Chapter XXXVIII

How Mr Winkle, When He Stepped Out Of The Frying-Pan, Walked Gently And Comfortably Into The Fire

The ill-starred gentleman who had been the unfortunate cause of the unusual noise and disturbance which alarmed the inhabitants of the Royal Crescent in manner and form already described, after passing a night of great confusion and anxiety, left the roof beneath which his friends still slumbered, bound he knew not whither. The excellent and considerate feelings which prompted Mr Winkle to take this step can never be too highly appreciated or too warmly extolled. 'If,' reasoned Mr Winkle with himself - 'if this Dowler attempts (as I have no doubt he will) to carry into execution his threat of personal violence against myself, it will be incumbent on me to call him out. He has a wife; that wife is attached to, and dependent on him. Heavens! If I should kill him in the blindness of my wrath, what would be my feelings ever afterwards!' This painful consideration operated so powerfully on the feelings of the humane young man, as to cause his knees to knock together, and his countenance to exhibit alarming manifestations of inward emotion. Impelled by such reflections, he grasped his carpet-bag, and creeping stealthily downstairs, shut the detestable street door with as little noise as possible, and walked off. Bending his steps towards the Royal Hotel, he found a coach on the point of starting for Bristol, and, thinking Bristol as good a place for his purpose as any other he could go to, he mounted the box, and reached his place of destination in such time as the pair of horses, who went the whole stage and back again, twice a day or more, could be reasonably supposed to arrive there. He took up his quarters at the Bush, and designing to postpone any communication by letter with Mr Pickwick until it was probable that Mr Dowler's wrath might have in some degree evaporated, walked forth to view the city, which struck him as being a shade more dirty than any place he had ever seen. Having inspected the docks and shipping, and viewed the cathedral, he inquired his way to Clifton, and being directed thither, took the route which was pointed out to him. But as the pavements of Bristol are not the widest or cleanest upon earth, so its streets are not altogether the straightest or least intricate; and Mr Winkle, being greatly puzzled by their manifold windings and twistings, looked about him for a decent shop in which he could apply afresh for counsel and instruction.

His eye fell upon a newly-painted tenement which had been recently converted into something between a shop and a private house, and which a red lamp, projecting over the fanlight of the street door, would have sufficiently announced as the residence of a medical practitioner, even if the word 'Surgery' had not been inscribed in golden characters on a wainscot ground, above the window of what, in times bygone, had been the front parlour. Thinking this an eligible place wherein to

make his inquiries, Mr Winkle stepped into the little shop where the gilt-labelled drawers and bottles were; and finding nobody there, knocked with a half-crown on the counter, to attract the attention of anybody who might happen to be in the back parlour, which he judged to be the innermost and peculiar sanctum of the establishment, from the repetition of the word surgery on the door - painted in white letters this time, by way of taking off the monotony.

At the first knock, a sound, as of persons fencing with fire- irons, which had until now been very audible, suddenly ceased; at the second, a studious-looking young gentleman in green spectacles, with a very large book in his hand, glided quietly into the shop, and stepping behind the counter, requested to know the visitor's pleasure.

'I am sorry to trouble you, Sir,' said Mr Winkle, 'but will you have the goodness to direct me to - '

'Ha! ha! ha!' roared the studious young gentleman, throwing the large book up into the air, and catching it with great dexterity at the very moment when it threatened to smash to atoms all the bottles on the counter. 'Here's a start!'

There was, without doubt; for Mr Winkle was so very much astonished at the extraordinary behaviour of the medical gentleman, that he involuntarily retreated towards the door, and looked very much disturbed at his strange reception.

'What, don't you know me?' said the medical gentleman. Mr Winkle murmured, in reply, that he had not that pleasure.

'Why, then,' said the medical gentleman, 'there are hopes for me yet; I may attend half the old women in Bristol, if I've decent luck. Get out, you mouldy old villain, get out!' With this adjuration, which was addressed to the large book, the medical gentleman kicked the volume with remarkable agility to the farther end of the shop, and, pulling off his green spectacles, grinned the identical grin of Robert Sawyer, Esquire, formerly of Guy's Hospital in the Borough, with a private residence in Lant Street.

'You don't mean to say you weren't down upon me?' said Mr Bob Sawyer, shaking Mr Winkle's hand with friendly warmth.

'Upon my word I was not,' replied Mr Winkle, returning his pressure.

'I wonder you didn't see the name,' said Bob Sawyer, calling his friend's attention to the outer door, on which, in the same white paint, were traced the words 'Sawyer, late Nockemorf.'

'It never caught my eye,' returned Mr Winkle.

'Lord, if I had known who you were, I should have rushed out, and caught you in my arms,' said Bob Sawyer; 'but upon my life, I thought you were the King's-taxes.'

'No!' said Mr Winkle.

'I did, indeed,' responded Bob Sawyer, 'and I was just going to say that I wasn't at home, but if you'd leave a message I'd be sure to give it to myself; for he don't know me; no more does the Lighting and Paving. I think the Church-rates guesses who I am, and I know the Water-works does, because I drew a tooth of his when I first came down here. But come in, come in!' Chattering in this way, Mr Bob Sawyer pushed Mr Winkle into the back room, where, amusing himself by boring little circular caverns in the chimney-piece with a red-hot poker, sat no less a person than Mr Benjamin Allen.

'Well!' said Mr Winkle. 'This is indeed a pleasure I did not expect. What a very nice place you have here!'

'Pretty well, pretty well,' replied Bob Sawyer. 'I PASSED, soon after that precious party, and my friends came down with the needful for this business; so I put on a black suit of clothes, and a pair of spectacles, and came here to look as solemn as I could.'

'And a very snug little business you have, no doubt?' said Mr Winkle knowingly.

'Very,' replied Bob Sawyer. 'So snug, that at the end of a few years you might put all the profits in a wine-glass, and cover 'em over with a gooseberry leaf.' 'You cannot surely mean that?' said Mr Winkle. 'The stock itself - ' 'Dummies, my dear boy,' said Bob Sawyer; 'half the drawers have nothing in 'em, and the other half don't open.'

'Nonsense!' said Mr Winkle.

'Fact - honour!' returned Bob Sawyer, stepping out into the shop, and demonstrating the veracity of the assertion by divers hard pulls at the little gilt knobs on the counterfeit drawers. 'Hardly anything real in the shop but the leeches, and THEY are second-hand.'

'I shouldn't have thought it!' exclaimed Mr Winkle, much surprised.

'I hope not,' replied Bob Sawyer, 'else where's the use of appearances, eh? But what will you take? Do as we do? That's right. Ben, my fine fellow, put your hand into the cupboard, and bring out the patent digester.'

Mr Benjamin Allen smiled his readiness, and produced from the closet at his elbow a black bottle half full of brandy.

'You don't take water, of course?' said Bob Sawyer.

'Thank you,' replied Mr Winkle. 'It's rather early. I should like to qualify it, if you have no objection.'

'None in the least, if you can reconcile it to your conscience,' replied Bob Sawyer, tossing off, as he spoke, a glass of the liquor with great relish. 'Ben, the pipkin!'

Mr Benjamin Allen drew forth, from the same hiding-place, a small brass pipkin, which Bob Sawyer observed he prided himself upon, particularly because it looked so business-like. The water in the professional pipkin having been made to boil, in course of time, by various little shovelfuls of coal, which Mr Bob Sawyer took out of a practicable window-seat, labelled 'Soda Water,' Mr Winkle adulterated his brandy; and the conversation was becoming general, when it was interrupted by the entrance into the shop of a boy, in a sober gray livery and a gold-laced hat, with a small covered basket under his arm, whom Mr Bob Sawyer immediately hailed with, 'Tom, you vagabond, come here.'

The boy presented himself accordingly.

'You've been stopping to ‘over’ all the posts in Bristol, you idle young scamp!' said Mr Bob Sawyer.

'No, sir, I haven't,' replied the boy.

'You had better not!' said Mr Bob Sawyer, with a threatening aspect. 'Who do you suppose will ever employ a professional man, when they see his boy playing at marbles in the gutter, or flying the garter in the horse-road? Have you no feeling for your profession, you groveller? Did you leave all the medicine?' 'Yes, Sir.'

'The powders for the child, at the large house with the new family, and the pills to be taken four times a day at the ill- tempered old gentleman's with the gouty leg?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Then shut the door, and mind the shop.'

'Come,' said Mr Winkle, as the boy retired, 'things are not quite so bad as you would have me believe, either. There is SOME medicine to be sent out.'

Mr Bob Sawyer peeped into the shop to see that no stranger was within hearing, and leaning forward to Mr Winkle, said, in a low tone -

'He leaves it all at the wrong houses.'

Mr Winkle looked perplexed, and Bob Sawyer and his friend laughed.

'Don't you see?' said Bob. 'He goes up to a house, rings the area bell, pokes a packet of medicine without a direction into the servant's hand, and walks off. Servant takes it into the dining- parlour; master opens it, and reads the label: 'Draught to be taken at bedtime - pills as before - lotion as usual - the powder. From Sawyer's, late Nockemorf's. Physicians' prescriptions carefully prepared,' and all the rest of it. Shows it to his wife - she reads the label; it goes down to the servants - THEY read the label. Next day, boy calls: 'Very sorry - his mistake - immense business - great many parcels to deliver - Mr Sawyer's compliments - late Nockemorf.' The name gets known, and that's the thing, my boy, in the medical way. Bless your heart, old fellow, it's better than all the advertising in the world. We have got one four-ounce bottle that's been to half the houses in Bristol, and hasn't done yet.'

'Dear me, I see,' observed Mr Winkle; 'what an excellent plan!'

'Oh, Ben and I have hit upon a dozen such,' replied Bob Sawyer, with great glee. 'The lamplighter has eighteenpence a week to pull the night-bell for ten minutes every time he comes round; and my boy always rushes into the church just before the psalms, when the people have got nothing to do but look about 'em, and calls me out, with horror and dismay depicted on his countenance. 'Bless my soul,' everybody says, 'somebody taken suddenly ill! Sawyer, late Nockemorf, sent for. What a business that young man has!"

At the termination of this disclosure of some of the mysteries of medicine, Mr Bob Sawyer and his friend, Ben Allen, threw themselves back in their respective chairs, and laughed boisterously. When they had enjoyed the joke to their heart's content, the discourse changed to topics in which Mr Winkle was more immediately interested.

We think we have hinted elsewhere, that Mr Benjamin Allen had a way of becoming sentimental after brandy. The case is not a peculiar one, as we ourself can testify, having, on a few occasions, had to deal with patients who have been afflicted in a similar manner. At this precise period of his existence, Mr Benjamin Allen had perhaps a greater predisposition to maudlinism than he had ever known before; the cause of which malady was briefly this. He had been staying nearly three weeks with Mr Bob Sawyer; Mr Bob Sawyer was not remarkable for temperance, nor was Mr Benjamin Allen for the

ownership of a very strong head; the consequence was that, during the whole space of time just mentioned, Mr Benjamin Allen had been wavering between intoxication partial, and intoxication complete.

'My dear friend,' said Mr Ben Allen, taking advantage of Mr Bob Sawyer's temporary absence behind the counter, whither he had retired to dispense some of the second-hand leeches, previously referred to; 'my dear friend, I am very miserable.'

Mr Winkle professed his heartfelt regret to hear it, and begged to know whether he could do anything to alleviate the sorrows of the suffering student.

'Nothing, my dear boy, nothing,' said Ben. 'You recollect Arabella, Winkle? My sister Arabella - a little girl, Winkle, with black eyes - when we were down at Wardle's? I don't know whether you happened to notice her - a nice little girl, Winkle. Perhaps my features may recall her countenance to your recollection?'

Mr Winkle required nothing to recall the charming Arabella to his mind; and it was rather fortunate he did not, for the features of her brother Benjamin would unquestionably have proved but an indifferent refresher to his memory. He answered, with as much calmness as he could assume, that he perfectly remembered the young lady referred to, and sincerely trusted she was in good health.

'Our friend Bob is a delightful fellow, Winkle,' was the only reply of Mr Ben Allen.

'Very,' said Mr Winkle, not much relishing this close connection of the two names.

'I designed 'em for each other; they were made for each other, sent into the world for each other, born for each other, Winkle,' said Mr Ben Allen, setting down his glass with emphasis. 'There's a special destiny in the matter, my dear sir; there's only five years' difference between 'em, and both their birthdays are in August.'

Mr Winkle was too anxious to hear what was to follow to express much wonderment at this extraordinary coincidence, marvellous as it was; so Mr Ben Allen, after a tear or two, went on to say that, notwithstanding all his esteem and respect and veneration for his friend, Arabella had unaccountably and undutifully evinced the most determined antipathy to his person.

'And I think,' said Mr Ben Allen, in conclusion. 'I think there's a prior attachment.'

'Have you any idea who the object of it might be?' asked Mr Winkle, with great trepidation.

Mr Ben Allen seized the poker, flourished it in a warlike manner above his head, inflicted a savage blow on an imaginary skull, and wound up by saying, in a very expressive manner, that he only wished he could guess; that was all.

'I'd show him what I thought of him,' said Mr Ben Allen. And round went the poker again, more fiercely than before.

All this was, of course, very soothing to the feelings of Mr Winkle, who remained silent for a few minutes; but at length mustered up resolution to inquire whether Miss Allen was in Kent.

'No, no,' said Mr Ben Allen, laying aside the poker, and looking very cunning; 'I didn't think Wardle's exactly the place for a headstrong girl; so, as I am her natural protector and guardian, our parents being dead, I have brought her down into this part of the country to spend a few months at an old aunt's, in a nice, dull, close place. I think that will cure her, my boy. If it doesn't, I'll take her abroad for a little while, and see what that'll do.'

'Oh, the aunt's is in Bristol, is it?' faltered Mr Winkle.

'No, no, not in Bristol,' replied Mr Ben Allen, jerking his thumb over his right shoulder; 'over that way - down there. But, hush, here's Bob. Not a word, my dear friend, not a word.'

Short as this conversation was, it roused in Mr Winkle the highest degree of excitement and anxiety. The suspected prior attachment rankled in his heart. Could he be the object of it? Could it be for him that the fair Arabella had looked scornfully on the sprightly Bob Sawyer, or had he a successful rival? He determined to see her, cost what it might; but here an insurmountable objection presented itself, for whether the explanatory 'over that way,' and 'down there,' of Mr Ben Allen, meant three miles off, or thirty, or three hundred, he could in no wise guess.

But he had no opportunity of pondering over his love just then, for Bob Sawyer's return was the immediate precursor of the arrival of a meat-pie from the baker's, of which that gentleman insisted on his staying to partake. The cloth was laid by an occasional charwoman, who officiated in the capacity of Mr Bob Sawyer's housekeeper; and a third knife and fork having been borrowed from the mother of the boy in the gray livery (for Mr Sawyer's domestic arrangements were as yet conducted on a limited scale), they sat down to dinner; the beer being served up, as Mr Sawyer remarked, 'in its native pewter.'

After dinner, Mr Bob Sawyer ordered in the largest mortar in the shop, and proceeded to brew a reeking jorum of rum-punch therein, stirring up and amalgamating the materials with a pestle in a very creditable and apothecary-like manner. Mr Sawyer, being a bachelor, had only one tumbler in the house, which was assigned to Mr Winkle as a compliment to the visitor, Mr Ben Allen being accommodated with a funnel with a cork in the narrow end, and Bob Sawyer contented himself with one of those wide-lipped crystal vessels inscribed with a variety of cabalistic characters, in which chemists are wont to measure out their liquid drugs in compounding prescriptions. These preliminaries adjusted, the punch was tasted, and pronounced excellent; and it having been arranged that Bob Sawyer and Ben Allen should be considered at liberty to fill twice to Mr Winkle's once, they started fair, with great satisfaction and good-fellowship.

There was no singing, because Mr Bob Sawyer said it wouldn't look professional; but to make amends for this deprivation there was so much talking and laughing that it might have been heard, and very likely was, at the end of the street. Which conversation materially lightened the hours and improved the mind of Mr Bob Sawyer's boy, who, instead of devoting the evening to his ordinary occupation of writing his name on the counter, and rubbing it out again, peeped through the glass door, and thus listened and looked on at the same time.

The mirth of Mr Bob Sawyer was rapidly ripening into the furious, Mr Ben Allen was fast relapsing into the sentimental, and the punch had well-nigh disappeared altogether, when the boy hastily running in, announced that a young woman had just come over, to say that Sawyer late Nockemorf was wanted directly, a couple of streets off. This broke up the party. Mr Bob Sawyer, understanding the message, after some twenty repetitions, tied a wet cloth round his head to sober himself, and, having partially succeeded, put on his green spectacles and issued forth. Resisting all entreaties to stay till he came back, and finding it quite impossible to engage Mr Ben Allen in any intelligible conversation on the subject nearest his heart, or indeed on any other, Mr Winkle took his departure, and returned to the Bush.

The anxiety of his mind, and the numerous meditations which Arabella had awakened, prevented his share of the mortar of punch producing that effect upon him which it would have had under other circumstances. So, after taking a glass of soda-water and brandy at the bar, he turned into the coffee-room, dispirited rather than elevated by the occurrences of the evening. Sitting in front of the fire, with his back towards him, was a tallish gentleman in a greatcoat: the only other occupant of the room. It was rather a cool evening for the season of the year, and the gentleman drew his chair aside to afford the new-comer a sight of the fire. What were Mr Winkle's feelings when, in

doing so, he disclosed to view the face and figure of the vindictive and sanguinary Dowler!

Mr Winkle's first impulse was to give a violent pull at the nearest bell-handle, but that unfortunately happened to be immediately behind Mr Dowler's head. He had made one step towards it, before he checked himself. As he did so, Mr Dowler very hastily drew back.

'Mr Winkle, Sir. Be calm. Don't strike me. I won't bear it. A blow! Never!' said Mr Dowler, looking meeker than Mr Winkle had expected in a gentleman of his ferocity.

'A blow, Sir?' stammered Mr Winkle.

'A blow, Sir,' replied Dowler. 'Compose your feelings. Sit down. Hear me.'

'Sir,' said Mr Winkle, trembling from head to foot, 'before I consent to sit down beside, or opposite you, without the presence of a waiter, I must be secured by some further understanding. You used a threat against me last night, Sir, a dreadful threat, Sir.' Here Mr Winkle turned very pale indeed, and stopped short.

'I did,' said Dowler, with a countenance almost as white as Mr Winkle's. 'Circumstances were suspicious. They have been explained. I respect your bravery. Your feeling is upright. Conscious innocence. There's my hand. Grasp it.'

'Really, Sir,' said Mr Winkle, hesitating whether to give his hand or not, and almost fearing that it was demanded in order that he might be taken at an advantage, 'really, Sir, I - '

'I know what you mean,' interposed Dowler. 'You feel aggrieved. Very natural. So should I. I was wrong. I beg your pardon. Be friendly. Forgive me.' With this, Dowler fairly forced his hand upon Mr Winkle, and shaking it with the utmost vehemence, declared he was a fellow of extreme spirit, and he had a higher opinion of him than ever.

'Now,' said Dowler, 'sit down. Relate it all. How did you find me? When did you follow? Be frank. Tell me.'

'It's quite accidental,' replied Mr Winkle, greatly perplexed by the curious and unexpected nature of the interview. 'Quite.'

'Glad of it,' said Dowler. 'I woke this morning. I had forgotten my threat. I laughed at the accident. I felt friendly. I said so.'

'To whom?' inquired Mr Winkle.

'To Mrs. Dowler. ‘You made a vow,’ said she. ‘I did,’ said I. ‘It was a rash one,’ said she. ‘It was,’ said I. ‘I'll apologise. Where is he?"

'Who?' inquired Mr Winkle.

'You,' replied Dowler. 'I went downstairs. You were not to be found. Pickwick looked gloomy. Shook his head. Hoped no violence would be committed. I saw it all. You felt yourself insulted. You had gone, for a friend perhaps. Possibly for pistols. ‘High spirit,’ said I. ‘I admire him.”

Mr Winkle coughed, and beginning to see how the land lay, assumed a look of importance.

'I left a note for you,' resumed Dowler. 'I said I was sorry. So I was. Pressing business called me here. You were not satisfied. You followed. You required a verbal explanation. You were right. It's all over now. My business is finished. I go back to-morrow. Join me.'

As Dowler progressed in his explanation, Mr Winkle's countenance grew more and more dignified. The mysterious nature of the commencement of their conversation was explained; Mr Dowler had as great an objection to duelling as himself; in short, this blustering and awful personage was one of the most egregious cowards in existence, and interpreting Mr Winkle's absence through the medium of his own fears, had taken the same step as himself, and prudently retired until all excitement of feeling should have subsided.

As the real state of the case dawned upon Mr Winkle's mind, he looked very terrible, and said he was perfectly satisfied; but at the same time, said so with an air that left Mr Dowler no alternative but to infer that if he had not been, something most horrible and destructive must inevitably have occurred. Mr Dowler appeared to be impressed with a becoming sense of Mr Winkle's magnanimity and condescension; and the two belligerents parted for the night, with many protestations of eternal friendship.

About half-past twelve o'clock, when Mr Winkle had been revelling some twenty minutes in the full luxury of his first sleep, he was suddenly awakened by a loud knocking at his chamber door, which, being repeated with increased vehemence, caused him to start up in bed, and inquire who was there, and what the matter was.

'Please, Sir, here's a young man which says he must see you directly,' responded the voice of the chambermaid.

'A young man!' exclaimed Mr Winkle.

'No mistake about that 'ere, Sir,' replied another voice through the keyhole; 'and if that wery same interestin' young creetur ain't let in vithout delay, it's wery possible as his legs vill enter afore his countenance.' The young man gave a gentle kick at one of the

lower panels of the door, after he had given utterance to this hint, as if to add force and point to the remark.

'Is that you, Sam?' inquired Mr Winkle, springing out of bed.

'Quite unpossible to identify any gen'l'm'n vith any degree o' mental satisfaction, vithout lookin' at him, Sir,' replied the voice dogmatically.

Mr Winkle, not much doubting who the young man was, unlocked the door; which he had no sooner done than Mr Samuel Weller entered with great precipitation, and carefully relocking it on the inside, deliberately put the key in his waistcoat pocket; and, after surveying Mr Winkle from head to foot, said -

'You're a wery humorous young gen'l'm'n, you air, Sir!'

'What do you mean by this conduct, Sam?' inquired Mr Winkle indignantly. 'Get out, sir, this instant. What do you mean, Sir?'

'What do I mean,' retorted Sam; 'come, Sir, this is raythe too rich, as the young lady said when she remonstrated with the pastry-cook, arter he'd sold her a pork pie as had got nothin' but fat inside. What do I mean! Well, that ain't a bad 'un, that ain't.'

'Unlock that door, and leave this room immediately, Sir,' said Mr Winkle.

'I shall leave this here room, sir, just precisely at the wery same moment as you leaves it,' responded Sam, speaking in a forcible manner, and seating himself with perfect gravity. 'If I find it necessary to carry you away, pick-a-back, o' course I shall leave it the least bit o' time possible afore you; but allow me to express a hope as you won't reduce me to extremities; in saying wich, I merely quote wot the nobleman said to the fractious pennywinkle, ven he vouldn't come out of his shell by means of a pin, and he conseqvently began to be afeered that he should be obliged to crack him in the parlour door.' At the end of this address, which was unusually lengthy for him, Mr Weller planted his hands on his knees, and looked full in Mr Winkle's face, with an expression of countenance which showed that he had not the remotest intention of being trifled with.

'You're a amiably-disposed young man, Sir, I don't think,' resumed Mr Weller, in a tone of moral reproof, 'to go inwolving our precious

governor in all sorts o' fanteegs, wen he's made up his mind to go through everythink for principle. You're far worse nor Dodson, Sir; and as for Fogg, I consider him a born angel to you!' Mr Weller having accompanied this last sentiment with an emphatic slap on each knee, folded his arms with a look of great disgust, and threw himself back in his chair, as if awaiting the criminal's defence.

'My good fellow,' said Mr Winkle, extending his hand - his teeth chattering all the time he spoke, for he had been standing, during the whole of Mr Weller's lecture, in his night-gear - 'my good fellow, I respect your attachment to my excellent friend, and I am very sorry indeed to have added to his causes for disquiet. There, Sam, there!'

'Well,' said Sam, rather sulkily, but giving the proffered hand a respectful shake at the same time - 'well, so you ought to be, and I am very glad to find you air; for, if I can help it, I won't have him put upon by nobody, and that's all about it.'

'Certainly not, Sam,' said Mr Winkle. 'There! Now go to bed, Sam, and we'll talk further about this in the morning.'

'I'm wery sorry,' said Sam, 'but I can't go to bed.'

'Not go to bed!' repeated Mr Winkle.

'No,' said Sam, shaking his head. 'Can't be done.'

'You don't mean to say you're going back to-night, Sam?' urged Mr Winkle, greatly surprised.

'Not unless you particklerly wish it,' replied Sam; 'but I mustn't leave this here room. The governor's orders wos peremptory.'

'Nonsense, Sam,' said Mr Winkle, 'I must stop here two or three days; and more than that, Sam, you must stop here too, to assist me in gaining an interview with a young lady - Miss Allen, Sam; you remember her - whom I must and will see before I leave Bristol.'

But in reply to each of these positions, Sam shook his head with great firmness, and energetically replied, 'It can't be done.'

After a great deal of argument and representation on the part of Mr Winkle, however, and a full disclosure of what had passed in the interview with Dowler, Sam began to waver; and at length a compromise was effected, of which the following were the main and principal conditions: -

That Sam should retire, and leave Mr Winkle in the undisturbed possession of his apartment, on the condition that he had permission to lock the door on the outside, and carry off the key; provided always, that in the event of an alarm of fire, or other dangerous contingency, the door should be instantly unlocked. That a letter should be written to Mr Pickwick early next morning, and forwarded per Dowler, requesting his consent to Sam and Mr Winkle's remaining at Bristol, for the purpose and with the object already assigned, and begging an answer by the next coach - , if favourable, the aforesaid parties to remain accordingly, and if not, to return to Bath immediately on the receipt thereof. And, lastly, that Mr Winkle should be understood as distinctly pledging himself not to resort to the window, fireplace, or other surreptitious mode of escape in the meanwhile. These stipulations having been concluded, Sam locked the door and departed.

He had nearly got downstairs, when he stopped, and drew the key from his pocket.

'I quite forgot about the knockin' down,' said Sam, half turning back. 'The governor distinctly said it was to be done. Amazin' stupid o' me, that 'ere! Never mind,' said Sam, brightening up, 'it's easily done to-morrow, anyvays.'

Apparently much consoled by this reflection, Mr Weller once more deposited the key in his pocket, and descending the remainder of the stairs without any fresh visitations of conscience, was soon, in common with the other inmates of the house, buried in profound repose.