

"I say, old boy, where do you hang out?"

Mr. Pickwick replied that he was at present suspended at the George and Vulture.

"I wish you'd come and see me," said Bob Sawyer.

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"There's my lodgings," said Mr. Bob Sawyer, producing a card. "Lant Street, Borough; it's near Guy's, and handy for me, you know. Little distance after you've passed Saint George's Church—turns out of the High Street on the right-hand side the way."

"I shall find it," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Come on Thursday fortnight, and bring the other chaps with you," said Mr. Bob Sawyer, "I'm going to have a few medical fellows that night."

Mr. Pickwick expressed the pleasure it would afford him to meet the medical fellows; and after Mr. Bob Sawyer had informed him that he meant to be very cozy, and that his friend Ben was to be one of the party, they shook hands and separated.

We feel that in this place we lay ourself open to the inquiry whether Mr. Winkle was whispering, during this brief conversation, to Arabella Allen; and if so, what he said; and furthermore, whether Mr. Snodgrass was conversing apart with Emily Wardle; and if so, what *he* said. To this we reply, that whatever they might have said to the ladies, they said nothing at all to Mr. Pickwick or Mr. Tupman for eight-and-twenty miles, and that they sighed very often, refused ale and brandy, and looked gloomy. If our observant lady readers can deduce any satisfactory inferences from these facts, we beg them by all means to do so.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WHICH IS ALL ABOUT THE LAW, AND SUNDRY GREAT AUTHORITIES LEARNED THEREIN.

SCATTERED about, in various holes and corners of the Temple, are certain dark and dirty chambers, in and out of which, all the morning in Vacation, and half the evening too in Term-time, there may be seen constantly hurrying with bundles of papers under their arms, and protruding from their pockets, an almost uninterrupted succession of Lawyers' Clerks. There are several grades of Lawyers' Clerks. There is the Articled Clerk, who has paid a premium, and is an attorney in perspective, who runs a tailor's bill, receives invitations to parties, knows a family in Gower Street, and another in Tavistock Square: who goes out of town every Long Vacation to see his father, who keeps live horses innumerable; and who is, in short, the very aristocrat of clerks. There is the salaried clerk—out-of-door, or in-door, as the case may be—who devotes the major part of his thirty shillings a week to his personal pleasure and adornment, repairs half-price to the Adelphi Theatre at least three times a week, dissipates majestically at the cider cellars afterward, and is a dirty caricature of the fashion which expired six months ago. There is the middle-aged copying-clerk, with a large family, who is always shabby, and often drunk. And there are the office lads in their first surtouts, who feel a befitting contempt for boys at day-schools: club as they go home at night, for saveloys and porter: and think there's nothing like "life." There are varieties of the genus, too numerous to recapitulate, but however numerous they may be, they are all to be seen, at certain regulated business hours, hurrying to and from the places we have just mentioned.

These sequestered nooks are the public offices of the legal profession, where writs are issued, judgments signed, declarations filed, and numerous other ingenious machines put in motion for the torture and torment of his Majesty's liege subjects; and the comfort and emolument of the practitioners of the law. They are, for the most part, low-roofed, moldy rooms, where innumerable rolls of parchment, which have been perspiring in secret for the last century, send

forth an agreeable odor, which is mingled by day with the scent of the dry rot, and by night with the various exhalations which arise from damp cloaks, festering umbrellas, and the coarsest tallow-candles.

About half-past seven o'clock in the evening, some ten days or a fortnight after Mr. Pickwick and his friends returned to London, there hurried into one of these offices, an individual in a brown coat and brass buttons, whose long hair was scrupulously twisted round the rim of his napless hat, and whose soiled drab trowsers were so tightly strapped over his Blucher boots, that his knees threatened every moment to start from their concealment. He produced from his coat-pockets a long and narrow strip of parchment, on which the presiding functionary impressed an illegible black stamp. He then drew forth four scraps of paper, of similar dimensions, each containing a printed copy of the strip of parchment with blanks for a name; and having filled up the blanks, put all the five documents in his pocket, and hurried away.

The man in the brown coat, with the cabalistic documents in his pocket, was no other than our old acquaintance, Mr. Jackson, of the house of Dodson and Fogg, Freeman's Court, Cornhill. Instead of returning to the office from whence he came, however, he bent his steps direct to Sun Court, and walking straight into the George and Vulture, demanded to know whether one Mr. Pickwick was within.

"Call Mr. Pickwick's servant, Tom," said the bar-maid of the George and Vulture.

"Don't trouble yourself," said Mr. Jackson, "I've come on business. If you'll show me Mr. Pickwick's room, I'll step up myself."

"What name, sir?" said the waiter.

"Jackson," replied the clerk.

The waiter stepped up stairs to announce Mr. Jackson; but Mr. Jackson saved him the trouble by following close at his heels, and walking into the apartment before he could articulate a syllable.

Mr. Pickwick had that day invited his three friends to dinner; they were all seated round the fire, drinking their wine, when Mr. Jackson presented himself, as above described.

"How de do, sir?" said Mr. Jackson, nodding to Mr. Pickwick.

That gentleman bowed, and looked somewhat surprised, for the physiognomy of Mr. Jackson dwelt not in his recollection.

"I have called from Dodson and Fogg's," said Mr. Jackson, in an explanatory tone.

Mr. Pickwick roused at the name. "I refer you to my attorney, sir: Mr. Perker, of Gray's Inn," said he. "Waiter, show this gentleman out."

"Beg your pardon, Mr. Pickwick," said Jackson, deliberately depositing his hat on the floor, and drawing from his pocket the strip of parchment. "But personal service, by clerk or agent, in these cases, you know, Mr. Pickwick—nothing like caution, sir, in all legal forms?"

Here Mr. Jackson cast his eye on the parchment; and, resting his hands on the table, and looking round with a winning and persuasive smile, said: "Now, come; don't let's have no words about such a little matter as this. Which of you gentlemen's name's Snodgrass?"

At this inquiry Mr. Snodgrass gave such a very undisguised and palpable start, that no further reply was needed.

"Ah! I thought so," said Mr. Jackson, more affably than before. "I've got a little something to trouble you with, sir."

"Me!" exclaimed Mr. Snodgrass.

"It's only a *subpœna* in Bardell and Pickwick on behalf of the plaintiff," replied Jackson, singling out one of the slips of paper, and producing a shilling from his waistcoat-pocket. "It'll come on, in the settens after Term; fourteenth of Feboooary, we expect; we've marked it a special jury cause, and it's only ten down the paper. That's yours, Mr. Snodgrass." As Jackson said this, he presented the parchment before the eyes of Mr. Snodgrass, and slipped the paper and the shilling into his hand.

Mr. Tupman had witnessed this process in silent astonishment, when Jackson, turning sharply upon him, said:

"I think I ain't mistaken when I say your name's Tupman, am I?"

Mr. Tupman looked at Mr. Pickwick; but, perceiving no encouragement in that gentleman's widely-opened eyes to deny his name, said:

"Yes, my name *is* Tupman, sir."

"And that other gentleman's Mr. Winkle, I think?" said Jackson.

Mr. Winkle faltered out a reply in the affirmative; and both gentlemen were forthwith invested with a slip of paper, and a shilling each, by the dexterous Mr. Jackson.

"Now," said Jackson, "I'm afraid you'll think me rather troublesome, but I want somebody else, if it ain't inconvenient. I have Samuel Weller's name here, Mr. Pickwick."

"Send my servant here, waiter," said Mr. Pickwick. The waiter retired, considerably astonished, and Mr. Pickwick motioned Jackson to a seat.

There was a painful pause, which was at length broken by the innocent defendant.

"I suppose, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, his indignation rising while he spoke; "I suppose, sir, that it is the intention of your employers to seek to criminate me upon the testimony of my own friends?"

Mr. Jackson struck his forefinger several times against the left side of his nose, to intimate that he was not there to disclose the secrets of the prison-house and playfully rejoined.

"Not knowin', can't say."

"For what other reason, sir," pursued Mr. Pickwick, "are these subpoenas served upon them, if not for this?"

"Very good plant, Mr. Pickwick," replied Jackson, slowly shaking his head. "But it won't do. No harm in trying, but there's little to be got o' t of me."

Here Mr. Jackson smiled once more upon the company, and, applying his left thumb to the tip of his nose, worked a visionary coffee-mill with his right hand: thereby performing a very graceful piece of pantomime (then much in vogue, but now, unhappily, almost obsolete) which was familiarly denominated "taking a grinder."

"No, no, Mr. Pickwick," said Jackson, in conclusion; "Perker's people must guess what we've served these subpoenas for. If they can't, they must wait till the action comes on, and then they'll find out."

Mr. Pickwick bestowed a look of excessive disgust on his unwelcome visitor, and would probably have hurled some tremendous anathema at the heads of Messrs. Dodson and Fogg, had not Sam's entrance at the instant interrupted him.

"Samuel Weller?" said Mr. Jackson, inquiringly.

"Vun o' the truest things as you've said for many a long year," replied Sam, in a most composed manner.

"Here's a subpoena for you, Mr. Weller," said Jackson.

"What's that in English?" inquired Sam.

"Here's the original," said Jackson, declining the required explanation.

"Which?" said Sam.

"This," replied Jackson, shaking the parchment.

"Oh, that's the 'rig'nal, is it?" said Sam. "Well, I'm very glad I've seen the 'rig'nal, 'cos it's a gratifyin' sort o' thing, and eases vun's mind so much."

"And here's the shilling," said Jackson. "It's from Dodson and Fogg's."

"And it's uncommon handsome o' Dodson and Fogg, as knows so little of me, to come down with a present," said Sam. "I feel it as a very high compliment, sir; it's a very honorable thing to them, as they knows how to reward merit wherever they meets it. Besides wich, it's affectin' to one's feelin's."

As Mr. Weller said this, he inflicted a little friction on his right eyelid with the sleeve of his coat, after the most approved manner of actors when they are in domestic pathetics.

Mr. Jackson seemed rather puzzled by Sam's proceedings; but as he had served the subpoenas, and had nothing more to say, he made a feint of putting on the one glove which he usually carried in his hand, for the sake of appearances, and returned to the office to report progress.

Mr. Pickwick slept little that night; his memory had received a very disagreeable refresher on the subject of Mrs. Bardell's action. He breakfasted betimes next morning, and, desiring Sam to accompany him, set forth towards Gray's Inn Square.

"Sam!" said Mr. Pickwick, looking round, when they got to the end of Cheapside.

"Sir," said Sam, stepping up to his master.

"Which way?"

"Up Newgate Street."

Mr. Pickwick did not turn round immediately, but looked vacantly in Sam's face for a few seconds and heaved a deep sigh.

"What's the matter, sir?" inquired Sam.

"This action, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, "is expected to come on on the fourteenth of next month."

"Remarkable coincidence that 'ere, sir," replied Sam.

"Why remarkable, Sam?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Valentine's day, sir," responded Sam; "reg'lar good day for a breach o' promise trial."

Mr. Weller's smile awakened no gleam of mirth in his master's countenance. Mr. Pickwick turned abruptly round, and led the way in silence.

They had walked some distance: Mr. Pickwick trotting on before, plunged in profound meditation, and Sam following behind, with a countenance expressive of the most enviable and easy defiance of every thing and every body: when the latter, who was always especially anxious to impart to his master any exclusive information he possessed, quickened his pace until he was close at Mr. Pickwick's heels; and, pointing up at a house they were passing, said:

"Very nice pork-shop that 'ere, sir."

"Yes, it seems so," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Celebrated sassage factory," said Sam.

"Is it?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Is it!" reiterated Sam, with some indignation; "I should rayther think it was. Why, sir, bless your innocent eyebrows, that's vere the mysterious disappearance of a 'spectable tradesman took place four year ago."

"You don't mean to say he was burked, Sam?" said Mr. Pickwick, looking hastily round.

"No, I don't indeed, sir," replied Mr. Weller, "I wish I did; far worse than that. He was the master o' that 'ere shop, sir, and the inwenter o' the patent-never-leavin'-off sassage steam-ngine, as ud swaller up a pavin'-stone if you put it too near, and grind it into sassage as easy as if it was a tender young babby. Wery proud o' that machine he was, as it was nat'ral he should be, and he'd stand down in the cellar a-lookin' at it wen it was in full play, till he got quite melancholy with joy. A wery happy man he'd ha' been, sir, in the procession o' that 'ere ingine and two more lovely hin-fants besides, if it hadn't been for his wife, who was a most ow-dacious wixin. She was always a-follerin' him about, and dinnin' in his ears, till at last he couldn't stand it no longer. 'I'll tell you what it is, my dear,' he says one day; 'if you persewere in this here sort of amusement,' he says, 'I'm blessed if I don't go away to 'Merriker; and that's all about it.' 'You're a idle willin', says she, 'and I wish the 'Mer-rikins joy of their bargain.' Arter wich she keeps on abusin' of him for half an hour, and then runs into the little parlor

behind the shop, sets to a-screamin', says he'll be the death on her, and falls in a fit, which lasts for three good hours—one o' them fits wich is all screamin' and kickin'. Well, next mornin', the husband was missin'. He hadn't taken nothin' from the till—hadn't even put on his great-coat—so it was quite clear he warn't gone to 'Merriker. Didn't come back next day; didn't come back next week; Missis had bills printed, sayin' that, if he'd come back, he should be forgiven every thin' (which was very liberal, seein' that he hadn't done nothin' at all); the canals was dragged, and for two months arterwards, wenever a body turned up, it was carried, as a reg'lar thing, straight off to the sassage-shop. Hows'ever, none on 'em answered; so they gave out that he'd run away, and she kep on the bis'ness. One Saturday night, a little thin old gen'l'm'n comes into the shop in a great passion, and says, 'Are you the missis o' this here shop?' 'Yes, I am,' says she. 'Well, ma'am,' says he, 'then I've just looked in to say that me and my family ain't agoin' to be choked for nothin'; and more than that, ma'am,' he says, 'you'll allow me to observe, that as you don't use the primest parts of the meat in the manafacter o' sassage, I think you'd find beef come nearly as cheap as buttons.' 'As buttons, sir!' says she. 'Buttons, ma'am,' says the little old gentleman, unfolding a bit of paper, and showin' twenty or thirty halves o' buttons. 'Nice seasonin' for sassage is trowsers' buttons, ma'am.' 'They're my husband's buttons!' says the widder, beginnin' to faint. 'What!' screams the little old gen'l'm'n, turnin' wery pale. 'I see it all,' says the widder; 'in a fit of temporary insanity he rashly converted his-self into sassage!' And so he had, sir," said Mr. Weller, looking steadily into Mr. Pickwick's horror-stricken countenance, "or else he'd been draw'd into the ingine; but however that might ha' been, the little old gen'l'm'n, who had been remarkably partial to sassage all his life, rushed out o' the shop in a wild state, and was never heerd on arterwards."

The relation of this affecting incident of private life brought master and man to Mr. Perker's chambers. Lowten, holding the door half open, was in conversation with a rustily-clad, miserable-looking man, in boots without toes, and gloves without fingers. There were traces of privation and suffering—almost of despair—in his lank and care-worn countenance; he felt his poverty, for he shrunk to the dark side of the stair-case as Mr. Pickwick approached.