

gentleman rubbed his head with a rueful visage. "Wot do you think o' that, for a go o' vanity warm, sir?"

Mr. Stiggins made no verbal answer, but his manner was expressive. He tasted the contents of the glass which Sam had placed in his hand; put his umbrella on the floor, and tasted it again: passing his hand placidly across his stomach twice or thrice; he then drank the whole at a breath, and smacking his lips, held out the tumbler for more.

Nor was Mrs. Weller behindhand in doing justice to the composition. The good lady began by protesting that she couldn't touch a drop—then took a small drop—then a large drop—then a great many drops; and her feelings being of the nature of those substances which are powerfully affected by the application of strong waters, she dropped a tear with every drop of negus, and so got on, melting the feelings down, until at length she had arrived at a very pathetic and decent pitch of misery.

The elder Mr. Weller observed these signs and tokens with many manifestations of disgust, and when after a second jug of the same, Mr. Stiggins began to sigh in a dismal manner, he plainly evinced his disapprobation of the whole proceedings by sundry incoherent ramblings of speech, among which frequent angry repetitions of the word "gammon" were alone distinguishable to the ear.

"I'll tell you wot it is, Samivel, my boy," whispered the old gentleman into his son's ear, after a long and steadfast contemplation of his lady and Mr. Stiggins; "I think there must be somethin' wrong in your mother-in-law's inside, as well as in that o' the red-nosed man."

"Wot do you mean?" said Sam.

"I mean this here, Sammy," replied the old gentleman, "that wot they drink don't seem no nourishment to 'em; it all turns to warm water, and comes a-pourin' out o' their eyes. 'Pend upon it, Sammy, it's a constitootional infirmity."

Mr. Weller delivered this scientific opinion with many confirmatory frowns and nods; which, Mrs. Weller remarking, and concluding that they bore some disparaging reference either to herself or to Mr. Stiggins, or to both, was on the point of becoming infinitely worse, when Mr. Stiggins, getting on his legs as well as he could, proceeded to deliver an edifying discourse for the benefit of the company, but more especially of Mr. Samuel, whom he adjured in moving terms to be upon his guard in that sink of iniquity into which he was cast; to

abstain from all hypocrisy and pride of heart; and to take in all things exact pattern by him (Stiggins), in which case he might calculate on arriving, sooner or later, at the comfortable conclusion that, like him, he was a most estimable and blameless character, and that all his acquaintance and friends were hopelessly abandoned and profligate wretches. Which consideration, he said, could not but afford him the liveliest satisfaction.

He furthermore conjured him to avoid, above all things, the vice of intoxication, which he likened unto the filthy habits of swine, and to those poisonous and baleful drugs which, being chewed in the mouth, are said to filch away the memory. At this point of his discourse, the reverend and red-nosed gentleman became singularly incoherent, and staggering to and fro in the excitement of his eloquence, was fain to catch at the back of a chair to preserve his perpendicular.

Mr. Stiggins did not desire his hearers to be upon their guard against those false prophets and wretched mockers of religion who, without sense to expound its first doctrines, or hearts to feel its first principles, are more dangerous members of society than the common criminal; imposing, as they necessarily do, upon the weakest and worst informed, casting scorn and contempt on what should be held most sacred, and bringing into partial disrepute large bodies of virtuous and well-conducted persons of many excellent sects and persuasions. But as he leaned over the back of the chair for a considerable time, and closing one eye, winked a good deal with the other, it is presumed that he thought all this, but kept it to himself.

During the delivery of the oration, Mrs. Weller sobbed and wept at the end of the paragraphs; while Sam, sitting cross-legged on a chair and resting his arms on the top rail, regarded the speaker with great suavity and blandness of demeanor; occasionally bestowing a look of recognition on the old gentleman, who was delighted at the beginning, and went to sleep about half-way.

"Brayvo; wery pretty!" said Sam, when the red-nosed man, having finished, pulled his worn gloves on: thereby thrusting his fingers through the broken tops till the knuckles were disclosed to view. "Wery pretty!"

"I hope it may do you good, Samuel," said Mrs. Weller, solemnly.

"I think it vill, mum," replied Sam.

"I wish I could hope that it would do your father good," said Mrs. Weller.

"Thankee, my dear," said Mr. Weller, senior. "How do you find yourself arter it, my love?"

"Scoffer!" exclaimed Mrs. Weller.

"Benighted man!" said the reverend Mr. Stiggins.

"If I don't get no better light than that 'ere moonshine o' yourn, my worthy creetur," said the elder Mr. Weller, "it's very likely as I shall continey to be a night-coach till I'm took off the road altogether. Now, Mrs. We, if the piebald stands at livery much longer, he'll stand 'at nothin' as we go back, and p'raps that 'ere harm-cheer 'ull be tipped over into some hedge or another, with the shepherd in it."

At this supposition, the reverend Mr. Stiggins, in evident consternation, gathered up his hat and umbrella, and proposed an immediate departure, to which Mrs. Weller assented. Sam walked with them to the lodge-gate, and took a dutiful leave.

"A-do, Samivel," said the old gentleman.

"Wot's a-do?" inquired Sammy.

"Well, good-bye, then," said the old gentleman.

"Oh, that's wot you're a-aimin' at, is it?" said Sam. "Good-bye!"

"Sammy," whispered Mr. Weller, looking cautiously round; "my duty to your gov'ner, and tell him if he thinks better o' this 'ere bis'ness, to commoonicate with me. Me and a cab'net maker has dewised a plan for gettin' him out. A pianner, Samivel, a pianner!" said Mr. Weller, striking his son on the chest with the back of his hand, and falling back a step or two.

"Wot do you mean?" said Sam.

"A pianner-forty, Samivel," rejoined Mr. Weller, in a still more mysterious manner, "as he can have on hire; vun as von't play, Sammy."

"And wot 'ud be the good o' that?" said Sam.

"Let him send to my friend, the cab'net-maker, to fetch it back, Sammy," replied Mr. Weller. "Are you awake, now?"

"No," rejoined Sam.

"There ain't no vurks in it," whispered his father. "It 'ull hold him easy, vith his hat and shoes on, and breathe through the legs, vich is holler. Have a passage ready taken for 'Merriker. The 'Merrikin gov'ment will never give him

tip ven they find as he's got money to spend, Sammy. Let the gov'ner stop there till Mrs. Bardell's dead, or Mr. Dodson and Fogg's hung (wich last ewent I think is the most likely to happen first, Sammy), and then let him come back and write a book about the 'Merrikins as'll pay all his expenses and more if he blows 'em up enough."

Mr. Weller delivered this hurried abstract of his plot with great vehemence of whisper; then, as if fearful of weakening the effect of the tremendous communication by any further dialogue, he gave the coachman's salute, and vanished.

Sam had scarcely recovered his usual composure of countenance, which had been greatly disturbed by the secret communication of his respected relative, when Mr. Pickwick accosted him.

"Sam," said that gentleman.

"Sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"I am going for a walk round the prison, and I wish you to attend me. I see a prisoner we know coming this way, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, smiling.

"Wich, sir?" inquired Mr. Weller; "the gen'l'm'n with the head o' hair, or the interestin' captive in the stockin's?"

"Neither," rejoined Mr. Pickwick. "He is an old friend of yours, Sam."

"O' mine, sir?" exclaimed Mr. Weller.

"You recollect the gentleman very well, I dare say, Sam," replied Mr. Pickwick, "or else you are more unmindful of your acquaintances than I think you are. Hush! not a word, Sam, not a syllable. Here he is."

As Mr. Pickwick spoke, Jingle walked up. He looked less miserable than before, being clad in a half-worn suit of clothes, which, with Mr. Pickwick's assistance, had been released from the pawnbroker's. He wore clean linen too, and had had his hair cut. He was very pale and thin, however; and as he crept slowly up, leaning on a stick, it was easy to see that he had suffered severely from illness and want, and was still very weak. He took off his hat as Mr. Pickwick saluted him, and seemed much humbled and abashed at sight of Sam Weller.

Following close at his heels came Mr. Job Trotter, in the catalogue of whose vices, want of faith and attachment to his companion could at all events find no place. He was still ragged and squalid, but his face was not quite so hollow as on his first meeting with Mr. Pickwick, a few

days before. As he took off his hat to our benevolent old friend, he murmured some broken expressions of gratitude, and muttered something about having been saved from starving.

"Well, well," said Mr. Pickwick, impatiently interrupting him, "you can follow with Sam. I want to speak with you, Mr. Jingle. Can you walk without his arm?"

"Certainly, sir—all ready—not too fast—legs shaky—head queer—round and round—earthquaky sort of feeling—very."

"Here, give me your arm," said Mr. Pickwick.

"No, no," replied Jingle; "won't indeed—rather not."

"Nonsense," said Mr. Pickwick; "lean upon me, I desire, sir."

Seeing that he was confused and agitated, and uncertain what to do, Mr. Pickwick cut the matter short by drawing the invalided stroller's arm through his and leading him away without saying another word about it.

During the whole of this time the countenance of Mr. Samuel Weller had exhibited an expression of the most overwhelming and absorbing astonishment that the imagination can portray. After looking from Job to Jingle, and from Jingle to Job in profound silence, he softly ejaculated the words, "Well, I *am* damn'd!" Which he repeated at least a score of times: after which exertion, he appeared wholly bereft of speech, and again cast his eyes, first upon the one and then upon the other, in mute perplexity and bewilderment.

"Now, Sam!" said Mr. Pickwick, looking back.

"I'm a-comin', sir," replied Mr. Weller, mechanically following his master; and still he lifted not his eyes from Mr. Job Trotter, who walked at his side in silence.

Job kept his eyes fixed on the ground for some time. Sam, with his glued to Job's countenance, ran up against the people who were walking about, and fell over little children, and stumbled against steps and railings, without appearing at all sensible of it, until Job, looking stealthily up, said,

"How do you do, Mr. Weller?"

"It *is* him!" exclaimed Sam; and having established Job's identity beyond all doubt, he smote his leg, and vented his feelings in a long, shrill whistle.

"Things has altered with me, sir," said Job.

"I should think they had," exclaimed Mr. Weller, survey-

ing his companion's rags with undisguised wonder. "This is rayther a change for the worse, Mr. Trotter, as the gen'l'm'n said, wen he got two doubtful shillin's and sixpenn'orth o' pocket pieces for a good half-crown."

"It is, indeed," replied Job, shaking his head. "There is no deception now, Mr. Weller. Tears," said Job, with a look of momentary slyness, "tears are not the only proofs of distress, nor the best ones."

"No, they ain't," replied Sam, expressively.

"They may be put on, Mr. Weller," said Job.

"I know they may," said Sam; "some people, indeed, has 'em always ready laid on, and can pull out the plug wenever they likes."

"Yes," replied Job; "but *these* sort of things are not so easily counterfeited, Mr. Weller, and it is a more painful process to get them up." As he spoke, he pointed to his sallow, sunken cheeks; and, drawing up his coat-sleeves, disclosed an arm which looked as if the bone could be broken at a touch: so sharp and brittle did it appear beneath its thin covering of flesh.

"Wot have you been a-doin' to yourself?" said Sam, recoiling.

"Nothing," replied Job.

"Nothin'!" echoed Sam.

"I have been doing nothing for many weeks past," said Job; "and eating and drinking almost as little."

Sam took one comprehensive glance at Mr. Trotter's thin face and wretched apparel; and then, seizing him by the arm, commenced dragging him away with great violence.

"Where are you going, Mr. Weller?" said Job, vainly struggling in the powerful grasp of his old enemy.

"Come on," said Sam, "come on!" He deigned no further explanation until they reached the tap; and then called for a pot of porter, which was speedily produced.

"Now," said Sam, "drink that up, ev'ry drop on it, and then turn the pot upside down, to let me see as you've took the med'cine."

"But, my dear Mr. Weller," remonstrated Job.

"Down vith it!" said Sam, peremptorily.

Thus admonished, Mr. Trotter raised the pot to his lips, and, by gentle and almost imperceptible degrees, tilted it into the air. He paused once, and only once, to draw a long breath, but without raising his face from the vessel, which, in

a few moments thereafter, he held out at arm's-length, bottom upward. Nothing fell upon the ground but a few particles of froth, which slowly detached themselves from the rim and trickled lazily down.

"Well done!" said Sam. "How do you find yourself arter it?"

"Better, sir. I think I am better," responded Job.

"O' course you air," said Sam, argumentatively. "It's like puttin' gas in a balloon. I can see with the naked eye that you gets stouter under the operation. Wot do you say to another o' the same dimensions?"

"I would rather not, I am much obliged to you, sir," replied Job, "much rather not."

"Vell, then, wot do you say to some wittles?" inquired Sam.

"Thanks to your worthy governor, sir," said Mr. Trotter, "we have half a leg of mutton, baked, at a quarter before three, with the potatoes under it to save boiling."

"Wot! Has *he* been a-purwidin' for you?" asked Sam, emphatically.

"He has, sir," replied Job. "More than that, Mr. Weller; my master being very ill, he got us a room—we were in a kennel before—and paid for it, sir; and come to look at us at night, when nobody should know. Mr. Weller," said Job, with real tears in his eyes, for once, "I could serve that gentleman till I fell down dead at his feet."

"I say!" said Sam, "I'll trouble you, my friend—none o' that!"

Job Trotter looked amazed.

"None o' that, I say, young feller," repeated Sam, firmly. "No man serves him but me. And now we're upon it, I'll let you into another secret besides that," said Sam, as he paid for the beer. "I never heerd, mind you, nor read of in story-books, nor see in picters, any angel in tights and gaiters—not even in spectacles, as I remember, though that may ha' been done for any thin' I know to the contrairey—but mark my vords, Job Trotter, he's a reg'lar thorough-bred angel for all that; and let me see the man as wenturs to tell me he knows a better vun." With this defiance, Mr. Weller buttoned up his change in a side-pocket, and, with many confirmatory nods and gestures by-the-way, proceeded in search of the subject of discourse.

They found Mr. Pickwick, in company with Jingle talking

very earnestly, and not bestowing a look on the groups who were congregated on the racket-ground; they were motley groups, too, and worth the looking at, if it were only in idle curiosity.

"Well," said Mr. Pickwick, as Sam and his companion drew nigh, "you will see how your health becomes, and think about it meanwhile. Make the statement out for me when you feel yourself equal to the task, and I will discuss the subject with you when I have considered it. Now go to your room. You are tired, and not strong enough to be out long."

Mr. Alfred Jingle, without one spark of his old animation—with nothing even of the dismal gayety which he had assumed when Mr. Pickwick first stumbled on him in his misery—bowed low without speaking, and, motioning to Job not to follow him just yet, crept slowly away.

"Curious scene this, is it not, Sam?" said Mr. Pickwick, looking good-humoredly round.

"Wery much so, sir," replied Sam. "Wonders 'ull never cease," added Sam, speaking to himself. "I'm wery much mistaken if that 'ere Jingle worn't a-doin' somethin' in the water-cart way!"

The area formed by the wall in that part of the Fleet in which Mr. Pickwick stood was just wide enough to make a good racket-court; one side being formed, of course, by the wall itself, and the other by that portion of the prison which looked (or rather would have looked, but for the wall) toward St. Paul's Cathedral. Sauntering or sitting about, in every possible attitude of listless idleness, were a great number of debtors, the major part of whom were waiting in prison until their day of "going up" before the Insolvent Court should arrive; while others had been remanded for various terms, which they were idling away as best they could. Some were shabby, some were smart, many dirty, a few clear; but there they all lounged, and loitered, and slunk about, with as little spirit or purpose as the beasts in a menagerie.

Lolling from the windows which commanded a view of this promenade were a number of persons, some in noisy conversation with their acquaintance below, others playing at ball with some adventurous throwers outside, others looking on at the racket-players, or watching the boys as they cried the game. Dirty slipshod women passed and repassed,

on their way to the cooking-house in one corner of the yard: children screamed, and fought, and played together, in another; the tumbling of the skittles, and the shouts of the players, mingled perpetually with these and a hundred other sounds; and all was noise and tumult, save in a little miserable shed a few yards off, where lay, all quiet and ghastly, the body of the Chancery prisoner who had died the night before, awaiting the mockery of an inquest. The body! It is the lawyer's term for the restless whirling mass of cares and anxieties, affections, hopes, and griefs, that make up the living man. The law *had* his body; and there it lay, clothed in grave-clothes, an awful witness to its tender mercy.

"Would you like to see a whistling-shop, sir?" inquired Job Trotter.

"What do you mean?" was Mr. Pickwick's counter inquiry.

"A vislin'-shop, sir," interposed Mr. Weller.

"What is that, Sam? A bird-fancier's?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Bless your heart, no, sir," replied Job: "a whistling-shop, sir, is where they sell spirits." Mr. Job Trotter briefly explained here, that all persons, being prohibited under heavy penalties from conveying spirits into debtors' prisons, and such commodities being highly prized by the ladies and gentlemen confined therein, it had occurred to some speculative turnkey to connive, for certain lucrative considerations, at two or three persons retailing the favorite article of gin for their own profit and advantage.

"This plan you see, sir, has been gradually introduced into all the prisons for debt," said Mr. Trotter.

"And it has this very great advantage," said Sam, "that the turnkeys takes very good care to seize hold o' ev'ry body but them as pays 'em, that attempts the willainy, and wen it gets in the papers they're applauded for their wigilance; so it cuts two ways—frightens other people from the trade, and elewates their own characters."

"Exactly so, Mr. Weller," observed Job.

"Well, but are these rooms never searched, to ascertain whether any spirits are concealed in them?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Cert'nly they are, sir," replied Sam; "but the turnkeys knows beforehand, and gives the word to the wistlers and you *may* wistle for it wen you go to look."

By this time Job had tapped at a door, which was opened by a gentleman with an uncombed head, who bolted it after them when they had walked in, and grinned; upon which Job grinned, and Sam also; whereupon Mr. Pickwick, thinking it might be expected of him, kept on smiling to the end of the interview.

The gentleman with the uncombed head appeared quite satisfied with this mute announcement of their business, and producing a flat stone bottle, which might hold about a couple of quarts, from beneath his bedstead, filled out three glasses of gin, which Job Trotter and Sam disposed of in a most workman-like manner.

"Any more?" said the whistling gentleman.

"No more," replied Job Trotter.

Mr. Pickwick paid, the door was unbolted, and out they came; the uncombed gentleman bestowing a friendly nod upon Mr. Roker, who happened to be passing at the moment.

From this spot Mr. Pickwick wandered along all the galleries, up and down all the staircases, and once again round the whole area of the yard. The great body of the prison population appeared to be Mivins, and Smangle, and the parson, and the leg, over and over, and over again. There were the same squalor, the same turmoil and noise, the same general characteristics, in every corner; in the best and the worst alike. The whole place seemed restless and troubled: and the people were crowding and flitting to and fro, like the shadows in an uneasy dream.

"I have seen enough," said Mr. Pickwick, as he threw himself into a chair in his little apartment. "My head aches with these scenes, and my heart too. Henceforth I will be a prisoner in my own room."

And Mr. Pickwick steadfastly adhered to this determination. For three long months he remained shut up all day; only stealing out at night, to breathe the air, when the greater part of his fellow-prisoners were in bed, or carousing in their rooms. His health was beginning to suffer from the closeness of the confinement; but neither the often-repeated entreaties of Perker and his friends, nor the still more frequently-repeated warnings and admonitions of Mr. Samuel Weller, could induce him to alter one jot of his inflexible resolution.