

“Proud o’ the title, as the Living Skellinton said, ven they show’d him.”

“Follow me instantly,” said Mr. Pickwick. “Tupman, if I stay at Bury, you can join me there, when I write. Till then, good-bye!”

Remonstrances were useless. Mr. Pickwick was roused, and his mind was made up. Mr. Tupman returned to his companions, and in another hour had drowned all present recollection of Mr. Alfred Jingle, or Mr. Charles Fitz-Marschall, in an exhilarating quadrille and a bottle of Champagne. By that time Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller, perched on the outside of a stage-coach, were every succeeding minute placing a less and less distance between themselves and the good old town of Bury St. Edmunds.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### TOO FULL OF ADVENTURE TO BE BRIEFLY DESCRIBED.

THERE is no month in the whole year in which nature wears a more beautiful appearance than in the month of August. Spring has many beauties, and May is a fresh and blooming month, but the charms of this time of year are enhanced by their contrast with the winter season. August has no such advantage. It comes when we remember nothing but clear skies, green fields, and sweet-smelling flowers—when the recollection of snow, and ice, and bleak winds, has faded from our minds as completely as they have disappeared from the earth—and yet what a pleasant time it is! Orchards and cornfields ring with the hum of labor; trees bend beneath the thick clusters of rich fruit which bow their branches to the ground; and the corn, piled in graceful sheaves, or waving in every light breath that sweeps above it, as if it wooed the sickle, tinges the landscape with a golden hue. A mellow softness appears to hang over the whole earth; the influence of the season seems to extend itself to the very wagon, whose slow motion across the well-reaped field, is perceptible only to the eye, but strikes with no harsh sound upon the ear.

As the coach rolls swiftly past the fields and orchards which skirt the road, groups of women and children, piling the fruit in sieves, or gathering the scattered ears of corn, pause for an instant from their labor, and shading the sun-burned face with a still browner hand, gaze upon the passengers with curious eyes, while some stout urchin, too small to work, but too mischievous to be left at home, scrambles over the side of the basket in which he has been deposited for security, and kicks and screams with delight. The reaper stops in his work, and stands with folded arms, looking at the vehicle as it whirls past; and the rough cart-horses bestow a sleepy glance upon the smart coach-team, which says, as plainly as a horse’s glance can, “It’s all very fine to look at, but slow going, over a heavy field, is better than warm work like that, upon a dusty road, after all.” You cast a look behind you, as you turn a corner of the road. The women and children have resumed their labor; the

reaper once more stoops to his work; the cart-horses have moved on: and all are again in motion.

The influence of a scene like this, was not lost upon the well-regulated mind of Mr. Pickwick. Intent upon the resolution he had formed, of exposing the real character of the nefarious Jingle, in any quarter in which he might be pursuing his fraudulent designs, he sat at first taciturn and contemplative, brooding over the means by which his purpose could be best attained. By degrees his attention grew more and more attracted by the objects around him; and at last he derived as much enjoyment from the ride, as if it had been undertaken for the pleasantest reason in the world.

"Delightful prospect, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Beats the chimney-pots, sir," replied Mr. Weller, touching his hat.

"I suppose you have hardly seen any thing but chimney-pots and bricks and mortar all your life, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, smiling.

"I worn't always a boots, sir," said Mr. Weller, with a shake of the head. "I was a vagginer's boy, once."

"When was that?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"When I was first pitched neck and crop into the world, to play at leap-frog with its troubles," replied Sam. "I was a carrier's boy at startin'; then a vagginer's, then a helper, then a boots. Now I'm a gen'l'm'n's servant. I shall be a gen'l'm'n myself one of these days, perhaps, with a pipe in my mouth, and a summer-house in the back-garden. Who knows? I shouldn't be surprised, for one."

"You are quite a philosopher, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"It runs in the family, I b'lieve, sir," replied Mr. Weller. "My father's very much in that line, now. If my mother-in-law blows him up, he whistles. She flies in a passion, and breaks his pipe; he steps out, and gets another. Then she screams very loud, and falls into 'sterics; and he smokes very comfortably till she comes to agin. That's philosophy, sir, an't it?"

"A very good substitute for it, at all events," replied Mr. Pickwick, laughing. "It must have been of great service to you, in the course of your rambling life, Sam."

"Service, sir," exclaimed Sam. "You may say that. Arter I run away from the carrier, and afore I took up with the vagginer, I had unfurnished lodgin's for a fortnight."

"Unfurnished lodgings?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes—the dry arches of Waterloo Bridge. Fine sleeping-place—within ten minutes' walk of all the public offices—only if there is any objection to it, it is that the situation's *rather* too airy. I see some queer sights there."

"Ah, I suppose you did," said Mr. Pickwick, with an air of considerable interest.

"Sights, sir," resumed Mr. Weller, "as 'ud penetrate your benevolent heart, and come out on the other side. You don't see the reg'lar wagrants there; trust 'em, they knows better than that. Young beggars, male and female, as hasn't made a rise in their profession, takes up their quarters there sometimes; but it's generally the worn-out, starving, houseless creeturs as rolls themselves in the dark corners o' them lonesome places—poor creeturs as an't up to the two-penny rope."

"And pray, Sam, what is the two-penny rope?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"The two-penny rope, sir," replied Mr. Weller, "is just a cheap lodgin'-house, where the beds is two-pence a night."

"What do they call a rope for?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Bless your innocence, sir, that an't it," replied Sam. "Wen the lady and gen'l'm'n as keeps the Hot-el first begun business they used to make the beds on the floor; but this wouldn't do at no price, 'cos instead o' taking a moderate two-penn'orth o' sleep, the lodgers used to lie there half the day. So now they has two ropes, 'bout six foot apart, and three from the floor, which goes right down the room; and the beds are made of slips of coarse sacking, stretched across 'em."

"Well," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Well," said Mr. Weller, "the adwantage o' the plan's hobvious. At six o'clock every mornin' they lets go the ropes at one end, and down falls all the lodgers. 'Consequence is that, being thoroughly waked, they get up very quietly, and walk away! Beg your pardon, sir," said Sam, suddenly breaking off in his loquacious discourse. "Is this Bury St. Edmunds?"

"It is," replied Mr. Pickwick. The coach rattled through the well-paved streets of a handsome little town, of thriving and cleanly appearance and stopped before a large inn situated in a wide open street, nearly facing the old abbey.

"And this," said Mr. Pickwick, looking up, "is the Angel! We alight here, Sam. But some caution is necessary. Order a private room, and do not mention my name. You understand."

"Right as a trivet, sir," replied Mr. Weller, with a wink of intelligence; and having dragged Mr. Pickwick's portmanteau from the hind boot, into which it had been hastily thrown when they joined the coach at Eatanswill, Mr. Weller disappeared on his errand. A private room was speedily engaged, and into it Mr. Pickwick was ushered without delay.

"Now Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, "the first thing to be done is to—"

"Order dinner, sir," interposed Mr. Weller. "It's very late, sir."

"Ah, so it is," said Mr. Pickwick, looking at his watch. "You are right, Sam."

"And if I might advise, sir," added Mr. Weller, "I'd just have a good night's rest afterwards, and not begin inquiring arter this here deep 'un till the mornin'. There's nothin' so refreshing as sleep, sir, as the servant-girl said afore she drank the egg-cupful o' laudanum."

"I think you are right, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick. "But I must first ascertain that he is in the house, and not likely to go away."

"Leave that to me, sir," said Sam. "Let me order you a snug little dinner, and make my inquiries below while it's a-getting ready; I could worm ev'ry secret out o' the boots's heart in five minutes, sir."

"Do so," said Mr. Pickwick; and Mr. Weller at once retired.

In half an hour Mr. Pickwick was seated at a very satisfactory dinner; and in three-quarters Mr. Weller returned with the intelligence that Mr. Charles Fitz-Marshall had ordered his private room to be retained for him until further notice. He was going to spend the evening at some private house in the neighborhood, had ordered the boots to sit up until his return, and had taken his servant with him.

"Now, sir," argued Mr. Weller, when he had concluded his report, "if I can get a talk with this here servant in the mornin', he'll tell me all his master's concerns."

"How do you know that?" interposed Mr. Pickwick.

"Bless your dear heart, sir, servants always do," replied Mr. Weller.

"Oh, ah, I forgot that," said Mr. Pickwick. "Well."

"Then you can arrange what's best to be done, sir, and we can act according."

As it appeared that this was the best arrangement that could be made, it was finally agreed upon. Mr. Weller, by his master's permission, retired to spend the evening in his own way; and was shortly afterward elected, by the unanimous voice of the assembled company, into the tap-room chair, in which honorable post he acquitted himself so much to the satisfaction of the gentlemen frequenters, that their roars of laughter and approbation penetrated to Mr. Pickwick's bedroom, and shortened the term of his natural rest by at least three hours.

Early on the ensuing morning, Mr. Weller was dispelling all the feverish remains of the previous evening's conviviality, through the instrumentality of a half-penny shower-bath (having induced a young gentleman attached to the stable department, by the offer of that coin, to pump over his head and face, until he was perfectly restored), when he was attracted by the appearance of a young fellow in mulberry-colored livery, who was sitting on a bench in the yard, reading what appeared to be a hymn-book, with an air of deep abstraction, but who occasionally stole a glance at the individual under the pump, as if he took some interest in his proceedings, nevertheless.

"You're a rum 'un to look at, you are!" thought Mr. Weller, the first time his eyes encountered the glance of the stranger in the mulberry suit: who had a large, sallow, ugly face, very sunken eyes, and a gigantic head, from which depended a quantity of lank black hair. "You're a rum 'un!" thought Mr. Weller; and thinking this, he went on washing himself, and thought no more about him.

Still the man kept glancing from his hymn-book to Sam, and from Sam to his hymn-book, as if he wanted to open a conversation. So at last Sam, by way of giving him an opportunity, said with a familiar nod—

"How are you, governor?"

"I am happy to say, I am pretty well, sir," said the man, speaking with great deliberation, and closing the book. "I hope you are the same, sir?"

"Why, if I felt less like a walking brandy-bottle, I shouldn't be quite so staggery this mornin'," replied Sam.

"Are you stoppin' in this house, old 'un?"

The mulberry man replied in the affirmative.

"How was it you worn't one of us, last night?" inquired Sam, scrubbing his face with the towel. "You seem one of the jolly sort—looks as conwivial as a live trout in a lime basket," added Mr. Weller, in an undertone.

"I was out last night with my master," replied the stranger.

"What's his name?" inquired Mr. Weller, coloring up very red with sudden excitement, and the friction of the towel combined.

"Fitz-Marshall," said the mulberry man.

"Give us your hand," said Mr. Weller, advancing; "I should like to know you. I like your appearance, old fellow."

"Well, that is very strange," said the mulberry man, with great simplicity of manner. "I like yours so much, that I wanted to speak to you, from the very first moment I saw you under the pump."

"Did you, though?"

"Upon my word. Now, isn't that curious?"

"Wery sing'ler," said Sam, inwardly congratulating himself upon the softness of the stranger. "What's your name, my patriarch?"

"Job."

"And a wery good name it is—only one I know, that ain't got a nickname to it. What's the other name?"

"Trotter," said the stranger. "What is yours?"

Sam bore in mind his master's caution, and replied,

"My name's Walker; my master's name's Wilkins. Will you take a drop o' somethin' this mornin', Mr. Trotter?"

Mr. Trotter acquiesced in this agreeable proposal: and having deposited his book in his coat-pocket, accompanied Mr. Weller to the tap, where they were soon occupied in discussing an exhilarating compound, formed by mixing together, in a pewter vessel, certain quantities of British Hollands, and the fragrant essence of the clove.

"And what sort of a place have you got?" inquired Sam, as he filled his companion's glass, for the second time.

"Bad," said Job, smacking his lips, "very bad."

"You don't mean that?" said Sam.

"I do, indeed. Worse than that, my master's going to be married."

"No."

"Yes; and worse than that, too, he's going to run away with an immense rich heiress, from boarding-school."

"What a dragon!" said Sam, refilling his companion's glass. "It's some boarding-school in this town, I suppose, ain't it?"

Now, although this question was put in the most careless tone imaginable, Mr. Job Trotter plainly showed by gestures, that he perceived his new friend's anxiety to draw forth an answer to it. He emptied his glass, looked mysteriously at his companion, winked both of his small eyes, one after the other, and finally made a motion with his arm, as if he were working an imaginary pump-handle, thereby intimating that he (Mr. Trotter) considered himself as undergoing the process of being pumped, by Mr. Samuel Weller.

"No, no," said Mr. Trotter, in conclusion, "that's not to be told to every body. That is a secret—a great secret, Mr. Walker."

As the mulberry man said this, he turned his glass upside down, as a means of reminding his companion that he had nothing left wherewith to slake his thirst. Sam observed the hint; and feeling the delicate manner in which it was conveyed, ordered the pewter vessel to be refilled, whereat the small eyes of the mulberry man glistened.

"And so it's a secret?" said Sam.

"I should rather suspect it was," said the mulberry man, sipping his liquor, with a complacent face.

"I suppose your mas'r's wery rich?" said Sam.

Mr. Trotter smiled, and holding his glass in his left hand, gave four distinct slaps on the pocket of his mulberry indescribables with his right, as if to intimate that his master might have done the same without alarming any body much, by the chinking of coin.

"Ah," said Sam, "that's the game, is it?"

The mulberry man nodded significantly.

"Well, and don't you think, old feller," remonstrated Mr. Weller, "that if you let your mistress take in this here young lady, you're a precious rascal?"

"I know that," said Job Trotter, turning upon his companion a countenance of deep contrition, and groaning slightly. "I know that, and that's what it is that preys upon my mind. But what am I to do?"

"Do!" said Sam; "di-wulge to the missis, and give up your master."

"Who'd believe me?" replied Job Trotter. "The young lady's considered the very picture of innocence and discre-

tion. She'd deny it, and so would my master. Who'd believe me? I should lose my place, and get indicted for a conspiracy, or some such thing; that's all I should take by my motion."

"There's somethin' in that," said Sam, ruminating; there's somethin' in that."

"If I knew any respectable gentleman who would take the matter up," continued Mr. Trotter, "I might have some hope of preventing the elopement; but there's the same difficulty, Mr. Walker, just the same. I know no gentleman in this strange place, and ten to one if I did, whether he would believe my story."

"Come this way," said Sam, suddenly jumping up, and grasping the mulberry man by the arm. "My mas'r's the man you want, I see." And after a slight resistance on the part of Job Trotter, Sam led his newly-found friend to the apartment of Mr. Pickwick, to whom he presented him, together with a brief summary of the dialogue we have just repeated.

"I am very sorry to betray my master, sir," said Job Trotter, applying to his eyes a pink-checked pocket-handkerchief about six inches square.

"The feeling does you a great deal of honor," replied Mr. Pickwick; "but it is your duty, nevertheless."

"I know it is my duty, sir," replied Job, with great emotion. "We should all try to discharge our duty, sir, and I humbly endeavor to discharge mine, sir; but it is a hard trial to betray a master, sir, whose clothes you wear, and whose bread you eat, even though he is a scoundrel, sir."

"You are a very good fellow," said Mr. Pickwick, much affected, "an honest fellow."

"Come, come," interposed Sam, who had witnessed Mr. Trotter's tears with considerable impatience, "blow this here water-cart bis'ness. It won't do no good, this won't."

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, reproachfully, "I am sorry to find that you have so little respect for this young man's feelings."

"His feelins is all very well, sir," replied Mr. Weller; "and as they're so very fine, and it's a pity he should lose 'em, I think he'd better keep 'em in his own buzzum, than let 'em evaporate in hot water, 'specially as they do no good. Tears never yet wound up a clock, or worked a steam-ingen'. The next time you go out to a smoking-party, young fellow,

fill your pipe with that 'ere reflection; and for the present just put that bit of pink gingham into your pocket. 'Ta'n't so handsome that you need keep waving it about, as if you was a tight-rope dancer."

"My man is in the right," said Mr. Pickwick, accosting Job, "although his mode of expressing his opinion is somewhat homely, and occasionally incomprehensible."

"He is, sir, very right," said Mr. Trotter, "and I will give way no longer."

"Very well," said Mr. Pickwick. "Now, where is this boarding-school?"

"It is a large, old, red-brick house, just outside the town, sir," replied Job Trotter.

"And when," said Mr. Pickwick, "when is this villainous design to be carried into execution—when is this elopement to take place?"

"To-night, sir," replied Job.

"To-night!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"This very night, sir," replied Job Trotter. "That is what alarms me so much."

"Instant measures must be taken," said Mr. Pickwick. "I will see the lady who keeps the establishment immediately."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Job, "but that course of proceeding will never do."

"Why not?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"My master, sir, is a very artful man."

"I know he is," said Mr. Pickwick.

"And he has so wound himself round the old lady's heart, sir," resumed Job, "that she would believe nothing to his prejudice, if you went down on your bare knees and swore it; especially as you have no proof but the word of a servant, who, for any thing she knows (and my master would be sure to say so), was discharged forsome fault, and does this in revenge."

"What had better be done, then?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Nothing but taking him in the very act of eloping, will convince the old lady, sir," replied Job.

"All them old cats *will* run their heads agin mile-stones," observed Mr. Weller in a parenthesis.

"But this taking him in the very act of elopement, would be a very difficult thing to accomplish, I fear," said Mr. Pickwick.

"I don't know, sir," said Mr. Trotter, after a few moments' reflection. "I think it might be very easily done."

"How?" was Mr. Pickwick's inquiry.