friend, Mr. Sawyer," added Arabella, looking down, "that I fear the consequences dreadfully."

"Ah, to be sure," said Perker, gravely. "You must take this matter in hand for them, my dear sir. These young men will respect you, when they would listen to nobody else. You must prevent mischief, my dear sir. Hot blood, hot blood." And the little man took a warning pinch, and shook his head doubtfully.

"You forget, my love," said Mr. Pickwick, gently, "you forget that I am a prisoner."

"No, indeed I do not, my dear sir," replied Arabella. "I never have forgotten it. I have never ceased to think how great your sufferings must have been in this shocking place. But I hoped that what no consideration for yourself would induce you to do, a regard to our happiness might. If my brother hears of this first from you, I feel certain we shall be reconciled. He is my only relation in the world, Mr. Pickwick, and unless you plead for me, I fear I have lost even him. I have done wrong, very, very wrong, I know." Here poor Arabella hid her face in her handkerchief, and wept bitterly.

Mr. Pickwick's nature was a good deal worked upon by these same tears; but when Mrs. Winkle, drying her eyes, took to coaxing and entreating in the sweetest tones of a very sweet voice, he became particularly restless, and evidently undecided how to act. As was evinced by sundry nervous rubbings of his spectacle-glasses, nose, tights, head, and gaiters.

Taking advantage of these symptoms of indecision, Mr. Perker (to whom, it appeared, the young couple had driven straight that morning) urged with legal point and shrewdness that Mr. Winkle, senior, was still unacquainted with the important rise in life's flight of steps which his son had taken; that the future expectations of the said son depended entirely upon the said Winkle, senior, continuing to regard him with undiminished feelings of affection and attachment, which it was very unlikely he would, if this great event were long kept a secret from him; that Mr. Pickwick, repairing to Bristol to seek Mr. Allen might, with equal reason, repair to Birmingham to seek Mr. Winkle, senior; lastly, that Mr. Winkle, senior, had good right and title to consider Mr. Pickwick as in some degree the guardian and adviser of his son, and that it consequently behooved that gentleman, and was indeed due to his personal character, to acquaint the aforesaid Winkle, senior, personally, and by word of mouth, with the whole circumstances of the case, and with the share he had taken in the transaction.

Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass arrived, most opportunely, in this stage of the pleadings, and as it was necessary to explain to them all that had occurred, together with the various reasons, pro and con, the whole of the arguments were gone over again, after which every body urged every argument in his own way, and at his own length. And, at last, Mr. Pickwick, fairly argued and remonstrated out of all his resolutions, and being in imminent danger of being argued and remonstrated out of his wits, caught Arabella in his arms, and declaring that she was a very amiable creature, and that he didn't know how it was, but he had always been very fond of her from the first, said he could never find it in his heart to stand in the way of young people's happiness, and they might do with him as they pleased.

Mr. Weller's first act, on hearing this concession, was to dispatch Job Trotter to the illustrious Mr. Pell with an authority to deliver to the bearer the formal discharge which his prudent parent had had the foresight to leave in the hands of that learned gentleman, in case it should be at any time required on an emergency; his next proceeding was, to invest his whole stock of ready money in the purchase of five-and-twenty gallons of mild porter: which he himself dispensed on the racket-ground to every body who would partake of it; this done, he hurraed in divers parts of the building until he lost his voice, and then quietly relapsed into his usual collected and philosophical condition.

At three o'clock that afternoon, Mr. Pickwick took a last look at his little room, and made his way, as well as he could, through the throng of debtors who pressed eagerly forward to shake him by the hand, until he reached the lodge steps. He turned here, to look about him, and his eye lightened as he did so. In all the crowd of wan, emaciated faces, he saw not one which was not the happier for his sympathy and charity.

"Perker," said Mr. Pickwick, beckoning one young man toward him, "this is Mr. Jingle, whom I spoke to you about."

"Very good, my dear sir," replied Perker, looking hard at Jingle. "You will see me again, young man, to-morrow. I hope you may live to remember and feel deeply what I shall have to communicate, sir."

Jingle bowed respectfully, trembled very much as he took Mr. Pickwick's proffered hand, and withdrew.

"Job you know, I think?" said Mr. Pickwick, presenting that gentleman.

"I know the rascal," replied Perker, good-humoredly. "See after your friend, and be in the way to-morrow at one. Do you hear? Now, is there any thing more?"

"Nothing," rejoined Mr. Pickwick. "You have delivered the little parcel I gave you for your old landlord, Sam?"

"I have, sir," replied Sam. "He bust out a-cryin', sir, and said you wos wery gen'rous and thoughtful, and he only wished you could have him innokilated for a gallopin' consumption, for his old friend as had lived here so long wos dead, and he'd noweres to look for another."

"Poor fellow, poor fellow!" said Mr. Pickwick. "God bless you, my friends!"

As Mr. Pickwick uttered this adieu, the crowd raised a loud shout. Many among them were pressing forward to shake him by the hand again, when he drew his arm through Perker's, and hurried from the prison: far more sad and melancholy, for the moment, than when he had first entered it. Alas! how many sad and unhappy beings had he left behind!

A happy evening was that for, at least, one party in the George and Vulture; and light and cheerful were two of the hearts that emerged from its hospitable door next morning. The owners thereof were

Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller, the former of whom was speedily deposited inside a comfortable post-coach, with a little dickey behind, in which the latter mounted with great agility.

"Sir," called out Mr. Weller to his master.

"Well, Sam," replied Mr. Pickwick, thrusting his head out of the window.

"I wish them horses had been three months and better in the Fleet, sir."

"Why, Sam?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Wy, sir," exclaimed Mr. Weller, rubbing his hands, "how they would go if they had been!"

CHAPTER XLVIII.

RELATES HOW MR. PICKWICK, WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF SAMUEL WELLER, ESSAYED TO SOFTEN THE HEART OF MR. BENJAMIN ALLEN, AND TO MOLLIFY THE WRATH OF MR. ROBERT SAWYER.

MR. BEN ALLEN and Mr. Bob Sawyer sat together in the little surgery behind the shop, discussing minced veal and future prospects, when the discourse, not unnaturally, turned upon the practice acquired by Bob the aforesaid, and his present chances of deriving a competent independence from the honorable profession to which he had devoted himself.

"—Which, I think," observed Mr. Bob Sawyer, pursuing the thread of the subject, "which, I think, Ben, are rather dubious."

"What's rather dubious?" inquired Mr. Ben Allen, at the same time sharpening his intellects with a draught of beer. "What's dubious?"

"Why, the chances," responded Mr. Bob Sawyer.

"I forgot," said Mr. Ben Allen. "The beer has reminded me that I forgot, Bob—yes; they *are* dubious."

"It's wonderful how the poor people patronize me," said Mr. Bob Sawyer, reflectively. "They knock me up at all hours of the night; they take medicine to an extent which I should have conceived impossible; they put on blisters and leeches with a perseverance worthy of a better cause; they make additions to their families in a manner which is quite awful. Six of those last-named little promissory notes, all due on the same day, Ben, and all intrusted to me!"

"It's very gratifying, isn't it?" said Mr. Ben Allen, holding his plate for some more minced veal.

"Oh, very," replied Bob; "only not quite so much so, as the confidence of patients with a shilling or two to spare, would be. This business was capitally described in the advertisement, Ben. It is a practice, a very extensive practice—and that's all."

"Bob," said Mr. Ben Allen, laying down his knife and fork and fixing his eyes on the visage of his friend, "Bob, I'll tell you what it is."

"What is it?" inquired Mr. Bob Sawyer.

"You must make yourself, with as little delay as possible, master of Arabella's one thousand pounds."

"Three per cent. consolidated Bank annuities, now standing in her name in the book or books of the Governor and Company of the Bank of England," added Bob Sawyer in legal phraseology.

"Exactly so," said Ben. "She has it when she comes of age, or marries. She wants a year of coming of age, and if you plucked up a spirit she needn't want a month of being married."

"She's a very charming and delightful creature," quoth Mr. Robert Sawyer, in reply; "and has only one fault that I know of, Ben. It happens, unfortunately, that that single blemish is a want of taste. She don't like me."

"It's my opinion that she don't know what she does like," said Mr. Ben Allen, contemptuously.

"Perhaps not," remarked Mr. Bob Sawyer. "But it's my opinion that she does know what she doesn't like, and that's of more importance."

"I wish," said Mr. Ben Allen, setting his teeth together, and speaking more like a savage warrior who fed on raw wolf's flesh which he carved with his fingers, than a peaceable young gentleman who ate minced veal with a knife and fork, "I wish I knew whether any rascal really has been tampering with her, and attempting to engage her affections. I think I should assassinate him, Bob."

"I'd put a bullet in him, if I found him out," said Mr. Sawyer, stopping in the course of a long draught of beer, and looking malignantly out of the porter pot. "If that didn't do his business, I'd extract it afterward, and kill him that way."

Mr. Benjamin Allen gazed abstractedly on his friend for some minutes in silence, and then said,

"You have never proposed to her point-blank, Bob?"

"No. Because I saw it would be of no use," replied Mr. Robert Sawyer.

"You shall do it before you are twenty-four hours older," retorted Ben, with desperate calmness. "She *shall* have you, or I'll know the reason why. I'll exert my authority."

"Well," said Mr. Bob Sawyer, "we shall see."

"We *shall* see, my friend," replied Mr. Ben Allen, fiercely. He paused for a few seconds, and added, in a voice broken by emotion, "You have loved her from a child, my friend. You loved her when we were boys at school together, and, even then she was wayward, and slighted your young feelings. Do you recollect, with all the eagerness of a child's love, one day pressing upon her acceptance two small caraway-seed biscuits and one sweet apple, neatly folded into a circular parcel with the leaf of a copy-book?"

"I do," replied Bob Sawyer.

"She slighted that, I think?" said Ben Allen.

"She did," rejoined Bob. "She said I had kept the parcel so long in the pockets of my corduroys, that the apple was unpleasantly warm."

"I remember" said Mr. Allen, gloomily. "Upon which we ate it ourselves, in alternate bites."

Bob Sawyer intimated his recollection of the circumstance last alluded to by a melancholy frown; and the two friends remained for some time absorbed, each in his own meditations.

While these observations were being exchanged between Mr. Bob Sawyer and Mr. Benjamin Allen; and while the boy in the gray livery, marveling at the unwonted prolongation of the dinner, cast an anxious look, from time to time, toward the glass door, distracted by inward misgivings regarding the

amount of minced veal which would be ultimately reserved for his individual cravings, there rolled soberly on through the streets of Bristol a private fly, painted of a sad green color, drawn by a chubby sort of brown horse, and driven by a surly-looking man with his legs dressed like the legs of a groom, and his body attired in the coat of a coachman. Such appearances are common to many vehicles belonging to, and maintained by, old ladies of economic habits; and in this vehicle sat an old lady who was its mistress and proprietor.

"Martin!" said the old lady, calling to the surly man out of the front window.

"Well?" said the surly man, touching his hat to the old lady.

"Mr. Sawyer's," said the old lady.

"I was going there," said the surly man.

The old lady nodded the satisfaction which this proof of the surly man's foresight imparted to her feelings; and the surly man giving a smart lash to the chubby horse, they all repaired to Mr. Bob Sawyer's together.

"Martin!" said the old lady, when the fly stopped at the door of Mr. Robert Sawyer, late Nockemorf.

"Well?" said Martin.

"Ask the lad to step out and mind the horse."

"I'm going to mind the horse myself," said Martin, laying his whip on the roof of the fly.

"I can't permit it on any account," said the old lady; "your testimony will be very important, and I must take you into the house with me. You must not stir from my side during the whole interview. Do you hear?"

"I hear," replied Martin.

"Well, what are you stopping for?"

"Nothing," replied Martin. So saying, the surly man leisurely descended from the wheel, on which he had been poising himself on the tops of the toes of his right foot, and, having summoned the boy in the gray livery, opened the coach door, flung down the steps, and thrusting in a hand enveloped in a dark wash-leather glove, pulled out the old lady with as much unconcern in his manner as if she were a bandbox.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the old lady. "I am so flurried, now I have got here, Martin, that I'm all in a tremble."

Mr. Martin coughed behind the dark wash-leather glove, but expressed no sympathy; so the old lady, composing herself, trotted up Mr. Bob Sawyer's steps, and Mr. Martin followed. Immediately on the old lady's entering the shop, Mr. Benjamin Allen and Mr. Bob Sawyer, who had been putting the spirits and water out of sight, and upsetting nauseous drugs to take off the smell of the tobacco-smoke, issued hastily forth in a transport of pleasure and affection.

"My dear aunt," exclaimed Mr. Ben Allen, "how kind of you to look in upon us! Mr. Sawyer, aunt; my friend, Mr. Bob Sawyer, whom I have spoken to you about, regarding—you know, aunt." And here Mr. Ben Allen, who was not at the moment extraordinarily sober, added the word "Arabella," in what was meant to be a whisper, but which was an especially audible and distinct tone of speech which nobody could avoid hearing, if any body were so disposed.

"My dear Benjamin," said the old lady, struggling with a great shortness of breath, and trembling from head to foot: "don't be alarmed, my dear, but I think I had better speak to Mr. Sawyer alone for a moment. Only for one moment."

"Bob," said Mr. Ben Allen, "will you take my aunt into the surgery?"

"Certainly," responded Bob, in a most professional voice. "Step this way, my dear ma'am. Don't be frightened, ma'am. We shall be able to set you to rights in a very short time, I have no doubt, ma'am. Here, my dear ma'am. Now then!" With this, Mr. Bob Sawyer having handed the old lady to a chair, shut the door, drew another chair close to her, and waited to hear detailed the symptoms of some disorder from which he saw in perspective a long train of profits and advantages.

The first thing the old lady did was to shake her head a great many times, and begin to cry.

"Nervous," said Bob Sawyer, complacently. "Camphor-julep and water three times a day, and composing draught at night."

"I don't know how to begin, Mr. Sawyer," said the old lady. "It is so very painful and distressing."

"You need not begin, ma'am," rejoined Mr. Bob Sawyer. "I can anticipate all you would say. The head is in fault."

"I should be very sorry to think it was the heart," said the old lady, with a slight groan.

"Not the slightest danger of that, ma'am," replied Bob Sawyer. "The stomach is the primary cause."

"Mr. Sawyer!" exclaimed the old lady, starting.

"Not the least doubt of it, ma'am," rejoined Bob, looking wondrous wise. "Medicine in time, my dear ma'am, would have prevented it all."

"Mr. Sawyer," said the old lady, more flurried than before, "this conduct is either great impertinence to one in my situation, sir, or it arises from your not understanding the object of my visit. If it had been in the power of medicine, or any foresight I could have used, to prevent what has occurred, I should certainly have done so. I had better see my nephew at once," said the old lady, twirling her reticule indignantly, and rising as she spoke.

"Stop a moment, ma'am," said Bob Sawyer; "I'm afraid I have not understood you. What *is* the matter, ma'am?"

"My niece, Mr. Sawyer," said the old lady; "your friend's sister."

"Yes, ma'am," said Bob, all impatience; for the old lady, although much agitated, spoke with the most tantalizing deliberation, as old ladies often do. "Yes, ma'am."

"Left my home, Mr. Sawyer, three days ago, on a pretended visit to my sister, another aunt of hers, who keeps the large boarding-school just beyond the third mile-stone, where there is a very large laburnum-tree and an oak gate," said the old lady, stopping in this place to dry her eyes.

"Oh, devil take the laburnum-tree, ma'am," said Bob, quite forgetting his professional dignity in his anxiety. "Get on a little faster; put a little more steam on, ma'am, pray."

"This morning," said the old lady, slowly, "this morning, she—"

"She came back, ma'am, I suppose," said Bob, with great animation. "Did she come back?"

"No, she did not; she wrote," replied the old lady.

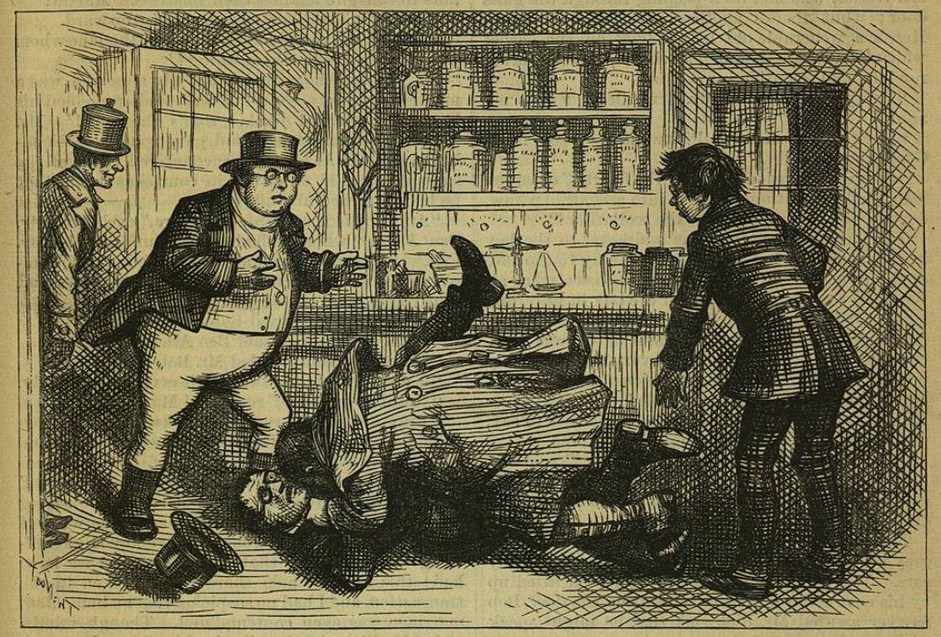
"What did she say?" inquired Bob, eagerly.

"She said, Mr. Sawyer," replied the old lady—"and it is this I want you to prepare Benjamin's mind for, gently and by degrees; she said that she was—I have got the letter in my pocket, Mr. Sawyer, but my glasses are in the carriage, and I should only waste your time if I attempted to point out the passage to you, without them; she said, in short, Mr. Sawyer, that she was married."

"What!" said, or rather shouted, Mr. Bob Sawyer.

"Married," repeated the old lady.

Mr. Bob Sawyer stopped to hear no more; but darting from the surgery into the outer shop, cried in a stentorian voice, "Ben, my boy, she's bolted!"



THE ARRIVAL OF TWO MOST UNEXPECTED VISITORS.

Mr. Ben Allen, who had been slumbering behind the counter, with his head half a foot or so below his knees, no sooner heard this appalling communication, than he made a precipitate rush at Mr. Martin, and, twisting his hand in the neckcloth of that taciturn servitor, expressed an intention of choking him where he stood. This intention, with a promptitude often the effect of desperation, he at once commenced carrying into execution with much vigor and surgical skill.

Mr. Martin, who was a man of few words, and possessed but little power of eloquence or persuasion, submitted to this operation with a very calm and agreeable expression of countenance for some seconds; finding, however, that it threatened speedily to lead to a result which would place it beyond his power to claim any wages, board or otherwise, in all time to come, he muttered an inarticulate remonstrance, and felled Mr. Benjamin Allen to the ground. As that gentleman had his hands entangled in his cravat, he had no alternative but to follow him to the floor. There they both lay struggling, when the shop door opened, and the party was increased by the arrival of two most unexpected visitors: to wit, Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Samuel Weller.

The impression at once produced on Mr. Weller's mind by what he saw was that Mr. Martin was hired by the establishment of Sawyer, late Nockemorf, to take strong medicine, or to go into fits and be experimentalized upon, or to swallow poison now and then with the view of testing the efficacy of some new antidotes, or to do something or other to promote the great science of medicine, and gratify the ardent spirit of inquiry burning in the bosoms of its two young professors. So, without presuming to interfere, Sam stood perfectly still, and looked on, as if he were mightily interested in the result of the then pending experiment. Not so Mr. Pickwick. He at once threw himself on the astonished combatants with his accustomed energy, and loudly called upon the by-standers to interpose.

This roused Mr. Bob Sawyer, who had been hitherto quite paralyzed by the frenzy of his companion. With that gentleman's assistance, Mr. Pickwick raised Ben Allen to his feet. Mr. Martin finding himself alone on the floor, got up, and looked about him.

"Mr. Allen," said Mr. Pickwick, "what is the matter, sir?"

"Never mind, sir!" replied Mr. Allen, with haughty defiance.

"What is it?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, looking at Bob Sawyer. "Is he unwell?"

Before Bob could reply, Mr. Ben Allen seized Mr. Pickwick by the hand, and murmured, in sorrowful accents, "My sister, my dear sir; my sister."

"Oh, is that all!" said Mr. Pickwick. "We shall easily arrange that matter, I hope. Your sister is safe and well, and I am here, my dear sir, to—"

"Sorry to do any thin' as may cause an interruption to such wery pleasant proceedin's, as the king said wen he dissolved the parliament," interposed Mr. Weller, who had been peeping through the glass door; "but there's another experiment here, sir. Here's a wenerable old lady a-lyin' on the carpet waitin' for dissection, or galwinism, or some other rewivin' and scientific inwention."

"I forgot," exclaimed Mr. Ben Allen. "It is my aunt."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Pickwick. "Poor lady! Gently Sam, gently."

"Strange sitivation for one o' the family," observed Sam Weller, hoisting the aunt into a chair. "Now, depitty Sawbones, bring out the wollatilly!"

The latter observation was addressed to the boy in gray, who, having handed over the fly to the care of the street-keeper, had come back to see what all the noise was about. Between the boy in gray, and Mr. Bob Sawyer, and Mr. Benjamin Allen (who having frightened his aunt into a fainting-fit, was affectionately solicitous for her recovery) the old lady was at length restored to consciousness; then Mr. Ben Allen, turning with a puzzled countenance to Mr. Pickwick, asked him what he was about to say, when he had been so alarmingly interrupted.

"We are all friends here, I presume?" said Mr. Pickwick, clearing his voice, and looking toward the man of few words with the surly countenance, who drove the fly with the chubby horse.

This reminded Mr. Bob Sawyer that the boy in gray was looking on, with eyes wide open, and greedy ears. The incipient chemist having been lifted up by his coat-collar and dropped outside the door, Bob Sawyer assured Mr. Pickwick that he might speak without reserve.

"Your sister, my dear sir," said Mr. Pickwick, turning to Benjamin Allen, "is in London; well and happy."

"Her happiness is no object to me, sir," said Mr. Benjamin Allen, with a flourish of the hand.

"Her husband *is* an object to *me*, sir," said Bob Sawyer. "He shall be an object to me, sir, at twelve paces, and a very pretty object I'll make of him, sir—a mean-spirited scoundrel!" This, as it stood, was a very pretty denunciation, and magnanimous withal; but Mr. Bob Sawyer rather weakened its effect by winding up with some general observations concerning the punching of heads and knocking out of eyes, which were commonplace by comparison.

"Stay, sir," said Mr. Pickwick; "before you apply those epithets to the gentleman in question, consider, dispassionately, the extent of his fault, and above all remember that he is a friend of mine."

"What!" said Mr. Bob Sawyer.

"His name!" cried Ben Allen. "His name!"

"Mr. Nathaniel Winkle," said Mr. Pickwick.

Mr. Benjamin Allen deliberately crushed his spectacles beneath the heel of his boot, and having picked up the pieces, and put them into three separate pockets, folded his arms, bit his lips, and looked in a threatening manner at the bland features of Mr. Pickwick.

"Then it's you, is it, sir, who have encouraged and brought about this match?" inquired Mr. Benjamin Allen at length.

"And it's this gentleman's servant, I suppose," interrupted the old lady, "who has been skulking about my house, and endeavoring to entrap my servants to conspire against their mistress. Martin!"

"Well," said the surly man, coming forward.

"Is that the young man you saw in the lane whom you told me about this morning?"

Mr. Martin, who, as it has already appeared, was a man of few words, looked at Sam Weller, nodded his head, and growled forth, "that's the man!" Mr. Weller, who was never proud, gave a smile of friendly recognition as his eyes encountered those of the surly groom, and admitted, in courteous terms, that he had "knowed him afore."

"And this is the faithful creature," exclaimed Mr. Ben Allen, "whom I had nearly suffocated! Mr. Pickwick, how dare you allow your fellow to be employed in the abduction of my sister? I demand that you explain this matter, sir."

"Explain it, sir," cried Bob Sawyer, fiercely.

"It's a conspiracy," said Ben Allen.

"A regular plant," added Mr. Bob Sawyer.

"A disgraceful imposition," observed the old lady.

"Nothing but a do," remarked Martin.

"Pray hear me," urged Mr. Pickwick, as Mr. Ben Allen fell into a chair that patients were bled in, and gave way to his pocket-handkerchief. "I have rendered no assistance in this matter, beyond that of being present at one interview between the young people, which I could not prevent, and from which I conceived my presence would remove any slight coloring of impropriety that it might otherwise have had; this is the whole share I have taken in the transaction, and I had no suspicion that an immediate marriage was even contemplated. Though, mind," added Mr. Pickwick, hastily checking himself, "mind, I do not say I should have prevented it, if I *had* known that it was intended."

"You hear that, all of you; you hear that?" said Mr. Benjamin Allen.

"I hope they do," mildly observed Mr. Pickwick, looking round, "and," added that gentleman, his color mounting as he spoke, "I hope they hear this, sir, also. That from what has been stated to me, sir, I assert that you were by no means justified in attempting to force your sister's inclinations as you did, and that you should rather have endeavored by your kindness and forbearance to have supplied the place of other nearer relations whom she has never known, from a child. As regards my young friend, I must beg to add, that in every point of worldly advantage, he is, at least, on an equal footing with yourself, if not on a much better one, and that unless I hear this question discussed with becoming temper and moderation, I decline hearing any more said upon the subject."

"I wish to make a wery few remarks in addition to wot has been put forard by the honorable gen'l'm'n as has jist give over," said Mr. Weller, stepping forth, "wich is this here: a indiwidual in company has called me a feller."

"That has nothing whatever to do with the matter, Sam," interposed Mr. Pickwick. "Pray hold your tongue."

"I ain't agoin' to say nothin' on that 'ere pint, sir," replied Sam, "but merely this here. P'raps that gen'l'm'n may think as there wos a priory 'tachment; but there worn't nothin' o' the sort, for the young lady said, in the wery beginning o' the keepin' company, that she couldn't abide him. Nobody's cut him out, and it 'ud ha' been just the wery same for him if the young lady had never seen Mr. Winkle. That's wot I wished to say, sir, and I hope I've now made that 'ere gen'l'm'n's mind easy."

A short pause followed these consolatory remarks of Mr. Weller. Then Mr. Ben Allen, rising from his chair, protested that he would never see Arabella's face again; while Mr. Bob Sawyer, despite Sam's flattering assurance, vowed dreadful vengeance on the happy bridegroom.

But, just when matters were at their height, and threatening to remain so, Mr. Pickwick found a powerful assistant in the old lady, who, evidently much struck by the mode in which he had advocated her niece's cause, ventured to approach Mr. Benjamin Allen with a few comforting reflections, of which the chief were, that after all, perhaps, it was well it was no worse; the least said the soonest mended, and upon her word she did not know that it was so very bad after all; what was over couldn't be begun, and what couldn't be cured must be endured: with various other assurances of the like novel and strengthening description. To all of these Mr. Benjamin Allen replied that he meant no disrespect to his aunt, or any body there, but if it were all the same to them, and they would allow him to have his own way, he would rather have the pleasure of hating his sister till death, and after it.

At length, when this determination had been announced half a hundred times, the old lady suddenly bridling up and looking very majestic, wished to know what she had done that no respect was to be paid to her years or station, and that she should be obliged to beg and pray, in that way, of her own nephew, whom she remembered about five-and-twenty years before he was born, and whom she had known, personally, when he hadn't a tooth in his head? To say nothing of her presence on the first occasion of his having his hair cut, and assistance at numerous other times and ceremonies during his babyhood, of sufficient importance to found a claim upon his affection, obedience, and sympathies forever.

While the good lady was bestowing this objurgation on Mr. Ben Allen, Bob Sawyer and Mr. Pickwick had retired in close conversation to the inner room, where Mr. Sawyer was observed to apply himself several times to the mouth of a black bottle, under the influence of which his features gradually assumed a cheerful and even jovial expression. And at last he emerged from the room, bottle in hand, and, remarking that he was very sorry to say he had been making a fool of himself, begged to propose the health and happiness of Mr. and Mrs. Winkle, whose felicity, so far from envying, he would be the first to congratulate them upon. Hearing this, Mr. Ben Allen suddenly arose from his chair, and, seizing the black bottle, drank the toast so heartily, that, the liquor being strong, he became nearly as black in the face as the bottle. Finally, the black bottle went round till it was empty, and there was so much shaking of hands, and interchanging of compliments, that even the metal-visaged Mr. Martin condescended to smile.

"And now," said Bob Sawyer, rubbing his hands, "we'll have a jolly night."

"I am sorry," said Mr. Pickwick, "that I must return to my inn. I have not been accustomed to fatigue lately, and my journey has tired me exceedingly."

"You'll take some tea, Mr. Pickwick?" said the old lady, with irresistible sweetness.

"Thank you, I would rather not," replied that gentleman. The truth is, that the old lady's evidently increasing admiration was Mr. Pickwick's principal inducement for going away. He thought of Mrs. Bardell; and every glance of the old lady's eyes threw him into a cold perspiration.

As Mr. Pickwick could by no means be prevailed upon to stay, it was arranged at once, on his own proposition, that Mr. Benjamin Allen should accompany him on his journey to the elder Mr. Winkle's, and that the coach should be at the door at nine o'clock next morning. He then took his leave, and, followed by Samuel Weller, repaired to the Bush. It is worthy of remark, that Mr. Martin's face was horribly convulsed as he shook hands with Sam at parting, and that he gave vent to a smile and an oath simultaneously: from which tokens it has been inferred by those who were best acquainted with that gentleman's peculiarities, that he expressed himself much pleased with Mr. Weller's society, and requested the honor of his further acquaintance.

"Shall I order a private room, sir?" inquired Sam, when they reached the Bush.

"Why, no, Sam," replied Mr. Pickwick: "as I dined in the coffee-room, and shall go to bed soon, it is hardly worth while. See who there is in the travelers' room, Sam."

Mr. Weller departed on his errand, and presently returned to say that there was only a gentleman with one eye: and that he and the landlord were drinking a bowl of bishop together.

"I will join them," said Mr. Pickwick.

"He's a queer customer, the vun-eyed vun, sir," observed Mr. Weller, as he led the way. "He's a-gammonin' that 'ere landlord, he is, sir, till he don't rightly know wether he's a-standin' on the soles of his boots or the crown of his hat."

The individual to whom this observation referred was sitting at the upper end of the room when Mr. Pickwick entered, and was smoking a large Dutch pipe, with his eye intently fixed on the round face of the landlord: a jolly-looking old personage, to whom he had recently been relating some tale of wonder, as was testified by sundry disjointed excla-

mations of, "Well, I wouldn't have believed it! The strangest thing I ever heard! Couldn't have supposed it possible!" and other expressions of astonishment which burst spontaneously from his lips, as he returned the fixed gaze of the one-eyed man.

"Servant, sir," said the one-eyed man to Mr. Pickwick. "Fine night, sir."

"Very much so indeed," replied Mr. Pickwick, as the waiter placed a small decanter of brandy and some hot water before him.

While Mr. Pickwick was mixing his brandy-and-water, the one-eyed man looked round at him earnestly from time to time, and at length said:

"I think I've seen you before."

"I don't recollect you," rejoined Mr. Pickwick.

"I dare say not," said the one-eyed man. "You didn't know me, but I knew two friends of yours that were stopping at the Peacock at Eatanswill at the time of the Election."

"Oh, indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes," rejoined the one-eyed man. "I mentioned a little circumstance to them about a friend of mine of the name of Tom Smart. Perhaps you've heard them speak of it."

"Often," rejoined Mr. Pickwick, smiling. "He was your uncle, I think?"

"No, no; only a friend of my uncle's," replied the one-eyed man.

"He was a wonderful man, that uncle of yours, though," remarked the landlord, shaking his head.

"Well, I think he was; I think I may say he was," answered the one-eyed man. "I could tell you a story about that same uncle, gentlemen, that would rather surprise you."

"Could you?" said Mr. Pickwick. "Let us hear it, by all means."

The one-eyed Bagman ladled out a glass of negus from the bowl, and drank it; smoked a long whiff out of the Dutch pipe; and then, calling to Sam Weller, who was lingering near the door, that he needn't go away unless he wanted to, because the story was no secret, fixed his eye upon the landlord's and proceeded, in the words of the next chapter.

CHAPTER XLIX.

CONTAINING THE STORY OF THE BAGMAN'S UNCLE.

"MY uncle, gentlemen," said the bagman, "was one of the merriest, pleasantest, cleverest fellows that ever lived. I wish you had known him, gentlemen. On second thoughts, gentlemen, I *don't* wish you had known him, for if you had, you would have been all, by this time, in the ordinary course of nature, if not dead, at all events so near it, as to have taken to stopping at home and giving up company: which would have deprived me of the inestimable pleasure of addressing you at this moment. Gentlemen, I wish your fathers and mothers had known my uncle. They would have been amazingly fond of him, especially your respectable mothers; I know they would. If any two of his numerous virtues predominated over the many that adorned his character, I should say they were his mixed punch and his after-supper song. Excuse my dwelling on these melancholy recollections of departed worth; you won't see a man like my uncle every day in the week.

"I have always considered it a great point in my uncle's character, gentlemen, that he was the intimate friend and companion of Tom Smart, of the great house of Bilson and Slum, Cateaton Street, City. My uncle collected for Tiggin and Welps, but for a long time he went pretty near the same journey as Tom; and the very first night they met, my uncle took a fancy for Tom, and Tom took a fancy for my uncle. They made a bet of a new hat before they had known each other half an hour, who should brew the best quart of punch and drink it the quickest. My uncle was judged to have won the making, but Tom Smart beat him in the drinking by about half a salt-spoonful. They took another quart apiece to drink each other's health in, and were staunch friends ever afterward. There's a destiny in these things, gentlemen; we can't help it.

"In personal appearance, my uncle was a trifle shorter than the middle size; he was a thought stouter too, than the ordinary run of people, and perhaps his face might be a shade redder. He had the jolliest face you ever saw, gentlemen: something like Punch, with a handsomer nose and chin; his eyes were always twinkling and sparkling with good-humor; and a smile—not one of your unmeaning wooden grins, but a real, merry, hearty, good-tempered smile—was perpetually on his countenance. He was pitched out of his gig once, and knocked, head first, against a mile-stone. There he lay, stunned, and so cut about the face with some gravel which had been heaped up alongside it, that, to use my uncle's own strong expression, if his mother could have revisited the earth, she wouldn't have known him. Indeed, when I come to think of the matter, gentlemen, I feel pretty sure she wouldn't, for she died when my uncle was two years and seven months old, and I think it's very likely that, even without the gravel, his top-boots would have puzzled the good lady not a little: to say nothing of his jolly red face. However, there he lay, and I have heard my uncle say, many a time, that the man said who picked him up that he was smiling as merrily as if he had tumbled out for a treat, and that after they had bled him, the first faint glimmerings of returning animation were his jumping up in bed, bursting out into a loud laugh, kissing the young woman who held the basin, and demanding a mutton chop and a pickled walnut. He was very fond of pickled walnuts, gentlemen. He said he always found that, taken without vinegar, they relished the beer.

"My uncle's great journey was in the fall of the leaf, at which time he collected debts, and took orders, in the north: going from London to Edinburgh, from Edinburgh to Glasgow, from Glasgow back to Edinburgh, and thence to London by the smack. You are to understand that his second visit to Edinburgh was for his own pleasure. He used to go back for a week, just to look up his old friends; and what with breakfasting with this one, lunching with that, dining with a third, and supping with another, a pretty tight week he used to make of it. I don't know whether any of you, gentlemen, ever partook of a real substantial hospitable Scotch breakfast, and

then went out to a slight lunch of a bushel of oysters, a dozen or so of bottled ale, and a noggin or two of whisky to close up with. If you ever did, you will agree with me that it requires a pretty strong head to go out to dinner and supper afterward.

"But, bless your hearts and eyebrows, all this sort of thing was nothing to my uncle! He was so well seasoned, that it was mere child's play. I have heard him say that he could see the Dundee people out, any day, and walk home afterward without staggering; and yet the Dundee people have as strong heads and as strong punch, gentlemen, as you are likely to meet with between the poles. I have heard of a Glasgow man and a Dundee man drinking against each other for fifteen hours at a sitting. They were both suffocated, as nearly as could be ascertained, at the same moment; but with this trifling exception, gentlemen, they were not a bit the worse for it.

"One night, within four-and-twenty hours of the time when he had settled to take shipping for London, my uncle supped at the house of a very old friend of his, a Baillie Mac something and four syllables after it, who lived in the old town of Edinburgh. There were the baillie's wife, and the baillie's three daughters, and the baillie's grown-up son, and three or four stout, bushy eyebrowed, canny old Scotch fellows, that the baillie had got together to do honor to my uncle, and help to make merry. It was a glorious supper. There were kippered salmon, and Finnan haddocks, and a lamb's head, and a haggis—a celebrated Scotch dish, gentlemen, which my uncle used to say always looked to him, when it came to table, very much like a cupid's stomach—and a great many other things besides, that I forget the names of, but very good things notwithstanding. The lassies were pretty and agreeable; and the baillie's wife was one of the best creatures that ever lived; and my uncle was in thoroughly good cue. The consequence of which was, that the young ladies tittered and giggled, and the old lady laughed out loud, and the baillie and the other old fellows roared till they were red in the face, the whole mortal time. I don't quite recollect how many tumblers of whisky toddy each man drank after supper; but this I know, that about one o'clock in the morning, the baillie's grown-up son became insensible while attempting the first verse of 'Willie brewed a Peck o' Maut;' and he having been, for half an hour before, the only other man visible above the mahogany, it occurred to my uncle that it was almost time to think about going: especially as drinking had set in at seven o'clock, in order that he might get home at a decent hour. But thinking it might not be quite polite to go just then, my uncle voted himself into the chair, mixed another glass, rose to propose his own health, addressed himself in a neat and complimentary speech, and drank the toast with great enthusiasm. Still nobody woke; so my uncle took a little drop more—neat this time, to prevent the toddy from disagreeing with him—and, laying violent hands on his hat, sallied forth into the street.

"It was a wild gusty night when my uncle closed the baillie's door, and settling his hat firmly on his head, to prevent the wind from taking it, thrust his hands into his pockets, and looking upward, took a short survey of the state of the weather. The clouds were drifting over the moon at their giddiest speed: at one time wholly obscuring her; at another, suffering her to burst forth in full splendor and shed her light on all the objects around; anon driving over her again with increased velocity, and shrouding every thing in darkness. 'Really, this won't do,' said my uncle, addressing himself to the weather, as if he felt himself personally offended. 'This is not at all the kind of thing for my voyage. It will not do, at any price,' said my uncle, very impressively. Having repeated this several times, he recovered his balance with some difficulty—for he was rather giddy with looking up into the sky so long—and walked merrily on.

"The baillie's house was in the Canongate, and my uncle was going to the other end of Leith Walk, rather better than a mile's journey. On either side of him there shot up against the dark sky tall, gaunt, straggling houses, with time-stained fronts, and windows that seemed to have shared the lot of eyes in mortals, and to have grown dim and sunken with age. Six, seven, eight stories high, were the houses; story piled above story, as children build with cards—throwing their dark shadows over the roughly-paved road, and making the dark night darker. A few oil-lamps were scattered at long distances, but they only served to mark the dirty entrance to some narrow close, or to show where a common stair communicated, by steep and intricate windings, with the various flats above. Glancing at all these things with the air of a man who had seen them too often before, to think them worthy of much notice now, my uncle walked up the middle of the street, with a thumb in each waistcoat-pocket, indulging from time to time in various snatches of song, chaunted forth with such good-will and spirit, that the quiet honest folk started from their first sleep and lay trembling in bed till the sound died away in the distance; when, satisfying themselves that it was only some drunken ne'er-do-weel finding his way home, they covered themselves up warm and fell asleep again.

"I am particular in describing how my uncle walked up the middle of the street, with his thumbs in his waistcoat-pockets, gentlemen, because, as he often used to say (and with great reason too) there is nothing at all extraordinary in this story, unless you distinctly understand at the beginning that he was not by any means of a marvelous or romantic turn.

"Gentlemen, my uncle walked on with his thumbs in his waistcoat-pockets, taking the middle of the street to himself, and singing, now a verse of a love-song, and then a verse of a drinking one, and when he was tired of both, whistling melodiously, until he reached the North Bridge, which at this point connects the old and new towns of Edinburgh. Here he stopped for a minute, to look at the strange, irregular clusters of lights piled one above the other, and twinkling afar off so high, that they looked like stars gleaming from the castle walls on the one side and the Calton Hill on the other, as if they illuminated veritable castles in the air; while the old picturesque town slept heavily on, in gloom and darkness below: its palace and chapel of Holyrood, guarded day and night, as a friend of my uncle's used to say, by old Arthur's Seat, towering, surly and dark, like