named gentlemen were wet through,

and looked extremely intelligent.â

â\_Sunday\_, \_two oâclock\_, \_p.m.\_

âThe Honourable and Reverend Mr. Long Eers, accompanied by Sir William

Joltered, walked and drove this morning. They accomplished the former

feat in boots, and the latter in a hired fly. This has naturally given

rise to much discussion.

âI have just learnt that an interview has taken place at the Boot-jack

and Countenance between Sowster, the active and intelligent beadle of

this place, and Professor Pumpkinskull, who, as your readers are

doubtless aware, is an influential member of the council. I forbear to

communicate any of the rumours to which this very extraordinary

proceeding has given rise until I have seen Sowster, and endeavoured to

ascertain the truth from him.â

â\_Half-past six\_.

âI engaged a donkey-chaise shortly after writing the above, and proceeded

at a brisk trot in the direction of Sowsterâs residence, passing through

a beautiful expanse of country, with red brick buildings on either side,

and stopping in the marketplace to observe the spot where Mr. Kwakleyâs

hat was blown off yesterday. It is an uneven piece of paving, but has

certainly no appearance which would lead one to suppose that any such

event had recently occurred there. From this point I proceededâpassing

the gas-works and tallow-melterâsâto a lane which had been pointed out to

me as the beadleâs place of residence; and before I had driven a dozen

yards further, I had the good fortune to meet Sowster himself advancing

towards me.

âSowster is a fat man, with a more enlarged development of that peculiar

conformation of countenance which is vulgarly termed a double chin than I

remember to have ever seen before. He has also a very red nose, which he

attributes to a habit of early risingâso red, indeed, that but for this

explanation I should have supposed it to proceed from occasional

inebriety. He informed me that he did not feel himself at liberty to

relate what had passed between himself and Professor Pumpkinskull, but

had no objection to state that it was connected with a matter of police

regulation, and added with peculiar significance âNever wos sitch times!â

âYou will easily believe that this intelligence gave me considerable

surprise, not wholly unmixed with anxiety, and that I lost no time in

waiting on Professor Pumpkinskull, and stating the object of my visit.

After a few momentsâ reflection, the Professor, who, I am bound to say,

behaved with the utmost politeness, openly avowed (I mark the passage in

italics) \_that he had requested Sowster to attend on the Monday morning

at the Boot-jack and Countenance\_, \_to keep off the boys\_; \_and that he

had further desired that the under-beadle might be stationed\_, \_with the

same object\_, \_at the Black Boy and Stomach-ache\_!

âNow I leave this unconstitutional proceeding to your comments and the

consideration of your readers. I have yet to learn that a beadle,

without the precincts of a church, churchyard, or work-house, and acting

otherwise than under the express orders of churchwardens and overseers in

council assembled, to enforce the law against people who come upon the

parish, and other offenders, has any lawful authority whatever over the

rising youth of this country. I have yet to learn that a beadle can be

called out by any civilian to exercise a domination and despotism over

the boys of Britain. I have yet to learn that a beadle will be permitted

by the commissioners of poor law regulation to wear out the soles and

heels of his boots in illegal interference with the liberties of people

not proved poor or otherwise criminal. I have yet to learn that a beadle

has power to stop up the Queenâs highway at his will and pleasure, or

that the whole width of the street is not free and open to any man, boy,

or woman in existence, up to the very walls of the housesâay, be they

Black Boys and Stomach-aches, or Boot-jacks and Countenances, I care

not.â

â\_Nine oâclock\_.

âI have procured a local artist to make a faithful sketch of the tyrant

Sowster, which, as he has acquired this infamous celebrity, you will no

doubt wish to have engraved for the purpose of presenting a copy with

every copy of your next number. I enclose it.

[Picture which cannot be reproduced]

The under-beadle has consented to write his life, but it is to be

strictly anonymous.

âThe accompanying likeness is of course from the life, and complete in

every respect. Even if I had been totally ignorant of the manâs real

character, and it had been placed before me without remark, I should have

shuddered involuntarily. There is an intense malignity of expression in

the features, and a baleful ferocity of purpose in the ruffianâs eye,

which appals and sickens. His whole air is rampant with cruelty, nor is

the stomach less characteristic of his demoniac propensities.â

â\_Monday\_.

âThe great day has at length arrived. I have neither eyes, nor ears, nor

pens, nor ink, nor paper, for anything but the wonderful proceedings that

have astounded my senses. Let me collect my energies and proceed to the

account.

âSECTION A.âZOOLOGY AND BOTANY.

FRONT PARLOUR, BLACK BOY AND STOMACH-ACHE.

\_President\_âSir William Joltered. \_Vice-Presidents\_âMr. Muddlebranes and

Mr. Drawley.

âMR. X. X. MISTY communicated some remarks on the disappearance of

dancing-bears from the streets of London, with observations on the

exhibition of monkeys as connected with barrel-organs. The writer had

observed, with feelings of the utmost pain and regret, that some years

ago a sudden and unaccountable change in the public taste took place with

reference to itinerant bears, who, being discountenanced by the populace,

gradually fell off one by one from the streets of the metropolis, until

not one remained to create a taste for natural history in the breasts of

the poor and uninstructed. One bear, indeed,âa brown and ragged

animal,âhad lingered about the haunts of his former triumphs, with a worn

and dejected visage and feeble limbs, and had essayed to wield his

quarter-staff for the amusement of the multitude; but hunger, and an

utter want of any due recompense for his abilities, had at length driven

him from the field, and it was only too probable that he had fallen a

sacrifice to the rising taste for grease. He regretted to add that a

similar, and no less lamentable, change had taken place with reference to

monkeys. These delightful animals had formerly been almost as plentiful

as the organs on the tops of which they were accustomed to sit; the

proportion in the year 1829 (it appeared by the parliamentary return)

being as one monkey to three organs. Owing, however, to an altered taste

in musical instruments, and the substitution, in a great measure, of

narrow boxes of music for organs, which left the monkeys nothing to sit

upon, this source of public amusement was wholly dried up. Considering

it a matter of the deepest importance, in connection with national

education, that the people should not lose such opportunities of making

themselves acquainted with the manners and customs of two most

interesting species of animals, the author submitted that some measures

should be immediately taken for the restoration of these pleasing and

truly intellectual amusements.

âTHE PRESIDENT inquired by what means the honourable member proposed to

attain this most desirable end?

âTHE AUTHOR submitted that it could be most fully and satisfactorily

accomplished, if Her Majestyâs Government would cause to be brought over

to England, and maintained at the public expense, and for the public

amusement, such a number of bears as would enable every quarter of the

town to be visitedâsay at least by three bears a week. No difficulty

whatever need be experienced in providing a fitting place for the

reception of these animals, as a commodious bear-garden could be erected

in the immediate neighbourhood of both Houses of Parliament; obviously

the most proper and eligible spot for such an establishment.

âPROFESSOR MULL doubted very much whether any correct ideas of natural

history were propagated by the means to which the honourable member had

so ably adverted. On the contrary, he believed that they had been the

means of diffusing very incorrect and imperfect notions on the subject.

He spoke from personal observation and personal experience, when he said

that many children of great abilities had been induced to believe, from

what they had observed in the streets, at and before the period to which

the honourable gentleman had referred, that all monkeys were born in red

coats and spangles, and that their hats and feathers also came by nature.

He wished to know distinctly whether the honourable gentleman attributed

the want of encouragement the bears had met with to the decline of public

taste in that respect, or to a want of ability on the part of the bears

themselves?

âMR. X. X. MISTY replied, that he could not bring himself to believe but

that there must be a great deal of floating talent among the bears and

monkeys generally; which, in the absence of any proper encouragement, was

dispersed in other directions.

âPROFESSOR PUMPKINSKULL wished to take that opportunity of calling the

attention of the section to a most important and serious point. The

author of the treatise just read had alluded to the prevalent taste for

bearsâ-grease as a means of promoting the growth of hair, which

undoubtedly was diffused to a very great and (as it appeared to him) very

alarming extent. No gentleman attending that section could fail to be

aware of the fact that the youth of the present age evinced, by their

behaviour in the streets, and at all places of public resort, a

considerable lack of that gallantry and gentlemanly feeling which, in

more ignorant times, had been thought becoming. He wished to know

whether it were possible that a constant outward application of

bearsâ-grease by the young gentlemen about town had imperceptibly infused

into those unhappy persons something of the nature and quality of the

bear. He shuddered as he threw out the remark; but if this theory, on

inquiry, should prove to be well founded, it would at once explain a

great deal of unpleasant eccentricity of behaviour, which, without some

such discovery, was wholly unaccountable.

âTHE PRESIDENT highly complimented the learned gentleman on his most

valuable suggestion, which produced the greatest effect upon the

assembly; and remarked that only a week previous he had seen some young

gentlemen at a theatre eyeing a box of ladies with a fierce intensity,

which nothing but the influence of some brutish appetite could possibly

explain. It was dreadful to reflect that our youth were so rapidly

verging into a generation of bears.

âAfter a scene of scientific enthusiasm it was resolved that this

important question should be immediately submitted to the consideration

of the council.

âTHE PRESIDENT wished to know whether any gentleman could inform the

section what had become of the dancing-dogs?

âA MEMBER replied, after some hesitation, that on the day after three

glee-singers had been committed to prison as criminals by a late most

zealous police-magistrate of the metropolis, the dogs had abandoned their

professional duties, and dispersed themselves in different quarters of

the town to gain a livelihood by less dangerous means. He was given to

understand that since that period they had supported themselves by lying

in wait for and robbing blind menâs poodles.

âMR. FLUMMERY exhibited a twig, claiming to be a veritable branch of that

noble tree known to naturalists as the SHAKSPEARE, which has taken root

in every land and climate, and gathered under the shade of its broad

green boughs the great family of mankind. The learned gentleman remarked

that the twig had been undoubtedly called by other names in its time; but

that it had been pointed out to him by an old lady in Warwickshire, where

the great tree had grown, as a shoot of the genuine SHAKSPEARE, by which

name he begged to introduce it to his countrymen.

âTHE PRESIDENT wished to know what botanical definition the honourable

gentleman could afford of the curiosity.

âMR. FLUMMERY expressed his opinion that it was A DECIDED PLANT.

âSECTION B.âDISPLAY OF MODELS AND MECHANICAL SCIENCE.

LARGE ROOM, BOOT-JACK AND COUNTENANCE.

\_President\_âMr. Mallett. \_Vice-Presidents\_âMessrs. Leaver and Scroo.

âMR. CRINKLES exhibited a most beautiful and delicate machine, of little

larger size than an ordinary snuff-box, manufactured entirely by himself,

and composed exclusively of steel, by the aid of which more pockets could

be picked in one hour than by the present slow and tedious process in

four-and-twenty. The inventor remarked that it had been put into active

operation in Fleet Street, the Strand, and other thoroughfares, and had

never been once known to fail.

âAfter some slight delay, occasioned by the various members of the

section buttoning their pockets,

âTHE PRESIDENT narrowly inspected the invention, and declared that he had

never seen a machine of more beautiful or exquisite construction. Would

the inventor be good enough to inform the section whether he had taken

any and what means for bringing it into general operation?

âMR. CRINKLES stated that, after encountering some preliminary

difficulties, he had succeeded in putting himself in communication with

Mr. Fogle Hunter, and other gentlemen connected with the swell mob, who

had awarded the invention the very highest and most unqualified

approbation. He regretted to say, however, that these distinguished

practitioners, in common with a gentleman of the name of Gimlet-eyed

Tommy, and other members of a secondary grade of the profession whom he

was understood to represent, entertained an insuperable objection to its

being brought into general use, on the ground that it would have the

inevitable effect of almost entirely superseding manual labour, and

throwing a great number of highly-deserving persons out of employment.

âTHE PRESIDENT hoped that no such fanciful objections would be allowed to

stand in the way of such a great public improvement.

âMR. CRINKLES hoped so too; but he feared that if the gentlemen of the

swell mob persevered in their objection, nothing could be done.

âPROFESSOR GRIME suggested, that surely, in that case, Her Majestyâs

Government might be prevailed upon to take it up.

âMR. CRINKLES said, that if the objection were found to be insuperable he

should apply to Parliament, which he thought could not fail to recognise

the utility of the invention.

âTHE PRESIDENT observed that, up to this time Parliament had certainly

got on very well without it; but, as they did their business on a very

large scale, he had no doubt they would gladly adopt the improvement.

His only fear was that the machine might be worn out by constant working.

âMR. COPPERNOSE called the attention of the section to a proposition of

great magnitude and interest, illustrated by a vast number of models, and

stated with much clearness and perspicuity in a treatise entitled

âPractical Suggestions on the necessity of providing some harmless and

wholesome relaxation for the young noblemen of England.â His proposition

was, that a space of ground of not less than ten miles in length and four

in breadth should be purchased by a new company, to be incorporated by

Act of Parliament, and inclosed by a brick wall of not less than twelve

feet in height. He proposed that it should be laid out with highway

roads, turnpikes, bridges, miniature villages, and every object that

could conduce to the comfort and glory of Four-in-hand Clubs, so that

they might be fairly presumed to require no drive beyond it. This

delightful retreat would be fitted up with most commodious and extensive

stables, for the convenience of such of the nobility and gentry as had a

taste for ostlering, and with houses of entertainment furnished in the

most expensive and handsome style. It would be further provided with

whole streets of door-knockers and bell-handles of extra size, so

constructed that they could be easily wrenched off at night, and

regularly screwed on again, by attendants provided for the purpose, every

day. There would also be gas lamps of real glass, which could be broken

at a comparatively small expense per dozen, and a broad and handsome foot

pavement for gentlemen to drive their cabriolets upon when they were

humorously disposedâfor the full enjoyment of which feat live pedestrians

would be procured from the workhouse at a very small charge per head.

The place being inclosed, and carefully screened from the intrusion of

the public, there would be no objection to gentlemen laying aside any

article of their costume that was considered to interfere with a pleasant

frolic, or, indeed, to their walking about without any costume at all, if

they liked that better. In short, every facility of enjoyment would be

afforded that the most gentlemanly person could possibly desire. But as

even these advantages would be incomplete unless there were some means

provided of enabling the nobility and gentry to display their prowess

when they sallied forth after dinner, and as some inconvenience might be

experienced in the event of their being reduced to the necessity of

pummelling each other, the inventor had turned his attention to the

construction of an entirely new police force, composed exclusively of

automaton figures, which, with the assistance of the ingenious Signor

Gagliardi, of Windmill-street, in the Haymarket, he had succeeded in

making with such nicety, that a policeman, cab-driver, or old woman, made

upon the principle of the models exhibited, would walk about until

knocked down like any real man; nay, more, if set upon and beaten by six

or eight noblemen or gentlemen, after it was down, the figure would utter

divers groans, mingled with entreaties for mercy, thus rendering the

illusion complete, and the enjoyment perfect. But the invention did not

stop even here; for station-houses would be built, containing good beds

for noblemen and gentlemen during the night, and in the morning they

would repair to a commodious police office, where a pantomimic

investigation would take place before the automaton magistrates,âquite

equal to life,âwho would fine them in so many counters, with which they

would be previously provided for the purpose. This office would be

furnished with an inclined plane, for the convenience of any nobleman or

gentleman who might wish to bring in his horse as a witness; and the

prisoners would be at perfect liberty, as they were now, to interrupt the

complainants as much as they pleased, and to make any remarks that they

thought proper. The charge for these amusements would amount to very

little more than they already cost, and the inventor submitted that the

public would be much benefited and comforted by the proposed arrangement.

âPROFESSOR NOGO wished to be informed what amount of automaton police

force it was proposed to raise in the first instance.

âMR. COPPERNOSE replied, that it was proposed to begin with seven

divisions of police of a score each, lettered from A to G inclusive. It

was proposed that not more than half this number should be placed on

active duty, and that the remainder should be kept on shelves in the

police office ready to be called out at a momentâs notice.

âTHE PRESIDENT, awarding the utmost merit to the ingenious gentleman who

had originated the idea, doubted whether the automaton police would quite

answer the purpose. He feared that noblemen and gentlemen would perhaps

require the excitement of thrashing living subjects.

âMR. COPPERNOSE submitted, that as the usual odds in such cases were ten

noblemen or gentlemen to one policeman or cab-driver, it could make very

little difference in point of excitement whether the policeman or

cab-driver were a man or a block. The great advantage would be, that a

policemanâs limbs might be all knocked off, and yet he would be in a

condition to do duty next day. He might even give his evidence next

morning with his head in his hand, and give it equally well.

âPROFESSOR MUFF.âWill you allow me to ask you, sir, of what materials it

is intended that the magistratesâ heads shall be composed?

âMR. COPPERNOSE.âThe magistrates will have wooden heads of course, and

they will be made of the toughest and thickest materials that can

possibly be obtained.

âPROFESSOR MUFF.âI am quite satisfied. This is a great invention.

âPROFESSOR NOGO.âI see but one objection to it. It appears to me that

the magistrates ought to talk.

âMR. COPPERNOSE no sooner heard this suggestion than he touched a small

spring in each of the two models of magistrates which were placed upon

the table; one of the figures immediately began to exclaim with great

volubility that he was sorry to see gentlemen in such a situation, and

the other to express a fear that the policeman was intoxicated.

âThe section, as with one accord, declared with a shout of applause that

the invention was complete; and the President, much excited, retired with

Mr. Coppernose to lay it before the council. On his return,

âMR. TICKLE displayed his newly-invented spectacles, which enabled the

wearer to discern, in very bright colours, objects at a great distance,

and rendered him wholly blind to those immediately before him. It was,

he said, a most valuable and useful invention, based strictly upon the

principle of the human eye.

âTHE PRESIDENT required some information upon this point. He had yet to

learn that the human eye was remarkable for the peculiarities of which

the honourable gentleman had spoken.

âMR. TICKLE was rather astonished to hear this, when the President could

not fail to be aware that a large number of most excellent persons and

great statesmen could see, with the naked eye, most marvellous horrors on

West India plantations, while they could discern nothing whatever in the

interior of Manchester cotton mills. He must know, too, with what

quickness of perception most people could discover their neighbourâs

faults, and how very blind they were to their own. If the President

differed from the great majority of men in this respect, his eye was a

defective one, and it was to assist his vision that these glasses were

made.

âMR. BLANK exhibited a model of a fashionable annual, composed of

copper-plates, gold leaf, and silk boards, and worked entirely by milk

and water.

âMR. PROSEE, after examining the machine, declared it to be so

ingeniously composed, that he was wholly unable to discover how it went

on at all.

âMR. BLANK.âNobody can, and that is the beauty of it.

âSECTION C.âANATOMY AND MEDICINE.

BAR ROOM, BLACK BOY AND STOMACH-ACHE.

\_President\_âDr. Soemup. \_Vice-Presidents\_âMessrs. Pessell and Mortair.

âDR. GRUMMIDGE stated to the section a most interesting case of

monomania, and described the course of treatment he had pursued with

perfect success. The patient was a married lady in the middle rank of

life, who, having seen another lady at an evening party in a full suit of

pearls, was suddenly seized with a desire to possess a similar equipment,

although her husbandâs finances were by no means equal to the necessary

outlay. Finding her wish ungratified, she fell sick, and the symptoms

soon became so alarming, that he (Dr. Grummidge) was called in. At this

period the prominent tokens of the disorder were sullenness, a total

indisposition to perform domestic duties, great peevishness, and extreme

languor, except when pearls were mentioned, at which times the pulse

quickened, the eyes grew brighter, the pupils dilated, and the patient,

after various incoherent exclamations, burst into a passion of tears, and

exclaimed that nobody cared for her, and that she wished herself dead.

Finding that the patientâs appetite was affected in the presence of

company, he began by ordering a total abstinence from all stimulants, and

forbidding any sustenance but weak gruel; he then took twenty ounces of

blood, applied a blister under each ear, one upon the chest, and another

on the back; having done which, and administered five grains of calomel,

he left the patient to her repose. The next day she was somewhat low,

but decidedly better, and all appearances of irritation were removed.

The next day she improved still further, and on the next again. On the

fourth there was some appearance of a return of the old symptoms, which

no sooner developed themselves, than he administered another dose of

calomel, and left strict orders that, unless a decidedly favourable

change occurred within two hours, the patientâs head should be

immediately shaved to the very last curl. From that moment she began to

mend, and, in less than four-and-twenty hours was perfectly restored.

She did not now betray the least emotion at the sight or mention of

pearls or any other ornaments. She was cheerful and good-humoured, and a

most beneficial change had been effected in her whole temperament and

condition.

âMR. PIPKIN (M.R.C.S.) read a short but most interesting communication in

which he sought to prove the complete belief of Sir William Courtenay,

otherwise Thorn, recently shot at Canterbury, in the Homoeopathic system.

The section would bear in mind that one of the Homoeopathic doctrines

was, that infinitesimal doses of any medicine which would occasion the

disease under which the patient laboured, supposing him to be in a

healthy state, would cure it. Now, it was a remarkable

circumstanceâproved in the evidenceâthat the deceased Thorn employed a

woman to follow him about all day with a pail of water, assuring her that

one drop (a purely homoeopathic remedy, the section would observe),

placed upon his tongue, after death, would restore him. What was the

obvious inference? That Thorn, who was marching and countermarching in

osier beds, and other swampy places, was impressed with a presentiment

that he should be drowned; in which case, had his instructions been

complied with, he could not fail to have been brought to life again

instantly by his own prescription. As it was, if this woman, or any

other person, had administered an infinitesimal dose of lead and

gunpowder immediately after he fell, he would have recovered forthwith.

But unhappily the woman concerned did not possess the power of reasoning

by analogy, or carrying out a principle, and thus the unfortunate

gentleman had been sacrificed to the ignorance of the peasantry.

âSECTION D.âSTATISTICS.

OUT-HOUSE, BLACK BOY AND STOMACH-ACHE.

\_President\_âMr. Slug. \_Vice-Presidents\_âMessrs. Noakes and Styles.

âMR. KWAKLEY stated the result of some most ingenious statistical

inquiries relative to the difference between the value of the

qualification of several members of Parliament as published to the world,

and its real nature and amount. After reminding the section that every

member of Parliament for a town or borough was supposed to possess a

clear freehold estate of three hundred pounds per annum, the honourable

gentleman excited great amusement and laughter by stating the exact

amount of freehold property possessed by a column of legislators, in

which he had included himself. It appeared from this table, that the

amount of such income possessed by each was 0 pounds, 0 shillings, and 0

pence, yielding an average of the same. (Great laughter.) It was pretty

well known that there were accommodating gentlemen in the habit of

furnishing new members with temporary qualifications, to the ownership of

which they swore solemnlyâof course as a mere matter of form. He argued

from these \_data\_ that it was wholly unnecessary for members of

Parliament to possess any property at all, especially as when they had

none the public could get them so much cheaper.

âSUPPLEMENTARY SECTION, E.âUMBUGOLOGY AND DITCHWATERISICS.

\_President\_âMr. Grub. \_Vice Presidents\_âMessrs. Dull and Dummy.

âA paper was read by the secretary descriptive of a bay pony with one

eye, which had been seen by the author standing in a butcherâs cart at

the corner of Newgate Market. The communication described the author of

the paper as having, in the prosecution of a mercantile pursuit, betaken

himself one Saturday morning last summer from Somers Town to Cheapside;

in the course of which expedition he had beheld the extraordinary

appearance above described. The pony had one distinct eye, and it had

been pointed out to him by his friend Captain Blunderbore, of the Horse

Marines, who assisted the author in his search, that whenever he winked

this eye he whisked his tail (possibly to drive the flies off), but that

he always winked and whisked at the same time. The animal was lean,

spavined, and tottering; and the author proposed to constitute it of the

family of \_Fitfordogsmeataurious\_. It certainly did occur to him that

there was no case on record of a pony with one clearly-defined and

distinct organ of vision, winking and whisking at the same moment.

âMR. Q. J. SNUFFLETOFFLE had heard of a pony winking his eye, and

likewise of a pony whisking his tail, but whether they were two ponies or

the same pony he could not undertake positively to say. At all events,

he was acquainted with no authenticated instance of a simultaneous

winking and whisking, and he really could not but doubt the existence of

such a marvellous pony in opposition to all those natural laws by which

ponies were governed. Referring, however, to the mere question of his

one organ of vision, might he suggest the possibility of this pony having

been literally half asleep at the time he was seen, and having closed

only one eye.

âTHE PRESIDENT observed that, whether the pony was half asleep or fast

asleep, there could be no doubt that the association was wide awake, and

therefore that they had better get the business over, and go to dinner.

He had certainly never seen anything analogous to this pony, but he was

not prepared to doubt its existence; for he had seen many queerer ponies

in his time, though he did not pretend to have seen any more remarkable

donkeys than the other gentlemen around him.

âPROFESSOR JOHN KETCH was then called upon to exhibit the skull of the

late Mr. Greenacre, which he produced from a blue bag, remarking, on

being invited to make any observations that occurred to him, âthat heâd

pound it as that âere âspectable section had never seed a more gamerer

cove nor he vos.â

âA most animated discussion upon this interesting relic ensued; and, some

difference of opinion arising respecting the real character of the

deceased gentleman, Mr. Blubb delivered a lecture upon the cranium before

him, clearly showing that Mr. Greenacre possessed the organ of

destructiveness to a most unusual extent, with a most remarkable

development of the organ of carveativeness. Sir Hookham Snivey was

proceeding to combat this opinion, when Professor Ketch suddenly

interrupted the proceedings by exclaiming, with great excitement of

manner, âWalker!â

âTHE PRESIDENT begged to call the learned gentleman to order.

âPROFESSOR KETCH.ââOrder be blowed! youâve got the wrong un, I tell you.

It ainât no âed at all; itâs a coker-nut as my brother-in-law has been

a-carvinâ, to hornament his new baked tatur-stall wots a-cominâ down âere

vile the âsociationâs in the town. Hand over, vill you?â

âWith these words, Professor Ketch hastily repossessed himself of the

cocoa-nut, and drew forth the skull, in mistake for which he had

exhibited it. A most interesting conversation ensued; but as there

appeared some doubt ultimately whether the skull was Mr. Greenacreâs, or

a hospital patientâs, or a pauperâs, or a manâs, or a womanâs, or a

monkeyâs, no particular result was obtained.â

\* \* \* \* \*

âI cannot,â says our talented correspondent in conclusion, âI cannot

close my account of these gigantic researches and sublime and noble

triumphs without repeating a \_bon mot\_ of Professor Woodensconceâs, which

shows how the greatest minds may occasionally unbend when truth can be

presented to listening ears, clothed in an attractive and playful form.

I was standing by, when, after a week of feasting and feeding, that

learned gentleman, accompanied by the whole body of wonderful men,

entered the hall yesterday, where a sumptuous dinner was prepared; where

the richest wines sparkled on the board, and fat bucksâpropitiatory

sacrifices to learningâsent forth their savoury odours. âAh!â said

Professor Woodensconce, rubbing his hands, âthis is what we meet for;

this is what inspires us; this is what keeps us together, and beckons us

onward; this is the \_spread\_ of science, and a glorious spread it is.ââ

THE PANTOMIME OF LIFE

Before we plunge headlong into this paper, let us at once confess to a

fondness for pantomimesâto a gentle sympathy with clowns and

pantaloonsâto an unqualified admiration of harlequins and columbinesâto a

chaste delight in every action of their brief existence, varied and

many-coloured as those actions are, and inconsistent though they

occasionally be with those rigid and formal rules of propriety which

regulate the proceedings of meaner and less comprehensive minds. We

revel in pantomimesânot because they dazzle oneâs eyes with tinsel and

gold leaf; not because they present to us, once again, the well-beloved

chalked faces, and goggle eyes of our childhood; not even because, like

Christmas-day, and Twelfth-night, and Shrove-Tuesday, and oneâs own

birthday, they come to us but once a year;âour attachment is founded on a

graver and a very different reason. A pantomime is to us, a mirror of

life; nay, more, we maintain that it is so to audiences generally,

although they are not aware of it, and that this very circumstance is the

secret cause of their amusement and delight.

Let us take a slight example. The scene is a street: an elderly

gentleman, with a large face and strongly marked features, appears. His

countenance beams with a sunny smile, and a perpetual dimple is on his

broad, red cheek. He is evidently an opulent elderly gentleman,

comfortable in circumstances, and well-to-do in the world. He is not

unmindful of the adornment of his person, for he is richly, not to say

gaudily, dressed; and that he indulges to a reasonable extent in the

pleasures of the table may be inferred from the joyous and oily manner in

which he rubs his stomach, by way of informing the audience that he is

going home to dinner. In the fulness of his heart, in the fancied

security of wealth, in the possession and enjoyment of all the good

things of life, the elderly gentleman suddenly loses his footing, and

stumbles. How the audience roar! He is set upon by a noisy and

officious crowd, who buffet and cuff him unmercifully. They scream with

delight! Every time the elderly gentleman struggles to get up, his

relentless persecutors knock him down again. The spectators are

convulsed with merriment! And when at last the elderly gentleman does

get up, and staggers away, despoiled of hat, wig, and clothing, himself

battered to pieces, and his watch and money gone, they are exhausted with

laughter, and express their merriment and admiration in rounds of

applause.

Is this like life? Change the scene to any real street;âto the Stock

Exchange, or the City bankerâs; the merchantâs counting-house, or even

the tradesmanâs shop. See any one of these men fall,âthe more suddenly,

and the nearer the zenith of his pride and riches, the better. What a

wild hallo is raised over his prostrate carcase by the shouting mob; how

they whoop and yell as he lies humbled beneath them! Mark how eagerly

they set upon him when he is down; and how they mock and deride him as he

slinks away. Why, it is the pantomime to the very letter.

Of all the pantomimic \_dramatis personae\_, we consider the pantaloon the

most worthless and debauched. Independent of the dislike one naturally

feels at seeing a gentleman of his years engaged in pursuits highly

unbecoming his gravity and time of life, we cannot conceal from ourselves

the fact that he is a treacherous, worldly-minded old villain, constantly

enticing his younger companion, the clown, into acts of fraud or petty

larceny, and generally standing aside to watch the result of the

enterprise. If it be successful, he never forgets to return for his

share of the spoil; but if it turn out a failure, he generally retires

with remarkable caution and expedition, and keeps carefully aloof until

the affair has blown over. His amorous propensities, too, are eminently

disagreeable; and his mode of addressing ladies in the open street at

noon-day is down-right improper, being usually neither more nor less than

a perceptible tickling of the aforesaid ladies in the waist, after

committing which, he starts back, manifestly ashamed (as well he may be)

of his own indecorum and temerity; continuing, nevertheless, to ogle and

beckon to them from a distance in a very unpleasant and immoral manner.

Is there any man who cannot count a dozen pantaloons in his own social

circle? Is there any man who has not seen them swarming at the west end

of the town on a sunshiny day or a summerâs evening, going through the

last-named pantomimic feats with as much liquorish energy, and as total

an absence of reserve, as if they were on the very stage itself? We can

tell upon our fingers a dozen pantaloons of our acquaintance at this

momentâcapital pantaloons, who have been performing all kinds of strange

freaks, to the great amusement of their friends and acquaintance, for

years past; and who to this day are making such comical and ineffectual

attempts to be young and dissolute, that all beholders are like to die

with laughter.

Take that old gentleman who has just emerged from the \_CafÃ© de lâEurope\_

in the Haymarket, where he has been dining at the expense of the young

man upon town with whom he shakes hands as they part at the door of the

tavern. The affected warmth of that shake of the hand, the courteous

nod, the obvious recollection of the dinner, the savoury flavour of which

still hangs upon his lips, are all characteristics of his great

prototype. He hobbles away humming an opera tune, and twirling his cane

to and fro, with affected carelessness. Suddenly he stopsââtis at the

millinerâs window. He peeps through one of the large panes of glass;

and, his view of the ladies within being obstructed by the India shawls,

directs his attentions to the young girl with the band-box in her hand,

who is gazing in at the window also. See! he draws beside her. He

coughs; she turns away from him. He draws near her again; she disregards

him. He gleefully chucks her under the chin, and, retreating a few

steps, nods and beckons with fantastic grimaces, while the girl bestows a

contemptuous and supercilious look upon his wrinkled visage. She turns

away with a flounce, and the old gentleman trots after her with a

toothless chuckle. The pantaloon to the life!

But the close resemblance which the clowns of the stage bear to those of

every-day life is perfectly extraordinary. Some people talk with a sigh

of the decline of pantomime, and murmur in low and dismal tones the name

of Grimaldi. We mean no disparagement to the worthy and excellent old

man when we say that this is downright nonsense. Clowns that beat

Grimaldi all to nothing turn up every day, and nobody patronizes

themâmoreâs the pity!

âI know who you mean,â says some dirty-faced patron of Mr.

Osbaldistoneâs, laying down the Miscellany when he has got thus far, and

bestowing upon vacancy a most knowing glance; âyou mean C. J. Smith as

did Guy Fawkes, and George Barnwell at the Garden.â The dirty-faced

gentleman has hardly uttered the words, when he is interrupted by a young

gentleman in no shirt-collar and a Petersham coat. âNo, no,â says the

young gentleman; âhe means Brown, King, and Gibson, at the âDelphi.â

Now, with great deference both to the first-named gentleman with the

dirty face, and the last-named gentleman in the non-existing

shirt-collar, we do \_not\_ mean either the performer who so grotesquely

burlesqued the Popish conspirator, or the three unchangeables who have

been dancing the same dance under different imposing titles, and doing

the same thing under various high-sounding names for some five or six

years last past. We have no sooner made this avowal, than the public,

who have hitherto been silent witnesses of the dispute, inquire what on

earth it is we \_do\_ mean; and, with becoming respect, we proceed to tell

them.

It is very well known to all playgoers and pantomime-seers, that the

scenes in which a theatrical clown is at the very height of his glory are

those which are described in the play-bills as âCheesemongerâs shop and

Crockery warehouse,â or âTailorâs shop, and Mrs. Queertableâs

boarding-house,â or places bearing some such title, where the great fun

of the thing consists in the heroâs taking lodgings which he has not the

slightest intention of paying for, or obtaining goods under false

pretences, or abstracting the stock-in-trade of the respectable

shopkeeper next door, or robbing warehouse porters as they pass under his

window, or, to shorten the catalogue, in his swindling everybody he

possibly can, it only remaining to be observed that, the more extensive

the swindling is, and the more barefaced the impudence of the swindler,

the greater the rapture and ecstasy of the audience. Now it is a most

remarkable fact that precisely this sort of thing occurs in real life day

after day, and nobody sees the humour of it. Let us illustrate our

position by detailing the plot of this portion of the pantomimeânot of

the theatre, but of life.

The Honourable Captain Fitz-Whisker Fiercy, attended by his livery

servant Doâemâa most respectable servant to look at, who has grown grey

in the service of the captainâs familyâviews, treats for, and ultimately

obtains possession of, the unfurnished house, such a number, such a

street. All the tradesmen in the neighbourhood are in agonies of

competition for the captainâs custom; the captain is a good-natured,

kind-hearted, easy man, and, to avoid being the cause of disappointment

to any, he most handsomely gives orders to all. Hampers of wine, baskets

of provisions, cart-loads of furniture, boxes of jewellery, supplies of

luxuries of the costliest description, flock to the house of the

Honourable Captain Fitz-Whisker Fiercy, where they are received with the

utmost readiness by the highly respectable Doâem; while the captain

himself struts and swaggers about with that compound air of conscious

superiority and general blood-thirstiness which a military captain should

always, and does most times, wear, to the admiration and terror of

plebeian men. But the tradesmenâs backs are no sooner turned, than the

captain, with all the eccentricity of a mighty mind, and assisted by the

faithful Doâem, whose devoted fidelity is not the least touching part of

his character, disposes of everything to great advantage; for, although

the articles fetch small sums, still they are sold considerably above

cost price, the cost to the captain having been nothing at all. After

various manoeuvres, the imposture is discovered, Fitz-Fiercy and Doâem

are recognized as confederates, and the police office to which they are

both taken is thronged with their dupes.

Who can fail to recognize in this, the exact counterpart of the best

portion of a theatrical pantomimeâFitz-Whisker Fiercy by the clown; Doâem

by the pantaloon; and supernumeraries by the tradesmen? The best of the

joke, too, is, that the very coal-merchant who is loudest in his

complaints against the person who defrauded him, is the identical man who

sat in the centre of the very front row of the pit last night and laughed

the most boisterously at this very same thing,âand not so well done

either. Talk of Grimaldi, we say again! Did Grimaldi, in his best days,

ever do anything in this way equal to Da Costa?

The mention of this latter justly celebrated clown reminds us of his last

piece of humour, the fraudulently obtaining certain stamped acceptances

from a young gentleman in the army. We had scarcely laid down our pen to

contemplate for a few moments this admirable actorâs performance of that

exquisite practical joke, than a new branch of our subject flashed

suddenly upon us. So we take it up again at once.

All people who have been behind the scenes, and most people who have been

before them, know, that in the representation of a pantomime, a good many

men are sent upon the stage for the express purpose of being cheated, or

knocked down, or both. Now, down to a moment ago, we had never been able

to understand for what possible purpose a great number of odd, lazy,

large-headed men, whom one is in the habit of meeting here, and there,

and everywhere, could ever have been created. We see it all, now. They

are the supernumeraries in the pantomime of life; the men who have been

thrust into it, with no other view than to be constantly tumbling over

each other, and running their heads against all sorts of strange things.

We sat opposite to one of these men at a supper-table, only last week.

Now we think of it, he was exactly like the gentlemen with the pasteboard

heads and faces, who do the corresponding business in the theatrical

pantomimes; there was the same broad stolid simperâthe same dull leaden

eyeâthe same unmeaning, vacant stare; and whatever was said, or whatever

was done, he always came in at precisely the wrong place, or jostled

against something that he had not the slightest business with. We looked

at the man across the table again and again; and could not satisfy

ourselves what race of beings to class him with. How very odd that this

never occurred to us before!

We will frankly own that we have been much troubled with the harlequin.

We see harlequins of so many kinds in the real living pantomime, that we

hardly know which to select as the proper fellow of him of the theatres.

At one time we were disposed to think that the harlequin was neither more

nor less than a young man of family and independent property, who had run

away with an opera-dancer, and was fooling his life and his means away in

light and trivial amusements. On reflection, however, we remembered that

harlequins are occasionally guilty of witty, and even clever acts, and we

are rather disposed to acquit our young men of family and independent

property, generally speaking, of any such misdemeanours. On a more

mature consideration of the subject, we have arrived at the conclusion

that the harlequins of life are just ordinary men, to be found in no

particular walk or degree, on whom a certain station, or particular

conjunction of circumstances, confers the magic wand. And this brings us

to a few words on the pantomime of public and political life, which we

shall say at once, and then concludeâmerely premising in this place that

we decline any reference whatever to the columbine, being in no wise

satisfied of the nature of her connection with her parti-coloured lover,

and not feeling by any means clear that we should be justified in

introducing her to the virtuous and respectable ladies who peruse our

lucubrations.

We take it that the commencement of a Session of Parliament is neither

more nor less than the drawing up of the curtain for a grand comic

pantomime, and that his Majestyâs most gracious speech on the opening

thereof may be not inaptly compared to the clownâs opening speech of

âHere we are!â âMy lords and gentlemen, here we are!â appears, to our

mind at least, to be a very good abstract of the point and meaning of the

propitiatory address of the ministry. When we remember how frequently

this speech is made, immediately after \_the change\_ too, the parallel is

quite perfect, and still more singular.

Perhaps the cast of our political pantomime never was richer than at this

day. We are particularly strong in clowns. At no former time, we should

say, have we had such astonishing tumblers, or performers so ready to go

through the whole of their feats for the amusement of an admiring throng.

Their extreme readiness to exhibit, indeed, has given rise to some

ill-natured reflections; it having been objected that by exhibiting

gratuitously through the country when the theatre is closed, they reduce

themselves to the level of mountebanks, and thereby tend to degrade the

respectability of the profession. Certainly Grimaldi never did this sort

of thing; and though Brown, King, and Gibson have gone to the Surrey in

vacation time, and Mr. C. J. Smith has ruralised at Sadlerâs Wells, we

find no theatrical precedent for a general tumbling through the country,

except in the gentleman, name unknown, who threw summersets on behalf of

the late Mr. Richardson, and who is no authority either, because he had

never been on the regular boards.

But, laying aside this question, which after all is a mere matter of

taste, we may reflect with pride and gratification of heart on the

proficiency of our clowns as exhibited in the season. Night after night

will they twist and tumble about, till two, three, and four oâclock in

the morning; playing the strangest antics, and giving each other the

funniest slaps on the face that can possibly be imagined, without

evincing the smallest tokens of fatigue. The strange noises, the

confusion, the shouting and roaring, amid which all this is done, too,

would put to shame the most turbulent sixpenny gallery that ever yelled

through a boxing-night.

It is especially curious to behold one of these clowns compelled to go

through the most surprising contortions by the irresistible influence of

the wand of office, which his leader or harlequin holds above his head.

Acted upon by this wonderful charm he will become perfectly motionless,

moving neither hand, foot, nor finger, and will even lose the faculty of

speech at an instantâs notice; or on the other hand, he will become all

life and animation if required, pouring forth a torrent of words without

sense or meaning, throwing himself into the wildest and most fantastic

contortions, and even grovelling on the earth and licking up the dust.

These exhibitions are more curious than pleasing; indeed, they are rather

disgusting than otherwise, except to the admirers of such things, with

whom we confess we have no fellow-feeling.

Strange tricksâvery strange tricksâare also performed by the harlequin

who holds for the time being the magic wand which we have just mentioned.

The mere waving it before a manâs eyes will dispossess his brains of all

the notions previously stored there, and fill it with an entirely new set

of ideas; one gentle tap on the back will alter the colour of a manâs

coat completely; and there are some expert performers, who, having this

wand held first on one side and then on the other, will change from side

to side, turning their coats at every evolution, with so much rapidity

and dexterity, that the quickest eye can scarcely detect their motions.

Occasionally, the genius who confers the wand, wrests it from the hand of

the temporary possessor, and consigns it to some new performer; on which

occasions all the characters change sides, and then the race and the hard

knocks begin anew.

We might have extended this chapter to a much greater lengthâwe might

have carried the comparison into the liberal professionsâwe might have

shown, as was in fact our original purpose, that each is in itself a

little pantomime with scenes and characters of its own, complete; but, as

we fear we have been quite lengthy enough already, we shall leave this

chapter just where it is. A gentleman, not altogether unknown as a

dramatic poet, wrote thus a year or two agoâ

âAll the worldâs a stage,

And all the men and women merely players:â

and we, tracking out his footsteps at the scarcely-worth-mentioning

little distance of a few millions of leagues behind, venture to add, by

way of new reading, that he meant a Pantomime, and that we are all actors

in The Pantomime of Life.

SOME PARTICULARS CONCERNING A LION

We have a great respect for lions in the abstract. In common with most

other people, we have heard and read of many instances of their bravery

and generosity. We have duly admired that heroic self-denial and

charming philanthropy which prompts them never to eat people except when

they are hungry, and we have been deeply impressed with a becoming sense

of the politeness they are said to display towards unmarried ladies of a

certain state. All natural histories teem with anecdotes illustrative of

their excellent qualities; and one old spelling-book in particular

recounts a touching instance of an old lion, of high moral dignity and

stern principle, who felt it his imperative duty to devour a young man

who had contracted a habit of swearing, as a striking example to the

rising generation.

All this is extremely pleasant to reflect upon, and, indeed, says a very

great deal in favour of lions as a mass. We are bound to state, however,

that such individual lions as we have happened to fall in with have not

put forth any very striking characteristics, and have not acted up to the

chivalrous character assigned them by their chroniclers. We never saw a

lion in what is called his natural state, certainly; that is to say, we

have never met a lion out walking in a forest, or crouching in his lair

under a tropical sun, waiting till his dinner should happen to come by,

hot from the bakerâs. But we have seen some under the influence of

captivity, and the pressure of misfortune; and we must say that they

appeared to us very apathetic, heavy-headed fellows.

The lion at the Zoological Gardens, for instance. He is all very well;

he has an undeniable mane, and looks very fierce; but, Lord bless us!

what of that? The lions of the fashionable world look just as ferocious,

and are the most harmless creatures breathing. A box-lobby lion or a

Regent-street animal will put on a most terrible aspect, and roar,

fearfully, if you affront him; but he will never bite, and, if you offer

to attack him manfully, will fairly turn tail and sneak off. Doubtless

these creatures roam about sometimes in herds, and, if they meet any

especially meek-looking and peaceably-disposed fellow, will endeavour to

frighten him; but the faintest show of a vigorous resistance is

sufficient to scare them even then. These are pleasant characteristics,

whereas we make it matter of distinct charge against the Zoological lion

and his brethren at the fairs, that they are sleepy, dreamy, sluggish

quadrupeds.

We do not remember to have ever seen one of them perfectly awake, except

at feeding-time. In every respect we uphold the biped lions against

their four-footed namesakes, and we boldly challenge controversy upon the

subject.

With these opinions it may be easily imagined that our curiosity and

interest were very much excited the other day, when a lady of our

acquaintance called on us and resolutely declined to accept our refusal

of her invitation to an evening party; âfor,â said she, âI have got a

lion coming.â We at once retracted our plea of a prior engagement, and

became as anxious to go, as we had previously been to stay away.

We went early, and posted ourselves in an eligible part of the

drawing-room, from whence we could hope to obtain a full view of the

interesting animal. Two or three hours passed, the quadrilles began, the

room filled; but no lion appeared. The lady of the house became

inconsolable,âfor it is one of the peculiar privileges of these lions to

make solemn appointments and never keep them,âwhen all of a sudden there

came a tremendous double rap at the street-door, and the master of the

house, after gliding out (unobserved as he flattered himself) to peep

over the banisters, came into the room, rubbing his hands together with

great glee, and cried out in a very important voice, âMy dear,

Mr.â(naming the lion) has this moment arrived.â

Upon this, all eyes were turned towards the door, and we observed several

young ladies, who had been laughing and conversing previously with great

gaiety and good humour, grow extremely quiet and sentimental; while some

young gentlemen, who had been cutting great figures in the facetious and

small-talk way, suddenly sank very obviously in the estimation of the

company, and were looked upon with great coldness and indifference. Even

the young man who had been ordered from the music shop to play the

pianoforte was visibly affected, and struck several false notes in the

excess of his excitement.

All this time there was a great talking outside, more than once

accompanied by a loud laugh, and a cry of âOh! capital! excellent!â from

which we inferred that the lion was jocose, and that these exclamations

were occasioned by the transports of his keeper and our host. Nor were

we deceived; for when the lion at last appeared, we overheard his keeper,

who was a little prim man, whisper to several gentlemen of his

acquaintance, with uplifted hands, and every expression of

half-suppressed admiration, thatâ(naming the lion again) was in \_such\_

cue to-night!

The lion was a literary one. Of course, there were a vast number of

people present who had admired his roarings, and were anxious to be

introduced to him; and very pleasant it was to see them brought up for

the purpose, and to observe the patient dignity with which he received

all their patting and caressing. This brought forcibly to our mind what

we had so often witnessed at country fairs, where the other lions are

compelled to go through as many forms of courtesy as they chance to be

acquainted with, just as often as admiring parties happen to drop in upon

them.

While the lion was exhibiting in this way, his keeper was not idle, for

he mingled among the crowd, and spread his praises most industriously.

To one gentleman he whispered some very choice thing that the noble

animal had said in the very act of coming up-stairs, which, of course,

rendered the mental effort still more astonishing; to another he murmured

a hasty account of a grand dinner that had taken place the day before,

where twenty-seven gentlemen had got up all at once to demand an extra

cheer for the lion; and to the ladies he made sundry promises of

interceding to procure the majestic bruteâs sign-manual for their albums.

Then, there were little private consultations in different corners,

relative to the personal appearance and stature of the lion; whether he

was shorter than they had expected to see him, or taller, or thinner, or

fatter, or younger, or older; whether he was like his portrait, or unlike

it; and whether the particular shade of his eyes was black, or blue, or

hazel, or green, or yellow, or mixture. At all these consultations the

keeper assisted; and, in short, the lion was the sole and single subject

of discussion till they sat him down to whist, and then the people

relapsed into their old topics of conversationâthemselves and each other.

We must confess that we looked forward with no slight impatience to the

announcement of supper; for if you wish to see a tame lion under

particularly favourable circumstances, feeding-time is the period of all

others to pitch upon. We were therefore very much delighted to observe a

sensation among the guests, which we well knew how to interpret, and

immediately afterwards to behold the lion escorting the lady of the house

down-stairs. We offered our arm to an elderly female of our

acquaintance, whoâdear old soul!âis the very best person that ever lived,

to lead down to any meal; for, be the room ever so small, or the party

ever so large, she is sure, by some intuitive perception of the eligible,

to push and pull herself and conductor close to the best dishes on the

table;âwe say we offered our arm to this elderly female, and, descending

the stairs shortly after the lion, were fortunate enough to obtain a seat

nearly opposite him.

Of course the keeper was there already. He had planted himself at

precisely that distance from his charge which afforded him a decent

pretext for raising his voice, when he addressed him, to so loud a key,

as could not fail to attract the attention of the whole company, and

immediately began to apply himself seriously to the task of bringing the

lion out, and putting him through the whole of his manoeuvres. Such

flashes of wit as he elicited from the lion! First of all, they began to

make puns upon a salt-cellar, and then upon the breast of a fowl, and

then upon the trifle; but the best jokes of all were decidedly on the

lobster salad, upon which latter subject the lion came out most

vigorously, and, in the opinion of the most competent authorities, quite

outshone himself. This is a very excellent mode of shining in society,

and is founded, we humbly conceive, upon the classic model of the

dialogues between Mr. Punch and his friend the proprietor, wherein the

latter takes all the up-hill work, and is content to pioneer to the jokes

and repartees of Mr. P. himself, who never fails to gain great credit and

excite much laughter thereby. Whatever it be founded on, however, we

recommend it to all lions, present and to come; for in this instance it

succeeded to admiration, and perfectly dazzled the whole body of hearers.

When the salt-cellar, and the fowlâs breast, and the trifle, and the

lobster salad were all exhausted, and could not afford standing-room for

another solitary witticism, the keeper performed that very dangerous feat

which is still done with some of the caravan lions, although in one

instance it terminated fatally, of putting his head in the animalâs

mouth, and placing himself entirely at its mercy. Boswell frequently

presents a melancholy instance of the lamentable results of this

achievement, and other keepers and jackals have been terribly lacerated

for their daring. It is due to our lion to state, that he condescended

to be trifled with, in the most gentle manner, and finally went home with

the showman in a hack cab: perfectly peaceable, but slightly fuddled.

Being in a contemplative mood, we were led to make some reflections upon

the character and conduct of this genus of lions as we walked homewards,

and we were not long in arriving at the conclusion that our former

impression in their favour was very much strengthened and confirmed by

what we had recently seen. While the other lions receive company and

compliments in a sullen, moody, not to say snarling manner, these appear

flattered by the attentions that are paid them; while those conceal

themselves to the utmost of their power from the vulgar gaze, these court

the popular eye, and, unlike their brethren, whom nothing short of

compulsion will move to exertion, are ever ready to display their

acquirements to the wondering throng. We have known bears of undoubted

ability who, when the expectations of a large audience have been wound up

to the utmost pitch, have peremptorily refused to dance; well-taught

monkeys, who have unaccountably objected to exhibit on the slack wire;

and elephants of unquestioned genius, who have suddenly declined to turn

the barrel-organ; but we never once knew or heard of a biped lion,

literary or otherwise,âand we state it as a fact which is highly

creditable to the whole species,âwho, occasion offering, did not seize

with avidity on any opportunity which was afforded him, of performing to

his heartâs content on the first violin.

MR. ROBERT BOLTON: THE âGENTLEMAN CONNECTED WITH THE PRESSâ

In the parlour of the Green Dragon, a public-house in the immediate

neighbourhood of Westminster Bridge, everybody talks politics, every

evening, the great political authority being Mr. Robert Bolton, an

individual who defines himself as âa gentleman connected with the press,â

which is a definition of peculiar indefiniteness. Mr. Robert Boltonâs

regular circle of admirers and listeners are an undertaker, a

greengrocer, a hairdresser, a baker, a large stomach surmounted by a

manâs head, and placed on the top of two particularly short legs, and a

thin man in black, name, profession, and pursuit unknown, who always sits

in the same position, always displays the same long, vacant face, and

never opens his lips, surrounded as he is by most enthusiastic

conversation, except to puff forth a volume of tobacco smoke, or give

vent to a very snappy, loud, and shrill \_hem\_! The conversation

sometimes turns upon literature, Mr. Bolton being a literary character,

and always upon such news of the day as is exclusively possessed by that

talented individual. I found myself (of course, accidentally) in the

Green Dragon the other evening, and, being somewhat amused by the

following conversation, preserved it.

âCan you lend me a ten-pound note till Christmas?â inquired the

hairdresser of the stomach.

âWhereâs your security, Mr. Clip?â

âMy stock in trade,âthereâs enough of it, Iâm thinking, Mr. Thicknesse.

Some fifty wigs, two poles, half-a-dozen head blocks, and a dead Bruin.â

âNo, I wonât, then,â growled out Thicknesse. âI lends nothing on the

security of the whigs or the Poles either. As for whigs, theyâre cheats;

as for the Poles, theyâve got no cash. I never have nothing to do with

blockheads, unless I canât awoid it (ironically), and a dead bearâs about

as much use to me as I could be to a dead bear.â

âWell, then,â urged the other, âthereâs a book as belonged to Pope,

Byronâs Poems, valued at forty pounds, because itâs got Popeâs identical

scratch on the back; what do you think of that for security?â

âWell, to be sure!â cried the baker. âBut how dâye mean, Mr. Clip?â

âMean! why, that itâs got the \_hottergruff\_ of Pope.

âSteal not this book, for fear of hangmanâs rope;

For it belongs to Alexander Pope.â

All thatâs written on the inside of the binding of the book; so, as my

son says, weâre \_bound\_ to believe it.â

âWell, sir,â observed the undertaker, deferentially, and in a

half-whisper, leaning over the table, and knocking over the hairdresserâs

grog as he spoke, âthat argumentâs very easy upset.â

âPerhaps, sir,â said Clip, a little flurried, âyouâll pay for the first

upset afore you thinks of another.â

âNow,â said the undertaker, bowing amicably to the hairdresser, âI

\_think\_, I says I \_think\_âyouâll excuse me, Mr. Clip, I \_think\_, you see,

that wonât go down with the present companyâunfortunately, my master had

the honour of making the coffin of that ere Lordâs housemaid, not no more

nor twenty year ago. Donât think Iâm proud on it, gentlemen; others

might be; but I hate rank of any sort. Iâve no more respect for a Lordâs

footman than I have for any respectable tradesman in this room. I may

say no more nor I have for Mr. Clip! (bowing). Therefore, that ere Lord

must have been born long after Pope died. And itâs a logical

interference to defer, that they neither of them lived at the same time.

So what I mean is this here, that Pope never had no book, never seed,

felt, never smelt no book (triumphantly) as belonged to that ere Lord.

And, gentlemen, when I consider how patiently you have âeared the ideas

what I have expressed, I feel bound, as the best way to reward you for

the kindness you have exhibited, to sit down without saying anything

moreâpartickler as I perceive a worthier visitor nor myself is just

entered. I am not in the habit of paying compliments, gentlemen; when I

do, therefore, I hope I strikes with double force.â

âAh, Mr. Murgatroyd! whatâs all this about striking with double force?â

said the object of the above remark, as he entered. âI never excuse a

manâs getting into a rage during winter, even when heâs seated so close

to the fire as you are. It is very injudicious to put yourself into such

a perspiration. What is the cause of this extreme physical and mental

excitement, sir?â

Such was the very philosophical address of Mr. Robert Bolton, a

shorthand-writer, as he termed himselfâa bit of equivoque passing current

among his fraternity, which must give the uninitiated a vast idea of the

establishment of the ministerial organ, while to the initiated it

signifies that no one paper can lay claim to the enjoyment of their

services. Mr. Bolton was a young man, with a somewhat sickly and very

dissipated expression of countenance. His habiliments were composed of

an exquisite union of gentility, slovenliness, assumption, simplicity,

\_newness\_, and old age. Half of him was dressed for the winter, the

other half for the summer. His hat was of the newest cut, the DâOrsay;

his trousers had been white, but the inroads of mud and ink, etc., had

given them a pie-bald appearance; round his throat he wore a very high

black cravat, of the most tyrannical stiffness; while his \_tout ensemble\_

was hidden beneath the enormous folds of an old brown poodle-collared

great-coat, which was closely buttoned up to the aforesaid cravat. His

fingers peeped through the ends of his black kid gloves, and two of the

toes of each foot took a similar view of society through the extremities

of his high-lows. Sacred to the bare walls of his garret be the

mysteries of his interior dress! He was a short, spare man, of a

somewhat inferior deportment. Everybody seemed influenced by his entry

into the room, and his salutation of each member partook of the

patronizing. The hairdresser made way for him between himself and the

stomach. A minute afterwards he had taken possession of his pint and

pipe. A pause in the conversation took place. Everybody was waiting,

anxious for his first observation.

âHorrid murder in Westminster this morning,â observed Mr. Bolton.

Everybody changed their positions. All eyes were fixed upon the man of

paragraphs.

âA baker murdered his son by boiling him in a copper,â said Mr. Bolton.

âGood heavens!â exclaimed everybody, in simultaneous horror.

âBoiled him, gentlemen!â added Mr. Bolton, with the most effective

emphasis; â\_boiled\_ him!â

âAnd the particulars, Mr. B.,â inquired the hairdresser, âthe

particulars?â

Mr. Bolton took a very long draught of porter, and some two or three

dozen whiffs of tobacco, doubtless to instil into the commercial

capacities of the company the superiority of a gentlemen connected with

the press, and then saidâ

âThe man was a baker, gentlemen.â (Every one looked at the baker

present, who stared at Bolton.) âHis victim, being his son, also was

necessarily the son of a baker. The wretched murderer had a wife, whom

he was frequently in the habit, while in an intoxicated state, of

kicking, pummelling, flinging mugs at, knocking down, and half-killing

while in bed, by inserting in her mouth a considerable portion of a sheet

or blanket.â

The speaker took another draught, everybody looked at everybody else, and

exclaimed, âHorrid!â

âIt appears in evidence, gentlemen,â continued Mr. Bolton, âthat, on the

evening of yesterday, Sawyer the baker came home in a reprehensible state

of beer. Mrs. S., connubially considerate, carried him in that condition

up-stairs into his chamber, and consigned him to their mutual couch. In

a minute or two she lay sleeping beside the man whom the morrowâs dawn

beheld a murderer!â (Entire silence informed the reporter that his

picture had attained the awful effect he desired.) âThe son came home

about an hour afterwards, opened the door, and went up to bed. Scarcely

(gentlemen, conceive his feelings of alarm), scarcely had he taken off

his indescribables, when shrieks (to his experienced ear \_maternal\_

shrieks) scared the silence of surrounding night. He put his

indescribables on again, and ran down-stairs. He opened the door of the

parental bed-chamber. His father was dancing upon his mother. What must

have been his feelings! In the agony of the minute he rushed at his male

parent as he was about to plunge a knife into the side of his female.

The mother shrieked. The father caught the son (who had wrested the

knife from the paternal grasp) up in his arms, carried him down-stairs,

shoved him into a copper of boiling water among some linen, closed the

lid, and jumped upon the top of it, in which position he was found with a

ferocious countenance by the mother, who arrived in the melancholy

wash-house just as he had so settled himself.

ââWhereâs my boy?â shrieked the mother.

ââIn that copper, boiling,â coolly replied the benign father.

âStruck by the awful intelligence, the mother rushed from the house, and

alarmed the neighbourhood. The police entered a minute afterwards. The

father, having bolted the wash-house door, had bolted himself. They

dragged the lifeless body of the boiled baker from the cauldron, and,

with a promptitude commendable in men of their station, they immediately

carried it to the station-house. Subsequently, the baker was apprehended

while seated on the top of a lamp-post in Parliament Street, lighting his

pipe.â

The whole horrible ideality of the Mysteries of Udolpho, condensed into

the pithy effect of a ten-line paragraph, could not possibly have so

affected the narratorâs auditory. Silence, the purest and most noble of

all kinds of applause, bore ample testimony to the barbarity of the

baker, as well as to Boltonâs knack of narration; and it was only broken

after some minutes had elapsed by interjectional expressions of the

intense indignation of every man present. The baker wondered how a

British baker could so disgrace himself and the highly honourable calling

to which he belonged; and the others indulged in a variety of wonderments

connected with the subject; among which not the least wonderment was that

which was awakened by the genius and information of Mr. Robert Bolton,

who, after a glowing eulogium on himself, and his unspeakable influence

with the daily press, was proceeding, with a most solemn countenance, to

hear the pros and cons of the Pope autograph question, when I took up my

hat, and left.

FAMILIAR EPISTLE FROM A PARENT TO A CHILD

AGED TWO YEARS AND TWO MONTHS

MY CHILD,

To recount with what trouble I have brought you upâwith what an anxious

eye I have regarded your progress,âhow late and how often I have sat up

at night working for you,âand how many thousand letters I have received

from, and written to your various relations and friends, many of whom

have been of a querulous and irritable turn,âto dwell on the anxiety and

tenderness with which I have (as far as I possessed the power) inspected

and chosen your food; rejecting the indigestible and heavy matter which

some injudicious but well-meaning old ladies would have had you swallow,

and retaining only those light and pleasant articles which I deemed

calculated to keep you free from all gross humours, and to render you an

agreeable child, and one who might be popular with society in general,âto

dilate on the steadiness with which I have prevented your annoying any

company by talking politicsâalways assuring you that you would thank me

for it yourself some day when you grew older,âto expatiate, in short,

upon my own assiduity as a parent, is beside my present purpose, though I

cannot but contemplate your fair appearanceâyour robust health, and

unimpeded circulation (which I take to be the great secret of your good

looks) without the liveliest satisfaction and delight.

It is a trite observation, and one which, young as you are, I have no

doubt you have often heard repeated, that we have fallen upon strange

times, and live in days of constant shiftings and changes. I had a

melancholy instance of this only a week or two since. I was returning

from Manchester to London by the Mail Train, when I suddenly fell into

another trainâa mixed trainâof reflection, occasioned by the dejected and

disconsolate demeanour of the Post-Office Guard. We were stopping at

some station where they take in water, when he dismounted slowly from the

little box in which he sits in ghastly mockery of his old condition with

pistol and blunderbuss beside him, ready to shoot the first highwayman

(or railwayman) who shall attempt to stop the horses, which now travel

(when they travel at all) \_inside\_ and in a portable stable invented for

the purpose,âhe dismounted, I say, slowly and sadly, from his post, and

looking mournfully about him as if in dismal recollection of the old

roadside public-house the blazing fireâthe glass of foaming aleâthe buxom

handmaid and admiring hangers-on of tap-room and stable, all honoured by

his notice; and, retiring a little apart, stood leaning against a

signal-post, surveying the engine with a look of combined affliction and

disgust which no words can describe. His scarlet coat and golden lace

were tarnished with ignoble smoke; flakes of soot had fallen on his

bright green shawlâhis pride in days of yoreâthe steam condensed in the

tunnel from which we had just emerged, shone upon his hat like rain. His

eye betokened that he was thinking of the coachman; and as it wandered to

his own seat and his own fast-fading garb, it was plain to see that he

felt his office and himself had alike no business there, and were nothing

but an elaborate practical joke.

As we whirled away, I was led insensibly into an anticipation of those

days to come, when mail-coach guards shall no longer be judges of

horse-fleshâwhen a mail-coach guard shall never even have seen a

horseâwhen stations shall have superseded stables, and corn shall have

given place to coke. âIn those dawning times,â thought I,

âexhibition-rooms shall teem with portraits of Her Majestyâs favourite

engine, with boilers after Nature by future Landseers. Some Amburgh, yet

unborn, shall break wild horses by his magic power; and in the dress of a

mail-coach guard exhibit his TRAINED ANIMALS in a mock mail-coach. Then,

shall wondering crowds observe how that, with the exception of his whip,

it is all his eye; and crowned heads shall see them fed on oats, and

stand alone unmoved and undismayed, while counters flee affrighted when

the coursers neigh!â

Such, my child, were the reflections from which I was only awakened then,

as I am now, by the necessity of attending to matters of present though

minor importance. I offer no apology to you for the digression, for it

brings me very naturally to the subject of change, which is the very

subject of which I desire to treat.

In fact, my child, you have changed hands. Henceforth I resign you to

the guardianship and protection of one of my most intimate and valued

friends, Mr. Ainsworth, with whom, and with you, my best wishes and

warmest feelings will ever remain. I reap no gain or profit by parting

from you, nor will any conveyance of your property be required, for, in

this respect, you have always been literally âBentleyâsâ Miscellany, and

never mine.

Unlike the driver of the old Manchester mail, I regard this altered state

of things with feelings of unmingled pleasure and satisfaction.

Unlike the guard of the new Manchester mail, \_your\_ guard is at home in

his new place, and has roystering highwaymen and gallant desperadoes ever

within call. And if I might compare you, my child, to an engine; (not a

Tory engine, nor a Whig engine, but a brisk and rapid locomotive;) your

friends and patrons to passengers; and he who now stands towards you \_in

loco parentis\_ as the skilful engineer and supervisor of the whole, I

would humbly crave leave to postpone the departure of the train on its

new and auspicious course for one brief instant, while, with hat in hand,

I approach side by side with the friend who travelled with me on the old

road, and presume to solicit favour and kindness in behalf of him and his

new charge, both for their sakes and that of the old coachman,

BOZ.

Footnotes:

{122} This paper was written before the practice of exhibiting Members

of Parliament, like other curiosities, for the small charge of

half-a-crown, was abolished.

{161} The regulations of the prison relative to the confinement of

prisoners during the day, their sleeping at night, their taking their

meals, and other matters of gaol economy, have been all altered-greatly

for the betterâsince this sketch was first published. Even the

construction of the prison itself has been changed.

{165} These two men were executed shortly afterwards. The other was

respited during his Majestyâs pleasure.

{429} [In its original form.]