"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 they best could. Some were shabby, some were smart, many dirty, a few clean; 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 vistlin'-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 prisoners 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 wery great advantage," said Sam, "that the turnkeys takes wery 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 workmanlike 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 butcher, 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.

CHAPTER XLVI.

RECORDS A TOUCHING ACT OF DELICATE FEELING, NOT UNMIXED WITH PLEASANTRY, ACHIEVED AND PERFORMED BY MESSRS. DODSON AND FOGG.

It was within a week of the close of the month of July, that a hackney cabriolet, number unrecorded, was seen to proceed at a rapid pace up Goswell Street; three people were squeezed into it besides the driver, who sat in his own particular little dickey at the side; over the apron were hung two shawls, belonging to two small vixenish-looking ladies under the apron; between whom, compressed into a very small compass, was stowed away a gentleman of heavy and subdued demeanor, who, whenever he ventured to make an observation, was snapped up short by one of the vixenish ladies before mentioned. Lastly, the two vixenish ladies and the heavy gentleman were giving the driver contradictory directions, all tending to the one point that he should stop at Mrs. Bardell's door; which the heavy gentleman, in direct opposition to, and defiance of, the vixenish ladies, contended was a green door, and not a yellow one.

"Stop at the house with the green door, driver," said the heavy gentleman.

"Oh! you perwerse creetur!" exclaimed one of the vixenish ladies. "Drive to the ouse with the yellow door, cabman."

Upon this, the cabman, who in a sudden effort to pull up at the house with the green door had pulled the horse up so high that he nearly pulled him backward into the cabriolet, let the animal's fore legs down to the ground again, and paused.

"Now vere am I to pull up?" inquired the driver. "Settle it among yourselves. All I ask is, vere?"

Here the contest was renewed with increased violence; and the horse being troubled with a fly on his nose, the cabman humanely employed his leisure in lashing him about on the head, on the counter-irritation principle.

"Most wotes carries the day!" said one of the vixenish ladies at length. "The ouse with the yellow door, cabmin."

But after the cabriolet had dashed up in splendid style to the house with the yellow door, "making," as one of the vixenish ladies triumphantly said, "acterrally more noise than if one had come in one's own carriage"—and after the driver had dismounted to assist the ladies in getting out—the small round head of Master Thomas Bardell was thrust out of the one-pair window of a house with a red door, a few numbers off.

"Aggrawatin' thing!" said the vixenish lady last mentioned, darting a withering glance at the heavy gentleman.

"My dear, it's not my fault," said the gentleman.

"Don't talk to me, you creetur, don't," retorted the lady. "The house with the red door, cabmin. Oh! If ever a woman was troubled with a ruffianly creetur, that takes a pride and a pleasure in disgraceing his wife on every possible occasion afore strangers, I am that woman!"

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Raddle," said the other little woman, who was no other than Mrs. Cluppins.

"What have I been a-doing of?" asked Mr. Raddle.

"Don't talk to me, don't, you brute, for fear I should be perwoked to forgit my sect and strike you!" said Mrs. Raddle.

While this dialogue was going on, the driver was most ignominiously leading the horse by the bridle up to the house with the red door, which Master Bardell had already opened. Here was a mean and low way of arriving at a friend's house! No dashing up, with all the fire and fury of the animal; no jumping down of the driver; no loud knocking at the door; no opening of the apron with a crash at the very last moment, for fear of the ladies sitting in a draught; and then the man handing the shawls out afterward, as if he were a private coachman! The whole edge of the thing had been taken off; it was flatter than walking.

"Well, Tommy," said Mrs. Cluppins, "how's your poor dear mother?"

"Oh, she's very well," replied Master Bardell. "She's in the front parlor, all ready. I'm ready too, I am." Here Master Bardell put his hands in his pockets, and jumped off and on the bottom step of the door.

"Is any body else agoin', Tommy?" said Mrs. Cluppins, arranging her pelerine.

"Mrs. Sanders is going, she is," replied Tommy. "I'm going too, I am."

"Drat the boy," said little Mrs. Cluppins. "He thinks of nobody but himself. Here, Tommy dear."

"Well," said Master Bardell.

"Who else is agoin', lovey?" said Mrs. Cluppins in an insinuating manner.

"Oh! Mrs. Rogers is agoin'," replied Master Bardell, opening his eyes very wide as he delivered the intelligence.

"What! The lady as has taken the lodgings!" ejaculated Mrs. Cluppins.

Master Bardell put his hands deeper down into his pockets, and nodded exactly thirty-five times, to imply that it was the lady lodger, and no other.

"Bless us!" said Mrs. Cluppins. "It's quite a party!"

"Ah, if you knew what was in the cupboard, you'd say so," replied Master Bardell.

"What is there, Tommy?" said Mrs. Cluppins, coaxingly. "You'll tell *me*, Tommy, I know."

"No, I won't," replied Master Bardell, shaking his head, and applying himself to the bottom step again.

"Drat the child!" muttered Mrs. Cluppins. "What a prowokin' little wretch it is. Come, Tommy, tell your dear Cluppy."

"Mother said I wasn't to," rejoined Master Bardell, "I'm agoin' to have some, I am." Cheered by this prospect, the precious boy applied himself to his infantile treadmill with increased vigor.

The above examination of a child of tender years took place while Mr. and Mrs. Raddle and the cab-driver were having an altercation concerning the fare: which, terminating at this point in favor of the cabman, Mrs. Raddle came up tottering.

"Lauk, Mary Ann! what's the matter?" said Mrs. Cluppins.

"It's put me all over in such a tremble, Betsey," replied Mrs. Raddle. "Raddle ain't like a man; he leaves every think to me."

This was scarcely fair upon the unfortunate Mr. Raddle, who had been thrust aside by his good lady in the commencement of the dispute, and peremptorily commanded to hold his tongue. He had no opportunity of defending himself, however, for Mrs. Raddle gave unequivocal signs of fainting; which, being perceived from the parlor window, Mrs. Bardell, Mrs. Sanders, the lodger, and the lodger's servant, darted precipitately out, and conveyed her into the house: all talking at the same time, and giving utterance to various expressions of pity and condolence, as if she were one of the most suffering mortals on earth. Being conveyed into the front parlor, she was there deposited on a sofa; and the lady from the first-floor running up *to* the first-floor, returned with a bottle of sal volatile, which, holding Mrs. Raddle tight round the neck, she applied in all womanly kindness and pity to her nose, until that lady, with many plunges and struggles, was fain to declare herself decidedly better.

"Ah, poor thing!" said Mrs. Rodgers, "I know what her feelin's is, too well."

"Ah, poor thing! so do I," said Mrs. Sanders; and then all the ladies moaned in unison, and said *they* knew what it was, and they pitied her from their hearts, they did. Even the lodger's little servant, who was thirteen years old, and three feet high, murmured her sympathy.

"But what's been the matter?" said Mrs. Bardell.

"Ah, what has decomposed you, ma'am?" inquired Mrs. Rogers.

"I have been a good deal flurried," replied Mrs. Raddle, in a reproachful manner. Thereupon the ladies cast indignant looks at Mr. Raddle.

"Why, the fact is," said that unhappy gentleman, stepping forward, "when we alighted at this door, a dispute arose with the driver of the cabrioily—" A loud scream from his wife at the mention of this word rendered all further explanation inaudible.

"You'd better leave us to bring her round, Raddle," said Mrs. Cluppins. "She'll never get better as long as you're here."

All the ladies concurred in this opinion; so Mr. Raddle was pushed out of the room, and requested to give himself an airing in the back yard. Which he did for about a quarter of an hour, when Mrs. Bardell announced to him with a solemn face that he might come in now, but that he must be very careful how he behaved toward his wife. She knew he didn't mean to be unkind; but Mary Ann was very far from strong, and, if he didn't take care, he might lose her when he least expected it, which would be a very dreadful reflection for him afterward; and so on. All this Mr. Raddle heard with great submission, and presently returned to the parlor in a most lamb-like manner.

"Why, Mrs. Rogers, ma'am," said Mrs. Bardell, "you've never been introduced, I declare! Mr. Raddle, ma'am; Mrs. Cluppins, ma'am; Mrs. Raddle, ma'am."

"—Which is Mrs. Cruppins's sister," suggested Mrs. Sanders.

"Oh, indeed!" said Mrs. Rodgers, graciously; for she was the lodger, and her servant was in waiting, so she was more gracious than intimate, in right of her position. "Oh, indeed!"

Mrs. Raddle smiled sweetly, Mr. Raddle bowed, and Mrs. Cluppins said "she was sure she was very happy to have an opportunity of being known to a lady which she had heerd so much in favior of, as Mrs. Rogers." A compliment which the last-named lady acknowledged with graceful condescension.

"Well, Mr. Raddle," said Mrs. Bardell, "I'm sure you ought to feel very much honored at you and Tommy being the only gentlemen to escort so many ladies all the way to the Spaniards, at Hampstead. Don't you think he ought, Mrs. Rogers, ma'am?"

"Oh, certainly, ma'am," replied Mrs. Rogers; after whom all the other ladies responded "Oh, certainly."

"Of course I feel it, ma'am," said Mr. Raddle, rubbing his hands, and evincing a slight tendency to brighten up a little. "Indeed, to tell you the truth, I said, as we was a-coming along in the cabrioily—"

At the recapitulation of the word which awakened so many painful recollections, Mrs. Raddle applied her handkerchief to her eyes again, and uttered a half-suppressed scream; so Mrs. Bardell frowned upon Mr. Raddle, to intimate that he had better not say any thing more, and desired Mrs. Roger's servant, with an air, to "put the wine on."

This was the signal for displaying the hidden treasures of the closet, which comprised sundry plates of oranges and biscuits, and a bottle of old crusted port—that at one-and-nine—with another of the celebrated East India sherry at fourteen-pence, which were all produced in honor of the lodger, and afforded unlimited satisfaction to every body. After great consternation had been excited in the mind of Mrs. Cluppins, by an attempt on the part of Tommy to recount how he had been cross-examined regarding the cupboard then in action (which was fortunately nipped in the bud by his imbibing half a glass of the old crusted "the wrong way," and thereby endangering his life for some seconds), the party walked forth in quest of a Hampstead stage. This was soon found, and in a couple of hours they all arrived safely in the Spaniards Tea-gardens, where the luckless Mr. Raddle's very first act nearly occasioned his good lady a relapse; it being neither more nor less than to order tea for seven, whereas (as the ladies one and all remarked), what could have been easier than for Tommy to have drank out of any body's cup—or every body's, if that was all—when the waiter wasn't looking: which would have saved one head of tea, and the tea just as good!

However, there was no help for it, and the tea-tray came, with seven cups and saucers, and bread-and-butter on the same scale. Mrs. Bardell was unanimously voted into the chair, and Mrs. Rodgers being stationed on her right hand, and Mrs. Raddle on her left, the meal proceeded with great merriment and success.

"How sweet the country is, to be sure!" sighed Mrs. Rogers; "I almost wish I lived in it always."

"Oh, you wouldn't like that, ma'am," replied Mrs. Bardell, rather hastily; for it was not at all advisable, with reference to the lodgings, to encourage such notions; "you wouldn't like it, ma'am."

"Oh! I should think you was a deal too lively and sought after, to be content with the country, ma'am," said little Mrs. Cluppins.

"Perhaps I am, ma'am. Perhaps I am," sighed the first-floor lodger.

"For lone people as have got nobody to care for them, or take care of them, or as have been hurt in their mind, or that kind of thing," observed Mr. Raddle, plucking up a little cheerfulness, and looking round, "the country is all very well. The country for a wounded spirit, they say."

Now, of all things in the world that the unfortunate man could have said, any would have been preferable to this. Of course Mrs. Bardell burst into tears, and requested to be led from the table instantly; upon which the affectionate child began to cry too, most dismally.

"Would any body believe, ma'am," exclaimed Mrs. Raddle, turning fiercely to the first-floor lodger, "that a woman could be married to such a unmanly creetur, which can tamper with a woman's feelings as he does every hour in the day, ma'am?"

"My dear," remonstrated Mr. Raddle, "I didn't mean any thing, my dear."

"You didn't mean!" repeated Mrs. Raddle, with great scorn and contempt. "Go away. I can't bear the sight on you, you brute."

"You must *not* flurry yourself, Mary Ann," interposed Mrs. Cluppins. "You really must consider yourself, my dear, which you never do. Now go away, Raddle, there's a good soul, or you'll only aggravate her."

"You had better take your tea by yourself, sir, indeed," said Mrs. Rogers, again applying the smelling-bottle.

Mrs. Sanders, who according to custom was very busy with the bread-and-butter, expressed the same opinion, and Mr. Raddle quietly retired.

After this there was a great hoisting up of Master Bardell, who was rather a large size for hugging, into his mother's arms: in which operation he got his boots in the tea-board, and occasioned some confusion among the cups and saucers. But that description of fainting-fits, which is contagious among ladies, seldom lasts long; so when he had been well kissed, and a little cried over, Mrs. Bardell recovered, set him down again, wondered how she could have been so foolish, and poured out some more tea.

It was at this moment that the sound of approaching wheels was heard, and that the ladies, looking up, saw a hackney-coach stop at the garden-gate.

"More company!" said Mrs. Sanders.

"It's a gentleman," said Mrs. Raddle.

"Well, if it ain't Mr. Jackson, the young man from Dodson and Fogg's!" cried Mrs. Bardell. "Why, gracious! Surely Mr. Pickwick can't have paid the damages."

"Or hoffered marriage!" said Mrs. Cluppins.

"Dear me, how slow the gentleman is," exclaimed Mrs. Rogers: "why doesn't he make haste!"

As the lady spoke these words, Mr. Jackson turned from the coach where he had been addressing some observations to a shabby man in black leggings, who had just emerged from the vehicle with a thick ash stick in his hand, and made his way to the place where the ladies were seated; winding his hair round the brim of his hat as he came along.

"Is any thing the matter? Has any thing taken place, Mr. Jackson?" said Mrs. Bardell, eagerly.

"Nothing whatever, ma'am," replied Mr. Jackson. "How de do, ladies? I have to ask pardon, ladies, for intruding—but the law, ladies—the law." With this apology Mr. Jackson smiled, made a comprehensive bow, and gave his hair another wind. Mrs. Rogers whispered Mrs. Raddle that he was really an elegant young man.

"I called in Goswell Street," resumed Jackson, "and hearing that you were here, from the slavey, took a coach and came on. Our people want you down in the city directly, Mrs. Bardell."

"Lor!" ejaculated that lady, starting at the sudden nature of the communication.

"Yes," said Jackson, biting his lip. "It's very important and pressing business, which can't be postponed on any account. Indeed, Dodson expressly said so to me, and so did Fogg. I've kept the coach on purpose for you to go back in."

"How very strange!" exclaimed Mrs. Bardell.

The ladies agreed that it *was* very strange, but were unanimously of opinion that it must be very important, or Dodson and Fogg would never have sent; and further, that the business being urgent, she ought to repair to Dodson and Fogg's without any delay.

There was a certain degree of pride and importance about being wanted by one's lawyers in such a monstrous hurry, that was by no means displeasing to Mrs. Bardell, especially as it might be reasonably supposed to enhance her consequence in the eyes of the first-floor lodger. She simpered a little, affected extreme vexation and hesitation, and at last arrived at the conclusion that she supposed she must go.

"But won't you refresh yourself after your walk, Mr. Jackson?" said Mrs. Bardell, persuasively.

"Why, really there ain't much time to lose," replied Jackson; "and I've got a friend here," he continued, looking toward the man with the ash stick.

"Oh, ask your friend to come here, sir," said Mrs. Bardell. "Pray ask your friend here, sir."

"Why, thankee, I'd rather not," said Mr. Jackson, with some embarrassment of manner. "He's not much used to ladies' society, and it makes him bashful. If you'll order the waiter to deliver him any thing short, he won't drink it off at once, won't he!—only try him!" Mr. Jackson's fingers wandered playfully round his nose, at this portion of his discourse, to warn his hearers that he was speaking ironically.

The waiter was at once dispatched to the bashful gentleman, and the bashful gentleman took something; Mr. Jackson also took something, and the ladies took something, for hospitality's sake. Mr. Jackson then said he was afraid it was time to go; upon which, Mrs. Sanders, Mrs. Cluppins, and Tommy (who it was arranged should accompany Mrs.

Bardell, leaving the others to Mr. Raddle's protection), got into the coach.

"Isaac," said Jackson, as Mrs. Bardell prepared to get in, looking up at the man with the ash stick, who was seated on the box, smoking a cigar.

"Well?"

"*This* is Mrs. Bardell."

"Oh, I know'd that long ago," said the man.

Mrs. Bardell got in, Mr. Jackson got in after her, and away they drove. Mrs. Bardell could not help ruminating on what Mr. Jackson's friend had said. Shrewd creatures, those lawyers. Lord bless us, how they find people out!

"Sad thing about these costs of our people's, ain't it," said Jackson, when Mrs. Cluppins and Mrs. Sanders had fallen asleep; "your bill of costs, I mean?"

"I'm very sorry they can't get them," replied Mrs. Bardell. "But if you law-gentlemen do these things on speculation, why you must get a loss now and then, you know."

"You gave them a *cognovit* for the amount of your costs, after the trial, I'm told?" said Jackson.

"Yes. Just as a matter of form," replied Mrs. Bardell.

"Certainly," replied Jackson, dryly. "Quite a matter of form. Quite."

On they drove, and Mrs. Bardell fell asleep. She was awakened after some time, by the stopping of the coach.

"Bless us!" said the old lady. "Are we at Freeman's Court?"

"We're not going quite so far," replied Jackson. "Have the goodness to step out."

Mrs. Bardell, not yet thoroughly awake, complied. It was a curious place: a large wall, with a gate in the middle, and a gas-light burning inside.

"Now, ladies," cried the man with the ash stick, looking into the coach, and shaking Mrs. Sanders to wake her, "come!" Rousing her friend, Mrs. Sanders alighted. Mrs. Bardell, leaning on Jackson's arm, and leading Tommy by the hand, had already entered the porch. They followed.

The room they turned into was even more odd-looking than the porch. Such a number of men standing about! And they stared so!

"What place is this?" inquired Mrs. Bardell, pausing.

"Only one of our public offices," replied Jackson, hurrying her through a door, and looking round to see that the other women were following. "Look sharp, Isaac!"

"Safe and sound," replied the man with the ash stick. The door swung heavily after them, and they descended a small flight of steps.

"Here we are at last. All right and tight, Mrs. Bardell!" said Jackson, looking exultingly round.

"What do you mean?" said Mrs. Bardell, with a palpitating heart.

"Just this," replied Jackson, drawing her a little on one side; "don't be frightened, Mrs. Bardell. There never was a more delicate man than Dodson, ma'am, or a more humane man than Fogg. It was their duty, in the way of business, to take you in execution for them costs; but they were anxious to spare your feelings as much as they could. What a comfort it must be to you to think how it's been done! This is the Fleet, ma'am. Wish you good-night, Mrs. Bardell. Good-night, Tommy!"

As Jackson hurried away in company with the man with the ash stick, another man with a key in his hand, who had been looking on, led the bewildered female to a second short flight of steps leading to a door-way. Mrs. Bardell screamed violently; Tommy roared; Mrs. Cluppins shrunk within herself; and Mrs. Sanders made off without more ado. For there stood the injured Mr. Pickwick, taking his nightly allowance of air; and beside him leaned Samuel Weller, who, seeing Mrs. Bardell, took his hat off with mock reverence, while his master turned indignantly on his heel.

"Don't bother the woman," said the turnkey to Weller: "she's just come in."

"A pris'ner!" said Sam, quickly replacing his hat. "Who's the plaintives? What for? Speak up, old feller."

"Dodson and Fogg," replied the man; "execution on cognovit for costs."

"Here Job, Job!" shouted Sam, dashing into the passage. "Run to Mr. Perker's, Job. *I* want him directly. I see some good in this. Here's a game. Hooray! where's the gov'nor?"

But there was no reply to these inquiries, for Job had started furiously off, the instant he received his commission, and Mrs. Bardell had fainted in real downright earnest.

CHAPTER XLVII.

IS CHIEFLY DEVOTED TO MATTERS OF BUSINESS, AND THE TEMPORAL ADVANTAGE OF DODSON AND FOGG. MR. WINKLE RE-APPEARS UNDER EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES. MR. PICKWICK'S BENEVOLENCE PROVES STRONGER THAN HIS OBSTINACY.

JOB TROTTER, abating nothing of his speed, ran up Holborn: sometimes in the middle of the road, sometimes on the pavement, sometimes in the gutter, as the chances of getting along varied with the press of men, women, children, and coaches, in each division of the thoroughfare; regardless of all obstacles, he stopped not for an instant until he reached the gate of Gray's Inn. Notwithstanding all the expedition he had used, however, the gate had been closed a good half-hour when he reached it, and by the time he had discovered Mr. Perker's laundress, who lived with a married daughter, who had bestowed her hand upon a non-resident waiter, who occupied the one-pair of some number in some street closely adjoining to some brewery somewhere behind Gray's Inn Lane, it was within fifteen minutes of closing the prison for the night. Mr. Lowten had still to be ferreted out from the back parlor of the Magpie and Stump; and Job had scarcely accomplished this object, and communicated Sam Weller's message, when the clock struck ten.

"There," said Lowten, "it's too late now. You can't get in to-night; you've got the key of the street, my friend."

"Never mind me," replied Job. "I can sleep anywhere. But won't it be better to see Mr. Perker to-night, so that we may be there the first thing in the morning?"

"Why," responded Lowten, after a little consideration, "if it was in any body else's case, Perker wouldn't be best pleased at my going up to his house; but as it's Mr. Pickwick's, I think I may venture to take a cab and charge it to the office." Deciding on this line of conduct, Mr. Lowten took up his hat, and begging the assembled company to appoint a deputy chairman during his temporary absence, led the way to the nearest coach-stand. Summoning the cab of most promising appearance, he directed the driver to repair to Montague Place, Russell Square.

Mr. Perker had had a dinner-party that day, as was testified by the appearance of lights in the drawing-room windows, the sound of an improved grand piano, and an improvable cabinet voice issuing therefrom, and a rather overpowering smell of meat which pervaded the steps and entry. In fact a couple of very good country agencies happening to come up to town at the same time, an agreeable little party had been got together to meet them: comprising Mr. Snicks, the Life Office Secretary, Mr. Prosee, the eminent counsel, three solicitors, one commissioner of bankrupts, a special pleader from the Temple, a small-eyed peremptory young gentleman, his pupil, who had written a lively book about the law of demises, with a vast quantity of marginal notes and references; and several other eminent and distinguished personages. From this society little Mr. Perker detached himself, on his clerk being announced in a whisper; and repairing to the dining-room, there found Mr. Lowten and Job Trotter looking very dim and shadowy by the light of a kitchen candle, which the gentleman who condescended to appear in plush shorts and cottons for a quarterly stipend had, with a becoming contempt for the clerk and all things appertaining to "the office," placed upon the table.

"Now, Lowten," said little Mr. Perker, shutting the door, "what's the matter? No important letter come in a parcel, is there?"

"No, sir," replied Lowten. "This is a messenger from Mr. Pickwick, sir."

"From Pickwick, eh?" said the little man, turning quickly to Job. "Well, what is it?"

"Dodson and Fogg have taken Mrs. Bardell in execution for her costs, sir," said Job.

"No!" exclaimed Perker, putting his hands in his pockets, and reclining against the sideboard.

"Yes," said Job. "It seems they got a cognovit out of her, for the amount of 'em, directly after the trial."

"By Jove!" said Perker, taking both hands out of his pockets, and striking the knuckles of his right against the palm of his left, emphatically, "those are the cleverest scamps I ever had any thing to do with!"

"The sharpest practitioners *I* ever knew, sir," observed Lowten.

"Sharp!" echoed Perker. "There's no knowing where to have them."

"Very true, sir, there is not," replied Lowten; and then both master and man pondered for a few seconds with animated countenances, as if they were reflecting upon one of the most beautiful and ingenious discoveries that the intellect of man had ever made. When they had in some measure recovered from their trance of admiration, Job Trotter discharged himself of the rest of his commission. Perker nodded his head thoughtfully, and pulled out his watch.

"At ten precisely I will be there," said the little man. "Sam is quite right. Tell him so. Will you take a glass of wine, Lowten?"

"No, thank you, sir."

"You mean yes, I think," said the little man, turning to the sideboard for a decanter and glasses.

As Lowten *did* mean yes, he said no more on the subject, but inquired of Job, in an audible whisper, whether the portrait of Perker, which hung opposite the fire-place, wasn't a wonderful likeness, to which Job of course replied that it was. The wine being by this time poured out, Lowten drank to Mrs. Perker and the children, and Job to Perker. The gentleman in the plush shorts and cottons considering it no part of his duty to show the people from the office out, consistently declined to answer the bell, and they showed themselves out. The attorney betook himself to his drawing-room, the clerk to the Magpie and Stump, and Job to Covent Garden Market to spend the night in a vegetable basket.

Punctually at the appointed hour next morning, the good-humored little attorney tapped at Mr. Pickwick's door, which was opened with great alacrity by Sam Weller.

"Mr. Perker, sir," said Sam, announcing the visitor to Mr. Pickwick, who was sitting at the window in a thoughtful attitude. "Wery glad you've looked in accidentally, sir. I rather think the gov'nor wants to have a word and a half with you, sir."

Perker bestowed a look of intelligence on Sam, intimating that he understood he was not to say he had been sent for: and beckoning him to approach, whispered briefly in his ear.

"You don't mean that 'ere, sir?" said Sam, starting back in excessive surprise.

Perker nodded and smiled.

Mr. Samuel Weller looked at the little lawyer, then at Mr. Pickwick, then at the ceiling, then at Perker again; grinned, laughed outright, and finally, catching up his hat from the carpet, without further explanation disappeared.

"What does this mean?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, looking at Perker with astonishment. "What has put Sam into this most extraordinary state?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing," replied Perker. "Come, my dear sir, draw up your chair to the table. I have a good deal to say to you."

"What papers are those?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, as the little man deposited on the table a small bundle of documents tied with red tape.

"The papers in Bardell and Pickwick," replied Perker, undoing the knot with his teeth.

Mr. Pickwick grated the legs of his chair against the ground; and throwing himself into it, folded his hands and looked sternly — if Mr. Pickwick ever could look sternly—at his legal friend.

"You don't like to hear the name of the cause?" said the little man, still busying himself with the knot.

"No, I do not, indeed," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Sorry for that," resumed Perker, "because it will form the subject of our conversation."