

Shall we tell the lamentations that ensued, when Miss Wardle found herself deserted by the faithless Jingle? Shall we extract Mr. Pickwick's masterly description of that heart-rending scene? His note-book, blotted with the tears of sympathizing humanity, lies open before us; one word, and it is in the printer's hands. But, no! we will be resolute! We will not wring the public bosom, with the delineation of such suffering!

Slowly and sadly did the two friends and the deserted lady, return next day in the Muggleton heavy coach. Dimly and darkly had the sombre shadows of a summer's night fallen upon all around, when they again reached Dingley Dell, and stood within the entrance to Manor Farm.

CHAPTER XI.

INVOLVING ANOTHER JOURNEY, AND AN ANTIQUARIAN DISCOVERY.—RECORDING MR. PICKWICK'S DETERMINATION TO BE PRESENT AT AN ELECTION; AND CONTAINING A MANUSCRIPT OF THE OLD CLERGYMAN'S.

A NIGHT of quiet and repose in the profound silence of Dingley Dell, and an hour's breathing of its fresh and fragrant air on the ensuing morning, completely recovered Mr. Pickwick from the effects of his late fatigue of body and anxiety of mind. That illustrious man had been separated from his friends and followers, for two whole days; and it was with a degree of pleasure and delight, which no common imagination can adequately conceive, that he stepped forward to greet Mr. Winkle and Mr. Snodgrass, as he encountered those gentlemen on his return from his early walk. The pleasure was mutual; for who could ever gaze on Mr. Pickwick's beaming face without experiencing the sensation? But still a cloud seemed to hang over his companions which that great man could not but be sensible of, and was wholly at a loss to account for. There was a mysterious air about them both, as unusual as it was alarming.

"And how," said Mr. Pickwick, when he had grasped his followers by the hand, and exchanged warm salutations of welcome; "how is Tupman?"

Mr. Winkle, to whom the question was more peculiarly addressed, made no reply. He turned away his head, and appeared absorbed in melancholy reflection.

"Snodgrass," said Mr. Pickwick, earnestly, "how is our friend—he is not ill?"

"No," replied Mr. Snodgrass; and a tear trembled on his sentimental eyelid, like a rain-drop on a window-frame. "No; he is not ill."

Mr. Pickwick stopped, and gazed on each of his friends in turn.

"Winkle—Snodgrass," said Mr. Pickwick; "what does this mean? Where is our friend? What has happened? Speak—I conjure, I entreat—nay, I command you, speak."

There was a solemnity—a dignity—in Mr. Pickwick's manner, not to be withstood.

"He is gone," said Mr. Snodgrass.

"Gone!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick. "Gone!"

"Gone," repeated Mr. Snodgrass.

"Where?" ejaculated Mr. Pickwick.

"We can only guess, from that communication," replied Mr. Snodgrass, taking a letter from his pocket, and placing it in his friend's hand. "Yesterday morning, when a letter was received from Mr. Wardle, stating that you would be home with his sister at night, the melancholy which had hung over our friend during the whole of the previous day, was observed to increase. He shortly afterward disappeared; he was missing during the whole day, and in the evening this letter was brought by the hostler from the Crown, at Muggleton. It had been left in his charge in the morning, with a strict injunction that it should not be delivered until night.

Mr. Pickwick opened the epistle. It was in his friend's handwriting, and these were its contents:

"MY DEAR PICKWICK,—

"You, my dear friend, are placed far beyond the reach of many mortal frailties and weaknesses which ordinary people can not overcome. You do not know what it is, at one blow, to be deserted by a lovely and fascinating creature, and to fall a victim to the artifices of a villain, who hid the grin of cunning beneath the mask of friendship. I hope you never may.

"Any letter, addressed to me at the Leather Bottle, Cobham, Kent, will be forwarded—supposing I still exist. I hasten from the sight of that world, which has become odious to me. Should I hasten from it altogether, pity—forgive me. Life, my dear Pickwick, has become insupportable to me. The spirit which burns within us, is a porter's knot on which to rest the heavy load of worldly cares and troubles; and when that spirit fails us, the burden is too heavy to be borne. We sink beneath it. You may tell Rachael—Ah, that name!—"TRACY TUPMAN."

"We must leave this place, directly," said Mr. Pickwick, as he refolded the note. "It would not have been decent for us to remain here, under any circumstances, after what has happened; and now we are bound to follow in search of our friend." And so saying, he led the way to the house.

His intention was rapidly communicated. The entreaties to remain were pressing, but Mr. Pickwick was inflexible. Business, he said, required his immediate attendance.

The old clergyman was present.

"You are not really going?" said he, taking Mr. Pickwick aside.

Mr. Pickwick reiterated his former determination.

"Then here," said the old gentleman, "is a little manuscript, which I had hoped to have the pleasure of reading to you myself. I found it on the death of a friend of mine—a medical man, engaged in our County Lunatic Asylum—among a variety of papers, which I had the option of destroying or preserving, as I thought proper. I can hardly believe that the manuscript is genuine, though it certainly is not in my friend's hand. However, whether it be the genuine production of a maniac, or founded upon the ravings of some unhappy being (which I think more probable), read it, and judge for yourself."

Mr. Pickwick received the manuscript, and parted from the benevolent old gentleman with many expressions of good-will and esteem.

It was a more difficult task to take leave of the inmates of Manor Farm, from whom they had received so much hospitality and kindness. Mr. Pickwick kissed the young ladies—we were going to say, as if they were his own daughters, only as he might possibly have infused a little more warmth into the salutation, the comparison would not be quite appropriate—hugged the old lady with filial cordiality; and patted the rosy cheeks of the female servants in a most patriarchal manner, as he slipped into the hands of each some more substantial expression of his approval. The exchange of cordialities with their fine old host and Mr. Trundle, was even more hearty and prolonged; and it was not until Mr. Snodgrass had been several times called for, and at last emerged from a dark passage followed soon after by Emily (whose bright eyes looked unusually dim), that the three friends were enabled to tear themselves from their friendly entertainers. Many a backward look they gave at the Farm, as they walked slowly away; and many a kiss did Mr. Snodgrass waft in the air, in acknowledgment of something very like a lady's handkerchief, which was waved from one of the upper windows, until a turn of the lane hid the old house from their sight.

At Muggleton they procured a conveyance to Rochester. By the time they reached the last-named place, the violence of their grief had sufficiently abated to admit of their making a very excellent early dinner; and having procured the necessary information relative to the road, the three friends set forward again in the afternoon to walk to Cobham.

A delightful walk it was: for it was a pleasant afternoon in June, and their way lay through a deep and shady wood, cooled by the light wind which gently rustled the thick foliage, and enlivened by the songs of the birds that perched upon the boughs. The ivy and the moss crept in thick clusters over the old trees, and the soft green turf overspread the ground like a silken mat. They emerged upon an open park, with an ancient hall, displaying the quaint and picturesque architecture of Elizabeth's time. Long vistas of stately oaks and elm-trees appeared on every side; large herds of deer were cropping the fresh grass; and occasionally a startled hare scoured along the ground, with the speed of the shadows thrown by the light clouds which swept across a sunny landscape like a passing breath of summer.

"If this," said Mr. Pickwick, looking about him, "if this were the place to which all who are troubled with our friend's complaint came, I fancy their old attachment to this world would very soon return."

"I think so too," said Mr. Winkle.

"And really," added Mr. Pickwick, after half an hour's walking had brought them to the village, "really, for a misanthrope's choice, this is one of the prettiest and most desirable places of residence I ever met with."

In this opinion, also, both Mr. Winkle and Mr. Snodgrass expressed their concurrence; and having been directed to the Leathern Bottle, a clean and commodious village ale-house, the three travelers entered, and at once inquired for a gentleman of the name of Tupman.

"Show the gentlemen into the parlor, Tom," said the landlady.

A stout country lad opened a door at the end of the passage, and the three friends entered a long, low-roofed room, furnished with a large number of high-backed leather-cushioned chairs of fantastic shapes, and embellished with a great variety of old portraits and roughly-colored prints of some antiquity. At the upper end of the room was a table,

with a white cloth upon it, well covered with a roast fowl, bacon, ale, and et ceteras; and at the table sat Mr. Tupman, looking as unlike a man who had taken his leave of the world, as possible.

On the entrance of his friends, that gentleman laid down his knife and fork, and with a mournful air advanced to meet them.

"I did not expect to see you here," he said, as he grasped Mr. Pickwick's hand. "It's very kind."

"Ah!" said Mr. Pickwick, sitting down, and wiping from his forehead the perspiration which the walk had engendered. "Finish your dinner, and walk out with me. I wish to speak to you alone."

Mr. Tupman did as he was desired; and Mr. Pickwick having refreshed himself with a copious draught of ale, waited his friend's leisure. The dinner was quickly dispatched, and they walked out together.

For half an hour, their forms might have been seen pacing the church-yard to and fro, while Mr. Pickwick was engaged in combating his companion's resolution. Any repetition of his arguments would be useless; for what language could convey to them the energy and force which their great originator's manner communicated? Whether Mr. Tupman was already tired of retirement, or whether he was wholly unable to resist the eloquent appeal which was made to him, matters not; he did *not* resist it at last.

"It mattered little to him," he said, "where he dragged out the miserable remainder of his days: and since his friend laid so much stress upon his humble companionship, he was willing to share his adventures."

Mr. Pickwick smiled; they shook hands; and walked back to rejoin their companions.

It was at this moment that Mr. Pickwick made that immortal discovery, which has been the pride and boast of his friends, and the envy of every antiquarian in this or any other country. They had passed the door of their inn, and walked a little way down the village, before they recollected the precise spot in which it stood. As they turned back, Mr. Pickwick's eye fell upon a small broken stone, partially buried in the ground, in front of a cottage door. He paused.

"This is very strange," said Mr. Pickwick.

"What is strange?" inquired Mr. Tupman, staring eagerly

at every object near him, but the right one. "God bless me, what's the matter?"

This last was an ejaculation of irrepressible astonishment, occasioned by seeing Mr. Pickwick, in his enthusiasm for discovery, fall on his knees before the little stone, and commence wiping the dust off it with his pocket-handkerchief.

"There is an inscription here," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Is it possible?" said Mr. Tupman.

"I can discern," continued Mr. Pickwick, rubbing away with all his might and gazing intently through his spectacles: "I can discern a cross, and a B, and then a T. This is important," continued Mr. Pickwick, starting up. "This is some very old inscription, existing perhaps long before the ancient alms-houses in this place. It must not be lost."

He tapped at the cottage door. A laboring man opened it.

"Do you know how this stone came here, my friend?" inquired the benevolent Mr. Pickwick.

"No, I doan't sir," replied the man civilly. "It was here long afore I war born, or any on us."

Mr. Pickwick glanced triumphantly at his companion.

"You—you—are not particularly attached to it, I dare say," said Mr. Pickwick, trembling with anxiety. "You wouldn't mind selling it, now?"

"Ah! but who'd buy it?" inquired the man, with an expression of face which he probably meant to be very cunning.

"I'll give you ten shillings for it, at once," said Mr. Pickwick, "if you would take it up for me."

The astonishment of the village may be easily imagined, when (the little stone having been raised with one wrench of a spade), Mr. Pickwick, by dint of great personal exertion bore it with his own hands to the inn, and after having carefully washed it, deposited it on the table.

The exultation and joy of the Pickwickians knew no bounds, when their patience and assiduity, their washing and scraping, were crowned with success. The stone was uneven and broken, and the letters were straggling and irregular, but the following fragment of an inscription was clearly to be deciphered:

+
B I L S T
U M
P S H I
S. M.
A R K

Mr. Pickwick's eyes sparkled with delight, as he sat and gloated over the treasure he had discovered. He had attained one of the greatest objects of his ambition. In a county known to abound in remains of the early ages; in a village in which there still existed some memorials of the olden time, he—he, the Chairman of the Pickwick Club—had discovered a strange and curious inscription of unquestionable antiquity, which had wholly escaped the observation of the many learned men who had preceded him. He could hardly trust the evidence of his senses.

"This—this," said he, "determines me. We return to town to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" exclaimed his admiring followers.

"To-morrow," said Mr. Pickwick. "This treasure must be at once deposited where it can be thoroughly investigated, and properly understood. I have another reason for this step. In a few days, an election is to take place for the borough of Eatanswill, at which Mr. Perker, a gentleman whom I lately met, is the agent of one of the candidates. We will behold, and minutely examine, a scene so interesting to every Englishman."

"We will," was the animated cry of three voices.

Mr. Pickwick looked round him. The attachment and fervor of his followers lighted up a glow of enthusiasm within him. He was their leader, and he felt it.

"Let us celebrate this happy meeting with a convivial glass," said he. This proposition, like the other, was received with unanimous applause. Having himself deposited the important stone in a small deal box, purchased from the landlady for the purpose, he placed himself in an arm-chair at the head of the table; and the evening was devoted to festivity and conversation.

It was past eleven o'clock—a late hour for the little village of Cobham—when Mr. Pickwick retired to the bedroom which had been prepared for his reception. He threw open the lattice-window, and setting his light upon the table, fell into a train of meditation on the hurried events of the two preceding days.

The hour and the place were both favorable to contemplation; Mr. Pickwick was roused by the church-clock striking twelve. The first stroke of the hour sounded solemnly in his ear, but when the bell ceased the stillness seemed insupportable;—he almost felt as if he had lost a companion.

He was nervous and excited; and hastily undressing himself and placing his light in the chimney, got into bed.

Every one has experienced that disagreeable state of mind, in which a sensation of bodily weariness in vain contends against an inability to sleep. It was Mr. Pickwick's condition at this moment; he tossed first on one side and then on the other; and perseveringly closed his eyes as if to coax himself to slumber. It was of no use. Whether it was the unwonted exertion he had undergone, or the heat, or the brandy-and-water, or the strange bed—whatever it was, his thoughts kept reverting very uncomfortably to the grim pictures down stairs, and the old stories to which they had given rise in the course of the evening. After half an hour's tumbling about, he came to the unsatisfactory conclusion, that it was of no use trying to sleep; so he got up and partially dressed himself. Any thing, he thought, was better than lying there fancying all kinds of horrors. He looked out of the window—it was very dark. He walked about the room—it was very lonely.

He had taken a few turns from the door to the window, when the clergyman's manuscript for the first time entered his head. It was a good thought. If it failed to interest him, it might send him to sleep. He took it from his coat-pocket, and drawing a small table toward his bedside, trimmed the light, put on his spectacles, and composed himself to read. It was a strange handwriting, and the paper was much soiled and blotted. The title gave him a sudden start, too: and he could not avoid casting a wistful glance round the room. Reflecting on the absurdity of giving way to such feelings, however, he trimmed the light again, and read as follows:

A MADMAN'S MANUSCRIPT.

"Yes!—a madman's! How that word would have struck to my heart, many years ago! How it would have roused the terror that used to come upon me sometimes; sending the blood hissing and tingling through my veins, till the cold dew of fear stood in large drops upon my skin, and my knees knocked together with fright! I like it now though! It's a fine name. Show me the monarch whose angry frown was ever feared like the glare of a madman's eye—whose cord and axe were ever half so sure as a madman's gripe. Ho! ho! It's a grand thing to be mad! to be

peeped at like a wild lion through the iron bars—to gnash one's teeth and howl, through the long still night, to the merry ringing of a heavy chain—and to roll and twine among the straw, transported with such brave music. Hurra for the mad-house! Oh, it's a rare place!

"I remember days when I was *afraid* of being mad; when I used to start from my sleep, and fall upon my knees, and pray to be spared from the curse of my race; when I rushed from the sight of merriment or happiness, to hide myself in some lonely place, and spend the weary hours in watching the progress of the fever that was to consume my brain. I knew that madness was mixed up with my very blood, and the marrow of my bones; that one generation had passed away without the pestilence appearing among them, and that I was the first in whom it would revive. I knew it *must* be so: that so it always had been, and so it ever would be: and when I cowered in some obscure corner of a crowded room, and saw men whisper, and point, and turn their eyes toward me, I knew they were telling each other of the doomed madman; and I slunk away again to mope in solitude.

"I did this for years; long, long years they were. The nights here are long sometimes—very long; but they are nothing to the restless nights, and dreadful dreams I had at that time. It makes me cold to remember them. Large dusky forms with sly and jeering faces crouched in the corners of the room, and bent over my bed at night, tempting me to madness. They told me in low whispers, that the floor of the old house in which my father's father died, was stained with his own blood, shed by his own hand in raging madness. I drove my fingers into my ears, but they screamed into my head till the room rang with it, that in one generation before him the madness slumbered, but that his grandfather had lived for years with his hands fettered to the ground, to prevent his tearing himself to pieces. I knew they told the truth—I knew it well. I had found it out years before, though they had tried to keep it from me. Ha! ha! I was too cunning for them, madman as they thought me.

"At last it came upon me, and I wondered how I could ever have feared it. I could go into the world now, and laugh and shout with the best among them. I knew I was mad, but they did not even suspect it. How I used to hug myself with delight when I thought of the fine trick I was