ances as vants settlin' by means o' lawsuits—all I can say o' them is, that I vish they had the revard I'd give 'em."

"Ah, I wish they had the reward that every kind and generous heart would be inclined to bestow upon them!" said the gratified Mrs. Bardell.

"Amen to that," replied Sam, "and a fat and happy livin' they'd get out of it! Wish you good-night, ladies."

To the great relief of Mrs. Sanders, Sam was allowed to depart without any reference, on the part of the hostess, to the pettitoes and toasted cheese: to which the ladies, with such juvenile assistance as Master Bardell could afford, soon afterward rendered the amplest justice—indeed they wholly vanished before their strenuous exertions.

Mr. Weller went his way back to the George and Vulture, and faithfully recounted to his master such indications of the sharp practice of Dodson and Fogg as he had contrived to pick up in his visit to Mrs. Bardell's. An interview with Mr. Perker, next day, more than confirmed Mr. Weller's statement; and Mr. Pickwick was fain to prepare for his Christmas visit to Dingley Dell, with the pleasant anticipation that some two or three months afterward, an action brought against him for damages sustained by reason of a breach of promise of marriage, would be publicly tried in the Court of Common Pleas; the plaintiff having all the advantages derivable, not only from the force of circumstances, but from the sharp practice of Dodson and Fogg to boot.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SAMUEL WELLER MAKES A PILGRIMAGE TO DORKING, AND BEHOLDS HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW.

THERE still remaining an interval of two days before the time agreed upon for the departure of the Pickwickians to Dingley Dell, Mr. Weller sat himself down in a back room at the George and Vulture, after eating an early dinner, to muse on the best way of disposing of his time. It was a remarkably fine day; and he had not turned the matter over in his mind ten minutes, when he was suddenly stricken filial and affectionate; and it occurred to him so strongly that he ought to go down and see his father, and pay his duty to his mother-in-law, that he was lost in astonishment at his own remissness in never thinking of this moral obligation before. Anxious to atone for his past neglect without another hour's delay, he straightway walked up stairs to Mr. Pickwick, and requested leave of absence for this laudable purpose.

"Certainly, Sam, certainly," said Mr. Pickwick, his eyes glistening with delight at this manifestation of filial feeling on the part of his attendant; "certainly, Sam."

Mr. Weller made a grateful bow.

"I am very glad to see that you have so high a sense of your duties as a son, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"I always had, sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"That's a very gratifying reflection, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, approvingly.

"Wery, sir," replied Mr. Weller; "if ever I wanted any thin' o' my father, I always asked for it in a wery 'spectful and obligin' manner. If he didn't give it me, I took it, for fear I should be led to do any thin' wrong, through not havin' it. I saved him a world o' trouble in this way, sir."

"That's not precisely what I meant, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, shaking his head, with a slight smile.

"All good feelin', sir—the wery best intentions, as the gen'l'm'n said ven he run away from his wife 'cos she seemed unhappy with him," replied Mr. Weller.

"You may go, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Thank'ee, sir," replied Mr. Weller; and having made his best bow, and put on his best clothes, Sam planted himself on the top of the Arundel coach, and journeyed on to Dorking.

The Marquis of Granby in Mrs. Weller's time was quite a model of a road-side public-house of the better class—just large enough to be convenient, and small enough to be snug. On the opposite side of the road was a large sign-board on a high post, representing the head and shoulders of a gentleman with an apoplectic countenance, in a red coat with deep blue facings, and a touch of the same blue over his three-cornered hat, for a sky. Over that again were a pair of flags; beneath the last button of his coat were a couple of cannon; and the whole formed an expressive and undoubted likeness of the Marquis of Granby of glorious memory.

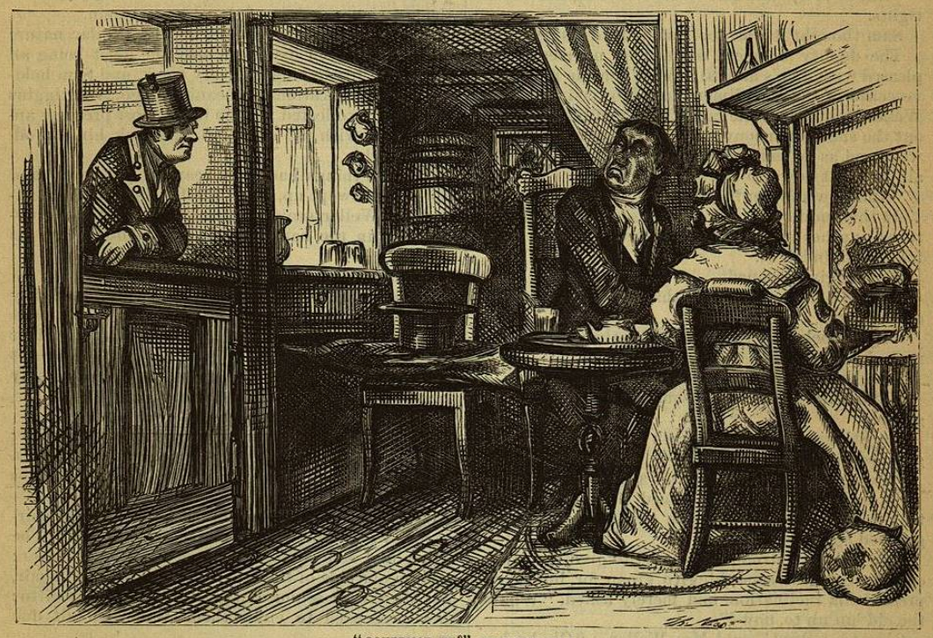
The bar window displayed a choice collection of geranium-plants, and a well-dusted row of spirit-phials. The open shutters bore a variety of golden inscriptions, eulogistic of good beds and neat wines; and the choice group of countrymen and hostlers lounging about the stable-door and horse-trough, afforded presumptive proof of the excellent quality of the ale and spirits which were sold within. Sam Weller paused, when he dismounted from the coach, to note all these little indications of a thriving business, with the eye of an experienced traveler; and having done so, stepped in at once, highly satisfied with every thing he had observed.

"Now, then!" said a shrill female voice, the instant Sam thrust his head in at the door, "what do you want, young man?"

Sam looked round in the direction whence the voice proceeded. It came from a rather stout lady of comfortable appearance, who was seated beside the fire-place in the bar, blowing the fire to make the kettle boil for tea. She was not alone; for on the other side of the fire-place, sitting bolt upright in a high-backed chair, was a man in threadbare black clothes, with a back almost as long and stiff as that of the chair itself, who caught Sam's most particular and especial attention at once.

He was a prim-faced, red-nosed man, with a long, thin countenance, and a semi-rattlesnake sort of eye—rather sharp, but decidedly bad. He wore very short trowsers, and black-cotton stockings, which, like the rest of his apparel, were particularly rusty. His looks were starched, but his white neckerchief was not, and its long limp ends straggled over his closely-buttoned waistcoat in a very uncouth and unpicturesque fashion. A pair of old, worn beaver gloves, a broad-brimmed hat, and a faded green umbrella, with plenty of whalebone sticking through the bottom, as if to counterbalance the want of a handle at the top, lay on a chair beside him, and, being disposed in a very tidy and careful manner, seemed to imply that the red-nosed man, whoever he was, had no intention of going away in a hurry.

To do the red-nosed man justice, he would have been very far from wise if he had entertained any such intention; for, to judge from all appearances, he must have been possessed of a most desirable circle of acquaintance, if he could have reasonably expected to be more comfortable anywhere else. The fire was blazing brightly under the influence of the bellows, and the kettle was singing gayly under the influence of both. A small tray of tea-things was



"GOVERNOR IN?" INQUIRED SAM.

arranged on the table, a plate of hot buttered toast was gently simmering before the fire, and the red-nosed man himself was busily engaged in converting a large slice of bread into the same agreeable edible, through the instrumentality of a long brass toasting-fork. Beside him stood a glass of reeking hot pine-apple rum-and-water, with a slice of lemon in it; and every time the red-nosed man stopped to bring the round of toast to his eye, with the view of ascertaining how it got on, he imbibed a drop or two of the hot pine-apple rum-and-water, and smiled upon the rather stout lady, as she blew the fire.

Sam was so lost in the contemplation of this comfortable scene, that he suffered the first inquiry of the rather stout lady to pass unheeded. It was not until it had been twice repeated, each time in a shriller tone, that he became conscious of the impropriety of his behavior.

"Governor in?" inquired Sam, in reply to the question.

"No, he isn't," replied Mrs. Weller; for the rather stout lady was no other than the quondam relict and sole executrix of the dead-and-gone Mr. Clarke; "no, he isn't, and I don't expect him, either."

"I suppose he's a-drivin' up to-day?" said Sam.

"He may be, or he may not," replied Mrs. Weller, buttering the round of toast which the red-nosed man had just finished. "I don't know, and, what's more, I don't care. Ask a blessin', Mr. Stiggins."

The red-nosed man did as he was desired, and instantly commenced on the toast with fierce voracity.

The appearance of the red-nosed man had induced Sam, at first sight, to more than half suspect that he was the deputy shepherd of whom his estimable parent had spoken. The moment he saw him eat, all doubt on the subject was removed, and he perceived at once that if he purposed to take up his temporary quarters where he was, he must make his footing good without delay. He therefore commenced proceedings by putting his arm over the half-door of the bar, coolly unbolting it, and leisurely walking in.

"Mother-in-law," said Sam, "how are you?"

"Why, I do believe he is a Weller!" said Mrs. W., raising her eyes to Sam's face, with no very gratified expression of countenance.

"I rayther think he is," said the imperturbable Sam; "and I hope this here reverend gen'l'm'n 'll

excuse me saying that I wish I was *the* Weller as owns you, mother-in-law."

This was a double-barreled compliment. It implied that Mrs. Weller was a most agreeable female, and also that Mr. Stiggins had a clerical appearance. It made a visible impression at once; and Sam followed up his advantage by kissing his mother-in-law.

"Get along with you!" said Mrs. Weller, pushing him away.

"For shame, young man!" said the gentleman with the red nose.

"No offense, sir, no offense," replied Sam; "you're wery right, though; it ain't the right sort o' thing, ven mothers-in-law is young and good-looking, is it, sir?"

"It's all vanity," said Mr. Stiggins.

"Ah, so it is," said Mrs. Weller, setting her cap to rights.

Sam thought it was, too, but he held his peace.

The deputy shepherd seemed by no means best pleased with Sam's arrival; and when the first effervescence of the compliment had subsided, even Mrs. Weller looked as if she could have spared him without the smallest inconvenience. However, there he was; and as he couldn't be decently turned out, they all three sat down to tea.

"And how's father?" said Sam.

At this inquiry, Mrs. Weller raised her hands, and turned up her eyes, as if the subject were too painful to be alluded to.

Mr. Stiggins groaned.

"What's the matter with that 'ere gen'l'm'n?" inquired Sam.

"He's shocked at the way your father goes on in," replied Mrs. Weller.

"Oh he is, is he?" said Sam.

"And with too good reason," added Mrs. Weller, gravely.

Mr. Stiggins took up a fresh piece of toast, and groaned heavily.

"He is a dreadful reprobate," said Mrs. Weller.

"A man of wrath!" exclaimed Mr. Stiggins. He took a large semicircular bite out of the toast, and groaned again.

Sam felt very strongly disposed to give the reverend Mr. Stiggins something to groan for, but he repressed his inclination, and merely asked, "What's the old 'un up to, now?"

"Up to, indeed!" said Mrs. Weller. "Oh, he has a hard heart. Night after night does this excellent man—don't frown, Mr. Stiggins: I *will* say you *are* an excellent man—come and sit here, for hours together, and it has not the least effect upon him."

"Well, that is odd," said Sam; "it 'ud have a wery considerable effect upon me, if I wos in his place; I know that."

"The fact is, my young friend," said Mr. Stiggins, solemnly, "he has an obderrate bosom. Oh, my young friend, who else could have resisted the pleading of sixteen of our fairest sisters, and withstood their exhortations to subscribe to our noble society for providing the infant negroes in the West Indies with flannel waistcoats and moral pocket-handkerchiefs?"

"What's a moral pocket-ankercher?" said Sam; "I never see one o' them articles o' furniter."

"Those which combine amusement with instruction, my young friend," replied Mr. Stiggins: "blending select tales with wood-cuts."

"Oh, I know," said Sam; "them as hangs up in the linen-drapers' shops, with beggars' petitions and all that 'ere upon 'em?"

Mr. Stiggins began a third round of toast, and nodded assent.

"And he wouldn't be persuaded by the ladies, wouldn't he?" said Sam.

"Sat and smoked his pipe, and said the infant negroes were—what did he say the infant negroes were?" said Mrs. Weller.

"Little humbugs," replied Mr. Stiggins, deeply affected.

"Said the infant negroes were little humbugs," repeated Mrs. Weller. And they both groaned at the atrocious conduct of the old gentleman.

A great many more iniquities of a similar nature might have been disclosed, only the toast being all eaten, the tea having got very weak, and Sam holding out no indications of meaning to go, Mr. Stiggins suddenly recollected that he had a most pressing appointment with the shepherd, and took himself off accordingly.

The tea-things had been scarcely put away, and the hearth swept up, when the London coach deposited Mr. Weller senior at the door; his legs deposited him in the bar; and his eyes showed him his son.

"What, Sammy!" exclaimed the father.

"What, old Nobs!" ejaculated the son. And they shook hands heartily.

"Werry glad to see you, Sammy," said the elder Mr. Weller, "though how you've managed to get over your mother-in-law, is a mystery to me. I only vish you'd write me out the receipt, that's all."

"Hush!" said Sam, "she's at home, old feller."

"She ain't vithin hearin'," replied Mr. Weller; "she always goes and blows up, down stairs, for a couple of hours arter tea; so we'll just give ourselves a damp, Sammy."

Saying this, Mr. Weller mixed two glasses of spirits-and-water, and produced a couple of pipes. The father and son sitting down opposite each other: Sam on one side of the fire, in the high-backed chair, and Mr. Weller senior on the other, in an easy ditto: they proceeded to enjoy themselves with all due gravity.

"Any body been here, Sammy?" asked Mr. Weller senior, dryly, after a long silence.

Sam nodded an expressive assent.

"Red-nosed chap?" inquired Mr. Weller.

Sam nodded again.

"Amiable man that 'ere, Sammy," said Mr. Weller smoking violently.

"Seems so," observed Sam.

"Good hand at accounts," said Mr. Weller.

"Is he?" said Sam.

"Borrows eighteen-pence on Monday, and comes on Tuesday for a shillin' to make it up half a crown; calls again on Vensday for another half-crown to make it five shillin's; and goes on, doubling, till he gets it up to a five-pound note in no time—like them sums in the 'rithmetic book 'bout the nails in the horse's shoes, Sammy."

Sam intimated by a nod that he recollected the problem alluded to by his parent.

"So you vouldn't subscribe to the flannel veskits?" said Sam, after another interval of smoking.

"Cert'nly not," replied Mr. Weller; "what's the good o' flannel veskits to the young niggers abroad? But I'll tell you what it is, Sammy," said Mr. Weller, lowering his voice, and bending across the fire-place; "I'd come down wery handsome towards strait-veskits for some people at home."

As Mr. Weller said this, he slowly recovered his former position, and winked at his first-born in a profound manner.

"It cert'nly seems a queer start to send out pocket-ankerchers to people as don't know the use on 'em," observed Sam.

"They're alvays a-doin' some gammon of that sort, Sammy," replied his father. "T'other Sunday I wos walkin' up the road, wen who should I see, a-standin' at a chapel door, with a blue soup-plate in her hand, but your mother-in-law! I werily believe there was change for a couple o' suv'rins in it, then, Sammy, all in ha'pence; and as the people come out, they rattled the pennies in it, till you'd ha' thought that no mortal plate as ever was baked could ha' stood the wear and tear. What d'ye think it was all for?"

"For another tea-drinkin', perhaps," said Sam.

"Not a bit on it," replied the father; "for the shepherd's water-rate, Sammy."

"The shepherd's water-rate!" said Sam.

"Ay," replied Mr. Weller, "there was three quarters owin', and the shepherd hadn't paid a farden, not he—perhaps it might be on account that the water warn't o' much use to him, for it's wery little o' that tap he drinks, Sammy, wery; he knows a trick worth a good half-dozen of that, he does. Hows'ever, it warn't paid, and so they cuts the water off. Down goes the shepherd to chapel, gives out as he's a persecuted saint, and says he hopes the heart of the turn-cock as cut the water off 'll be softened, and turned in the right vay: but he rayther thinks he's booked for somethin' uncomfortable. Upon this, the women calls a meetin', sings a hymn, wotes your mother-in-law into the chair, wolunteers a col-lection next Sunday, and hands it all over to the shepherd. And if he ain't got enough out on 'em, Sammy, to make him free of the water company for life," said Mr. Weller, in conclusion, "I'm one Dutchman, and you're another, and that's all about it."

Mr. Weller smoked for some minutes in silence, and then resumed:

"The worst o' these here shepherds is, my boy, that they reg'larly turns the heads of all the young ladies about here. Lord bless their little hearts, they thinks it's all right, and don't know no better; but they're the wictims o' gammon, Samivel, they're the wictims o' gammon."

"I s'pose they are," said Sam.

"Nothin' else," said Mr. Weller, shaking his head gravely; "and wot aggrawates me, Samivel, is to see 'em a-wastin' all their time and labor in making clothes for copper-colored people as don't want 'em, and taking no notice of flesh-colored Christians as do. If I'd my vay, Samivel, I'd just stick some o' these here lazy shepherds behind a heavy wheelbarrow, and run 'em up and down a fourteen-inch-wide plank all day. That 'ud shake the nonsense out of 'em, if any thin' vould."

Mr. Weller having delivered this gentle recipe with strong emphasis, eked out by a variety of nods and contortions of the eye, emptied his glass at a draught, and knocked the ashes out of his pipe, with native dignity.

He was engaged in this operation, when a shrill voice was heard in the passage.

"Here's your dear relation, Sammy," said Mr. Weller; and Mrs. W. hurried into the room.

"Oh, you've come back, have you!" said Mrs. Weller.

"Yes, my dear," replied Mr. Weller, filling a fresh pipe.

"Has Mr. Stiggins been back?" said Mrs. Weller.

"No, my dear, he hasn't," replied Mr. Weller, lighting the pipe by the ingenious process of holding to the bowl thereof, between the tongs, a red-hot coal from the adjacent fire; "and what's more, my dear, I shall manage to surwive it, if he don't come back at all."

"Ugh, you wretch!" said Mrs. Weller.

"Thank'ee, my love," said Mr. Weller.

"Come, come, father," said Sam, "none o' these little lovins afore strangers. Here's the reverend gen'l'm'n a-comin' in now."

At this announcement, Mrs. Weller hastily wiped off the tears which she had just begun to force on; and Mr. W. drew his chair sullenly into the chimney-corner.

Mr. Stiggins was easily prevailed on to take another glass of the hot pine-apple rum-and-water, and a second, and a third, and then to refresh himself with a slight supper, previous to beginning again. He sat on the same side as Mr. Weller senior; and every time he could contrive to do so, unseen by his wife, that gentleman indicated to his son the hidden emotions of his bosom, by shaking his fist over the deputy-shepherd's head: a process which afforded his son the most unmingled delight and satisfaction, the more especially as Mr. Stiggins went on, quietly drinking the hot pine-apple rum-and-water, wholly unconscious of what was going on.

The major part of the conversation was confined to Mrs. Weller and the reverend Mr. Stiggins; and the topics principally descanted on were the virtues of the shepherd, the worthiness of his flock, and the high crimes and misdemeanors of every body beside; dissertations which the elder Mr. Weller occasionally interrupted by half-suppressed references to a gentleman of the name of Walker, and other running commentaries of the same kind.

At length Mr. Stiggins, with several most indubitable symptoms of having quite as much pine-apple rum-and-water about him as he could comfortably accommodate, took his hat, and his leave: and Sam was immediately afterward shown to bed by his father. The respectable old gentleman wrung his hand fervently, and seemed disposed to address some observation to his son; but on Mrs. Weller advancing toward him, he appeared to relinquish that intention, and abruptly bade him good-night.

Sam was up betimes next day, and having partaken of a hasty breakfast, prepared to return to

London. He had scarcely set foot without the house, when his father stood before him.

"Goin', Sammy?" inquired Mr. Weller.

"Off at once," replied Sam.

"I vish you could muffle that 'ere Stiggins, and take him with you," said Mr. Weller.

"I am ashamed on you!" said Sam, reproachfully; "what do you let him show his red nose in the Markis o' Granby at all for?"

Mr. Weller the elder fixed on his son an earnest look, and replied, "'Cause I'm a married man, Samivel, 'cause I'm a married man. Wen you're a married man, Samivel, you'll understand a good many things as you don't understand now; but vether it's worth while goin' through so much to learn so little, as the charity-boy said ven he got to the end of the alphabet, is a matter o' taste. *I* rayther think it isn't."

"Well," said Sam, "good-bye."

"Tar-tar, Sammy," replied his father.

"I've only to say this here," said Sam, stopping short, "that if *I* was the proprietor o' the Markis o' Granby, and that 'ere Stiggins came and made toast in *my* bar, I'd—"

"What?" interposed Mr. Weller, with great anxiety. "What?"

"—Pison his rum-and-water," said Sam.

"No!" said Mr. Weller, shaking his son eagerly by the hand, "would you raly, Sammy; would you, though?"

"I would," said Sam. "I wouldn't be too hard upon him at first. I'd drop him in the water-butt, and put the lid on; and if I found he was insensible to kindness, I'd try the other persvasion."

The elder Mr. Weller bestowed a look of deep, unspeakable admiration on his son: and, having once more grasped his hand, walked slowly away, revolving in his mind the numerous reflections to which his advice had given rise.

Sam looked after him, until he turned a corner of the road: and then set forward on his walk to London. He meditated, at first, on the probable consequences of his own advice, and the likelihood and unlikelihood of his father's adopting it. He dismissed the subject from his mind, however, with the consolatory reflection that time alone would show; and this is the reflection we would impress upon the reader.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A GOOD-HUMORED CHRISTMAS CHAPTER, CONTAINING AN ACCOUNT OF A WEDDING, AND SOME OTHER SPORTS BESIDE: WHICH ALTHOUGH IN THEIR WAY, EVEN AS GOOD CUSTOMS AS MARRIAGE ITSELF, ARE NOT QUITE SO RELIGIOUSLY KEPT UP, IN THESE DEGENERATE TIMES.

As brisk as bees, if not altogether as light as fairies, did the four Pickwickians assemble on the morning of the twenty-second day of December, in the year of grace in which these, their faithfully-recorded adventures, were undertaken and accomplished. Christmas was close at hand, in all his bluff and hearty honesty; it was the season of hospitality, merriment, and open-heartedness; the old year was preparing, like an ancient philosopher, to call his friends around him, and amidst the sound of feasting and revelry to pass gently and calmly away. Gay and merry was the time, and gay and merry were at least four of the numerous hearts that were gladdened by its coming.

And numerous indeed are the hearts to which Christmas brings a brief season of happiness and enjoyment. How many families, whose members have been dispersed and scattered far and wide, in the restless struggles of life, are then reunited, and meet once again in that happy state of companionship and mutual good-will, which is a source of such pure and unalloyed delight, and one so incompatible with the cares and sorrows of the world, that the religious belief of the most civilized nations, and the rude traditions of the roughest savages, alike number it among the first joys of a future condition of existence, provided for the blest and happy! How many old recollections, and how many dormant sympathies, does Christmas-time awaken!

We write these words now, many miles distant from the spot at which, year after year, we met on that day, a merry and joyous circle. Many of the hearts that throbbed so gayly then, have ceased to beat; many of the looks that shone so brightly then, have ceased to glow; the hands we grasped, have grown cold; the eyes we sought, have hid their lustre in the grave; and yet the old house, the room, the merry voices and smiling faces, the jest, the laugh, the most minute and trivial circumstances connected with those happy meetings, crowd upon our mind at each recurrence of the season, as if the last assemblage had been but yesterday! Happy, happy Christmas, that can win us back to the delusions of our childish days; that can recall to the old man the pleasures of his youth; that can transport the sailor and the traveler thousands of miles away, back to his own fireside and his quiet home!

But we are so taken up and occupied with the good qualities of this saint Christmas, that we are keeping Mr. Pickwick and his friends waiting in the cold on the outside of the Muggleton coach, which they have just attained, well wrapped up in great-coats, shawls, and comforters. The portmanteaus and carpet-bags have been stowed away, and Mr. Weller and the guard are endeavoring to insinuate into the fore-boot a huge codfish several sizes too large for it—which is snugly packed up in a long brown basket, with a layer of straw over the top, and which has been left to the last, in order that he may repose in safety on the half-dozen barrels of real native oysters, all the property of Mr. Pickwick, which have been arranged in regular order at the bottom of the receptacle. The interest displayed in Mr. Pickwick's countenance is most intense, as Mr. Weller and the guard try to squeeze the codfish into the boot, first head first, and then tail first, and then top upward, and then bottom upward, and then sideways, and then longways, all of which artifices the implacable codfish sturdily resists, until the guard accidentally hits him in the very middle of the basket, whereupon he suddenly disappears into the boot, and with him, the head and shoulders of the guard himself, who, not calculating upon so sudden a cessation of the passive resistance of the codfish, ex-

periences a very unexpected shock, to the unsmotherable delight of all the porters and by-standers. Upon this, Mr. Pickwick smiles with great good-humor, and drawing a shilling from his waistcoat-pocket, begs the guard, as he picks himself out of the boot, to drink his health in a glass of hot brandy-and-water; at which the guard smiles too, and Messrs. Snodgrass, Winkle, and Tupman, all smile in company. The guard and Mr. Weller disappear for five minutes: most probably to get the hot brandy-and-water, for they smell very strongly of it when they return, the coachman mounts to the box, Mr. Weller jumps up behind, the Pickwickians pull their coats round their legs and their shawls over their noses, the helpers pull the horse-cloths off, the coachman shouts out a cheery "All right," and away they go.

They have rumbled through the streets, and jolted over the stones, and at length reach the wide and open country. The wheels skim over the hard and frosty ground: and the horses, bursting into a canter at a smart crack of the whip, step along the road as if the load behind them—coach, passengers, cod-fish, oyster-barrels, and all, were but a feather at their heels. They have descended a gentle slope, and enter upon a level, as compact and dry as a solid block of marble, two miles long. Another crack of the whip, and on they speed, at a smart gallop: the horses tossing their heads and rattling the harness, as if in exhilaration at the rapidity of the motion: while the coachman, holding whip and reins in one hand, takes off his hat with the other, and resting it on his knees, pulls out his handkerchief, and wipes his forehead: partly because he has a habit of doing it, and partly because it's as well to show the passengers how cool he is, and what an easy thing it is to drive four-in-hand when you have had as much practice as he has. Having done this very leisurely (otherwise the effect would be materially impaired), he replaces his handkerchief, pulls on his hat, adjusts his gloves, squares his elbows, cracks the whip again, and on they speed, more merrily than before.

A few small houses, scattered on either side of the road, betoken the entrance to some town or village. The lively notes of the guard's key-bugle vibrate in the clear cold air, and wake up the old gentleman inside, who, carefully letting down the window-sash half-way, and standing sentry over the air, takes a short peep out, and then carefully pulling it up again, informs the other inside that they're going to change directly; on which the other inside wakes himself up, and determines to postpone his next nap until after the stoppage. Again the bugle sounds lustily forth, and rouses the cottager's wife and children, who peep out at the house door, and watch the coach till it turns the corner, when they once more crouch round the blazing fire, and throw on another log of wood against father comes home; while father himself, a full mile off, has just exchanged a friendly nod with the coachman, and turned round to take a good long stare at the vehicle as it whirls away.

And now the bugle plays a lively air as the coach rattles through the ill-paved streets of a country town; and the coachman, undoing the buckle which keeps his ribbons together, prepares to throw them off the moment he stops. Mr. Pickwick emerges from his coat-collar, and looks about him with great curiosity; perceiving which, the coachman informs Mr. Pickwick of the name of the town, and tells him it was market-day yesterday, both of which pieces of information Mr. Pickwick retails to his fellow-passengers; whereupon they emerge from their coat-collars too, and look about them also. Mr. Winkle, who sits at the extreme edge, with one leg dangling in the air, is nearly precipitated into the street, as the coach twists round the sharp corner by the cheese-monger's shop, and turns into the market-place; and before Mr. Snodgrass, who sits next to him, has recovered from his alarm, they pull up at the inn yard, where the fresh horses, with cloths on, are already waiting. The coachman throws down the reins and gets down himself, and the other outside passengers drop down also: except those who have no great confidence in their ability to get up again: and they remain where they are, and stamp their feet against the coach to warm them—looking, with longing eyes and red noses, at the bright fire in the inn bar, and the sprigs of holly with red berries which ornament the window.

But the guard has delivered at the corn-dealer's shop the brown paper packet he took out of the little pouch which hangs over his shoulder by a leathern strap; and has seen the horses carefully put to; and has thrown on the pavement the saddle which was brought from London on the coach-roof; and has assisted in the conference between the coachman and the hostler about the gray mare that hurt her off-fore-leg last Tuesday: and he and Mr. Weller are all right behind, and the coachman is all right in front, and the old gentleman inside, who has kept the window down full two inches all this time, has pulled it up again, and the cloths are off, and they are all ready for starting, except the "two stout gentlemen," whom the coachman inquires after with some impatience. Hereupon the coachman, and the guard, and Sam Weller, and Mr. Winkle, and Mr. Snodgrass, and all the hostlers, and every one of the idlers, who are more in number than all the others put together, shout for the missing gentlemen as loud as they can bawl. A distant response is heard from the yard, and Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Tupman come running down it, quite out of breath, for they have been having a glass of ale apiece, and Mr. Pickwick's fingers are so cold that he has been full five minutes before he could find the sixpence to pay for it. The coachman shouts an admonitory "Now then, gen'l'm'n!" the guard re-echoes it; the old gentleman inside thinks it a very extraordinary thing that people *will* get down when they know there isn't time for it; Mr. Pickwick struggles up on one side, Mr. Tupman on the other; Mr. Winkle cries "All right;" and off they start. Shawls are pulled up, coat-collars are re-adjusted, the pavement ceases, the houses disappear, and they are once again dashing along the open road, with the fresh clear air blowing in their faces, and gladdening their very hearts within them.

Such was the progress of Mr. Pickwick and his friends by the Muggleton Telegraph, on their way to Dingley Dell; and at three o'clock that afternoon they all stood, high and dry, safe and sound, hale and hearty, upon the steps of the Blue Lion, having