

Chapter X

Clearing Up All Doubts (If Any Existed) Of The Disinterestedness Of Mr A. Jingle's Character

There are in London several old inns, once the headquarters of celebrated coaches in the days when coaches performed their journeys in a graver and more solemn manner than they do in these times; but which have now degenerated into little more than the abiding and booking-places of country wagons. The reader would look in vain for any of these ancient hostelries, among the Golden Crosses and Bull and Mouths, which rear their stately fronts in the improved streets of London. If he would light upon any of these old places, he must direct his steps to the obscurer quarters of the town, and there in some secluded nooks he will find several, still standing with a kind of gloomy sturdiness, amidst the modern innovations which surround them.

In the Borough especially, there still remain some half-dozen old inns, which have preserved their external features unchanged, and which have escaped alike the rage for public improvement and the encroachments of private speculation. Great, rambling queer old places they are, with galleries, and passages, and staircases, wide enough and antiquated enough to furnish materials for a hundred ghost stories, supposing we should ever be reduced to the lamentable necessity of inventing any, and that the world should exist long enough to exhaust the innumerable veracious legends connected with old London Bridge, and its adjacent neighbourhood on the Surrey side.

It was in the yard of one of these inns - of no less celebrated a one than the White Hart - that a man was busily employed in brushing the dirt off a pair of boots, early on the morning succeeding the events narrated in the last chapter. He was habited in a coarse, striped waistcoat, with black calico sleeves, and blue glass buttons; drab breeches and leggings. A bright red handkerchief was wound in a very loose and unstudied style round his neck, and an old white hat was carelessly thrown on one side of his head. There were two rows of boots before him, one cleaned and the other dirty, and at every addition he made to the clean row, he paused from his work, and contemplated its results with evident satisfaction.

The yard presented none of that bustle and activity which are the usual characteristics of a large coach inn. Three or four lumbering wagons, each with a pile of goods beneath its ample canopy, about the height of the second-floor window of an ordinary house, were stowed away beneath a lofty roof which extended over one end of the yard; and another, which was probably to commence its journey that

morning, was drawn out into the open space. A double tier of bedroom galleries, with old Clumsy balustrades, ran round two sides of the straggling area, and a double row of bells to correspond, sheltered from the weather by a little sloping roof, hung over the door leading to the bar and coffee-room. Two or three gigs and chaise-carts were wheeled up under different little sheds and pent-houses; and the occasional heavy tread of a cart-horse, or rattling of a chain at the farther end of the yard, announced to anybody who cared about the matter, that the stable lay in that direction. When we add that a few boys in smock-frocks were lying asleep on heavy packages, wool-packs, and other articles that were scattered about on heaps of straw, we have described as fully as need be the general appearance of the yard of the White Hart Inn, High Street, Borough, on the particular morning in question.

A loud ringing of one of the bells was followed by the appearance of a smart chambermaid in the upper sleeping gallery, who, after tapping at one of the doors, and receiving a request from within, called over the balustrades - 'Sam!'

'Hollo,' replied the man with the white hat.

'Number twenty-two wants his boots.'

'Ask number twenty-two, vether he'll have 'em now, or vait till he gets 'em,' was the reply.

'Come, don't be a fool, Sam,' said the girl coaxingly, 'the gentleman wants his boots directly.'

'Well, you ARE a nice young 'ooman for a musical party, you are,' said the boot-cleaner. 'Look at these here boots - eleven pair o' boots; and one shoe as belongs to number six, with the wooden leg. The eleven boots is to be called at half-past eight and the shoe at nine. Who's number twenty-two, that's to put all the others out? No, no; reg'lar rotation, as Jack Ketch said, ven he tied the men up. Sorry to keep you a-waitin', Sir, but I'll attend to you directly.'

Saying which, the man in the white hat set to work upon a top-boot with increased assiduity.

There was another loud ring; and the bustling old landlady of the White Hart made her appearance in the opposite gallery.

'Sam,' cried the landlady, 'where's that lazy, idle - why, Sam - oh, there you are; why don't you answer?'

'Wouldn't be gen-teel to answer, till you'd done talking,' replied Sam gruffly.

'Here, clean these shoes for number seventeen directly, and take 'em to private sitting-room, number five, first floor.'

The landlady flung a pair of lady's shoes into the yard, and bustled away.

'Number five,' said Sam, as he picked up the shoes, and taking a piece of chalk from his pocket, made a memorandum of their destination on the soles - 'Lady's shoes and private sittin'- room! I suppose she didn't come in the vagin.'

'She came in early this morning,' cried the girl, who was still leaning over the railing of the gallery, 'with a gentleman in a hackney-coach, and it's him as wants his boots, and you'd better do 'em, that's all about it.'

'Vy didn't you say so before,' said Sam, with great indignation, singling out the boots in question from the heap before him. 'For all I know'd he was one o' the regular threepennies. Private room! and a lady too! If he's anything of a gen'l'm'n, he's vurth a shillin' a day, let alone the arrands.' Stimulated by this inspiring reflection, Mr Samuel brushed away with such hearty good-will, that in a few minutes the boots and shoes, with a polish which would have struck envy to the soul of the amiable Mr Warren (for they used Day & Martin at the White Hart), had arrived at the door of number five.

'Come in,' said a man's voice, in reply to Sam's rap at the door. Sam made his best bow, and stepped into the presence of a lady and gentleman seated at breakfast. Having officiously deposited the gentleman's boots right and left at his feet, and the lady's shoes right and left at hers, he backed towards the door.

'Boots,' said the gentleman.

'Sir,' said Sam, closing the door, and keeping his hand on the knob of the lock. 'Do you know - what's a-name - Doctors' Commons?'

'Yes, Sir.'

'Where is it?'

'Paul's Churchyard, Sir; low archway on the carriage side, bookseller's at one corner, hot-el on the other, and two porters in the middle as touts for licences.'

'Touts for licences!' said the gentleman.

'Touts for licences,' replied Sam. 'Two coves in white aprons - touches their hats ven you walk in - 'Licence, Sir, licence?' Queer sort, them, and their mas'rs, too, sir - Old Bailey Proctors - and no mistake.'

'What do they do?' inquired the gentleman.

'Do! You, Sir! That ain't the worst on it, neither. They puts things into old gen'l'm'n's heads as they never dreamed of. My father, Sir, was a coachman. A widower he wos, and fat enough for anything - uncommon fat, to be sure. His missus dies, and leaves him four hundred pound. Down he goes to the Commons, to see the lawyer and draw the blunt - very smart - top boots on - nosegay in his button-hole - broad-brimmed tile - green shawl - quite the gen'l'm'n. Goes through the archvay, thinking how he should invest the money - up comes the touter, touches his hat - 'Licence, Sir, licence?' - 'What's that?' says my father. - 'Licence, Sir,' says he. - 'What licence?' says my father. - 'Marriage licence,' says the touter. - 'Dash my veskit,' says my father, 'I never thought o' that.' - 'I think you wants one, Sir,' says the touter. My father pulls up, and thinks a bit - 'No,' says he, 'damme, I'm too old, b'sides, I'm a many sizes too large,' says he. - 'Not a bit on it, Sir,' says the touter. - 'Think not?' says my father. - 'I'm sure not,' says he; 'we married a gen'l'm'n twice your size, last Monday.' - 'Did you, though?' said my father. - 'To be sure, we did,' says the touter, 'you're a babby to him - this way, sir - this way!' - and sure enough my father walks arter him, like a tame monkey behind a horgan, into a little back office, vere a teller sat among dirty papers, and tin boxes, making believe he was busy. 'Pray take a seat, vile I makes out the affidavit, Sir,' says the lawyer. - 'Thank'ee, Sir,' says my father, and down he sat, and stared with all his eyes, and his mouth wide open, at the names on the boxes. 'What's your name, Sir,' says the lawyer. - 'Tony Weller,' says my father. - 'Parish?' says the lawyer. 'Belle Savage,' says my father; for he stopped there wen he drove up, and he know'd nothing about parishes, he didn't. - 'And what's the lady's name?' says the lawyer. My father was struck all of a heap. 'Blessed if I know,' says he. - 'Not know!' says the lawyer. - 'No more nor you do,' says my father; 'can't I put that in arterwards?' - 'Impossible!' says the lawyer. - 'Wery well,' says my father, after he'd thought a moment, 'put down Mrs. Clarke.' - 'What Clarke?' says the lawyer, dipping his pen in the ink. - 'Susan Clarke, Markis o' Granby, Dorking,' says my father; 'she'll have me, if I ask. I des-say - I never said nothing to her, but she'll have me, I know.' The licence was made out, and she DID have him, and what's more she's got him now; and I never had any of the four hundred pound, worse luck. Beg your pardon, sir,' said Sam, when he had concluded, 'but wen I gets on this here grievance, I runs on like a new barrow with the wheel greased.'

Having said which, and having paused for an instant to see whether he was wanted for anything more, Sam left the room.

'Half-past nine - just the time - off at once;' said the gentleman, whom we need hardly introduce as Mr Jingle.

'Time - for what?' said the spinster aunt coquettishly.

'Licence, dearest of angels - give notice at the church - call you mine, to-morrow' - said Mr Jingle, and he squeezed the spinster aunt's hand.

'The licence!' said Rachael, blushing.

'The licence,' repeated Mr Jingle - 'In hurry, post-haste for a licence, In hurry, ding dong I come back.'

'How you run on,' said Rachael.

'Run on - nothing to the hours, days, weeks, months, years, when we're united - run on - they'll fly on - bolt - mizzle - steam-engine - thousand-horse power - nothing to it.'

'Can't - can't we be married before to-morrow morning?' inquired Rachael. 'Impossible - can't be - notice at the church - leave the licence to-day - ceremony come off to-morrow.' 'I am so terrified, lest my brother should discover us!' said Rachael.

'Discover - nonsense - too much shaken by the break-down - besides - extreme caution - gave up the post-chaise - walked on - took a hackney-coach - came to the Borough - last place in the world that he'd look in - ha! ha! - capital notion that - very.'

'Don't be long,' said the spinster affectionately, as Mr Jingle stuck the pinched-up hat on his head.

'Long away from you? - Cruel charmer;' and Mr Jingle skipped playfully up to the spinster aunt, imprinted a chaste kiss upon her lips, and danced out of the room.

'Dear man!' said the spinster, as the door closed after him.

'Rum old girl,' said Mr Jingle, as he walked down the passage.

It is painful to reflect upon the perfidy of our species; and we will not, therefore, pursue the thread of Mr Jingle's meditations, as he wended his way to Doctors' Commons. It will be sufficient for our purpose to relate, that escaping the snares of the dragons in white aprons, who

guard the entrance to that enchanted region, he reached the vicar-general's office in safety and having procured a highly flattering address on parchment, from the Archbishop of Canterbury, to his 'trusty and well-beloved Alfred Jingle and Rachael Wardle, greeting,' he carefully deposited the mystic document in his pocket, and retraced his steps in triumph to the Borough.

He was yet on his way to the White Hart, when two plump gentleman and one thin one entered the yard, and looked round in search of some authorised person of whom they could make a few inquiries. Mr Samuel Weller happened to be at that moment engaged in burnishing a pair of painted tops, the personal property of a farmer who was refreshing himself with a slight lunch of two or three pounds of cold beef and a pot or two of porter, after the fatigues of the Borough market; and to him the thin gentleman straightway advanced.

'My friend,' said the thin gentleman.

'You're one o' the advice gratis order,' thought Sam, 'or you wouldn't be so wery fond o' me all at once.' But he only said - 'Well, Sir.'

'My friend,' said the thin gentleman, with a conciliatory hem - 'have you got many people stopping here now? Pretty busy. Eh?'

Sam stole a look at the inquirer. He was a little high-dried man, with a dark squeezed-up face, and small, restless, black eyes, that kept winking and twinkling on each side of his little inquisitive nose, as if they were playing a perpetual game of peep-bo with that feature. He was dressed all in black, with boots as shiny as his eyes, a low white neckcloth, and a clean shirt with a frill to it. A gold watch-chain, and seals, depended from his fob. He carried his black kid gloves IN his hands, and not ON them; and as he spoke, thrust his wrists beneath his coat tails, with the air of a man who was in the habit of propounding some regular posers.

'Pretty busy, eh?' said the little man.

'Oh, wery well, Sir,' replied Sam, 'we shan't be bankrupts, and we shan't make our fort'ns. We eats our biled mutton without capers, and don't care for horse-radish ven ve can get beef.'

'Ah,' said the little man, 'you're a wag, ain't you?'

'My eldest brother was troubled with that complaint,' said Sam; 'it may be catching - I used to sleep with him.'

'This is a curious old house of yours,' said the little man, looking round him.

'If you'd sent word you was a-coming, we'd ha' had it repaired;' replied the imperturbable Sam.

The little man seemed rather baffled by these several repulses, and a short consultation took place between him and the two plump gentlemen. At its conclusion, the little man took a pinch of snuff from an oblong silver box, and was apparently on the point of renewing the conversation, when one of the plump gentlemen, who in addition to a benevolent countenance, possessed a pair of spectacles, and a pair of black gaiters, interfered -

'The fact of the matter is,' said the benevolent gentleman, 'that my friend here (pointing to the other plump gentleman) will give you half a guinea, if you'll answer one or two - '

'Now, my dear sir - my dear Sir,' said the little man, 'pray, allow me - my dear Sir, the very first principle to be observed in these cases, is this: if you place the matter in the hands of a professional man, you must in no way interfere in the progress of the business; you must repose implicit confidence in him. Really, Mr - ' He turned to the other plump gentleman, and said, 'I forget your friend's name.'

'Pickwick,' said Mr Wardle, for it was no other than that jolly personage.

'Ah, Pickwick - really Mr Pickwick, my dear Sir, excuse me - I shall be happy to receive any private suggestions of yours, as AMICUS CURIAE, but you must see the impropriety of your interfering with my conduct in this case, with such an AD CAPTANDUM argument as the offer of half a guinea. Really, my dear Sir, really;' and the little man took an argumentative pinch of snuff, and looked very profound.

'My only wish, Sir,' said Mr Pickwick, 'was to bring this very unpleasant matter to as speedy a close as possible.'

'Quite right - quite right,' said the little man.

'With which view,' continued Mr Pickwick, 'I made use of the argument which my experience of men has taught me is the most likely to succeed in any case.'

'Ay, ay,' said the little man, 'very good, very good, indeed; but you should have suggested it to me. My dear sir, I'm quite certain you cannot be ignorant of the extent of confidence which must be placed in professional men. If any authority can be necessary on such a point, my dear sir, let me refer you to the well-known case in Barnwell and - '

'Never mind George Barnwell,' interrupted Sam, who had remained a wondering listener during this short colloquy; 'everybody knows what sort of a case his was, tho' it's always been my opinion, mind you, that the young 'ooman deserved scragging a precious sight more than he did. Hows'ever, that's neither here nor there. You want me to accept of half a guinea. Wery well, I'm agreeable: I can't say no fairer than that, can I, sir?' (Mr Pickwick smiled.) Then the next question is, what the devil do you want with me, as the man said, wen he see the ghost?'

'We want to know - ' said Mr Wardle.

'Now, my dear sir - my dear sir,' interposed the busy little man.

Mr Wardle shrugged his shoulders, and was silent.

'We want to know,' said the little man solemnly; 'and we ask the question of you, in order that we may not awaken apprehensions inside - we want to know who you've got in this house at present?'

'Who there is in the house!' said Sam, in whose mind the inmates were always represented by that particular article of their costume, which came under his immediate superintendence. 'There's a vooden leg in number six; there's a pair of Hessians in thirteen; there's two pair of halves in the commercial; there's these here painted tops in the snuggery inside the bar; and five more tops in the coffee-room.'

'Nothing more?' said the little man.

'Stop a bit,' replied Sam, suddenly recollecting himself. 'Yes; there's a pair of Vellingtons a good deal worn, and a pair o' lady's shoes, in number five.'

'What sort of shoes?' hastily inquired Wardle, who, together with Mr Pickwick, had been lost in bewilderment at the singular catalogue of visitors.

'Country make,' replied Sam.

'Any maker's name?'

'Brown.'

'Where of?'

'Muggleton.'

'It is them,' exclaimed Wardle. 'By heavens, we've found them.'

'Hush!' said Sam. 'The Vellingtons has gone to Doctors' Commons.'

'No,' said the little man.

'Yes, for a licence.'

'We're in time,' exclaimed Wardle. 'Show us the room; not a moment is to be lost.'

'Pray, my dear sir - pray,' said the little man; 'caution, caution.' He drew from his pocket a red silk purse, and looked very hard at Sam as he drew out a sovereign.

Sam grinned expressively.

'Show us into the room at once, without announcing us,' said the little man, 'and it's yours.'

Sam threw the painted tops into a corner, and led the way through a dark passage, and up a wide staircase. He paused at the end of a second passage, and held out his hand.

'Here it is,' whispered the attorney, as he deposited the money on the hand of their guide.

The man stepped forward for a few paces, followed by the two friends and their legal adviser. He stopped at a door.

'Is this the room?' murmured the little gentleman.

Sam nodded assent.

Old Wardle opened the door; and the whole three walked into the room just as Mr Jingle, who had that moment returned, had produced the licence to the spinster aunt.

The spinster uttered a loud shriek, and throwing herself into a chair, covered her face with her hands. Mr Jingle crumpled up the licence, and thrust it into his coat pocket. The unwelcome visitors advanced into the middle of the room. 'You - you are a nice rascal, arn't you?' exclaimed Wardle, breathless with passion.

'My dear Sir, my dear sir,' said the little man, laying his hat on the table, 'pray, consider - pray. Defamation of character: action for damages. Calm yourself, my dear sir, pray - '

'How dare you drag my sister from my house?' said the old man.

'Ay - ay - very good,' said the little gentleman, 'you may ask that. How dare you, sir? - eh, sir?'

'Who the devil are you?' inquired Mr Jingle, in so fierce a tone, that the little gentleman involuntarily fell back a step or two.

'Who is he, you scoundrel,' interposed Wardle. 'He's my lawyer, Mr Perker, of Gray's Inn. Perker, I'll have this fellow prosecuted - indicted - I'll - I'll - I'll ruin him. And you,' continued Mr Wardle, turning abruptly round to his sister - 'you, Rachael, at a time of life when you ought to know better, what do you mean by running away with a vagabond, disgracing your family, and making yourself miserable? Get on your bonnet and come back. Call a hackney-coach there, directly, and bring this lady's bill, d'ye hear - d'ye hear?' 'Cert'nly, Sir,' replied Sam, who had answered Wardle's violent ringing of the bell with a degree of celerity which must have appeared marvellous to anybody who didn't know that his eye had been applied to the outside of the keyhole during the whole interview.

'Get on your bonnet,' repeated Wardle.

'Do nothing of the kind,' said Jingle. 'Leave the room, Sir - no business here - lady's free to act as she pleases - more than one-and-twenty.'

'More than one-and-twenty!' ejaculated Wardle contemptuously. 'More than one-and-forty!'

'I ain't,' said the spinster aunt, her indignation getting the better of her determination to faint.

'You are,' replied Wardle; 'you're fifty if you're an hour.'

Here the spinster aunt uttered a loud shriek, and became senseless.

'A glass of water,' said the humane Mr Pickwick, summoning the landlady.

'A glass of water!' said the passionate Wardle. 'Bring a bucket, and throw it all over her; it'll do her good, and she richly deserves it.'

'Ugh, you brute!' ejaculated the kind-hearted landlady. 'Poor dear.' And with sundry ejaculations of 'Come now, there's a dear - drink a little of this - it'll do you good - don't give way so - there's a love,' etc. etc., the landlady, assisted by a chambermaid, proceeded to vinegar the forehead, beat the hands, titillate the nose, and unlace the stays of the spinster aunt, and to administer such other restoratives as are

usually applied by compassionate females to ladies who are endeavouring to ferment themselves into hysterics.

'Coach is ready, Sir,' said Sam, appearing at the door.

'Come along,' cried Wardle. 'I'll carry her downstairs.'

At this proposition, the hysterics came on with redoubled violence. The landlady was about to enter a very violent protest against this proceeding, and had already given vent to an indignant inquiry whether Mr Wardle considered himself a lord of the creation, when Mr Jingle interposed -

'Boots,' said he, 'get me an officer.'

'Stay, stay,' said little Mr Perker. 'Consider, Sir, consider.'

'I'll not consider,' replied Jingle. 'She's her own mistress - see who dares to take her away - unless she wishes it.'

'I WON'T be taken away,' murmured the spinster aunt. 'I DON'T wish it.' (Here there was a frightful relapse.)

'My dear Sir,' said the little man, in a low tone, taking Mr Wardle and Mr Pickwick apart - 'my dear Sir, we're in a very awkward situation. It's a distressing case - very; I never knew one more so; but really, my dear sir, really we have no power to control this lady's actions. I warned you before we came, my dear sir, that there was nothing to look to but a compromise.'

There was a short pause.

'What kind of compromise would you recommend?' inquired Mr Pickwick.

'Why, my dear Sir, our friend's in an unpleasant position - very much so. We must be content to suffer some pecuniary loss.'

'I'll suffer any, rather than submit to this disgrace, and let her, fool as she is, be made miserable for life,' said Wardle.

'I rather think it can be done,' said the bustling little man. 'Mr Jingle, will you step with us into the next room for a moment?'

Mr Jingle assented, and the quartette walked into an empty apartment.

'Now, sir,' said the little man, as he carefully closed the door, 'is there no way of accommodating this matter - step this way, sir, for a moment - into this window, Sir, where we can be alone - there, sir, there, pray sit down, sir. Now, my dear Sir, between you and I, we know very well, my dear Sir, that you have run off with this lady for the sake of her money. Don't frown, Sir, don't frown; I say, between you and I, WE know it. We are both men of the world, and WE know very well that our friends here, are not - eh?'

Mr Jingle's face gradually relaxed; and something distantly resembling a wink quivered for an instant in his left eye.

'Very good, very good,' said the little man, observing the impression he had made. 'Now, the fact is, that beyond a few hundreds, the lady has little or nothing till the death of her mother - fine old lady, my dear Sir.'

'OLD,' said Mr Jingle briefly but emphatically.

'Why, yes,' said the attorney, with a slight cough. 'You are right, my dear Sir, she is rather old. She comes of an old family though, my dear Sir; old in every sense of the word. The founder of that family came into Kent when Julius Caesar invaded Britain; - only one member of it, since, who hasn't lived to eighty-five, and he was beheaded by one of the Henrys. The old lady is not seventy-three now, my dear Sir.' The little man paused, and took a pinch of snuff.

'Well,' cried Mr Jingle.

'Well, my dear sir - you don't take snuff! - ah! so much the better - expensive habit - well, my dear Sir, you're a fine young man, man of the world - able to push your fortune, if you had capital, eh?'

'Well,' said Mr Jingle again.

'Do you comprehend me?'

'Not quite.'

'Don't you think - now, my dear Sir, I put it to you don't you think - that fifty pounds and liberty would be better than Miss Wardle and expectation?'

'Won't do - not half enough!' said Mr Jingle, rising.

'Nay, nay, my dear Sir,' remonstrated the little attorney, seizing him by the button. 'Good round sum - a man like you could treble it in no time - great deal to be done with fifty pounds, my dear Sir.'

'More to be done with a hundred and fifty,' replied Mr Jingle coolly.

'Well, my dear Sir, we won't waste time in splitting straws,' resumed the little man, 'say - say - seventy.' 'Won't do,' said Mr Jingle.

'Don't go away, my dear sir - pray don't hurry,' said the little man. 'Eighty; come: I'll write you a cheque at once.'

'Won't do,' said Mr Jingle.

'Well, my dear Sir, well,' said the little man, still detaining him; 'just tell me what WILL do.'

'Expensive affair,' said Mr Jingle. 'Money out of pocket - posting, nine pounds; licence, three - that's twelve - compensation, a hundred - hundred and twelve - breach of honour - and loss of the lady - '

'Yes, my dear Sir, yes,' said the little man, with a knowing look, 'never mind the last two items. That's a hundred and twelve - say a hundred - come.'

'And twenty,' said Mr Jingle.

'Come, come, I'll write you a cheque,' said the little man; and down he sat at the table for that purpose.

'I'll make it payable the day after to-morrow,' said the little man, with a look towards Mr Wardle; 'and we can get the lady away, meanwhile.' Mr Wardle sullenly nodded assent.

'A hundred,' said the little man.

'And twenty,' said Mr Jingle.

'My dear Sir,' remonstrated the little man.

'Give it him,' interposed Mr Wardle, 'and let him go.'

The cheque was written by the little gentleman, and pocketed by Mr Jingle.

'Now, leave this house instantly!' said Wardle, starting up.

'My dear Sir,' urged the little man.

'And mind,' said Mr Wardle, 'that nothing should have induced me to make this compromise - not even a regard for my family - if I had not

known that the moment you got any money in that pocket of yours, you'd go to the devil faster, if possible, than you would without it - '

'My dear sir,' urged the little man again.

'Be quiet, Perker,' resumed Wardle. 'Leave the room, Sir.'

'Off directly,' said the unabashed Jingle. 'Bye bye, Pickwick.' If any dispassionate spectator could have beheld the countenance of the illustrious man, whose name forms the leading feature of the title of this work, during the latter part of this conversation, he would have been almost induced to wonder that the indignant fire which flashed from his eyes did not melt the glasses of his spectacles - so majestic was his wrath. His nostrils dilated, and his fists clenched involuntarily, as he heard himself addressed by the villain. But he restrained himself again - he did not pulverise him.

'Here,' continued the hardened traitor, tossing the licence at Mr Pickwick's feet; 'get the name altered - take home the lady - do for Tuppy.'

Mr Pickwick was a philosopher, but philosophers are only men in armour, after all. The shaft had reached him, penetrated through his philosophical harness, to his very heart. In the frenzy of his rage, he hurled the inkstand madly forward, and followed it up himself. But Mr Jingle had disappeared, and he found himself caught in the arms of Sam.

'Hollo,' said that eccentric functionary, 'furniter's cheap where you come from, Sir. Self-acting ink, that 'ere; it's wrote your mark upon the wall, old gen'l'm'n. Hold still, Sir; wot's the use o' runnin' arter a man as has made his lucky, and got to t'other end of the Borough by this time?'

Mr Pickwick's mind, like those of all truly great men, was open to conviction. He was a quick and powerful reasoner; and a moment's reflection sufficed to remind him of the impotency of his rage. It subsided as quickly as it had been roused. He panted for breath, and looked benignantly round upon his friends.

Shall we tell the lamentations that ensued when Miss Wardle found herself deserted by the faithless Jingle? Shall we extract Mr Pickwick's masterly description of that heartrending scene? His note-book, blotted with the tears of sympathising humanity, lies open before us; one word, and it is in the printer's hands. But, no! we will be resolute! We will not wring the public bosom, with the delineation of such suffering!

Slowly and sadly did the two friends and the deserted lady return next day in the Muggleton heavy coach. Dimly and darkly had the sombre shadows of a summer's night fallen upon all around, when they again reached Dingley Dell, and stood within the entrance to Manor Farm.