

CHAPTER XXV.

SHOWING, AMONG A VARIETY OF PLEASANT MATTERS, HOW MAJESTIC AND IMPARTIAL MR. NUPKINS WAS; AND HOW MR. WELLER RETURNED MR. JOB TROTTER'S SHUTTLECOCK AS HEAVILY AS IT CAME. WITH ANOTHER MATTER, WHICH WILL BE FOUND IN ITS PLACE.

VIOLENT was Mr. Weller's indignation as he was borne along; numerous were the allusions to the personal appearance and demeanor of Mr. Grummer and his companions; and valofous were the defiances to any six of the gentlemen present, in which he vented his dissatisfaction. Mr. Snodgrass and Mr. Winkle listened with gloomy respect to the torrent of eloquence which their leader poured forth from the sedan chair, and the rapid course of which not all Mr. Tupman's earnest entreaties to have the lid of the vehicle closed, were able to check for an instant. But Mr. Weller's anger quickly gave way to curiosity when the procession turned down the identical court-yard in which he had met with the runaway Job Trotter; and curiosity was exchanged for a feeling of the most gleeful astonishment, when the all important Mr. Grummer, commanding the sedan-bearers to halt, advanced with dignified and portentous steps to the very green gate from which Job Trotter had emerged, and gave a mighty pull at the bell-handle which hung at the side thereof. The ring was answered by a very smart and pretty-faced servant-girl, who, after holding up her hands in astonishment at the rebellious appearance of the prisoners, and the impassioned language of Mr. Pickwick, summoned Mr. Muzzle. Mr. Muzzle opened one-half of the carriage gate to admit the sedan, the captured ones, and the specials; and immediately slammed it in the faces of the mob, who, indignant at being excluded, and anxious to see what followed, relieved their feelings by kicking at the gate and ringing the bell for an hour or two afterward. In this amusement they all took part by turns, except three or four fortunate individuals, who, having discovered a grating in the gate which commanded a view of nothing, stared through it with the indefatigable perseverance with which people will flatten their noses against the front windows of a chemist's shop, when a drunken man, who has been run over by a dog-

cart in the street, is undergoing a surgical inspection in the back parlor.

At the foot of a flight of steps, leading to the house door, which was guarded on either side by an American aloe in a green tub, the sedan chair stopped. Mr. Pickwick and his friends were conducted into the hall, whence, having been previously announced by Muzzle, and ordered in by Mr. Nupkins, they were ushered into the worshipful presence of that public-spirited officer.

The scene was an impressive one, well calculated to strike terror to the hearts of culprits, and to impress them with an adequate idea of the stern majesty of the law. In front of a big book-case, in a big chair, behind a big table, and before a big volume, sat Mr. Nupkins, looking a full size larger than any one of them, big as they were. The table was adorned with piles of papers; and above the farther end of it appeared the head and shoulders of Mr. Jinks, who was busily engaged in looking as busy as possible. The party having all entered, Muzzle carefully closed the door, and placed himself behind his master's chair to await his orders. Mr. Nupkins threw himself back with thrilling solemnity, and scrutinized the faces of his unwilling visitors.

"Now, Grummer, who is that person?" said Mr. Nupkins, pointing to Mr. Pickwick, who, as the spokesman of his friends, stood hat in hand, bowing with the utmost politeness and respect.

"This here's Pickwick, your wash-up," said Grummer.

"Come, none o' that 'ere, old Strike-a-light," interposed Mr. Weller, elbowing himself into the front rank. "Beg your pardon, sir, but this here officer o' yourn in the gambooge tops 'ull never earn a decent livin' as a master o' the ceremonies any vere. This here, sir," continued Mr. Weller, thrusting Grummer aside, and addressing the magistrate with pleasant familiarity, "this here is S. Pickvick, Esquire; this here's Mr. Tupman; that 'ere's Mr. Snodgrass; and funder on, next him on the t'other side, Mr. Winkle—all very nice gen'l'm'n, sir, as you'll be very happy to have the acquaintance on; so the sooner you commits these here officers o' yourn to the tread-mill for a month or two, the sooner we shall begin to be on a pleasant understanding. Business first, pleasure arterwards, as King Richard the Third said wen he stabbed the t'other king in the Tower, afore he smothered the babbies."

At the conclusion of this address, Mr. Weller brushed his hat with his right elbow, and nodded benignly to Jinks, who had heard him throughout, with unspeakable awe.

"Who is this man, Grummer?" said the magistrate.

"Wery desp'rate ch'racter, your wash-up," replied Grummer. "He attempted to rescue the prisoners, and assaulted the officers; so we took him into custody, and brought him here."

"You did quite right," replied the magistrate. "He is evidently a desperate ruffian."

"He is my servant, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, angrily.

"Oh! he is your servant, is he?" said Mr. Nupkins. "A conspiracy to defeat the end of justice, and murder its officers. Pickwick's servant. Put that down, Mr. Jinks."

Mr. Jinks did so.

"What's your name, fellow?" thundered Mr. Nupkins.

"Veller," replied Sam.

"A very good name for the Newgate Calendar," said Mr. Nupkins.

This was a joke; so Jinks, Grummer, Dubbley, all the specials, and Muzzle, went into fits of laughter of five minutes' duration.

"Put down his name, Mr. Jinks," said the magistrate.

"Two L's, old feller," said Sam.

Here an unfortunate special laughed again, whereupon the magistrate threatened to commit him instantly. It is a dangerous thing to laugh at the wrong man, in these cases.

"Where do you live?" said the magistrate.

"Vare-ever I can," replied Sam.

"Put down that, Mr. Jinks," said the magistrate, who was fast rising into a rage.

"Score it under," said Sam.

"He is a vagabond, Mr. Jinks," said the magistrate. "He is a vagabond on his own statement; is he not, Mr. Jinks?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Then I'll commit him. I'll commit him as such," said Mr. Nupkins.

"This is a wery impartial country for justice," said Sam. "There ain't a magistrate goin' as don't commit himself twice as often as he commits other people."

At this sally another special laughed, and then tried to look so supernaturally solemn, that the magistrate detected him immediately.

"Grummer," said Mr. Nupkins, reddening with passion, "how dare you select such an inefficient and disreputable person for a special constable as that man? How dare you do it, sir?"

"I am very sorry, your wash-up," stammered Grummer.

"Very sorry!" said the furious magistrate. "You shall repent of this neglect of duty, Mr. Grummer; you shall be made an example of. Take that fellow's staff away. He's drunk. You're drunk, fellow."

"I am not drunk, your worship," said the man.

"You *are* drunk," returned the magistrate. "How dare you say you are not drunk, sir, when I say you are? Doesn't he smell of spirits, Grummer?"

"Horrid, your wash-up," replied Grummer, who had a vague impression that there was a smell of rum somewhere.

"I knew he did," said Mr. Nupkins. "I saw he was drunk when he first came into the room, by his excited eye. Did you observe his excited eye, Mr. Jinks?"

"Certainly, sir."

"I haven't touched a drop of spirits this morning," said the man, who was as sober a fellow as need be.

"How dare you tell me a falsehood?" said Mr. Nupkins. "Isn't he drunk at this moment, Mr. Jinks?"

"Certainly, sir," replied Jinks.

"Mr. Jinks," said the magistrate, "I shall commit that man for contempt. Make out his committal, Mr. Jinks."

And committed the special would have been, only Jinks, who was the magistrate's adviser (having had a legal education of three years in a country attorney's office) whispered the magistrate that he thought it wouldn't do; so the magistrate made a speech, and said, that in consideration of the special's family, he would merely reprimand and discharge him. Accordingly, the special was abused, vehemently, for a quarter of an hour, and sent about his business; and Grummer, Dubbley, Muzzle, and all the other specials murmured their admiration of the magnanimity of Mr. Nupkins.

"Now, Mr. Jinks," said the magistrate, "swear Grummer."

Grummer was sworn directly; but as Grummer wandered, and Mr. Nupkins's dinner was nearly ready, Mr. Nupkins cut the matter short, by putting leading questions to Grummer, which Grummer answered as nearly in the affirmative as he could. So the examination went off, all very smooth

and comfortable, the two assaults were proved against Mr. Weller, and a threat against Mr. Winkle, and a push against Mr. Snodgrass. When all this was done to the magistrate's satisfaction, the magistrate and Mr. Jinks consulted in whispers.

The consultation having lasted about ten minutes, Mr. Jinks retired to his end of the table; and the magistrate, with a preparatory cough, drew himself up in his chair, and was proceeding to commence his address, when Mr. Pickwick interposed.

"I beg your pardon, sir, for interrupting you," said Mr. Pickwick; "but before you proceed to express, and act upon, any opinion you may have formed on the statements which have been made here, I must claim my right to be heard, so far as I am personally concerned."

"Hold your tongue, sir," said the magistrate, peremptorily.

"I must submit to you, sir," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Hold your tongue, sir," interposed the magistrate, "or I shall order an officer to remove you."

"You may order your officer to do whatever you please, sir," said Mr. Pickwick; "and I have no doubt, from the specimen I have had of the subordination preserved among them, that whatever you order, they will execute, sir; but I shall take the liberty, sir, of claiming my right to be heard, until I am removed by force."

"Pickwick and principle!" exclaimed Mr. Weller, in a very audible voice.

"Sam, be quiet," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Dumb as a drum with a hole in it, sir," replied Sam.

Mr. Nupkins looked at Mr. Pickwick with a gaze of intense astonishment, at his displaying such unwonted temerity; and was apparently about to return a very angry reply, when Mr. Jinks pulled him by the sleeve, and whispered something in his ear. To this the magistrate returned a half-audible answer, and then the whispering was renewed. Jinks was evidently remonstrating.

At length the magistrate, gulping down, with a very bad grace, his disinclination to hear any thing more, turned to Mr. Pickwick, and said, sharply, "What do you want to say?"

"First," said Mr. Pickwick, sending a look through his spectacles, under which even Nupkins quailed. "First, I

wish to know what I and my friend have been brought here for?"

"Must I tell him?" whispered the magistrate to Jinks.

"I think you had better, sir," whispered Jinks to the magistrate.

"An information has been sworn before me," said the magistrate, "that it is apprehended you are going to fight a duel, and that the other man, Tupman, is your aider and abettor in it. Therefore—eh, Mr. Jinks?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Therefore, I call upon you both to—I think that's the course, Mr. Jinks?"

"Certainly, sir."

"To—to—what, Mr. Jinks?" said the magistrate, pettishly.

"To find bail, sir."

"Yes. Therefore, I call upon you both—as I was about to say, when I was interrupted by my clerk—to find bail."

"Good bail," whispered Mr. Jinks.

"I shall require good bail," said the magistrate.

"Town's-people," whispered Jinks.

"They must be town's-people," said the magistrate.

"Fifty pounds each," whispered Jinks, "and householders, of course."

"I shall require two sureties of fifty pounds each," said the magistrate aloud, with great dignity, "and they must be householders, of course."

"But, bless my heart, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, who, together with Mr. Tupman, was all amazement and indignation; "we are perfect strangers in this town. I have as little knowledge of any householders here, as I have intention of fighting a duel with anybody."

"I dare say," replied the magistrate, "I dare say—don't you, Mr. Jinks?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Have you anything more to say?" inquired the magistrate.

Mr. Pickwick *had* a great deal more to say, which he would no doubt have said, very little to his own advantage, or the magistrate's satisfaction, if he had not, the moment he ceased speaking, been pulled by the sleeve by Mr. Weller, with whom he was immediately engaged in so earnest a conversation, that he suffered the magistrate's inquiry to pass wholly unnoticed. Mr. Nupkins was not the man to ask a

question of the kind twice over; and so, with another preparatory cough, he proceeded, amidst the reverential and admiring silence of the constables, to pronounce his decision.

He should fine Weller two pounds for the first assault, and three pounds for the second. He should fine Winkle two pounds, and Snodgrass one pound, besides requiring them to enter into their own recognizances to keep the peace toward all his Majesty's subjects, and especially towards his liege servant, Daniel Grummer. Pickwick and Tupman he had already held to bail.

Immediately on the magistrate ceasing to speak, Mr. Pickwick, with a smile mantling on his again good-humored countenance, stepped forward, and said:

"I beg the magistrate's pardon, but may I request a few minutes' private conversation with him, on a matter of deep importance to himself?"

"What?" said the magistrate.

Mr. Pickwick repeated his request.

"This is a most extraordinary request," said the magistrate. "A private interview?"

"A private interview," replied Mr. Pickwick, firmly; "only, as a part of the information which I wish to communicate is derived from my servant, I should wish him to be present."

The magistrate looked at Mr. Jinks; Mr. Jinks looked at the magistrate; the officers looked at each other in amazement. Mr. Nupkins turned suddenly pale. Could the man Weller, in a moment of remorse, have divulged some secret conspiracy for his assassination? It was a dreadful thought. He was a public man: and he turned paler, as he thought of Julius Cæsar and Mr. Perceval.

The magistrate looked at Mr. Pickwick again, and beckoned Mr. Jinks.

"What do you think of this request, Mr. Jinks?" murmured Mr. Nupkins.

Mr. Jinks, who didn't exactly know what to think of it, and was afraid he might offend, smiled feebly, after a dubious fashion, and, screwing up the corners of his mouth, shook his head slowly from side to side.

"Mr. Jinks," said the magistrate gravely, "you are an ass."

At this little expression of opinion, Mr. Jinks smiled again—rather more feebly than before—and edged himself by degrees back into his own corner.

Mr. Nupkins debated the matter within himself for a few seconds, and then, rising from his chair, and requesting Mr. Pickwick and Sam to follow him, led the way into a small room which opened into the justice parlor. Desiring Mr. Pickwick to walk to the upper end of the little apartment, and holding his hand upon the half-closed door, that he might be able to effect an immediate escape, in case there was the least tendency to a display of hostilities, Mr. Nupkins expressed his readiness to hear the communication, whatever it might be.

"I will come to the point at once, sir," said Mr. Pickwick; "it affects yourself, and your credit, materially. I have every reason to believe, sir, that you are harboring in your house a gross impostor!"

"Two," interrupted Sam. "Mulberry agin all natur, for tears and willainy!"

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, "if I am to render myself intelligible to this gentleman, I must beg you to control your feelings."

"Werry sorry, sir," replied Mr. Weller; "but when I think o' that ere Job, I can't help opening the wulve a inch or two."

"In one word, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, "is my servant right in suspecting that a certain Captain Fitz-Marshall is in the habit of visiting here? Because," added Mr. Pickwick, as he saw that Mr. Nupkins was about to offer a very indignant interruption, "because, if he be, I know that person to be a—"

"Hush, hush," said Mr. Nupkins, closing the door. "Know him to be what, sir?"

"An unprincipled adventurer—a dishonorable character—a man who preys upon society, and makes easily-deceived people his dupes, sir; his absurd, his foolish, his wretched dupes, sir," said the excited Mr. Pickwick.

"Dear me," said Mr. Nupkins, turning very red, and altering his whole manner directly. "Dear me, Mr.—"

"Pickwick," said Sam.

"Pickwick," said the magistrate, "dear me, Mr. Pickwick—pray take a seat—you can not mean this? Captain Fitz-Marshall?"

"Don't call him a cap'en," said Sam, "nor Fitz-Marshall neither; he ain't neither one nor t'other. He's a strolling actor, he is, and his name's Jingle; and if ever there was a wolf in a mulberry suit, that ere Job Trotter's him."