

## **Chapter XIX**

### **A Pleasant Day With An Unpleasant Termination**

The birds, who, happily for their own peace of mind and personal comfort, were in blissful ignorance of the preparations which had been making to astonish them, on the first of September, hailed it, no doubt, as one of the pleasantest mornings they had seen that season. Many a young partridge who strutted complacently among the stubble, with all the finicking coxcombry of youth, and many an older one who watched his levity out of his little round eye, with the contemptuous air of a bird of wisdom and experience, alike unconscious of their approaching doom, basked in the fresh morning air with lively and blithesome feelings, and a few hours afterwards were laid low upon the earth. But we grow affecting: let us proceed.

In plain commonplace matter-of-fact, then, it was a fine morning - so fine that you would scarcely have believed that the few months of an English summer had yet flown by. Hedges, fields, and trees, hill and moorland, presented to the eye their ever-varying shades of deep rich green; scarce a leaf had fallen, scarce a sprinkle of yellow mingled with the hues of summer, warned you that autumn had begun. The sky was cloudless; the sun shone out bright and warm; the songs of birds, the hum of myriads of summer insects, filled the air; and the cottage gardens, crowded with flowers of every rich and beautiful tint, sparkled, in the heavy dew, like beds of glittering jewels. Everything bore the stamp of summer, and none of its beautiful colour had yet faded from the die.

Such was the morning, when an open carriage, in which were three Pickwickians (Mr Snodgrass having preferred to remain at home), Mr Wardle, and Mr Trundle, with Sam Weller on the box beside the driver, pulled up by a gate at the roadside, before which stood a tall, raw-boned gamekeeper, and a half-booted, leather-leggined boy, each bearing a bag of capacious dimensions, and accompanied by a brace of pointers.

'I say,' whispered Mr Winkle to Wardle, as the man let down the steps, 'they don't suppose we're going to kill game enough to fill those bags, do they?'

'Fill them!' exclaimed old Wardle. 'Bless you, yes! You shall fill one, and I the other; and when we've done with them, the pockets of our shooting-jackets will hold as much more.'

Mr Winkle dismounted without saying anything in reply to this observation; but he thought within himself, that if the party remained

in the open air, till he had filled one of the bags, they stood a considerable chance of catching colds in their heads.

'Hi, Juno, lass-hi, old girl; down, Daph, down,' said Wardle, caressing the dogs. 'Sir Geoffrey still in Scotland, of course, Martin?'

The tall gamekeeper replied in the affirmative, and looked with some surprise from Mr Winkle, who was holding his gun as if he wished his coat pocket to save him the trouble of pulling the trigger, to Mr Tupman, who was holding his as if he was afraid of it - as there is no earthly reason to doubt he really was.

'My friends are not much in the way of this sort of thing yet, Martin,' said Wardle, noticing the look. 'Live and learn, you know. They'll be good shots one of these days. I beg my friend Winkle's pardon, though; he has had some practice.'

Mr Winkle smiled feebly over his blue neckerchief in acknowledgment of the compliment, and got himself so mysteriously entangled with his gun, in his modest confusion, that if the piece had been loaded, he must inevitably have shot himself dead upon the spot.

'You mustn't handle your piece in that 'ere way, when you come to have the charge in it, Sir,' said the tall gamekeeper gruffly; 'or I'm damned if you won't make cold meat of some

on us.'

Mr Winkle, thus admonished, abruptly altered his position, and in so doing, contrived to bring the barrel into pretty smart contact with Mr Weller's head.

'Hollo!' said Sam, picking up his hat, which had been knocked off, and rubbing his temple. 'Hollo, sir! if you comes it this vay, you'll fill one o' them bags, and something to spare, at one fire.'

Here the leather-legged boy laughed very heartily, and then tried to look as if it was somebody else, whereat Mr Winkle frowned majestically.

'Where did you tell the boy to meet us with the snack, Martin?' inquired Wardle.

'Side of One-tree Hill, at twelve o'clock, Sir.'

'That's not Sir Geoffrey's land, is it?'

'No, Sir; but it's close by it. It's Captain Boldwig's land; but there'll be nobody to interrupt us, and there's a fine bit of turf there.'

'Very well,' said old Wardle. 'Now the sooner we're off the better. Will you join us at twelve, then, Pickwick?'

Mr Pickwick was particularly desirous to view the sport, the more especially as he was rather anxious in respect of Mr Winkle's life and limbs. On so inviting a morning, too, it was very tantalising to turn back, and leave his friends to enjoy themselves. It was, therefore, with a very rueful air that he replied -

'Why, I suppose I must.'

'Ain't the gentleman a shot, Sir?' inquired the long gamekeeper.

'No,' replied Wardle; 'and he's lame besides.'

'I should very much like to go,' said Mr Pickwick - 'very much.'

There was a short pause of commiseration.

'There's a barrow t'other side the hedge,' said the boy. 'If the gentleman's servant would wheel along the paths, he could keep nigh us, and we could lift it over the stiles, and that.'

'The wery thing,' said Mr Weller, who was a party interested, inasmuch as he ardently longed to see the sport. 'The wery thing. Well said, Smallcheek; I'll have it out in a minute.'

But here a difficulty arose. The long gamekeeper resolutely protested against the introduction into a shooting party, of a gentleman in a barrow, as a gross violation of all established rules and precedents. It was a great objection, but not an insurmountable one. The gamekeeper having been coaxed and feed, and having, moreover, eased his mind by 'punching' the head of the inventive youth who had first suggested the use of the machine, Mr Pickwick was placed in it, and off the party set; Wardle and the long gamekeeper leading the way, and Mr Pickwick in the barrow, propelled by Sam, bringing up the rear.

'Stop, Sam,' said Mr Pickwick, when they had got half across the first field.

'What's the matter now?' said Wardle.

'I won't suffer this barrow to be moved another step,' said Mr Pickwick, resolutely, 'unless Winkle carries that gun of his in a different manner.'

'How AM I to carry it?' said the wretched Winkle. 'Carry it with the muzzle to the ground,' replied Mr Pickwick.

'It's so unsportsmanlike,' reasoned Winkle.

'I don't care whether it's unsportsmanlike or not,' replied Mr Pickwick; 'I am not going to be shot in a wheel-barrow, for the sake of appearances, to please anybody.'

'I know the gentleman'll put that 'ere charge into somebody afore he's done,' growled the long man.

'Well, well - I don't mind,' said poor Winkle, turning his gun- stock uppermost - 'there.'

'Anythin' for a quiet life,' said Mr Weller; and on they went again.

'Stop!' said Mr Pickwick, after they had gone a few yards farther.

'What now?' said Wardle.

'That gun of Tupman's is not safe: I know it isn't,' said Mr Pickwick.

'Eh? What! not safe?' said Mr Tupman, in a tone of great alarm.

'Not as you are carrying it,' said Mr Pickwick. 'I am very sorry to make any further objection, but I cannot consent to go on, unless you carry it as Winkle does his.'

'I think you had better, sir,' said the long gamekeeper, 'or you're quite as likely to lodge the charge in yourself as in anything else.'

Mr Tupman, with the most obliging haste, placed his piece in the position required, and the party moved on again; the two amateurs marching with reversed arms, like a couple of privates at a royal funeral.

The dogs suddenly came to a dead stop, and the party advancing stealthily a single pace, stopped too.

'What's the matter with the dogs' legs?' whispered Mr Winkle. 'How queer they're standing.'

'Hush, can't you?' replied Wardle softly. 'Don't you see, they're making a point?'

'Making a point!' said Mr Winkle, staring about him, as if he expected to discover some particular beauty in the landscape, which the sagacious animals were calling special attention to. 'Making a point! What are they pointing at?'

'Keep your eyes open,' said Wardle, not heeding the question in the excitement of the moment. 'Now then.'

There was a sharp whirring noise, that made Mr Winkle start back as if he had been shot himself. Bang, bang, went a couple of guns - the smoke swept quickly away over the field, and curled into the air.

'Where are they!' said Mr Winkle, in a state of the highest excitement, turning round and round in all directions. 'Where are they? Tell me when to fire. Where are they - where are they?'

'Where are they!' said Wardle, taking up a brace of birds which the dogs had deposited at his feet. 'Why, here they are.'

'No, no; I mean the others,' said the bewildered Winkle.

'Far enough off, by this time,' replied Wardle, coolly reloading his gun.

'We shall very likely be up with another covey in five minutes,' said the long gamekeeper. 'If the gentleman begins to fire now, perhaps he'll just get the shot out of the barrel by the time they rise.'

'Ha! ha! ha!' roared Mr Weller.

'Sam,' said Mr Pickwick, compassionating his follower's confusion and embarrassment.

'Sir.'

'Don't laugh.'

'Certainly not, Sir.' So, by way of indemnification, Mr Weller contorted his features from behind the wheel-barrow, for the exclusive amusement of the boy with the leggings, who thereupon burst into a boisterous laugh, and was summarily cuffed by the long gamekeeper, who wanted a pretext for turning round, to hide his own merriment.

'Bravo, old fellow!' said Wardle to Mr Tupman; 'you fired that time, at all events.'

'Oh, yes,' replied Mr Tupman, with conscious pride. 'I let it off.'

'Well done. You'll hit something next time, if you look sharp. Very easy, ain't it?'

'Yes, it's very easy,' said Mr Tupman. 'How it hurts one's shoulder, though. It nearly knocked me backwards. I had no idea these small firearms kicked so.'

'Ah,' said the old gentleman, smiling, 'you'll get used to it in time. Now then - all ready - all right with the barrow there?'

'All right, Sir,' replied Mr Weller.

'Come along, then.'

'Hold hard, Sir,' said Sam, raising the barrow.

'Aye, aye,' replied Mr Pickwick; and on they went, as briskly as need be.

'Keep that barrow back now,' cried Wardle, when it had been hoisted over a stile into another field, and Mr Pickwick had been deposited in it once more.

'All right, sir,' replied Mr Weller, pausing.

'Now, Winkle,' said the old gentleman, 'follow me softly, and don't be too late this time.'

'Never fear,' said Mr Winkle. 'Are they pointing?'

'No, no; not now. Quietly now, quietly.' On they crept, and very quietly they would have advanced, if Mr Winkle, in the performance of some very intricate evolutions with his gun, had not accidentally fired, at the most critical moment, over the boy's head, exactly in the very spot where the tall man's brain would have been, had he been there instead.

'Why, what on earth did you do that for?' said old Wardle, as the birds flew unharmed away.

'I never saw such a gun in my life,' replied poor Mr Winkle, looking at the lock, as if that would do any good. 'It goes off of its own accord. It WILL do it.'

'Will do it!' echoed Wardle, with something of irritation in his manner. 'I wish it would kill something of its own accord.'

'It'll do that afore long, Sir,' observed the tall man, in a low, prophetic voice.

'What do you mean by that observation, Sir?' inquired Mr Winkle, angrily.

'Never mind, Sir, never mind,' replied the long gamekeeper; 'I've no family myself, sir; and this here boy's mother will get something handsome from Sir Geoffrey, if he's killed on his land. Load again, Sir, load again.'

'Take away his gun,' cried Mr Pickwick from the barrow, horror-stricken at the long man's dark insinuations. 'Take away his gun, do you hear, somebody?'

Nobody, however, volunteered to obey the command; and Mr Winkle, after darting a rebellious glance at Mr Pickwick, reloaded his gun, and proceeded onwards with the rest.

We are bound, on the authority of Mr Pickwick, to state, that Mr Tupman's mode of proceeding evinced far more of prudence and deliberation, than that adopted by Mr Winkle. Still, this by no means detracts from the great authority of the latter gentleman, on all matters connected with the field; because, as Mr Pickwick beautifully observes, it has somehow or other happened, from time immemorial, that many of the best and ablest philosophers, who have been perfect lights of science in matters of theory, have been wholly unable to reduce them to practice.

Mr Tupman's process, like many of our most sublime discoveries, was extremely simple. With the quickness and penetration of a man of genius, he had at once observed that the two great points to be attained were - first, to discharge his piece without injury to himself, and, secondly, to do so, without danger to the bystanders - obviously, the best thing to do, after surmounting the difficulty of firing at all, was to shut his eyes firmly, and fire into the air.

On one occasion, after performing this feat, Mr Tupman, on opening his eyes, beheld a plump partridge in the act of falling, wounded, to the ground. He was on the point of congratulating Mr Wardle on his invariable success, when that gentleman advanced towards him, and grasped him warmly by the hand.

'Tupman,' said the old gentleman, 'you singled out that particular bird?'

'No,' said Mr Tupman - 'no.'

'You did,' said Wardle. 'I saw you do it - I observed you pick him out - I noticed you, as you raised your piece to take aim; and I will say this, that the best shot in existence could not have done it more beautifully. You are an older hand at this than I thought you, Tupman; you have been out before.' It was in vain for Mr Tupman to protest, with a smile of self-denial, that he never had. The very smile was taken as evidence to the contrary; and from that time forth his reputation was established. It is not the only reputation that has been acquired as easily, nor are such fortunate circumstances confined to partridge-shooting.

Meanwhile, Mr Winkle flashed, and blazed, and smoked away, without producing any material results worthy of being noted down; sometimes expending his charge in mid-air, and at others sending it skimming along so near the surface of the ground as to place the lives of the two dogs on a rather uncertain and precarious tenure. As a display of fancy-shooting, it was extremely varied and curious; as an exhibition of firing with any precise object, it was, upon the whole, perhaps a failure. It is an established axiom, that 'every bullet has its billet.' If it apply in an equal degree to shot, those of Mr Winkle were unfortunate foundlings, deprived of their natural rights, cast loose upon the world, and billeted nowhere. 'Well,' said Wardle, walking up to the side of the barrow, and wiping the streams of perspiration from his jolly red face; 'smoking day, isn't it?'

'It is, indeed,' replied Mr Pickwick. 'The sun is tremendously hot, even to me. I don't know how you must feel it.'

'Why,' said the old gentleman, 'pretty hot. It's past twelve, though. You see that green hill there?'

'Certainly.'

'That's the place where we are to lunch; and, by Jove, there's the boy with the basket, punctual as clockwork!'

'So he is,' said Mr Pickwick, brightening up. 'Good boy, that. I'll give him a shilling, presently. Now, then, Sam, wheel away.'

'Hold on, sir,' said Mr Weller, invigorated with the prospect of refreshments. 'Out of the way, young leathers. If you walley my precious life don't upset me, as the gen'l'm'n said to the driver when they was a-carryin' him to Tyburn.' And quickening his pace to a sharp run, Mr Weller wheeled his master nimbly to the green hill, shot him dexterously out by the very side of the basket, and proceeded to unpack it with the utmost despatch.



'Weal pie,' said Mr Weller, soliloquising, as he arranged the eatables on the grass. 'Wery good thing is weal pie, when you know the lady as made it, and is quite sure it ain't kittens; and arter all though, where's the odds, when they're so like weal that the wery piemen themselves don't know the difference?'

'Don't they, Sam?' said Mr Pickwick.

'Not they, sir,' replied Mr Weller, touching his hat. 'I lodged in the same house with a pieman once, sir, and a wery nice man he was - reg'lar clever chap, too - make pies out o' anything, he could. 'What a number o' cats you keep, Mr Brooks,' says I, when I'd got intimate with him. 'Ah,' says he, 'I do - a good many,' says he, 'You must be wery fond o' cats,' says I. 'Other people is,' says he, a-winkin' at me; 'they ain't in season till the winter though,' says he. 'Not in season!' says I. 'No,' says he, 'fruits is in, cats is out.' 'Why, what do you mean?' says I. 'Mean!' says he. 'That I'll never be a party to the combination o' the butchers, to keep up the price o' meat,' says he. 'Mr Weller,' says he, a-squeezing my hand wery hard, and vispering in my ear - 'don't mention this here agin - but it's the seasonin' as does it. They're all made o' them noble animals,' says he, a-pointin' to a wery nice little tabby kitten, 'and I seasons 'em for beefsteak, weal or kidney, 'cording to the demand. And more than that,' says he, 'I can make a weal a beef-steak, or a beef- steak a kidney, or any one on 'em a mutton, at a minute's notice, just as the market changes, and appetites wary!'

'He must have been a very ingenious young man, that, Sam,' said Mr Pickwick, with a slight shudder.

'Just was, sir,' replied Mr Weller, continuing his occupation of emptying the basket, 'and the pies was beautiful. Tongue - , well that's a wery good thing when it ain't a woman's. Bread - knuckle o' ham, reg'lar picter - cold beef in slices, wery good. What's in them stone jars, young touch-and-go?'

'Beer in this one,' replied the boy, taking from his shoulder a couple of large stone bottles, fastened together by a leathern strap - 'cold punch in t'other.'

'And a wery good notion of a lunch it is, take it altogether,' said Mr Weller, surveying his arrangement of the repast with great satisfaction. 'Now, gen'l'm'n, 'fall on,' as the English said to the French when they fixed bagginets.'

It needed no second invitation to induce the party to yield full justice to the meal; and as little pressing did it require to induce Mr Weller, the long gamekeeper, and the two boys, to station themselves on the

grass, at a little distance, and do good execution upon a decent proportion of the viands. An old oak afforded a pleasant shelter to the group, and a rich prospect of arable and meadow land, intersected with luxuriant hedges, and richly ornamented with wood, lay spread out before them.

'This is delightful - thoroughly delightful!' said Mr Pickwick; the skin of whose expressive countenance was rapidly peeling off, with exposure to the sun.

'So it is - so it is, old fellow,' replied Wardle. 'Come; a glass of punch!'

'With great pleasure,' said Mr Pickwick; the satisfaction of whose countenance, after drinking it, bore testimony to the sincerity of the reply.

'Good,' said Mr Pickwick, smacking his lips. 'Very good. I'll take another. Cool; very cool. Come, gentlemen,' continued Mr Pickwick, still retaining his hold upon the jar, 'a toast. Our friends at Dingley Dell.'

The toast was drunk with loud acclamations.

'I'll tell you what I shall do, to get up my shooting again,' said Mr Winkle, who was eating bread and ham with a pocket-knife. 'I'll put a stuffed partridge on the top of a post, and practise at it, beginning at a short distance, and lengthening it by degrees. I understand it's capital practice.'

'I know a gen'l'man, Sir,' said Mr Weller, 'as did that, and begun at two yards; but he never tried it on agin; for he blowed the bird right clean away at the first fire, and nobody ever seed a feather on him arterwards.'

'Sam,' said Mr Pickwick.

'Sir,' replied Mr Weller.

'Have the goodness to reserve your anecdotes till they are called for.'

'Cert'nly, sir.'

Here Mr Weller winked the eye which was not concealed by the beer-can he was raising to his lips, with such exquisite facetiousness, that the two boys went into spontaneous convulsions, and even the long man condescended to smile.

'Well, that certainly is most capital cold punch,' said Mr Pickwick, looking earnestly at the stone bottle; 'and the day is extremely warm, and - Tupman, my dear friend, a glass of punch?'

'With the greatest delight,' replied Mr Tupman; and having drank that glass, Mr Pickwick took another, just to see whether there was any orange peel in the punch, because orange peel always disagreed with him; and finding that there was not, Mr Pickwick took another glass to the health of their absent friend, and then felt himself imperatively called upon to propose another in honour of the punch-compounder, unknown.

This constant succession of glasses produced considerable effect upon Mr Pickwick; his countenance beamed with the most sunny smiles, laughter played around his lips, and good-humoured merriment twinkled in his eye. Yielding by degrees to the influence of the exciting liquid, rendered more so by the heat, Mr Pickwick expressed a strong desire to recollect a song which he had heard in his infancy, and the attempt proving abortive, sought to stimulate his memory with more glasses of punch, which appeared to have quite a contrary effect; for, from forgetting the words of the song, he began to forget how to articulate any words at all; and finally, after rising to his legs to address the company in an eloquent speech, he fell into the barrow, and fast asleep, simultaneously.

The basket having been repacked, and it being found perfectly impossible to awaken Mr Pickwick from his torpor, some discussion took place whether it would be better for Mr Weller to wheel his master back again, or to leave him where he was, until they should all be ready to return. The latter course was at length decided on; and as the further expedition was not to exceed an hour's duration, and as Mr Weller begged very hard to be one of the party, it was determined to leave Mr Pickwick asleep in the barrow, and to call for him on their return. So away they went, leaving Mr Pickwick snoring most comfortably in the shade.

That Mr Pickwick would have continued to snore in the shade until his friends came back, or, in default thereof, until the shades of evening had fallen on the landscape, there appears no reasonable cause to doubt; always supposing that he had been suffered to remain there in peace. But he was NOT suffered to remain there in peace. And this was what prevented him.

Captain Boldwig was a little fierce man in a stiff black neckerchief and blue surtout, who, when he did condescend to walk about his property, did it in company with a thick rattan stick with a brass ferrule, and a gardener and sub-gardener with meek faces, to whom (the gardeners, not the stick) Captain Boldwig gave his orders with all

due grandeur and ferocity; for Captain Boldwig's wife's sister had married a marquis, and the captain's house was a villa, and his land 'grounds,' and it was all very high, and mighty, and great.

Mr Pickwick had not been asleep half an hour when little Captain Boldwig, followed by the two gardeners, came striding along as fast as his size and importance would let him; and when he came near the oak tree, Captain Boldwig paused and drew a long breath, and looked at the prospect as if he thought the prospect ought to be highly gratified at having him to take notice of it; and then he struck the ground emphatically with his stick, and summoned the head-gardener.

'Hunt,' said Captain Boldwig.

'Yes, Sir,' said the gardener.

'Roll this place to-morrow morning - do you hear, Hunt?'

'Yes, Sir.'

'And take care that you keep this place in good order - do you hear, Hunt?'

'Yes, Sir.'

'And remind me to have a board done about trespassers, and spring guns, and all that sort of thing, to keep the common people out. Do you hear, Hunt; do you hear?'

'I'll not forget it, Sir.'

'I beg your pardon, Sir,' said the other man, advancing, with his hand to his hat.

'Well, Wilkins, what's the matter with you?' said Captain Boldwig.

'I beg your pardon, sir - but I think there have been trespassers here to-day.'

'Ha!' said the captain, scowling around him.

'Yes, sir - they have been dining here, I think, sir.'

'Why, damn their audacity, so they have,' said Captain Boldwig, as the crumbs and fragments that were strewn upon the grass met his eye. 'They have actually been devouring their food here. I wish I had the vagabonds here!' said the captain, clenching the thick stick.

'I wish I had the vagabonds here,' said the captain wrathfully.

'Beg your pardon, sir,' said Wilkins, 'but - '

'But what? Eh?' roared the captain; and following the timid glance of Wilkins, his eyes encountered the wheel-barrow and Mr Pickwick.

'Who are you, you rascal?' said the captain, administering several pokes to Mr Pickwick's body with the thick stick. 'What's your name?'

'Cold punch,' murmured Mr Pickwick, as he sank to sleep again.

'What?' demanded Captain Boldwig.

No reply.

'What did he say his name was?' asked the captain. 'Punch, I think, sir,' replied Wilkins.

'That's his impudence - that's his confounded impudence,' said Captain Boldwig. 'He's only feigning to be asleep now,' said the captain, in a high passion. 'He's drunk; he's a drunken plebeian. Wheel him away, Wilkins, wheel him away directly.' 'Where shall I wheel him to, sir?' inquired Wilkins, with great timidity.

'Wheel him to the devil,' replied Captain Boldwig.

'Very well, sir,' said Wilkins.

'Stay,' said the captain.

Wilkins stopped accordingly.

'Wheel him,' said the captain - 'wheel him to the pound; and let us see whether he calls himself Punch when he comes to himself. He shall not bully me - he shall not bully me. Wheel him away.'

Away Mr Pickwick was wheeled in compliance with this imperious mandate; and the great Captain Boldwig, swelling with indignation, proceeded on his walk.

Inexpressible was the astonishment of the little party when they returned, to find that Mr Pickwick had disappeared, and taken the wheel-barrow with him. It was the most mysterious and unaccountable thing that was ever heard of. For a lame man to have got upon his legs without any previous notice, and walked off, would have been most extraordinary; but when it came to his wheeling a heavy barrow before him, by way of amusement, it grew positively

miraculous. They searched every nook and corner round, together and separately; they shouted, whistled, laughed, called - and all with the same result. Mr Pickwick was not to be found. After some hours of fruitless search, they arrived at the unwelcome conclusion that they must go home without him.

Meanwhile Mr Pickwick had been wheeled to the pound, and safely deposited therein, fast asleep in the wheel-barrow, to the immeasurable delight and satisfaction not only of all the boys in the village, but three-fourths of the whole population, who had gathered round, in expectation of his waking. If their most intense gratification had been awakened by seeing him wheeled in, how many hundredfold was their joy increased when, after a few indistinct cries of 'Sam!' he sat up in the barrow, and gazed with indescribable astonishment on the faces before him.

A general shout was of course the signal of his having woke up; and his involuntary inquiry of 'What's the matter?' occasioned another, louder than the first, if possible.

'Here's a game!' roared the populace.

'Where am I?' exclaimed Mr Pickwick.

'In the pound,' replied the mob.

'How came I here? What was I doing? Where was I brought from?' 'Boldwig! Captain Boldwig!' was the only reply.

'Let me out,' cried Mr Pickwick. 'Where's my servant? Where are my friends?'

'You ain't got no friends. Hurrah!' Then there came a turnip, then a potato, and then an egg; with a few other little tokens of the playful disposition of the many-headed.

How long this scene might have lasted, or how much Mr Pickwick might have suffered, no one can tell, had not a carriage, which was driving swiftly by, suddenly pulled up, from whence there descended old Wardle and Sam Weller, the former of whom, in far less time than it takes to write it, if not to read it, had made his way to Mr Pickwick's side, and placed him in the vehicle, just as the latter had concluded the third and last round of a single combat with the town-beadle.

'Run to the justice's!' cried a dozen voices.

'Ah, run away,' said Mr Weller, jumping up on the box. 'Give my compliments - Mr Veller's compliments - to the justice, and tell him

I've spiled his beadle, and that, if he'll swear in a new 'un, I'll come back again to-morrow and spile him. Drive on, old feller.'

'I'll give directions for the commencement of an action for false imprisonment against this Captain Boldwig, directly I get to London,' said Mr Pickwick, as soon as the carriage turned out of the town.

'We were trespassing, it seems,' said Wardle.

'I don't care,' said Mr Pickwick, 'I'll bring the action.'

'No, you won't,' said Wardle.

'I will, by - ' But as there was a humorous expression in Wardle's face, Mr Pickwick checked himself, and said, 'Why not?'

'Because,' said old Wardle, half-bursting with laughter, 'because they might turn on some of us, and say we had taken too much cold punch.'

Do what he would, a smile would come into Mr Pickwick's face; the smile extended into a laugh; the laugh into a roar; the roar became general. So, to keep up their good-humour, they stopped at the first roadside tavern they came to, and ordered a glass of brandy-and-water all round, with a magnum of extra strength for Mr Samuel Weller.