Chapter XXXV

In Which Mr Pickwick Thinks He Had Better Go To Bath; And Goes Accordingly

'But surely, my dear sir,' said little Perker, as he stood in Mr Pickwick's apartment on the morning after the trial, 'surely you don't really mean - really and seriously now, and irritation apart - that you won't pay these costs and damages?'

'Not one halfpenny,' said Mr Pickwick firmly; 'not one halfpenny.'

'Hooroar for the principle, as the money-lender said ven he vouldn't renew the bill,' observed Mr Weller, who was clearing away the breakfast-things.

'Sam,' said Mr Pickwick, 'have the goodness to step downstairs.'

'Cert'nly, sir,' replied Mr Weller; and acting on Mr Pickwick's gentle hint, Sam retired.

'No, Perker,' said Mr Pickwick, with great seriousness of manner, 'my friends here have endeavoured to dissuade me from this determination, but without avail. I shall employ myself as usual, until the opposite party have the power of issuing a legal process of execution against me; and if they are vile enough to avail themselves of it, and to arrest my person, I shall yield myself up with perfect cheerfulness and content of heart. When can they do this?'

'They can issue execution, my dear Sir, for the amount of the damages and taxed costs, next term,' replied Perker, 'just two months hence, my dear sir.'

'Very good,' said Mr Pickwick. 'Until that time, my dear fellow, let me hear no more of the matter. And now,' continued Mr Pickwick, looking round on his friends with a good- humoured smile, and a sparkle in the eye which no spectacles could dim or conceal, 'the only question is, Where shall we go next?'

Mr Tupman and Mr Snodgrass were too much affected by their friend's heroism to offer any reply. Mr Winkle had not yet sufficiently recovered the recollection of his evidence at the trial, to make any observation on any subject, so Mr Pickwick paused in vain.

'Well,' said that gentleman, 'if you leave me to suggest our destination, I say Bath. I think none of us have ever been there.'

Nobody had; and as the proposition was warmly seconded by Perker, who considered it extremely probable that if Mr Pickwick saw a little change and gaiety he would be inclined to think better of his determination, and worse of a debtor's prison, it was carried unanimously; and Sam was at once despatched to the White Horse Cellar, to take five places by the half-past seven o'clock coach, next morning.

There were just two places to be had inside, and just three to be had out; so Sam Weller booked for them all, and having exchanged a few compliments with the booking-office clerk on the subject of a pewter half-crown which was tendered him as a portion of his 'change,' walked back to the George and Vulture, where he was pretty busily employed until bed-time in reducing clothes and linen into the smallest possible compass, and exerting his mechanical genius in constructing a variety of ingenious devices for keeping the lids on boxes which had neither locks nor hinges.

The next was a very unpropitious morning for a journey - muggy, damp, and drizzly. The horses in the stages that were going out, and had come through the city, were smoking so, that the outside passengers were invisible. The newspaper-sellers looked moist, and smelled mouldy; the wet ran off the hats of the orange-vendors as they thrust their heads into the coach windows, and diluted the insides in a refreshing manner. The Jews with the fifty-bladed penknives shut them up in despair; the men with the pocket-books made pocket-books of them. Watch- guards and toasting-forks were alike at a discount, and pencil- cases and sponges were a drug in the market.

Leaving Sam Weller to rescue the luggage from the seven or eight porters who flung themselves savagely upon it, the moment the coach stopped, and finding that they were about twenty minutes too early, Mr Pickwick and his friends went for shelter into the travellers' room - the last resource of human dejection.

The travellers' room at the White Horse Cellar is of course uncomfortable; it would be no travellers' room if it were not. It is the right-hand parlour, into which an aspiring kitchen fireplace appears to have walked, accompanied by a rebellious poker, tongs, and shovel. It is divided into boxes, for the solitary confinement of travellers, and is furnished with a clock, a looking-glass, and a live waiter, which latter article is kept in a small kennel for washing glasses, in a corner of the apartment.

One of these boxes was occupied, on this particular occasion, by a stern-eyed man of about five-and-forty, who had a bald and glossy forehead, with a good deal of black hair at the sides and back of his head, and large black whiskers. He was buttoned up to the chin in a

brown coat; and had a large sealskin travelling- cap, and a greatcoat and cloak, lying on the seat beside him. He looked up from his breakfast as Mr Pickwick entered, with a fierce and peremptory air, which was very dignified; and, having scrutinised that gentleman and his companions to his entire satisfaction, hummed a tune, in a manner which seemed to say that he rather suspected somebody wanted to take advantage of him, but it wouldn't do.

'Waiter,' said the gentleman with the whiskers.

'Sir?' replied a man with a dirty complexion, and a towel of the same, emerging from the kennel before mentioned.

'Some more toast.'

'Yes, sir.'

'Buttered toast, mind,' said the gentleman fiercely.

'Directly, sir,' replied the waiter.

The gentleman with the whiskers hummed a tune in the same manner as before, and pending the arrival of the toast, advanced to the front of the fire, and, taking his coat tails under his arms, looked at his boots and ruminated.

'I wonder whereabouts in Bath this coach puts up,' said Mr Pickwick, mildly addressing Mr Winkle.

'Hum - eh - what's that?' said the strange man.

'I made an observation to my friend, sir,' replied Mr Pickwick, always ready to enter into conversation. 'I wondered at what house the Bath coach put up. Perhaps you can inform me.' 'Are you going to Bath?' said the strange man.

'I am, sir,' replied Mr Pickwick.

'And those other gentlemen?'

'They are going also,' said Mr Pickwick.

'Not inside - I'll be damned if you're going inside,' said the strange man.

'Not all of us,' said Mr Pickwick.

'No, not all of you,' said the strange man emphatically. 'I've taken two places. If they try to squeeze six people into an infernal box that only holds four, I'll take a post-chaise and bring an action. I've paid my fare. It won't do; I told the clerk when I took my places that it wouldn't do. I know these things have been done. I know they are done every day; but I never was done, and I never will be. Those who know me best, best know it; crush me!' Here the fierce gentleman rang the bell with great violence, and told the waiter he'd better bring the toast in five seconds, or he'd know the reason why.

'My good sir,' said Mr Pickwick, 'you will allow me to observe that this is a very unnecessary display of excitement. I have only taken places inside for two.'

'I am glad to hear it,' said the fierce man. 'I withdraw my expressions. I tender an apology. There's my card. Give me your acquaintance.'

'With great pleasure, Sir,' replied Mr Pickwick. 'We are to be fellow-travellers, and I hope we shall find each other's society mutually agreeable.'

'I hope we shall,' said the fierce gentleman. 'I know we shall. I like your looks; they please me. Gentlemen, your hands and names. Know me.'

Of course, an interchange of friendly salutations followed this gracious speech; and the fierce gentleman immediately proceeded to inform the friends, in the same short, abrupt, jerking sentences, that his name was Dowler; that he was going to Bath on pleasure; that he was formerly in the army; that he had now set up in business as a gentleman; that he lived upon the profits; and that the individual for whom the second place was taken, was a personage no less illustrious than Mrs. Dowler, his lady wife.

'She's a fine woman,' said Mr Dowler. 'I am proud of her. I have reason.'

'I hope I shall have the pleasure of judging,' said Mr Pickwick, with a smile. 'You shall,' replied Dowler. 'She shall know you. She shall esteem you. I courted her under singular circumstances. I won her through a rash vow. Thus. I saw her; I loved her; I proposed; she refused me. - 'You love another?' - 'Spare my blushes.' - 'I know him.' - 'You do.' - 'Very good; if he remains here, I'll skin him."

'Lord bless me!' exclaimed Mr Pickwick involuntarily.

'Did you skin the gentleman, Sir?' inquired Mr Winkle, with a very pale face.

'I wrote him a note, I said it was a painful thing. And so it was.'

'Certainly,' interposed Mr Winkle.

'I said I had pledged my word as a gentleman to skin him. My character was at stake. I had no alternative. As an officer in His Majesty's service, I was bound to skin him. I regretted the necessity, but it must be done. He was open to conviction. He saw that the rules of the service were imperative. He fled. I married her. Here's the coach. That's her head.'

As Mr Dowler concluded, he pointed to a stage which had just driven up, from the open window of which a rather pretty face in a bright blue bonnet was looking among the crowd on the pavement, most probably for the rash man himself. Mr Dowler paid his bill, and hurried out with his travelling cap, coat, and cloak; and Mr Pickwick and his friends followed to secure their places. Mr Tupman and Mr Snodgrass had seated themselves at the back part of the coach; Mr Winkle had got inside; and Mr Pickwick was preparing to follow him, when Sam Weller came up to his master, and whispering in his ear, begged to speak to him, with an air of the deepest mystery.

'Well, Sam,' said Mr Pickwick, 'what's the matter now?'

'Here's raythe a rum go, sir,' replied Sam.

'What?' inquired Mr Pickwick.

'This here, Sir,' rejoined Sam. 'I'm wery much afeerd, sir, that the properiator o' this here coach is a playin' some imperence vith us.'

'How is that, Sam?' said Mr Pickwick; 'aren't the names down on the way-bill?'

'The names is not only down on the vay-bill, Sir,' replied Sam, 'but they've painted vun on 'em up, on the door o' the coach.' As Sam spoke, he pointed to that part of the coach door on which the proprietor's name usually appears; and there, sure enough, in gilt letters of a goodly size, was the magic name of PICKWICK!

'Dear me,' exclaimed Mr Pickwick, quite staggered by the coincidence; 'what a very extraordinary thing!'

'Yes, but that ain't all,' said Sam, again directing his master's attention to the coach door; 'not content vith writin' up 'Pick- wick,' they puts 'Moses' afore it, vich I call addin' insult to injury, as the parrot said ven they not only took him from his native land, but made him talk the English langwidge arterwards.'

'It's odd enough, certainly, Sam,' said Mr Pickwick; 'but if we stand talking here, we shall lose our places.'

'Wot, ain't nothin' to be done in consequence, sir?' exclaimed Sam, perfectly aghast at the coolness with which Mr Pickwick prepared to ensconce himself inside.

'Done!' said Mr Pickwick. 'What should be done?' 'Ain't nobody to be whopped for takin' this here liberty, sir?' said Mr Weller, who had expected that at least he would have been commissioned to challenge the guard and the coachman to a pugilistic encounter on the spot.

'Certainly not,' replied Mr Pickwick eagerly; 'not on any account. Jump up to your seat directly.'

'I am wery much afeered,' muttered Sam to himself, as he turned away, 'that somethin' queer's come over the governor, or he'd never ha' stood this so quiet. I hope that 'ere trial hasn't broke his spirit, but it looks bad, wery bad.' Mr Weller shook his head gravely; and it is worthy of remark, as an illustration of the manner in which he took this circumstance to heart, that he did not speak another word until the coach reached the Kensington turnpike. Which was so long a time for him to remain taciturn, that the fact may be considered wholly unprecedented.

Nothing worthy of special mention occurred during the journey. Mr Dowler related a variety of anecdotes, all illustrative of his own personal prowess and desperation, and appealed to Mrs. Dowler in corroboration thereof; when Mrs. Dowler invariably brought in, in the form of an appendix, some remarkable fact or circumstance which Mr Dowler had forgotten, or had perhaps through modesty, omitted; for the addenda in every instance went to show that Mr Dowler was even a more wonderful fellow than he made himself out to be. Mr Pickwick and Mr Winkle listened with great admiration, and at intervals conversed with Mrs. Dowler, who was a very agreeable and fascinating person. So, what between Mr Dowler's stories, and Mrs. Dowler's charms, and Mr Pickwick's good-humour, and Mr Winkle's good listening, the insides contrived to be very companionable all the way. The outsides did as outsides always do. They were very cheerful and talkative at the beginning of every stage, and very dismal and sleepy in the middle, and very bright and wakeful again towards the end. There was one young gentleman in an India-rubber cloak, who smoked cigars all day; and there was another young gentleman in a parody upon a greatcoat, who lighted a good many, and feeling obviously unsettled after the second whiff, threw them away when he thought nobody was looking at him. There was a third young man on the box who wished to be learned in cattle; and an old one behind, who was familiar with farming. There was a constant succession of Christian

names in smock-frocks and white coats, who were invited to have a 'lift' by the guard, and who knew every horse and hostler on the road and off it; and there was a dinner which would have been cheap at half-a- crown a mouth, if any moderate number of mouths could have eaten it in the time. And at seven o'clock P.m. Mr Pickwick and his friends, and Mr Dowler and his wife, respectively retired to their private sitting-rooms at the White Hart Hotel, opposite the Great Pump Room, Bath, where the waiters, from their costume, might be mistaken for Westminster boys, only they destroy the illusion by behaving themselves much better. Breakfast had scarcely been cleared away on the succeeding morning, when a waiter brought in Mr Dowler's card, with a request to be allowed permission to introduce a friend. Mr Dowler at once followed up the delivery of the card, by bringing himself and the friend also.

The friend was a charming young man of not much more than fifty, dressed in a very bright blue coat with resplendent buttons, black trousers, and the thinnest possible pair of highly-polished boots. A gold eye-glass was suspended from his neck by a short, broad, black ribbon; a gold snuff-box was lightly clasped in his left hand; gold rings innumerable glittered on his fingers; and a large diamond pin set in gold glistened in his shirt frill. He had a gold watch, and a gold curb chain with large gold seals; and he carried a pliant ebony cane with a gold top. His linen was of the very whitest, finest, and stiffest; his wig of the glossiest, blackest, and curliest. His snuff was princes' mixture; his scent BOUQUET DU ROI. His features were contracted into a perpetual smile; and his teeth were in such perfect order that it was difficult at a small distance to tell the real from the false.

'Mr Pickwick,' said Mr Dowler; 'my friend, Angelo Cyrus Bantam, Esquire, M.C.; Bantam; Mr Pickwick. Know each other.'

'Welcome to Ba-ath, Sir. This is indeed an acquisition. Most welcome to Ba-ath, sir. It is long - very long, Mr Pickwick, since you drank the waters. It appears an age, Mr Pickwick. Re-markable!'

Such were the expressions with which Angelo Cyrus Bantam, Esquire, M.C., took Mr Pickwick's hand; retaining it in his, meantime, and shrugging up his shoulders with a constant succession of bows, as if he really could not make up his mind to the trial of letting it go again.

'It is a very long time since I drank the waters, certainly,' replied Mr Pickwick; 'for, to the best of my knowledge, I was never here before.'

'Never in Ba-ath, Mr Pickwick!' exclaimed the Grand Master, letting the hand fall in astonishment. 'Never in Ba-ath! He! he! Mr Pickwick, you are a wag. Not bad, not bad. Good, good. He! he! he! Re-markable!'

'To my shame, I must say that I am perfectly serious,' rejoined Mr Pickwick. 'I really never was here before.'

'Oh, I see,' exclaimed the Grand Master, looking extremely pleased; 'yes, yes - good, good - better and better. You are the gentleman of whom we have heard. Yes; we know you, Mr Pickwick; we know you.'

'The reports of the trial in those confounded papers,' thought Mr Pickwick. 'They have heard all about me.' 'You are the gentleman residing on Clapham Green,' resumed Bantam, 'who lost the use of his limbs from imprudently taking cold after port wine; who could not be moved in consequence of acute suffering, and who had the water from the king's bath bottled at one hundred and three degrees, and sent by wagon to his bedroom in town, where he bathed, sneezed, and the same day recovered. Very remarkable!'

Mr Pickwick acknowledged the compliment which the supposition implied, but had the self-denial to repudiate it, notwithstanding; and taking advantage of a moment's silence on the part of the M.C., begged to introduce his friends, Mr Tupman, Mr Winkle, and Mr Snodgrass. An introduction which overwhelmed the M.C. with delight and honour.

'Bantam,' said Mr Dowler, 'Mr Pickwick and his friends are strangers. They must put their names down. Where's the book?'

'The register of the distinguished visitors in Ba-ath will be at the Pump Room this morning at two o'clock,' replied the M.C. 'Will you guide our friends to that splendid building, and enable me to procure their autographs?'

'I will,' rejoined Dowler. 'This is a long call. It's time to go. I shall be here again in an hour. Come.'

'This is a ball-night,' said the M.C., again taking Mr Pickwick's hand, as he rose to go. 'The ball-nights in Ba-ath are moments snatched from paradise; rendered bewitching by music, beauty, elegance, fashion, etiquette, and - and - above all, by the absence of tradespeople, who are quite inconsistent with paradise, and who have an amalgamation of themselves at the Guildhall every fortnight, which is, to say the least, remarkable. Good-bye, good-bye!' and protesting all the way downstairs that he was most satisfied, and most delighted, and most overpowered, and most flattered, Angelo Cyrus Bantam, Esquire, M.C., stepped into a very elegant chariot that waited at the door, and rattled off.

At the appointed hour, Mr Pickwick and his friends, escorted by Dowler, repaired to the Assembly Rooms, and wrote their names down

in the book - an instance of condescension at which Angelo Bantam was even more overpowered than before. Tickets of admission to that evening's assembly were to have been prepared for the whole party, but as they were not ready, Mr Pickwick undertook, despite all the protestations to the contrary of Angelo Bantam, to send Sam for them at four o'clock in the afternoon, to the M.C.'s house in Queen Square. Having taken a short walk through the city, and arrived at the unanimous conclusion that Park Street was very much like the perpendicular streets a man sees in a dream, which he cannot get up for the life of him, they returned to the White Hart, and despatched Sam on the errand to which his master had pledged him.

Sam Weller put on his hat in a very easy and graceful manner, and, thrusting his hands in his waistcoat pockets, walked with great deliberation to Queen Square, whistling as he went along, several of the most popular airs of the day, as arranged with entirely new movements for that noble instrument the organ, either mouth or barrel. Arriving at the number in Queen Square to which he had been directed, he left off whistling and gave a cheerful knock, which was instantaneously answered by a powdered-headed footman in gorgeous livery, and of symmetrical stature.

'is this here Mr Bantam's, old feller?' inquired Sam Weller, nothing abashed by the blaze of splendour which burst upon his sight in the person of the powdered-headed footman with the gorgeous livery.

'Why, young man?' was the haughty inquiry of the powdered- headed footman.

''Cos if it is, jist you step in to him with that 'ere card, and say Mr Veller's a-waitin', will you?' said Sam. And saying it, he very coolly walked into the hall, and sat down.

The powdered-headed footman slammed the door very hard, and scowled very grandly; but both the slam and the scowl were lost upon Sam, who was regarding a mahogany umbrella-stand with every outward token of critical approval.

Apparently his master's reception of the card had impressed the powdered-headed footman in Sam's favour, for when he came back from delivering it, he smiled in a friendly manner, and said that the answer would be ready directly.

'Wery good,' said Sam. 'Tell the old gen'l'm'n not to put himself in a perspiration. No hurry, six-foot. I've had my dinner.'

'You dine early, sir,' said the powdered-headed footman.

'I find I gets on better at supper when I does,' replied Sam.

'Have you been long in Bath, sir?' inquired the powdered- headed footman. 'I have not had the pleasure of hearing of you before.'

'I haven't created any wery surprisin' sensation here, as yet,' rejoined Sam, 'for me and the other fash'nables only come last night.'

'Nice place, Sir,' said the powdered-headed footman.

'Seems so,' observed Sam.

'Pleasant society, sir,' remarked the powdered-headed footman. 'Very agreeable servants, sir.'

'I should think they wos,' replied Sam. 'Affable, unaffected, say-nothin'-to-nobody sorts o' fellers.'

'Oh, very much so, indeed, sir,' said the powdered-headed footman, taking Sam's remarks as a high compliment. 'Very much so indeed. Do you do anything in this way, Sir?' inquired the tall footman, producing a small snuff-box with a fox's head on the top of it.

'Not without sneezing,' replied Sam.

'Why, it IS difficult, sir, I confess,' said the tall footman. 'It may be done by degrees, Sir. Coffee is the best practice. I carried coffee, Sir, for a long time. It looks very like rappee, sir.'

Here, a sharp peal at the bell reduced the powdered-headed footman to the ignominious necessity of putting the fox's head in his pocket, and hastening with a humble countenance to Mr Bantam's 'study.' By the bye, who ever knew a man who never read or wrote either, who hadn't got some small back parlour which he WOULD call a study!

'There is the answer, sir,' said the powdered-headed footman. 'I'm afraid you'll find it inconveniently large.'

'Don't mention it,' said Sam, taking a letter with a small enclosure. 'It's just possible as exhausted natur' may manage to surwive it.'

'I hope we shall meet again, Sir,' said the powdered-headed footman, rubbing his hands, and following Sam out to the door-step.

'You are wery obligin', sir,' replied Sam. 'Now, don't allow yourself to be fatigued beyond your powers; there's a amiable bein'. Consider what you owe to society, and don't let yourself be injured by too much work. For the sake o' your feller-creeturs, keep yourself as quiet as

you can; only think what a loss you would be!' With these pathetic words, Sam Weller departed.

'A very singular young man that,' said the powdered-headed footman, looking after Mr Weller, with a countenance which clearly showed he could make nothing of him.

Sam said nothing at all. He winked, shook his head, smiled, winked again; and, with an expression of countenance which seemed to denote that he was greatly amused with something or other, walked merrily away.

At precisely twenty minutes before eight o'clock that night, Angelo Cyrus Bantam, Esq., the Master of the Ceremonies, emerged from his chariot at the door of the Assembly Rooms in the same wig, the same teeth, the same eye-glass, the same watch and seals, the same rings, the same shirt-pin, and the same cane. The only observable alterations in his appearance were, that he wore a brighter blue coat, with a white silk lining, black tights, black silk stockings, and pumps, and a white waistcoat, and was, if possible, just a thought more scented.

Thus attired, the Master of the Ceremonies, in strict discharge of the important duties of his all-important office, planted himself in the room to receive the company. Bath being full, the company, and the sixpences for tea, poured in, in shoals. In the ballroom, the long card-room, the octagonal card-room, the staircases, and the passages, the hum of many voices, and the sound of many feet, were perfectly bewildering. Dresses rustled, feathers waved, lights shone, and jewels sparkled. There was the music - not of the quadrille band, for it had not yet commenced; but the music of soft, tiny footsteps, with now and then a clear, merry laugh - low and gentle, but very pleasant to hear in a female voice, whether in Bath or elsewhere. Brilliant eyes, lighted up with pleasurable expectation, gleamed from every side; and, look where you would, some exquisite form glided gracefully through the throng, and was no sooner lost, than it was replaced by another as dainty and bewitching.

In the tea-room, and hovering round the card-tables, were a vast number of queer old ladies, and decrepit old gentlemen, discussing all the small talk and scandal of the day, with a relish and gusto which sufficiently bespoke the intensity of the pleasure they derived from the occupation. Mingled with these groups, were three or four match-making mammas, appearing to be wholly absorbed by the conversation in which they were taking part, but failing not from time to time to cast an anxious sidelong glance upon their daughters, who, remembering the maternal injunction to make the best use of their youth, had already commenced incipient flirtations in the mislaying

scarves, putting on gloves, setting down cups, and so forth; slight matters apparently, but which may be turned to surprisingly good account by expert practitioners.

Lounging near the doors, and in remote corners, were various knots of silly young men, displaying various varieties of puppyism and stupidity; amusing all sensible people near them with their folly and conceit; and happily thinking themselves the objects of general admiration - a wise and merciful dispensation which no good man will quarrel with.

And lastly, seated on some of the back benches, where they had already taken up their positions for the evening, were divers unmarried ladies past their grand climacteric, who, not dancing because there were no partners for them, and not playing cards lest they should be set down as irretrievably single, were in the favourable situation of being able to abuse everybody without reflecting on themselves. In short, they could abuse everybody, because everybody was there. It was a scene of gaiety, glitter, and show; of richly-dressed people, handsome mirrors, chalked floors, girandoles and wax-candles; and in all parts of the scene, gliding from spot to spot in silent softness, bowing obsequiously to this party, nodding familiarly to that, and smiling complacently on all, was the sprucely-attired person of Angelo Cyrus Bantam, Esquire, the Master of the Ceremonies.

'Stop in the tea-room. Take your sixpenn'orth. Then lay on hot water, and call it tea. Drink it,' said Mr Dowler, in a loud voice, directing Mr Pickwick, who advanced at the head of the little party, with Mrs. Dowler on his arm. Into the tea-room Mr Pickwick turned; and catching sight of him, Mr Bantam corkscrewed his way through the crowd and welcomed him with ecstasy.

'My dear Sir, I am highly honoured. Ba-ath is favoured. Mrs. Dowler, you embellish the rooms. I congratulate you on your feathers. Re-markable!'

'Anybody here?' inquired Dowler suspiciously.

'Anybody! The ELITE of Ba-ath. Mr Pickwick, do you see the old lady in the gauze turban?'

'The fat old lady?' inquired Mr Pickwick innocently.

'Hush, my dear sir - nobody's fat or old in Ba-ath. That's the Dowager Lady Snuphanuph.'

'Is it, indeed?' said Mr Pickwick.

'No less a person, I assure you,' said the Master of the Ceremonies. 'Hush. Draw a little nearer, Mr Pickwick. You see the splendidly-dressed young man coming this way?'

'The one with the long hair, and the particularly small forehead?' inquired Mr Pickwick.

'The same. The richest young man in Ba-ath at this moment. Young Lord Mutanhed.'

'You don't say so?' said Mr Pickwick.

'Yes. You'll hear his voice in a moment, Mr Pickwick. He'll speak to me. The other gentleman with him, in the red under- waistcoat and dark moustache, is the Honourable Mr Crushton, his bosom friend. How do you do, my Lord?'

'Veway hot, Bantam,' said his Lordship.

'It IS very warm, my Lord,' replied the M.C.

'Confounded,' assented the Honourable Mr Crushton.

'Have you seen his Lordship's mail-cart, Bantam?' inquired the Honourable Mr Crushton, after a short pause, during which young Lord Mutanhed had been endeavouring to stare Mr Pickwick out of countenance, and Mr Crushton had been reflecting what subject his Lordship could talk about best.

'Dear me, no,' replied the M.C.'A mail-cart! What an excellent idea. Remarkable!'

'Gwacious heavens!' said his Lordship, 'I thought evewebody had seen the new mail-cart; it's the neatest, pwettiest, gwacefullest thing that ever wan upon wheels. Painted wed, with a cweam piebald.'

'With a real box for the letters, and all complete,' said the Honourable Mr Crushton.

'And a little seat in fwont, with an iwon wail, for the dwiver,' added his Lordship. 'I dwove it over to Bwistol the other morning, in a cwimson coat, with two servants widing a quarter of a mile behind; and confound me if the people didn't wush out of their cottages, and awest my pwogwess, to know if I wasn't the post. Glorwious - glorwious!'

At this anecdote his Lordship laughed very heartily, as did the listeners, of course. Then, drawing his arm through that of the obsequious Mr Crushton, Lord Mutanhed walked away.

'Delightful young man, his Lordship,' said the Master of the Ceremonies.

'So I should think,' rejoined Mr Pickwick drily.

The dancing having commenced, the necessary introductions having been made, and all preliminaries arranged, Angelo Bantam rejoined Mr Pickwick, and led him into the card-room.

Just at the very moment of their entrance, the Dowager Lady Snuphanuph and two other ladies of an ancient and whist-like appearance, were hovering over an unoccupied card-table; and they no sooner set eyes upon Mr Pickwick under the convoy of Angelo Bantam, than they exchanged glances with each other, seeing that he was precisely the very person they wanted, to make up the rubber.

'My dear Bantam,' said the Dowager Lady Snuphanuph coaxingly, 'find us some nice creature to make up this table; there's a good soul.' Mr Pickwick happened to be looking another way at the moment, so her Ladyship nodded her head towards him, and frowned expressively.

'My friend Mr Pickwick, my Lady, will be most happy, I am sure, remarkably so,' said the M.C., taking the hint. 'Mr Pickwick, Lady Snuphanuph - Mrs. Colonel Wugsby - Miss Bolo.'

Mr Pickwick bowed to each of the ladies, and, finding escape impossible, cut. Mr Pickwick and Miss Bolo against Lady Snuphanuph and Mrs. Colonel Wugsby. As the trump card was turned up, at the commencement of the second deal, two young ladies hurried into the room, and took their stations on either side of Mrs. Colonel Wugsby's chair, where they waited patiently until the hand was over.

'Now, Jane,' said Mrs. Colonel Wugsby, turning to one of the girls, 'what is it?' 'I came to ask, ma, whether I might dance with the youngest Mr Crawley,' whispered the prettier and younger of the two.

'Good God, Jane, how can you think of such things?' replied the mamma indignantly. 'Haven't you repeatedly heard that his father has eight hundred a year, which dies with him? I am ashamed of you. Not on any account.'

'Ma,' whispered the other, who was much older than her sister, and very insipid and artificial, 'Lord Mutanhed has been introduced to me. I said I thought I wasn't engaged, ma.'

'You're a sweet pet, my love,' replied Mrs. Colonel Wugsby, tapping her daughter's cheek with her fan, 'and are always to be trusted. He's immensely rich, my dear. Bless you!' With these words Mrs. Colonel

Wugsby kissed her eldest daughter most affectionately, and frowning in a warning manner upon the other, sorted her cards.

Poor Mr Pickwick! he had never played with three thorough- paced female card-players before. They were so desperately sharp, that they quite frightened him. If he played a wrong card, Miss Bolo looked a small armoury of daggers; if he stopped to consider which was the right one, Lady Snuphanuph would throw herself back in her chair, and smile with a mingled glance of impatience and pity to Mrs. Colonel Wugsby, at which Mrs. Colonel Wugsby would shrug up her shoulders, and cough, as much as to say she wondered whether he ever would begin. Then, at the end of every hand, Miss Bolo would inquire with a dismal countenance and reproachful sigh, why Mr Pickwick had not returned that diamond, or led the club, or roughed the spade, or finessed the heart, or led through the honour, or brought out the ace, or played up to the king, or some such thing; and in reply to all these grave charges, Mr Pickwick would be wholly unable to plead any justification whatever, having by this time forgotten all about the game. People came and looked on, too, which made Mr Pickwick nervous. Besides all this, there was a great deal of distracting conversation near the table, between Angelo Bantam and the two Misses Matinter, who, being single and singular, paid great court to the Master of the Ceremonies, in the hope of getting a stray partner now and then. All these things, combined with the noises and interruptions of constant comings in and goings out, made Mr Pickwick play rather badly; the cards were against him, also; and when they left off at ten minutes past eleven, Miss Bolo rose from the table considerably agitated, and went straight home, in a flood of tears and a sedan-chair.

Being joined by his friends, who one and all protested that they had scarcely ever spent a more pleasant evening, Mr Pickwick accompanied them to the White Hart, and having soothed his feelings with something hot, went to bed, and to sleep, almost simultaneously.