Chapter XXIV - An Appeal Case

As soon as Richard and I had held the conversation of which I have given an account, Richard communicated the state of his mind to Mr Jarndyce. I doubt if my guardian were altogether taken by surprise when he received the representation, though it caused him much uneasiness and disappointment. He and Richard were often closeted together, late at night and early in the morning, and passed whole days in London, and had innumerable appointments with Mr Kenge, and laboured through a quantity of disagreeable business. While they were thus employed, my guardian, though he underwent considerable inconvenience from the state of the wind and rubbed his head so constantly that not a single hair upon it ever rested in its right place, was as genial with Ada and me as at any other time, but maintained a steady reserve on these matters. And as our utmost endeavours could only elicit from Richard himself sweeping assurances that everything was going on capitally and that it really was all right at last, our anxiety was not much relieved by him.

We learnt, however, as the time went on, that a new application was made to the Lord Chancellor on Richard's behalf as an infant and a ward, and I don't know what, and that there was a quantity of talking, and that the Lord Chancellor described him in open court as a vexatious and capricious infant, and that the matter was adjourned and readjourned, and referred, and reported on, and petitioned about until Richard began to doubt (as he told us) whether, if he entered the army at all, it would not be as a veteran of seventy or eighty years of age. At last an appointment was made for him to see the Lord Chancellor again in his private room, and there the Lord Chancellor very seriously reproved him for trifling with time and not knowing his mind--'a pretty good joke, I think,' said Richard, 'from that quarter!'--and at last it was settled that his application should be granted. His name was entered at the Horse Guards as an applicant for an ensign's commission; the purchase-money was deposited at an agent's; and Richard, in his usual characteristic way, plunged into a violent course of military study and got up at five o'clock every morning to practise the broadsword exercise.

Thus, vacation succeeded term, and term succeeded vacation. We sometimes heard of Jarndyce and Jarndyce as being in the paper or out of the paper, or as being to be mentioned, or as being to be spoken to; and it came on, and it went off. Richard, who was now in a professor's house in London, was able to be with us less frequently than before; my guardian still maintained the same reserve; and so time passed until the commission was obtained and Richard received directions with it to join a regiment in Ireland.

He arrived post-haste with the intelligence one evening, and had a long conference with my guardian. Upwards of an hour elapsed before my guardian put his head into the room where Ada and I were sitting and said, 'Come in, my dears!' We went in and found Richard, whom we had last seen in high spirits, leaning on the chimney-piece looking mortified and angry.

'Rick and I, Ada,' said Mr Jarndyce, 'are not quite of one mind. Come, come, Rick, put a brighter face upon it!'

'You are very hard with me, sir,' said Richard. 'The harder because you have been so considerate to me in all other respects and have done me kindnesses that I can never acknowledge. I never could have been set right without you, sir.'

'Well, well!' said Mr Jarndyce. 'I want to set you more right yet. I want to set you more right with yourself.'

'I hope you will excuse my saying, sir,' returned Richard in a fiery way, but yet respectfully, 'that I think I am the best judge about myself.'

'I hope you will excuse my saying, my dear Rick,' observed Mr Jarndyce with the sweetest cheerfulness and good humour, 'that it's quite natural in you to think so, but I don't think so. I must do my duty, Rick, or you could never care for me in cool blood; and I hope you will always care for me, cool and hot.'

Ada had turned so pale that he made her sit down in his reading-chair and sat beside her.

'It's nothing, my dear,' he said, 'it's nothing. Rick and I have only had a friendly difference, which we must state to you, for you are the theme. Now you are afraid of what's coming.'

'I am not indeed, cousin John,' replied Ada with a smile, 'if it is to come from you.'

'Thank you, my dear. Do you give me a minute's calm attention, without looking at Rick. And, little woman, do you likewise. My dear girl,' putting his hand on hers as it lay on the side of the easy-chair, 'you recollect the talk we had, we four when the little woman told me of a little love affair?'

'It is not likely that either Richard or I can ever forget your kindness that day, cousin John.'

'I can never forget it,' said Richard.

‘And I can never forget it,’ said Ada.

‘So much the easier what I have to say, and so much the easier for us to agree,’ returned my guardian, his face irradiated by the gentleness and honour of his heart. ‘Ada, my bird, you should know that Rick has now chosen his profession for the last time. All that he has of certainty will be expended when he is fully equipped. He has exhausted his resources and is bound henceforward to the tree he has planted.’

‘Quite true that I have exhausted my present resources, and I am quite content to know it. But what I have of certainty, sir,’ said Richard, ‘is not all I have.’

‘Rick, Rick!’ cried my guardian with a sudden terror in his manner, and in an altered voice, and putting up his hands as if he would have stopped his ears. ‘For the love of God, don't found a hope or expectation on the family curse! Whatever you do on this side the grave, never give one lingering glance towards the horrible phantom that has haunted us so many years. Better to borrow, better to beg, better to die!’

We were all startled by the fervour of this warning. Richard bit his lip and held his breath, and glanced at me as if he felt, and knew that I felt too, how much he needed it.

‘Ada, my dear,’ said Mr Jarndyce, recovering his cheerfulness, ‘these are strong words of advice, but I live in Bleak House and have seen a sight here. Enough of that. All Richard had to start him in the race of life is ventured. I recommend to him and you, for his sake and your own, that he should depart from us with the understanding that there is no sort of contract between you. I must go further. I will be plain with you both. You were to confide freely in me, and I will confide freely in you. I ask you wholly to relinquish, for the present, any tie but your relationship.’

‘Better to say at once, sir,’ returned Richard, ‘that you renounce all confidence in me and that you advise Ada to do the same.’

‘Better to say nothing of the sort, Rick, because I don't mean it.’

‘You think I have begun ill, sir,’ retorted Richard. ‘I HAVE, I know.’

‘How I hoped you would begin, and how go on, I told you when we spoke of these things last,’ said Mr Jarndyce in a cordial and encouraging manner. ‘You have not made that beginning yet, but there is a time for all things, and yours is not gone by; rather, it is just now fully come. Make a clear beginning altogether. You two (very

young, my dears) are cousins. As yet, you are nothing more. What more may come must come of being worked out, Rick, and no sooner.'

'You are very hard with me, sir,' said Richard. 'Harder than I could have supposed you would be.'

'My dear boy,' said Mr Jarndyce, 'I am harder with myself when I do anything that gives you pain. You have your remedy in your own hands. Ada, it is better for him that he should be free and that there should be no youthful engagement between you. Rick, it is better for her, much better; you owe it to her. Come! Each of you will do what is best for the other, if not what is best for yourselves.'

'Why is it best, sir?' returned Richard hastily. 'It was not when we opened our hearts to you. You did not say so then.'

'I have had experience since. I don't blame you, Rick, but I have had experience since.'

'You mean of me, sir.'

'Well! Yes, of both of you,' said Mr Jarndyce kindly. 'The time is not come for your standing pledged to one another. It is not right, and I must not recognize it. Come, come, my young cousins, begin afresh! Bygones shall be bygones, and a new page turned for you to write your lives in.'

Richard gave an anxious glance at Ada but said nothing.

'I have avoided saying one word to either of you or to Esther,' said Mr Jarndyce, 'until now, in order that we might be open as the day, and all on equal terms. I now affectionately advise, I now most earnestly entreat, you two to part as you came here. Leave all else to time, truth, and steadfastness. If you do otherwise, you will do wrong, and you will have made me do wrong in ever bringing you together.'

A long silence succeeded.

'Cousin Richard,' said Ada then, raising her blue eyes tenderly to his face, 'after what our cousin John has said, I think no choice is left us. Your mind may be quite at ease about me, for you will leave me here under his care and will be sure that I can have nothing to wish for--quite sure if I guide myself by his advice. I--I don't doubt, cousin Richard,' said Ada, a little confused, 'that you are very fond of me, and I--I don't think you will fall in love with anybody else. But I should like you to consider well about it too, as I should like you to be in all things very happy. You may trust in me, cousin Richard. I am not at all changeable; but I am not unreasonable, and should never blame

you. Even cousins may be sorry to part; and in truth I am very, very sorry, Richard, though I know it's for your welfare. I shall always think of you affectionately, and often talk of you with Esther, and--and perhaps you will sometimes think a little of me, cousin Richard. So now,' said Ada, going up to him and giving him her trembling hand, 'we are only cousins again, Richard--for the time perhaps-- and I pray for a blessing on my dear cousin, wherever he goes!'

It was strange to me that Richard should not be able to forgive my guardian for entertaining the very same opinion of him which he himself had expressed of himself in much stronger terms to me. But it was certainly the case. I observed with great regret that from this hour he never was as free and open with Mr Jarndyce as he had been before. He had every reason given him to be so, but he was not; and solely on his side, an estrangement began to arise between them.

In the business of preparation and equipment he soon lost himself, and even his grief at parting from Ada, who remained in Hertfordshire while he, Mr Jarndyce, and I went up to London for a week. He remembered her by fits and starts, even with bursts of tears, and at such times would confide to me the heaviest self- reproaches. But in a few minutes he would recklessly conjure up some undefinable means by which they were both to be made rich and happy for ever, and would become as gay as possible.

It was a busy time, and I trotted about with him all day long, buying a variety of things of which he stood in need. Of the things he would have bought if he had been left to his own ways I say nothing. He was perfectly confidential with me, and often talked so sensibly and feelingly about his faults and his vigorous resolutions, and dwelt so much upon the encouragement he derived from these conversations that I could never have been tired if I had tried.

There used, in that week, to come backward and forward to our lodging to fence with Richard a person who had formerly been a cavalry soldier; he was a fine bluff-looking man, of a frank free bearing, with whom Richard had practised for some months. I heard so much about him, not only from Richard, but from my guardian too, that I was purposely in the room with my work one morning after breakfast when he came.

'Good morning, Mr George,' said my guardian, who happened to be alone with me. 'Mr Carstone will be here directly. Meanwhile, Miss Summerson is very happy to see you, I know. Sit down.'

He sat down, a little disconcerted by my presence, I thought, and without looking at me, drew his heavy sunburnt hand across and across his upper lip.

‘You are as punctual as the sun,’ said Mr Jarndyce.

‘Military time, sir,’ he replied. ‘Force of habit. A mere habit in me, sir. I am not at all business-like.’

‘Yet you have a large establishment, too, I am told?’ said Mr Jarndyce.

‘Not much of a one, sir. I keep a shooting gallery, but not much of a one.’

‘And what kind of a shot and what kind of a swordsman do you make of Mr Carstone?’ said my guardian.

‘Pretty good, sir,’ he replied, folding his arms upon his broad chest and looking very large. ‘If Mr Carstone was to give his full mind to it, he would come out very good.’

‘But he don't, I suppose?’ said my guardian.

‘He did at first, sir, but not afterwards. Not his full mind. Perhaps he has something else upon it--some young lady, perhaps.’ His bright dark eyes glanced at me for the first time.

‘He has not me upon his mind, I assure you, Mr George,’ said I, laughing, ‘though you seem to suspect me.’

He reddened a little through his brown and made me a trooper's bow. ‘No offence, I hope, miss. I am one of the roughs.’

‘Not at all,’ said I. ‘I take it as a compliment.’

If he had not looked at me before, he looked at me now in three or four quick successive glances. ‘I beg your pardon, sir,’ he said to my guardian with a manly kind of diffidence, ‘but you did me the honour to mention the young lady's name--’

‘Miss Summerson.’

‘Miss Summerson,’ he repeated, and looked at me again.

‘Do you know the name?’ I asked.

‘No, miss. To my knowledge I never heard it. I thought I had seen you somewhere.’

‘I think not,’ I returned, raising my head from my work to look at him; and there was something so genuine in his speech and manner that I was glad of the opportunity. ‘I remember faces very well.’

‘So do I, miss!’ he returned, meeting my look with the fullness of his dark eyes and broad forehead. ‘Humph! What set me off, now, upon that!’

His once more reddening through his brown and being disconcerted by his efforts to remember the association brought my guardian to his relief.

‘Have you many pupils, Mr George?’

‘They vary in their number, sir. Mostly they're but a small lot to live by.’

‘And what classes of chance people come to practise at your gallery?’

‘All sorts, sir. Natives and foreigners. From gentlemen to 'prentices. I have had Frenchwomen come, before now, and show themselves dabs at pistol-shooting. Mad people out of number, of course, but THEY go everywhere where the doors stand open.’

‘People don't come with grudges and schemes of finishing their practice with live targets, I hope?’ said my guardian, smiling.

‘Not much of that, sir, though that HAS happened. Mostly they come for skill--or idleness. Six of one, and half-a-dozen of the other. I beg your pardon,’ said Mr George, sitting stiffly upright and squaring an elbow on each knee, ‘but I believe you're a Chancery suitor, if I have heard correct?’

‘I am sorry to say I am.’

‘I have had one of YOUR compatriots in my time, sir.’

‘A Chancery suitor?’ returned my guardian. ‘How was that?’

‘Why, the man was so badgered and worried and tortured by being knocked about from post to pillar, and from pillar to post,’ said Mr George, ‘that he got out of sorts. I don't believe he had any idea of taking aim at anybody, but he was in that condition of resentment and violence that he would come and pay for fifty shots and fire away till he was red hot. One day I said to him when there was nobody by and he had been talking to me angrily about his wrongs, 'If this practice is a safety-valve, comrade, well and good; but I don't altogether like your being so bent upon it in your present state of mind; I'd rather you took to something else.' I was on my guard for a blow, he was that passionate; but he received it in very good part and left off directly. We shook hands and struck up a sort of friendship.’

'What was that man?' asked my guardian in a new tone of interest.

'Why, he began by being a small Shropshire farmer before they made a baited bull of him,' said Mr George.

'Was his name Gridley?'

'It was, sir.'

Mr George directed another succession of quick bright glances at me as my guardian and I exchanged a word or two of surprise at the coincidence, and I therefore explained to him how we knew the name. He made me another of his soldierly bows in acknowledgment of what he called my condescension.

'I don't know,' he said as he looked at me, 'what it is that sets me off again--but--bosh! What's my head running against!' He passed one of his heavy hands over his crisp dark hair as if to sweep the broken thoughts out of his mind and sat a little forward, with one arm akimbo and the other resting on his leg, looking in a brown study at the ground.

'I am sorry to learn that the same state of mind has got this Gridley into new troubles and that he is in hiding,' said my guardian.

'So I am told, sir,' returned Mr George, still musing and looking on the ground. 'So I am told.'

'You don't know where?'

'No, sir,' returned the trooper, lifting up his eyes and coming out of his reverie. 'I can't say anything about him. He will be worn out soon, I expect. You may file a strong man's heart away for a good many years, but it will tell all of a sudden at last.'

Richard's entrance stopped the conversation. Mr George rose, made me another of his soldierly bows, wished my guardian a good day, and strode heavily out of the room.

This was the morning of the day appointed for Richard's departure. We had no more purchases to make now; I had completed all his packing early in the afternoon; and our time was disengaged until night, when he was to go to Liverpool for Holyhead. Jarndyce and Jarndyce being again expected to come on that day, Richard proposed to me that we should go down to the court and hear what passed. As it was his last day, and he was eager to go, and I had never been there, I gave my consent and we walked down to Westminster, where the court was then sitting. We beguiled the way with arrangements

concerning the letters that Richard was to write to me and the letters that I was to write to him and with a great many hopeful projects. My guardian knew where we were going and therefore was not with us.

When we came to the court, there was the Lord Chancellor--the same whom I had seen in his private room in Lincoln's Inn--sitting in great state and gravity on the bench, with the mace and seals on a red table below him and an immense flat nosegay, like a little garden, which scented the whole court. Below the table, again, was a long row of solicitors, with bundles of papers on the matting at their feet; and then there were the gentlemen of the bar in wigs and gowns--some awake and some asleep, and one talking, and nobody paying much attention to what he said. The Lord Chancellor leaned back in his very easy chair with his elbow on the cushioned arm and his forehead resting on his hand; some of those who were present dozed; some read the newspapers; some walked about or whispered in groups: all seemed perfectly at their ease, by no means in a hurry, very unconcerned, and extremely comfortable.

To see everything going on so smoothly and to think of the roughness of the suitors' lives and deaths; to see all that full dress and ceremony and to think of the waste, and want, and beggared misery it represented; to consider that while the sickness of hope deferred was raging in so many hearts this polite show went calmly on from day to day, and year to year, in such good order and composure; to behold the Lord Chancellor and the whole array of practitioners under him looking at one another and at the spectators as if nobody had ever heard that all over England the name in which they were assembled was a bitter jest, was held in universal horror, contempt, and indignation, was known for something so flagrant and bad that little short of a miracle could bring any good out of it to any one--this was so curious and self- contradictory to me, who had no experience of it, that it was at first incredible, and I could not comprehend it. I sat where Richard put me, and tried to listen, and looked about me; but there seemed to be no reality in the whole scene except poor little Miss Flite, the madwoman, standing on a bench and nodding at it.

Miss Flite soon espied us and came to where we sat. She gave me a gracious welcome to her domain and indicated, with much gratification and pride, its principal attractions. Mr Kenge also came to speak to us and did the honours of the place in much the same way, with the bland modesty of a proprietor. It was not a very good day for a visit, he said; he would have preferred the first day of term; but it was imposing, it was imposing.

When we had been there half an hour or so, the case in progress--if I may use a phrase so ridiculous in such a connexion--seemed to die out of its own vapidity, without coming, or being by anybody expected

to come, to any result. The Lord Chancellor then threw down a bundle of papers from his desk to the gentlemen below him, and somebody said, 'Jarndyce and Jarndyce.' Upon this there was a buzz, and a laugh, and a general withdrawal of the bystanders, and a bringing in of great heaps, and piles, and bags and bags full of papers.

I think it came on 'for further directions'--about some bill of costs, to the best of my understanding, which was confused enough. But I counted twenty-three gentlemen in wigs who said they were 'in it,' and none of them appeared to understand it much better than I. They chatted about it with the Lord Chancellor, and contradicted and explained among themselves, and some of them said it was this way, and some of them said it was that way, and some of them jocosely proposed to read huge volumes of affidavits, and there was more buzzing and laughing, and everybody concerned was in a state of idle entertainment, and nothing could be made of it by anybody. After an hour or so of this, and a good many speeches being begun and cut short, it was 'referred back for the present,' as Mr Kenge said, and the papers were bundled up again before the clerks had finished bringing them in.

I glanced at Richard on the termination of these hopeless proceedings and was shocked to see the worn look of his handsome young face. 'It can't last for ever, Dame Durden. Better luck next time!' was all he said.

I had seen Mr Guppy bringing in papers and arranging them for Mr Kenge; and he had seen me and made me a forlorn bow, which rendered me desirous to get out of the court. Richard had given me his arm and was taking me away when Mr Guppy came up.

'I beg your pardon, Mr Carstone,' said he in a whisper, 'and Miss Summerson's also, but there's a lady here, a friend of mine, who knows her and wishes to have the pleasure of shaking hands.' As he spoke, I saw before me, as if she had started into bodily shape from my remembrance, Mrs Rachael of my godmother's house.

'How do you do, Esther?' said she. 'Do you recollect me?'

I gave her my hand and told her yes and that she was very little altered.

'I wonder you remember those times, Esther,' she returned with her old asperity. 'They are changed now. Well! I am glad to see you, and glad you are not too proud to know me.' But indeed she seemed disappointed that I was not.

'Proud, Mrs Rachael!' I remonstrated.

'I am married, Esther,' she returned, coldly correcting me, 'and am Mrs Chadband. Well! I wish you good day, and I hope you'll do well.'

Mr Guppy, who had been attentive to this short dialogue, heaved a sigh in my ear and elbowed his own and Mrs Rachael's way through the confused little crowd of people coming in and going out, which we were in the midst of and which the change in the business had brought together. Richard and I were making our way through it, and I was yet in the first chill of the late unexpected recognition when I saw, coming towards us, but not seeing us, no less a person than Mr George. He made nothing of the people about him as he tramped on, staring over their heads into the body of the court.

'George!' said Richard as I called his attention to him.

'You are well met, sir,' he returned. 'And you, miss. Could you point a person out for me, I want? I don't understand these places.'

Turning as he spoke and making an easy way for us, he stopped when we were out of the press in a corner behind a great red curtain.

'There's a little cracked old woman,' he began, 'that--'

I put up my finger, for Miss Flite was close by me, having kept beside me all the time and having called the attention of several of her legal acquaintance to me (as I had overheard to my confusion) by whispering in their ears, 'Hush! Fitz Jarndyce on my left!'

'Hem!' said Mr George. 'You remember, miss, that we passed some conversation on a certain man this morning? Gridley,' in a low whisper behind his hand.

'Yes,' said I.

'He is hiding at my place. I couldn't mention it. Hadn't his authority. He is on his last march, miss, and has a whim to see her. He says they can feel for one another, and she has been almost as good as a friend to him here. I came down to look for her, for when I sat by Gridley this afternoon, I seemed to hear the roll of the muffled drums.'

'Shall I tell her?' said I.

'Would you be so good?' he returned with a glance of something like apprehension at Miss Flite. 'It's a providence I met you, miss; I doubt if I should have known how to get on with that lady.' And he put one hand in his breast and stood upright in a martial attitude as I informed little Miss Flite, in her ear, of the purport of his kind errand.

‘My angry friend from Shropshire! Almost as celebrated as myself!’ she exclaimed. ‘Now really! My dear, I will wait upon him with the greatest pleasure.’

‘He is living concealed at Mr George's,’ said I. ‘Hush! This is Mr George.’

‘In--deed!’ returned Miss Flite. ‘Very proud to have the honour! A military man, my dear. You know, a perfect general!’ she whispered to me.

Poor Miss Flite deemed it necessary to be so courtly and polite, as a mark of her respect for the army, and to curtsy so very often that it was no easy matter to get her out of the court. When this was at last done, and addressing Mr George as ‘General,’ she gave him her arm, to the great entertainment of some idlers who were looking on, he was so discomposed and begged me so respectfully ‘not to desert him’ that I could not make up my mind to do it, especially as Miss Flite was always tractable with me and as she too said, ‘Fitz Jarndyce, my dear, you will accompany us, of course.’ As Richard seemed quite willing, and even anxious, that we should see them safely to their destination, we agreed to do so. And as Mr George informed us that Gridley's mind had run on Mr Jarndyce all the afternoon after hearing of their interview in the morning, I wrote a hasty note in pencil to my guardian to say where we were gone and why. Mr George sealed it at a coffee-house, that it might lead to no discovery, and we sent it off by a ticket- porter.

We then took a hackney-coach and drove away to the neighbourhood of Leicester Square. We walked through some narrow courts, for which Mr George apologized, and soon came to the shooting gallery, the door of which was closed. As he pulled a bell-handle which hung by a chain to the door-post, a very respectable old gentleman with grey hair, wearing spectacles, and dressed in a black spencer and gaiters and a broad-brimmed hat, and carrying a large gold-beaded cane, addressed him.

‘I ask your pardon, my good friend,’ said he, ‘but is this George's Shooting Gallery?’

‘It is, sir,’ returned Mr George, glancing up at the great letters in which that inscription was painted on the whitewashed wall.

‘Oh! To be sure!’ said the old gentleman, following his eyes. ‘Thank you. Have you rung the bell?’

‘My name is George, sir, and I have rung the bell.’

'Oh, indeed?' said the old gentleman. 'Your name is George? Then I am here as soon as you, you see. You came for me, no doubt?'

'No, sir. You have the advantage of me.'

'Oh, indeed?' said the old gentleman. 'Then it was your young man who came for me. I am a physician and was requested--five minutes ago--to come and visit a sick man at George's Shooting Gallery.'

'The muffled drums,' said Mr George, turning to Richard and me and gravely shaking his head. 'It's quite correct, sir. Will you please to walk in.'

The door being at that moment opened by a very singular-looking little man in a green-baize cap and apron, whose face and hands and dress were blackened all over, we passed along a dreary passage into a large building with bare brick walls where there were targets, and guns, and swords, and other things of that kind. When we had all arrived here, the physician stopped, and taking off his hat, appeared to vanish by magic and to leave another and quite a different man in his place.

'Now lookee here, George,' said the man, turning quickly round upon him and tapping him on the breast with a large forefinger. 'You know me, and I know you. You're a man of the world, and I'm a man of the world. My name's Bucket, as you are aware, and I have got a peace-warrant against Gridley. You have kept him out of the way a long time, and you have been artful in it, and it does you credit.'

Mr George, looking hard at him, bit his lip and shook his head.

'Now, George,' said the other, keeping close to him, 'you're a sensible man and a well-conducted man; that's what YOU are, beyond a doubt. And mind you, I don't talk to you as a common character, because you have served your country and you know that when duty calls we must obey. Consequently you're very far from wanting to give trouble. If I required assistance, you'd assist me; that's what YOU'D do. Phil Squod, don't you go a-sidling round the gallery like that'--the dirty little man was shuffling about with his shoulder against the wall, and his eyes on the intruder, in a manner that looked threatening--'because I know you and won't have it.'

'Phil!' said Mr George.

'Yes, guv'ner.'

'Be quiet.'

The little man, with a low growl, stood still.

'Ladies and gentlemen,' said Mr Bucket, 'you'll excuse anything that may appear to be disagreeable in this, for my name's Inspector Bucket of the Detective, and I have a duty to perform. George, I know where my man is because I was on the roof last night and saw him through the skylight, and you along with him. He is in there, you know,' pointing; 'that's where HE is--on a sofy. Now I must see my man, and I must tell my man to consider himself in custody; but you know me, and you know I don't want to take any uncomfortable measures. You give me your word, as from one man to another (and an old soldier, mind you, likewise), that it's honourable between us two, and I'll accommodate you to the utmost of my power.'

'I give it,' was the reply. 'But it wasn't handsome in you, Mr Bucket.'

'Gammon, George! Not handsome?' said Mr Bucket, tapping him on his broad breast again and shaking hands with him. 'I don't say it wasn't handsome in you to keep my man so close, do I? Be equally good-tempered to me, old boy! Old William Tell, Old Shaw, the Life Guardsman! Why, he's a model of the whole British army in himself, ladies and gentlemen. I'd give a fifty-pun' note to be such a figure of a man!'

The affair being brought to this head, Mr George, after a little consideration, proposed to go in first to his comrade (as he called him), taking Miss Flite with him. Mr Bucket agreeing, they went away to the further end of the gallery, leaving us sitting and standing by a table covered with guns. Mr Bucket took this opportunity of entering into a little light conversation, asking me if I were afraid of fire-arms, as most young ladies were; asking Richard if he were a good shot; asking Phil Squod which he considered the best of those rifles and what it might be worth first-hand, telling him in return that it was a pity he ever gave way to his temper, for he was naturally so amiable that he might have been a young woman, and making himself generally agreeable.

After a time he followed us to the further end of the gallery, and Richard and I were going quietly away when Mr George came after us. He said that if we had no objection to see his comrade, he would take a visit from us very kindly. The words had hardly passed his lips when the bell was rung and my guardian appeared, 'on the chance,' he slightly observed, 'of being able to do any little thing for a poor fellow involved in the same misfortune as himself.' We all four went back together and went into the place where Gridley was.

It was a bare room, partitioned off from the gallery with unpainted wood. As the screening was not more than eight or ten feet high and

only enclosed the sides, not the top, the rafters of the high gallery roof were overhead, and the skylight through which Mr Bucket had looked down. The sun was low--near setting--and its light came redly in above, without descending to the ground. Upon a plain canvas-covered sofa lay the man from Shropshire, dressed much as we had seen him last, but so changed that at first I recognized no likeness in his colourless face to what I recollected.

He had been still writing in his hiding-place, and still dwelling on his grievances, hour after hour. A table and some shelves were covered with manuscript papers and with worn pens and a medley of such tokens. Touchingly and awfully drawn together, he and the little mad woman were side by side and, as it were, alone. She sat on a chair holding his hand, and none of us went close to them.

His voice had faded, with the old expression of his face, with his strength, with his anger, with his resistance to the wrongs that had at last subdued him. The faintest shadow of an object full of form and colour is such a picture of it as he was of the man from Shropshire whom we had spoken with before.

He inclined his head to Richard and me and spoke to my guardian.

'Mr Jarndyce, it is very kind of you to come to see me. I am not long to be seen, I think. I am very glad to take your hand, sir. You are a good man, superior to injustice, and God knows I honour you.'

They shook hands earnestly, and my guardian said some words of comfort to him.

'It may seem strange to you, sir,' returned Gridley; 'I should not have liked to see you if this had been the first time of our meeting. But you know I made a fight for it, you know I stood up with my single hand against them all, you know I told them the truth to the last, and told them what they were, and what they had done to me; so I don't mind your seeing me, this wreck.'

'You have been courageous with them many and many a time,' returned my guardian.

'Sir, I have been,' with a faint smile. 'I told you what would come of it when I ceased to be so, and see here! Look at us--look at us!' He drew the hand Miss Flite held through her arm and brought her something nearer to him.

'This ends it. Of all my old associations, of all my old pursuits and hopes, of all the living and the dead world, this one poor soul alone comes natural to me, and I am fit for. There is a tie of many suffering

years between us two, and it is the only tie I ever had on earth that Chancery has not broken.'

'Accept my blessing, Gridley,' said Miss Flite in tears. 'Accept my blessing!'

'I thought, boastfully, that they never could break my heart, Mr Jarndyce. I was resolved that they should not. I did believe that I could, and would, charge them with being the mockery they were until I died of some bodily disorder. But I am worn out. How long I have been wearing out, I don't know; I seemed to break down in an hour. I hope they may never come to hear of it. I hope everybody here will lead them to believe that I died defying them, consistently and perseveringly, as I did through so many years.'

Here Mr Bucket, who was sitting in a corner by the door, good-naturedly offered such consolation as he could administer.

'Come, come!' he said from his corner. 'Don't go on in that way, Mr Gridley. You are only a little low. We are all of us a little low sometimes. I am. Hold up, hold up! You'll lose your temper with the whole round of 'em, again and again; and I shall take you on a score of warrants yet, if I have luck.'

He only shook his head.

'Don't shake your head,' said Mr Bucket. 'Nod it; that's what I want to see you do. Why, Lord bless your soul, what times we have had together! Haven't I seen you in the Fleet over and over again for contempt? Haven't I come into court, twenty afternoons for no other purpose than to see you pin the Chancellor like a bull-dog? Don't you remember when you first began to threaten the lawyers, and the peace was sworn against you two or three times a week? Ask the little old lady there; she has been always present. Hold up, Mr Gridley, hold up, sir!'

'What are you going to do about him?' asked George in a low voice.

'I don't know yet,' said Bucket in the same tone. Then resuming his encouragement, he pursued aloud: 'Worn out, Mr Gridley? After dodging me for all these weeks and forcing me to climb the roof here like a tom cat and to come to see you as a doctor? That ain't like being worn out. I should think not! Now I tell you what you want. You want excitement, you know, to keep YOU up; that's what YOU want. You're used to it, and you can't do without it. I couldn't myself. Very well, then; here's this warrant got by Mr Tulkinghorn of Lincoln's Inn Fields, and backed into half-a-dozen counties since. What do you say to coming along with me, upon this warrant, and having a good angry

argument before the magistrates? It'll do you good; it'll freshen you up and get you into training for another turn at the Chancellor. Give in? Why, I am surprised to hear a man of your energy talk of giving in. You mustn't do that. You're half the fun of the fair in the Court of Chancery. George, you lend Mr Gridley a hand, and let's see now whether he won't be better up than down.'

'He is very weak,' said the trooper in a low voice.

'Is he?' returned Bucket anxiously. 'I only want to rouse him. I don't like to see an old acquaintance giving in like this. It would cheer him up more than anything if I could make him a little waxy with me. He's welcome to drop into me, right and left, if he likes. I shall never take advantage of it.'

The roof rang with a scream from Miss Flite, which still rings in my ears.

'Oh, no, Gridley!' she cried as he fell heavily and calmly back from before her. 'Not without my blessing. After so many years!'

The sun was down, the light had gradually stolen from the roof, and the shadow had crept upward. But to me the shadow of that pair, one living and one dead, fell heavier on Richard's departure than the darkness of the darkest night. And through Richard's farewell words I heard it echoed: 'Of all my old associations, of all my old pursuits and hopes, of all the living and the dead world, this one poor soul alone comes natural to me, and I am fit for. There is a tie of many suffering years between us two, and it is the only tie I ever had on earth that Chancery has not broken!'