

Chapter XIII

Some Account Of Eatanswill; Of The State Of Parties Therein; And Of The Election Of A Member To Serve In Parliament For That Ancient, Loyal, And Patriotic Borough

We will frankly acknowledge that, up to the period of our being first immersed in the voluminous papers of the Pickwick Club, we had never heard of Eatanswill; we will with equal candour admit that we have in vain searched for proof of the actual existence of such a place at the present day. Knowing the deep reliance to be placed on every note and statement of Mr Pickwick's, and not presuming to set up our recollection against the recorded declarations of that great man, we have consulted every authority, bearing upon the subject, to which we could possibly refer. We have traced every name in schedules A and B, without meeting with that of Eatanswill; we have minutely examined every corner of the pocket county maps issued for the benefit of society by our distinguished publishers, and the same result has attended our investigation. We are therefore led to believe that Mr Pickwick, with that anxious desire to abstain from giving offence to any, and with those delicate feelings for which all who knew him well know he was so eminently remarkable, purposely substituted a fictitious designation, for the real name of the place in which his observations were made. We are confirmed in this belief by a little circumstance, apparently slight and trivial in itself, but when considered in this point of view, not undeserving of notice. In Mr Pickwick's note-book, we can just trace an entry of the fact, that the places of himself and followers were booked by the Norwich coach; but this entry was afterwards lined through, as if for the purpose of concealing even the direction in which the borough is situated. We will not, therefore, hazard a guess upon the subject, but will at once proceed with this history, content with the materials which its characters have provided for us.

It appears, then, that the Eatanswill people, like the people of many other small towns, considered themselves of the utmost and most mighty importance, and that every man in Eatanswill, conscious of the weight that attached to his example, felt himself bound to unite, heart and soul, with one of the two great parties that divided the town - the Blues and the Buffs. Now the Blues lost no opportunity of opposing the Buffs, and the Buffs lost no opportunity of opposing the Blues; and the consequence was, that whenever the Buffs and Blues met together at public meeting, town-hall, fair, or market, disputes and high words arose between them. With these dissensions it is almost superfluous to say that everything in Eatanswill was made a party question. If the Buffs proposed to new skylight the market-place, the Blues got up public meetings, and denounced the proceeding; if the Blues proposed the erection of an additional pump in the High

Street, the Buffs rose as one man and stood aghast at the enormity. There were Blue shops and Buff shops, Blue inns and Buff inns - there was a Blue aisle and a Buff aisle in the very church itself.

Of course it was essentially and indispensably necessary that each of these powerful parties should have its chosen organ and representative: and, accordingly, there were two newspapers in the town - the Eatanswill GAZETTE and the Eatanswill INDEPENDENT; the former advocating Blue principles, and the latter conducted on grounds decidedly Buff. Fine newspapers they were. Such leading articles, and such spirited attacks! - 'Our worthless contemporary, the GAZETTE' - 'That disgraceful and dastardly journal, the INDEPENDENT' - 'That false and scurrilous print, the INDEPENDENT' - 'That vile and slanderous calumniator, the GAZETTE;' these, and other spirit-stirring denunciations, were strewn plentifully over the columns of each, in every number, and excited feelings of the most intense delight and indignation in the bosoms of the townspeople.

Mr Pickwick, with his usual foresight and sagacity, had chosen a peculiarly desirable moment for his visit to the borough. Never was such a contest known. The Honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall, was the Blue candidate; and Horatio Fizkin, Esq., of Fizkin Lodge, near Eatanswill, had been prevailed upon by his friends to stand forward on the Buff interest. The GAZETTE warned the electors of Eatanswill that the eyes not only of England, but of the whole civilised world, were upon them; and the INDEPENDENT imperatively demanded to know, whether the constituency of Eatanswill were the grand fellows they had always taken them for, or base and servile tools, undeserving alike of the name of Englishmen and the blessings of freedom. Never had such a commotion agitated the town before.

It was late in the evening when Mr Pickwick and his companions, assisted by Sam, dismounted from the roof of the Eatanswill coach. Large blue silk flags were flying from the windows of the Town Arms Inn, and bills were posted in every sash, intimating, in gigantic letters, that the Honourable Samuel Slumkey's committee sat there daily. A crowd of idlers were assembled in the road, looking at a hoarse man in the balcony, who was apparently talking himself very red in the face in Mr Slumkey's behalf; but the force and point of whose arguments were somewhat impaired by the perpetual beating of four large drums which Mr Fizkin's committee had stationed at the street corner. There was a busy little man beside him, though, who took off his hat at intervals and motioned to the people to cheer, which they regularly did, most enthusiastically; and as the red-faced gentleman went on talking till he was redder in the face than ever, it seemed to answer his purpose quite as well as if anybody had heard him.

The Pickwickians had no sooner dismounted than they were surrounded by a branch mob of the honest and independent, who forthwith set up three deafening cheers, which being responded to by the main body (for it's not at all necessary for a crowd to know what they are cheering about), swelled into a tremendous roar of triumph, which stopped even the red-faced man in the balcony.

'Hurrah!' shouted the mob, in conclusion.

'One cheer more,' screamed the little fogleman in the balcony, and out shouted the mob again, as if lungs were cast-iron, with steel works.

'Slumkey for ever!' roared the honest and independent.

'Slumkey for ever!' echoed Mr Pickwick, taking off his hat. 'No Fizkin!' roared the crowd.

'Certainly not!' shouted Mr Pickwick. 'Hurrah!' And then there was another roaring, like that of a whole menagerie when the elephant has rung the bell for the cold meat.

'Who is Slumkey?' whispered Mr Tupman.

'I don't know,' replied Mr Pickwick, in the same tone. 'Hush. Don't ask any questions. It's always best on these occasions to do what the mob do.'

'But suppose there are two mobs?' suggested Mr Snodgrass.

'Shout with the largest,' replied Mr Pickwick.

Volumes could not have said more.

They entered the house, the crowd opening right and left to let them pass, and cheering vociferously. The first object of consideration was to secure quarters for the night.

'Can we have beds here?' inquired Mr Pickwick, summoning the waiter.

'Don't know, Sir,' replied the man; 'afraid we're full, sir - I'll inquire, Sir.' Away he went for that purpose, and presently returned, to ask whether the gentleman were 'Blue.'

As neither Mr Pickwick nor his companions took any vital interest in the cause of either candidate, the question was rather a difficult one to answer. In this dilemma Mr Pickwick bethought himself of his new friend, Mr Perker.

'Do you know a gentleman of the name of Perker?' inquired Mr Pickwick.

'Certainly, Sir; Honourable Mr Samuel Slumkey's agent.'

'He is Blue, I think?'

'Oh, yes, Sir.'

'Then WE are Blue,' said Mr Pickwick; but observing that the man looked rather doubtful at this accommodating announcement, he gave him his card, and desired him to present it to Mr Perker forthwith, if he should happen to be in the house. The waiter retired; and reappearing almost immediately with a request that Mr Pickwick would follow him, led the way to a large room on the first floor, where, seated at a long table covered with books and papers, was Mr Perker.

'Ah - ah, my dear Sir,' said the little man, advancing to meet him; 'very happy to see you, my dear Sir, very. Pray sit down. So you have carried your intention into effect. You have come down here to see an election - eh?' Mr Pickwick replied in the affirmative.

'Spirited contest, my dear sir,' said the little man.

'I'm delighted to hear it,' said Mr Pickwick, rubbing his hands. 'I like to see sturdy patriotism, on whatever side it is called forth - and so it's a spirited contest?'

'Oh, yes,' said the little man, 'very much so indeed. We have opened all the public-houses in the place, and left our adversary nothing but the beer-shops-masterly stroke of policy that, my dear Sir, eh?' The little man smiled complacently, and took a large pinch of snuff.

'And what are the probabilities as to the result of the contest?' inquired Mr Pickwick.

'Why, doubtful, my dear Sir; rather doubtful as yet,' replied the little man. 'Fizkin's people have got three-and-thirty voters in the lock-up coach-house at the White Hart.'

'In the coach-house!' said Mr Pickwick, considerably astonished by this second stroke of policy.

'They keep 'em locked up there till they want 'em,' resumed the little man. 'The effect of that is, you see, to prevent our getting at them; and even if we could, it would be of no use, for they keep them very drunk on purpose. Smart fellow Fizkin's agent - very smart fellow indeed.'

Mr Pickwick stared, but said nothing.

'We are pretty confident, though,' said Mr Perker, sinking his voice almost to a whisper. 'We had a little tea-party here, last night - five-and-forty women, my dear sir - and gave every one of 'em a green parasol when she went away.'

'A parasol!' said Mr Pickwick.

'Fact, my dear Sir, fact. Five-and-forty green parasols, at seven and sixpence a-piece. All women like finery - extraordinary the effect of those parasols. Secured all their husbands, and half their brothers - beats stockings, and flannel, and all that sort of thing hollow. My idea, my dear Sir, entirely. Hail, rain, or sunshine, you can't walk half a dozen yards up the street, without encountering half a dozen green parasols.'

Here the little man indulged in a convulsion of mirth, which was only checked by the entrance of a third party.

This was a tall, thin man, with a sandy-coloured head inclined to baldness, and a face in which solemn importance was blended with a look of unfathomable profundity. He was dressed in a long brown surtout, with a black cloth waistcoat, and drab trousers. A double eyeglass dangled at his waistcoat; and on his head he wore a very low-crowned hat with a broad brim. The new-comer was introduced to Mr Pickwick as Mr Pott, the editor of the Eatanswill GAZETTE. After a few preliminary remarks, Mr Pott turned round to Mr Pickwick, and said with solemnity -

'This contest excites great interest in the metropolis, sir?'

'I believe it does,' said Mr Pickwick.

'To which I have reason to know,' said Pott, looking towards Mr Perker for corroboration - 'to which I have reason to know that my article of last Saturday in some degree contributed.'

'Not the least doubt of it,' said the little man.

'The press is a mighty engine, sir,' said Pott.

Mr Pickwick yielded his fullest assent to the proposition.

'But I trust, sir,' said Pott, 'that I have never abused the enormous power I wield. I trust, sir, that I have never pointed the noble instrument which is placed in my hands, against the sacred bosom of private life, or the tender breast of individual reputation; I trust, sir,

that I have devoted my energies to - to endeavours - humble they may be, humble I know they are - to instil those principles of - which - are - '

Here the editor of the Eatanswill GAZETTE, appearing to ramble, Mr Pickwick came to his relief, and said -

'Certainly.'

'And what, Sir,' said Pott - 'what, Sir, let me ask you as an impartial man, is the state of the public mind in London, with reference to my contest with the INDEPENDENT?'

'Greatly excited, no doubt,' interposed Mr Perker, with a look of slyness which was very likely accidental.

'The contest,' said Pott, 'shall be prolonged so long as I have health and strength, and that portion of talent with which I am gifted. From that contest, Sir, although it may unsettle men's minds and excite their feelings, and render them incapable for the discharge of the everyday duties of ordinary life; from that contest, sir, I will never shrink, till I have set my heel upon the Eatanswill INDEPENDENT. I wish the people of London, and the people of this country to know, sir, that they may rely upon me - that I will not desert them, that I am resolved to stand by them, Sir, to the last.' 'Your conduct is most noble, Sir,' said Mr Pickwick; and he grasped the hand of the magnanimous Pott. 'You are, sir, I perceive, a man of sense and talent,' said Mr Pott, almost breathless with the vehemence of his patriotic declaration. 'I am most happy, sir, to make the acquaintance of such a man.'

'And I,' said Mr Pickwick, 'feel deeply honoured by this expression of your opinion. Allow me, sir, to introduce you to my fellow-travellers, the other corresponding members of the club I am proud to have founded.'

'I shall be delighted,' said Mr Pott.

Mr Pickwick withdrew, and returning with his friends, presented them in due form to the editor of the Eatanswill GAZETTE.

'Now, my dear Pott,' said little Mr Perker, 'the question is, what are we to do with our friends here?'

'We can stop in this house, I suppose,' said Mr Pickwick.

'Not a spare bed in the house, my dear sir - not a single bed.'

'Extremely awkward,' said Mr Pickwick.

'Very,' said his fellow-voyagers.

'I have an idea upon this subject,' said Mr Pott, 'which I think may be very successfully adopted. They have two beds at the Peacock, and I can boldly say, on behalf of Mrs. Pott, that she will be delighted to accommodate Mr Pickwick and any one of his friends, if the other two gentlemen and their servant do not object to shifting, as they best can, at the Peacock.'

After repeated pressings on the part of Mr Pott, and repeated protestations on that of Mr Pickwick that he could not think of incommoding or troubling his amiable wife, it was decided that it was the only feasible arrangement that could be made. So it WAS made; and after dinner together at the Town Arms, the friends separated, Mr Tupman and Mr Snodgrass repairing to the Peacock, and Mr Pickwick and Mr Winkle proceeding to the mansion of Mr Pott; it having been previously arranged that they should all reassemble at the Town Arms in the morning, and accompany the Honourable Samuel Slumkey's procession to the place of nomination.

Mr Pott's domestic circle was limited to himself and his wife. All men whom mighty genius has raised to a proud eminence in the world, have usually some little weakness which appears the more conspicuous from the contrast it presents to their general character. If Mr Pott had a weakness, it was, perhaps, that he was rather too submissive to the somewhat contemptuous control and sway of his wife. We do not feel justified in laying any particular stress upon the fact, because on the present occasion all Mrs. Pott's most winning ways were brought into requisition to receive the two gentlemen.

'My dear,' said Mr Pott, 'Mr Pickwick - Mr Pickwick of London.'

Mrs. Pott received Mr Pickwick's paternal grasp of the hand with enchanting sweetness; and Mr Winkle, who had not been announced at all, sidled and bowed, unnoticed, in an obscure corner.

'P. my dear' - said Mrs. Pott.

'My life,' said Mr Pott.

'Pray introduce the other gentleman.'

'I beg a thousand pardons,' said Mr Pott. 'Permit me, Mrs. Pott, Mr - '

'Winkle,' said Mr Pickwick.

'Winkle,' echoed Mr Pott; and the ceremony of introduction was complete.

'We owe you many apologies, ma'am,' said Mr Pickwick, 'for disturbing your domestic arrangements at so short a notice.'

'I beg you won't mention it, sir,' replied the feminine Pott, with vivacity. 'It is a high treat to me, I assure you, to see any new faces; living as I do, from day to day, and week to week, in this dull place, and seeing nobody.'

'Nobody, my dear!' exclaimed Mr Pott archly.

'Nobody but you,' retorted Mrs. Pott, with asperity.

'You see, Mr Pickwick,' said the host in explanation of his wife's lament, 'that we are in some measure cut off from many enjoyments and pleasures of which we might otherwise partake. My public station, as editor of the Eatanswill GAZETTE, the position which that paper holds in the country, my constant immersion in the vortex of politics - '

'P. my dear - ' interposed Mrs. Pott.

'My life - ' said the editor. 'I wish, my dear, you would endeavour to find some topic of conversation in which these gentlemen might take some rational interest.'

'But, my love,' said Mr Pott, with great humility, 'Mr Pickwick does take an interest in it.'

'It's well for him if he can,' said Mrs. Pott emphatically; 'I am wearied out of my life with your politics, and quarrels with the INDEPENDENT, and nonsense. I am quite astonished, P., at your making such an exhibition of your absurdity.'

'But, my dear - ' said Mr Pott.

'Oh, nonsense, don't talk to me,' said Mrs. Pott. 'Do you play ecarte, Sir?'

'I shall be very happy to learn under your tuition,' replied Mr Winkle.

'Well, then, draw that little table into this window, and let me get out of hearing of those prosy politics.'

'Jane,' said Mr Pott, to the servant who brought in candles, 'go down into the office, and bring me up the file of the GAZETTE for eighteen

hundred and twenty-six. I'll read you,' added the editor, turning to Mr Pickwick - 'I'll just read you a few of the leaders I wrote at that time upon the Buff job of appointing a new tollman to the turnpike here; I rather think they'll amuse you.'

'I should like to hear them very much indeed,' said Mr Pickwick.

Up came the file, and down sat the editor, with Mr Pickwick at his side.

We have in vain pored over the leaves of Mr Pickwick's note-book, in the hope of meeting with a general summary of these beautiful compositions. We have every reason to believe that he was perfectly enraptured with the vigour and freshness of the style; indeed Mr Winkle has recorded the fact that his eyes were closed, as if with excess of pleasure, during the whole time of their perusal.

The announcement of supper put a stop both to the game of ecarte, and the recapitulation of the beauties of the Eatanswill GAZETTE. Mrs. Pott was in the highest spirits and the most agreeable humour. Mr Winkle had already made considerable progress in her good opinion, and she did not hesitate to inform him, confidentially, that Mr Pickwick was 'a delightful old dear.' These terms convey a familiarity of expression, in which few of those who were intimately acquainted with that colossal-minded man, would have presumed to indulge. We have preserved them, nevertheless, as affording at once a touching and a convincing proof of the estimation in which he was held by every class of society, and the case with which he made his way to their hearts and feelings.

It was a late hour of the night - long after Mr Tupman and Mr Snodgrass had fallen asleep in the inmost recesses of the Peacock - when the two friends retired to rest. Slumber soon fell upon the senses of Mr Winkle, but his feelings had been excited, and his admiration roused; and for many hours after sleep had rendered him insensible to earthly objects, the face and figure of the agreeable Mrs. Pott presented themselves again and again to his wandering imagination.

The noise and bustle which ushered in the morning were sufficient to dispel from the mind of the most romantic visionary in existence, any associations but those which were immediately connected with the rapidly-approaching election. The beating of drums, the blowing of horns and trumpets, the shouting of men, and tramping of horses, echoed and re - echoed through the streets from the earliest dawn of day; and an occasional fight between the light skirmishers of either party at once enlivened the preparations, and agreeably diversified their character. 'Well, Sam,' said Mr Pickwick, as his valet appeared at

his bedroom door, just as he was concluding his toilet; 'all alive to-day, I suppose?'

'Reg'lar game, sir,' replied Mr Weller; 'our people's a-collecting down at the Town Arms, and they're a-hollering themselves hoarse already.'

'Ah,' said Mr Pickwick, 'do they seem devoted to their party, Sam?'

'Never see such dewotion in my life, Sir.'

'Energetic, eh?' said Mr Pickwick.

'Uncommon,' replied Sam; 'I never see men eat and drink so much afore. I wonder they ain't afeer'd o' bustin'.'

'That's the mistaken kindness of the gentry here,' said Mr Pickwick.

'Wery likely,' replied Sam briefly.

'Fine, fresh, hearty fellows they seem,' said Mr Pickwick, glancing from the window.

'Wery fresh,' replied Sam; 'me and the two waiters at the Peacock has been a-pumpin' over the independent woters as supped there last night.'

'Pumping over independent voters!' exclaimed Mr Pickwick.

'Yes,' said his attendant, 'every man slept vere he fell down; we dragged 'em out, one by one, this mornin', and put 'em under the pump, and they're in reg'lar fine order now. Shillin' a head the committee paid for that 'ere job.'

'Can such things be!' exclaimed the astonished Mr Pickwick.

'Lord bless your heart, sir,' said Sam, 'why where was you half baptised? - that's nothin', that ain't.'

'Nothing?' said Mr Pickwick. 'Nothin' at all, Sir,' replied his attendant. 'The night afore the last day o' the last election here, the opposite party bribed the barmaid at the Town Arms, to hocus the brandy-and-water of fourteen unpolled electors as was a-stoppin' in the house.'

'What do you mean by 'hocussing' brandy-and-water?' inquired Mr Pickwick.

'Puttin' laud'num in it,' replied Sam. 'Blessed if she didn't send 'em all to sleep till twelve hours arter the election was over. They took one

man up to the booth, in a truck, fast asleep, by way of experiment, but it was no go - they wouldn't poll him; so they brought him back, and put him to bed again.' 'Strange practices, these,' said Mr Pickwick; half speaking to himself and half addressing Sam.

'Not half so strange as a miraculous circumstance as happened to my own father, at an election time, in this wery place, Sir,' replied Sam.

'What was that?' inquired Mr Pickwick.

'Why, he drove a coach down here once,' said Sam; "lection time came on, and he was engaged by vun party to bring down woters from London. Night afore he was going to drive up, committee on t' other side sends for him quietly, and away he goes vith the messenger, who shows him in; - large room - lots of gen'l'm'n - heaps of papers, pens and ink, and all that 'ere. 'Ah, Mr Weller,' says the gen'l'm'n in the chair, 'glad to see you, sir; how are you?' - 'Wery well, thank 'ee, Sir,' says my father; 'I hope you're pretty middlin,' says he. - 'Pretty well, thank'ee, Sir,' says the gen'l'm'n; 'sit down, Mr Weller - pray sit down, sir.' So my father sits down, and he and the gen'l'm'n looks wery hard at each other. 'You don't remember me?' said the gen'l'm'n. - 'Can't say I do,' says my father. - 'Oh, I know you,' says the gen'l'm'n: 'know'd you when you was a boy,' says he. - 'Well, I don't remember you,' says my father. - 'That's wery odd,' says the gen'l'm'n.' - 'Wery,' says my father. - 'You must have a bad mem'ry, Mr Weller,' says the gen'l'm'n. - 'Well, it is a wery bad 'un,' says my father. - 'I thought so,' says the gen'l'm'n. So then they pours him out a glass of wine, and gammons him about his driving, and gets him into a reg'lar good humour, and at last shoves a twenty-pound note into his hand. 'It's a wery bad road between this and London,' says the gen'l'm'n. - 'Here and there it is a heavy road,' says my father. - 'Specially near the canal, I think,' says the gen'l'm'n. - 'Nasty bit that 'ere,' says my father. - 'Well, Mr Weller,' says the gen'l'm'n, 'you're a wery good whip, and can do what you like with your horses, we know. We're all wery fond o' you, Mr Weller, so in case you should have an accident when you're bringing these here woters down, and should tip 'em over into the canal vithout hurtin' of 'em, this is for yourself,' says he. - 'Gen'l'm'n, you're wery kind,' says my father, 'and I'll drink your health in another glass of wine,' says he; vich he did, and then buttons up the money, and bows himself out. You wouldn't believe, sir,' continued Sam, with a look of inexpressible impudence at his master, 'that on the wery day as he came down with them woters, his coach WAS upset on that 'ere wery spot, and ev'ry man on 'em was turned into the canal.'

'And got out again?' inquired Mr Pickwick hastily.

'Why,' replied Sam very slowly, 'I rather think one old gen'l'm'n was missin'; I know his hat was found, but I ain't quite certain whether his head was in it or not. But what I look at is the hex-traordinary and wonderful coincidence, that arter what that gen'l'm'n said, my father's coach should be upset in that wery place, and on that wery day!'

'it is, no doubt, a very extraordinary circumstance indeed,' said Mr Pickwick. 'But brush my hat, Sam, for I hear Mr Winkle calling me to breakfast.'

With these words Mr Pickwick descended to the parlour, where he found breakfast laid, and the family already assembled. The meal was hastily despatched; each of the gentlemen's hats was decorated with an enormous blue favour, made up by the fair hands of Mrs. Pott herself; and as Mr Winkle had undertaken to escort that lady to a house-top, in the immediate vicinity of the hustings, Mr Pickwick and Mr Pott repaired alone to the Town Arms, from the back window of which, one of Mr Slumkey's committee was addressing six small boys and one girl, whom he dignified, at every second sentence, with the imposing title of 'Men of Eatanswill,' whereat the six small boys aforesaid cheered prodigiously.

The stable-yard exhibited unequivocal symptoms of the glory and strength of the Eatanswill Blues. There was a regular army of blue flags, some with one handle, and some with two, exhibiting appropriate devices, in golden characters four feet high, and stout in proportion. There was a grand band of trumpets, bassoons, and drums, marshalled four abreast, and earning their money, if ever men did, especially the drum-beaters, who were very muscular. There were bodies of constables with blue staves, twenty committee-men with blue scarfs, and a mob of voters with blue cockades. There were electors on horseback and electors afoot. There was an open carriage-and-four, for the Honourable Samuel Slumkey; and there were four carriage-and- pair, for his friends and supporters; and the flags were rustling, and the band was playing, and the constables were swearing, and the twenty committee-men were squabbling, and the mob were shouting, and the horses were backing, and the post-boys perspiring; and everybody, and everything, then and there assembled, was for the special use, behoof, honour, and renown, of the Honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall, one of the candidates for the representation of the borough of Eatanswill, in the Commons House of Parliament of the United Kingdom. Loud and long were the cheers, and mighty was the rustling of one of the blue flags, with 'Liberty of the Press' inscribed thereon, when the sandy head of Mr Pott was discerned in one of the windows, by the mob beneath; and tremendous was the enthusiasm when the Honourable Samuel Slumkey himself, in top-boots, and a blue neckerchief, advanced and seized the hand of the said Pott, and melodramatically testified by

gestures to the crowd, his ineffaceable obligations to the Eatanswill GAZETTE.

'Is everything ready?' said the Honourable Samuel Slumkey to Mr Perker.

'Everything, my dear Sir,' was the little man's reply.

'Nothing has been omitted, I hope?' said the Honourable Samuel Slumkey.

'Nothing has been left undone, my dear sir - nothing whatever. There are twenty washed men at the street door for you to shake hands with; and six children in arms that you're to pat on the head, and inquire the age of; be particular about the children, my dear sir - it has always a great effect, that sort of thing.'

'I'll take care,' said the Honourable Samuel Slumkey.

'And, perhaps, my dear Sir,' said the cautious little man, 'perhaps if you could - I don't mean to say it's indispensable - but if you could manage to kiss one of 'em, it would produce a very great impression on the crowd.'

'Wouldn't it have as good an effect if the proposer or seconder did that?' said the Honourable Samuel Slumkey.

'Why, I am afraid it wouldn't,' replied the agent; 'if it were done by yourself, my dear Sir, I think it would make you very popular.'

'Very well,' said the Honourable Samuel Slumkey, with a resigned air, 'then it must be done. That's all.'

'Arrange the procession,' cried the twenty committee-men.

Amidst the cheers of the assembled throng, the band, and the constables, and the committee-men, and the voters, and the horsemen, and the carriages, took their places - each of the two-horse vehicles being closely packed with as many gentlemen as could manage to stand upright in it; and that assigned to Mr Perker, containing Mr Pickwick, Mr Tupman, Mr Snodgrass, and about half a dozen of the committee besides.

There was a moment of awful suspense as the procession waited for the Honourable Samuel Slumkey to step into his carriage. Suddenly the crowd set up a great cheering.

'He has come out,' said little Mr Perker, greatly excited; the more so as their position did not enable them to see what was going forward.

Another cheer, much louder.

'He has shaken hands with the men,' cried the little agent.

Another cheer, far more vehement.

'He has patted the babies on the head,' said Mr Perker, trembling with anxiety.

A roar of applause that rent the air.

'He has kissed one of 'em!' exclaimed the delighted little man.

A second roar.

'He has kissed another,' gasped the excited manager.

A third roar.

'He's kissing 'em all!' screamed the enthusiastic little gentleman, and hailed by the deafening shouts of the multitude, the procession moved on.

How or by what means it became mixed up with the other procession, and how it was ever extricated from the confusion consequent thereupon, is more than we can undertake to describe, inasmuch as Mr Pickwick's hat was knocked over his eyes, nose, and mouth, by one poke of a Buff flag-staff, very early in the proceedings. He describes himself as being surrounded on every side, when he could catch a glimpse of the scene, by angry and ferocious countenances, by a vast cloud of dust, and by a dense crowd of combatants. He represents himself as being forced from the carriage by some unseen power, and being personally engaged in a pugilistic encounter; but with whom, or how, or why, he is wholly unable to state. He then felt himself forced up some wooden steps by the persons from behind; and on removing his hat, found himself surrounded by his friends, in the very front of the left hand side of the hustings. The right was reserved for the Buff party, and the centre for the mayor and his officers; one of whom - the fat crier of Eatanswill - was ringing an enormous bell, by way of commanding silence, while Mr Horatio Fizkin, and the Honourable Samuel Slumkey, with their hands upon their hearts, were bowing with the utmost affability to the troubled sea of heads that inundated the open space in front; and from whence arose a storm of groans, and shouts, and yells, and hootings, that would have done honour to an earthquake.

'There's Winkle,' said Mr Tupman, pulling his friend by the sleeve.

'Where!' said Mr Pickwick, putting on his spectacles, which he had fortunately kept in his pocket hitherto. 'There,' said Mr Tupman, 'on the top of that house.' And there, sure enough, in the leaden gutter of a tiled roof, were Mr Winkle and Mrs. Pott, comfortably seated in a couple of chairs, waving their handkerchiefs in token of recognition - a compliment which Mr Pickwick returned by kissing his hand to the lady.

The proceedings had not yet commenced; and as an inactive crowd is generally disposed to be jocose, this very innocent action was sufficient to awaken their facetiousness.

'Oh, you wicked old rascal,' cried one voice, 'looking arter the girls, are you?'

'Oh, you venerable sinner,' cried another.

'Putting on his spectacles to look at a married 'ooman!' said a third.

'I see him a-winkin' at her, with his wicked old eye,' shouted a fourth.

'Look arter your wife, Pott,' bellowed a fifth - and then there was a roar of laughter.

As these taunts were accompanied with invidious comparisons between Mr Pickwick and an aged ram, and several witticisms of the like nature; and as they moreover rather tended to convey reflections upon the honour of an innocent lady, Mr Pickwick's indignation was excessive; but as silence was proclaimed at the moment, he contented himself by scorching the mob with a look of pity for their misguided minds, at which they laughed more boisterously than ever.

'Silence!' roared the mayor's attendants.

'Whiffin, proclaim silence,' said the mayor, with an air of pomp befitting his lofty station. In obedience to this command the crier performed another concerto on the bell, whereupon a gentleman in the crowd called out 'Muffins'; which occasioned another laugh.

'Gentlemen,' said the mayor, at as loud a pitch as he could possibly force his voice to - 'gentlemen. Brother electors of the borough of Eatanswill. We are met here to-day for the purpose of choosing a representative in the room of our late - '

Here the mayor was interrupted by a voice in the crowd.

'Suc-cess to the mayor!' cried the voice, 'and may he never desert the nail and sarspan business, as he got his money by.'

This allusion to the professional pursuits of the orator was received with a storm of delight, which, with a bell-accompaniment, rendered the remainder of his speech inaudible, with the exception of the concluding sentence, in which he thanked the meeting for the patient attention with which they heard him throughout - an expression of gratitude which elicited another burst of mirth, of about a quarter of an hour's duration.

Next, a tall, thin gentleman, in a very stiff white neckerchief, after being repeatedly desired by the crowd to 'send a boy home, to ask whether he hadn't left his voice under the pillow,' begged to nominate a fit and proper person to represent them in Parliament. And when he said it was Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, near Eatanswill, the Fizkinites applauded, and the Slumkeyites groaned, so long, and so loudly, that both he and the seconder might have sung comic songs in lieu of speaking, without anybody's being a bit the wiser.

The friends of Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, having had their innings, a little choleric, pink-faced man stood forward to propose another fit and proper person to represent the electors of Eatanswill in Parliament; and very swimmingly the pink-faced gentleman would have got on, if he had not been rather too choleric to entertain a sufficient perception of the fun of the crowd. But after a very few sentences of figurative eloquence, the pink-faced gentleman got from denouncing those who interrupted him in the mob, to exchanging defiances with the gentlemen on the hustings; whereupon arose an uproar which reduced him to the necessity of expressing his feelings by serious pantomime, which he did, and then left the stage to his seconder, who delivered a written speech of half an hour's length, and wouldn't be stopped, because he had sent it all to the Eatanswill GAZETTE, and the Eatanswill GAZETTE had already printed it, every word.

Then Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, near Eatanswill, presented himself for the purpose of addressing the electors; which he no sooner did, than the band employed by the Honourable Samuel Slumkey, commenced performing with a power to which their strength in the morning was a trifle; in return for which, the Buff crowd belaboured the heads and shoulders of the Blue crowd; on which the Blue crowd endeavoured to dispossess themselves of their very unpleasant neighbours the Buff crowd; and a scene of struggling, and pushing, and fighting, succeeded, to which we can no more do justice than the mayor could, although he issued imperative orders to twelve constables to seize the ringleaders, who might amount in number to two hundred and fifty, or thereabouts. At all these encounters, Horatio

Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, and his friends, waxed fierce and furious; until at last Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, begged to ask his opponent, the Honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall, whether that band played by his consent; which question the Honourable Samuel Slumkey declining to answer, Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, shook his fist in the countenance of the Honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall; upon which the Honourable Samuel Slumkey, his blood being up, defied Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, to mortal combat. At this violation of all known rules and precedents of order, the mayor commanded another fantasia on the bell, and declared that he would bring before himself, both Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, and the Honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall, and bind them over to keep the peace. Upon this terrific denunciation, the supporters of the two candidates interfered, and after the friends of each party had quarrelled in pairs, for three-quarters of an hour, Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, touched his hat to the Honourable Samuel Slumkey; the Honourable Samuel Slumkey touched his to Horatio Fizkin, Esquire; the band was stopped; the crowd were partially quieted; and Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, was permitted to proceed.

The speeches of the two candidates, though differing in every other respect, afforded a beautiful tribute to the merit and high worth of the electors of Eatanswill. Both expressed their opinion that a more independent, a more enlightened, a more public-spirited, a more noble-minded, a more disinterested set of men than those who had promised to vote for him, never existed on earth; each darkly hinted his suspicions that the electors in the opposite interest had certain swinish and besotted infirmities which rendered them unfit for the exercise of the important duties they were called upon to discharge. Fizkin expressed his readiness to do anything he was wanted: Slumkey, his determination to do nothing that was asked of him. Both said that the trade, the manufactures, the commerce, the prosperity of Eatanswill, would ever be dearer to their hearts than any earthly object; and each had it in his power to state, with the utmost confidence, that he was the man who would eventually be returned.

There was a show of hands; the mayor decided in favour of the Honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall. Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, demanded a poll, and a poll was fixed accordingly. Then a vote of thanks was moved to the mayor for his able conduct in the chair; and the mayor, devoutly wishing that he had had a chair to display his able conduct in (for he had been standing during the whole proceedings), returned thanks. The processions reformed, the carriages rolled slowly through the crowd, and its members screeched and shouted after them as their feelings or caprice dictated.

During the whole time of the polling, the town was in a perpetual fever of excitement. Everything was conducted on the most liberal and delightful scale. Excisable articles were remarkably cheap at all the public-houses; and spring vans paraded the streets for the accommodation of voters who were seized with any temporary dizziness in the head - an epidemic which prevailed among the electors, during the contest, to a most alarming extent, and under the influence of which they might frequently be seen lying on the pavements in a state of utter insensibility. A small body of electors remained unpolled on the very last day. They were calculating and reflecting persons, who had not yet been convinced by the arguments of either party, although they had frequent conferences with each. One hour before the close of the poll, Mr Perker solicited the honour of a private interview with these intelligent, these noble, these patriotic men. it was granted. His arguments were brief but satisfactory. They went in a body to the poll; and when they returned, the Honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall, was returned also.

Chapter XIV

Comprising A Brief Description Of The Company At The Peacock Assembled; And A Tale Told By A Bagman

It is pleasant to turn from contemplating the strife and turmoil of political existence, to the peaceful repose of private life. Although in reality no great partisan of either side, Mr Pickwick was sufficiently fired with Mr Pott's enthusiasm, to apply his whole time and attention to the proceedings, of which the last chapter affords a description compiled from his own memoranda. Nor while he was thus occupied was Mr Winkle idle, his whole time being devoted to pleasant walks and short country excursions with Mrs. Pott, who never failed, when such an opportunity presented itself, to seek some relief from the tedious monotony she so constantly complained of. The two gentlemen being thus completely domesticated in the editor's house, Mr Tupman and Mr Snodgrass were in a great measure cast upon their own resources. Taking but little interest in public affairs, they beguiled their time chiefly with such amusements as the Peacock afforded, which were limited to a bagatelle-board in the first floor, and a sequestered skittle-ground in the back yard. In the science and nicety of both these recreations, which are far more abstruse than ordinary men suppose, they were gradually initiated by Mr Weller, who possessed a perfect knowledge of such pastimes. Thus, notwithstanding that they were in a great measure deprived of the comfort and advantage of Mr Pickwick's society, they were still enabled to beguile the time, and to prevent its hanging heavily on their hands.