

## Chapter XLVIII

### **Relates How Mr Pickwick, With The Assistance Of Samuel Weller, Essayed To Soften The Heart Of Mr Benjamin Allen, And To Mollify The Wrath Of Mr Robert Sawyer**

Mr Ben Allen and Mr Bob Sawyer sat together in the little surgery behind the shop, discussing minced veal and future prospects, when the discourse, not unnaturally, turned upon the practice acquired by Bob the aforesaid, and his present chances of deriving a competent independence from the honourable profession to which he had devoted himself.

'Which, I think,' observed Mr Bob Sawyer, pursuing the thread of the subject - 'which, I think, Ben, are rather dubious.'

'What's rather dubious?' inquired Mr Ben Allen, at the same time sharpening his intellect with a draught of beer. 'What's dubious?'

'Why, the chances,' responded Mr Bob Sawyer.

'I forgot,' said Mr Ben Allen. 'The beer has reminded me that I forgot, Bob - yes; they ARE dubious.'

'It's wonderful how the poor people patronise me,' said Mr Bob Sawyer reflectively. 'They knock me up, at all hours of the night; they take medicine to an extent which I should have conceived impossible; they put on blisters and leeches with a perseverance worthy of a better cause; they make additions to their families, in a manner which is quite awful. Six of those last-named little promissory notes, all due on the same day, Ben, and all intrusted to me!'

'It's very gratifying, isn't it?' said Mr Ben Allen, holding his plate for some more minced veal.

'Oh, very,' replied Bob; 'only not quite so much so as the confidence of patients with a shilling or two to spare would be. This business was capitally described in the advertisement, Ben. It is a practice, a very extensive practice - and that's all.'

'Bob,' said Mr Ben Allen, laying down his knife and fork, and fixing his eyes on the visage of his friend, 'Bob, I'll tell you what it is.'

'What is it?' inquired Mr Bob Sawyer.

'You must make yourself, with as little delay as possible, master of Arabella's one thousand pounds.'

'Three per cent. consolidated bank annuities, now standing in her name in the book or books of the governor and company of the Bank of England,' added Bob Sawyer, in legal phraseology.

'Exactly so,' said Ben. 'She has it when she comes of age, or marries. She wants a year of coming of age, and if you plucked up a spirit she needn't want a month of being married.'

'She's a very charming and delightful creature,' quoth Mr Robert Sawyer, in reply; 'and has only one fault that I know of, Ben. It happens, unfortunately, that that single blemish is a want of taste. She don't like me.'

'It's my opinion that she don't know what she does like,' said Mr Ben Allen contemptuously.

'Perhaps not,' remarked Mr Bob Sawyer. 'But it's my opinion that she does know what she doesn't like, and that's of more importance.'

'I wish,' said Mr Ben Allen, setting his teeth together, and speaking more like a savage warrior who fed on raw wolf's flesh which he carved with his fingers, than a peaceable young gentleman who ate minced veal with a knife and fork - 'I wish I knew whether any rascal really has been tampering with her, and attempting to engage her affections. I think I should assassinate him, Bob.'

'I'd put a bullet in him, if I found him out,' said Mr Sawyer, stopping in the course of a long draught of beer, and looking malignantly out of the porter pot. 'If that didn't do his business, I'd extract it afterwards, and kill him that way.'

Mr Benjamin Allen gazed abstractedly on his friend for some minutes in silence, and then said -

'You have never proposed to her, point-blank, Bob?'

'No. Because I saw it would be of no use,' replied Mr Robert Sawyer.

'You shall do it, before you are twenty-four hours older,' retorted Ben, with desperate calmness. 'She shall have you, or I'll know the reason why. I'll exert my authority.'

'Well,' said Mr Bob Sawyer, 'we shall see.'

'We shall see, my friend,' replied Mr Ben Allen fiercely. He paused for a few seconds, and added in a voice broken by emotion, 'You have loved her from a child, my friend. You loved her when we were boys at school together, and, even then, she was wayward and slighted your

young feelings. Do you recollect, with all the eagerness of a child's love, one day pressing upon her acceptance, two small caraway-seed biscuits and one sweet apple, neatly folded into a circular parcel with the leaf of a copy-book?'

'I do,' replied Bob Sawyer.

'She slighted that, I think?' said Ben Allen.

'She did,' rejoined Bob. 'She said I had kept the parcel so long in the pockets of my corduroys, that the apple was unpleasantly warm.'

'I remember,' said Mr Allen gloomily. 'Upon which we ate it ourselves, in alternate bites.'

Bob Sawyer intimated his recollection of the circumstance last alluded to, by a melancholy frown; and the two friends remained for some time absorbed, each in his own meditations.

While these observations were being exchanged between Mr Bob Sawyer and Mr Benjamin Allen; and while the boy in the gray livery, marvelling at the unwonted prolongation of the dinner, cast an anxious look, from time to time, towards the glass door, distracted by inward misgivings regarding the amount of minced veal which would be ultimately reserved for his individual cravings; there rolled soberly on through the streets of Bristol, a private fly, painted of a sad green colour, drawn by a chubby sort of brown horse, and driven by a surly-looking man with his legs dressed like the legs of a groom, and his body attired in the coat of a coachman. Such appearances are common to many vehicles belonging to, and maintained by, old ladies of economic habits; and in this vehicle sat an old lady who was its mistress and proprietor.

'Martin!' said the old lady, calling to the surly man, out of the front window.

'Well?' said the surly man, touching his hat to the old lady.

'Mr Sawyer's,' said the old lady.

'I was going there,' said the surly man.

The old lady nodded the satisfaction which this proof of the surly man's foresight imparted to her feelings; and the surly man giving a smart lash to the chubby horse, they all repaired to Mr Bob Sawyer's together.

'Martin!' said the old lady, when the fly stopped at the door of Mr Robert Sawyer, late Nockemorf.

'Well?' said Martin.

'Ask the lad to step out, and mind the horse.'

'I'm going to mind the horse myself,' said Martin, laying his whip on the roof of the fly.

'I can't permit it, on any account,' said the old lady; 'your testimony will be very important, and I must take you into the house with me. You must not stir from my side during the whole interview. Do you hear?'

'I hear,' replied Martin.

'Well; what are you stopping for?'

'Nothing,' replied Martin. So saying, the surly man leisurely descended from the wheel, on which he had been poising himself on the tops of the toes of his right foot, and having summoned the boy in the gray livery, opened the coach door, flung down the steps, and thrusting in a hand enveloped in a dark wash-leather glove, pulled out the old lady with as much unconcern in his manner as if she were a bandbox.

'Dear me!' exclaimed the old lady. 'I am so flurried, now I have got here, Martin, that I'm all in a tremble.'

Mr Martin coughed behind the dark wash-leather gloves, but expressed no sympathy; so the old lady, composing herself, trotted up Mr Bob Sawyer's steps, and Mr Martin followed. Immediately on the old lady's entering the shop, Mr Benjamin Allen and Mr Bob Sawyer, who had been putting the spirits-and- water out of sight, and upsetting nauseous drugs to take off the smell of the tobacco smoke, issued hastily forth in a transport of pleasure and affection.

'My dear aunt,' exclaimed Mr Ben Allen, 'how kind of you to look in upon us! Mr Sawyer, aunt; my friend Mr Bob Sawyer whom I have spoken to you about, regarding - you know, aunt.' And here Mr Ben Allen, who was not at the moment extraordinarily sober, added the word 'Arabella,' in what was meant to be a whisper, but which was an especially audible and distinct tone of speech which nobody could avoid hearing, if anybody were so disposed.

'My dear Benjamin,' said the old lady, struggling with a great shortness of breath, and trembling from head to foot, 'don't be

alarmed, my dear, but I think I had better speak to Mr Sawyer, alone, for a moment. Only for one moment.'

'Bob,' said Mr Allen, 'will you take my aunt into the surgery?'

'Certainly,' responded Bob, in a most professional voice. 'Step this way, my dear ma'am. Don't be frightened, ma'am. We shall be able to set you to rights in a very short time, I have no doubt, ma'am. Here, my dear ma'am. Now then!' With this, Mr Bob Sawyer having handed the old lady to a chair, shut the door, drew another chair close to her, and waited to hear detailed the symptoms of some disorder from which he saw in perspective a long train of profits and advantages.

The first thing the old lady did, was to shake her head a great many times, and began to cry.

'Nervous,' said Bob Sawyer complacently. 'Camphor-julep and water three times a day, and composing draught at night.'

'I don't know how to begin, Mr Sawyer,' said the old lady. 'It is so very painful and distressing.'

'You need not begin, ma'am,' rejoined Mr Bob Sawyer. 'I can anticipate all you would say. The head is in fault.'

'I should be very sorry to think it was the heart,' said the old lady, with a slight groan.

'Not the slightest danger of that, ma'am,' replied Bob Sawyer. 'The stomach is the primary cause.'

'Mr Sawyer!' exclaimed the old lady, starting.

'Not the least doubt of it, ma'am,' rejoined Bob, looking wondrous wise. 'Medicine, in time, my dear ma'am, would have prevented it all.'

'Mr Sawyer,' said the old lady, more flurried than before, 'this conduct is either great impertinence to one in my situation, Sir, or it arises from your not understanding the object of my visit. If it had been in the power of medicine, or any foresight I could have used, to prevent what has occurred, I should certainly have done so. I had better see my nephew at once,' said the old lady, twirling her reticule indignantly, and rising as she spoke.

'Stop a moment, ma'am,' said Bob Sawyer; 'I'm afraid I have not understood you. What IS the matter, ma'am?'

'My niece, Mr Sawyer,' said the old lady: 'your friend's sister.'

'Yes, ma'am,' said Bob, all impatience; for the old lady, although much agitated, spoke with the most tantalising deliberation, as old ladies often do. 'Yes, ma'am.'

'Left my home, Mr Sawyer, three days ago, on a pretended visit to my sister, another aunt of hers, who keeps the large boarding-school, just beyond the third mile-stone, where there is a very large laburnum-tree and an oak gate,' said the old lady, stopping in this place to dry her eyes.

'Oh, devil take the laburnum-tree, ma'am!' said Bob, quite forgetting his professional dignity in his anxiety. 'Get on a little faster; put a little more steam on, ma'am, pray.'

'This morning,' said the old lady slowly - 'this morning, she - '

'She came back, ma'am, I suppose,' said Bob, with great animation. 'Did she come back?'

'No, she did not; she wrote,' replied the old lady.

'What did she say?' inquired Bob eagerly.

'She said, Mr Sawyer,' replied the old lady - 'and it is this I want to prepare Benjamin's mind for, gently and by degrees; she said that she was - I have got the letter in my pocket, Mr Sawyer, but my glasses are in the carriage, and I should only waste your time if I attempted to point out the passage to you, without them; she said, in short, Mr Sawyer, that she was married.' 'What!' said, or rather shouted, Mr Bob Sawyer.

'Married,' repeated the old lady.

Mr Bob Sawyer stopped to hear no more; but darting from the surgery into the outer shop, cried in a stentorian voice, 'Ben, my boy, she's bolted!'

Mr Ben Allen, who had been slumbering behind the counter, with his head half a foot or so below his knees, no sooner heard this appalling communication, than he made a precipitate rush at Mr Martin, and, twisting his hand in the neck-cloth of that taciturn servitor, expressed an obliging intention of choking him where he stood. This intention, with a promptitude often the effect of desperation, he at once commenced carrying into execution, with much vigour and surgical skill.

Mr Martin, who was a man of few words and possessed but little power of eloquence or persuasion, submitted to this operation with a

very calm and agreeable expression of countenance, for some seconds; finding, however, that it threatened speedily to lead to a result which would place it beyond his power to claim any wages, board or otherwise, in all time to come, he muttered an inarticulate remonstrance and felled Mr Benjamin Allen to the ground. As that gentleman had his hands entangled in his cravat, he had no alternative but to follow him to the floor. There they both lay struggling, when the shop door opened, and the party was increased by the arrival of two most unexpected visitors, to wit, Mr Pickwick and Mr Samuel Weller.

The impression at once produced on Mr Weller's mind by what he saw, was, that Mr Martin was hired by the establishment of Sawyer, late Nockemorf, to take strong medicine, or to go into fits and be experimentalised upon, or to swallow poison now and then with the view of testing the efficacy of some new antidotes, or to do something or other to promote the great science of medicine, and gratify the ardent spirit of inquiry burning in the bosoms of its two young professors. So, without presuming to interfere, Sam stood perfectly still, and looked on, as if he were mightily interested in the result of the then pending experiment. Not so, Mr Pickwick. He at once threw himself on the astonished combatants, with his accustomed energy, and loudly called upon the bystanders to interpose.

This roused Mr Bob Sawyer, who had been hitherto quite paralysed by the frenzy of his companion. With that gentleman's assistance, Mr Pickwick raised Ben Allen to his feet. Mr Martin finding himself alone on the floor, got up, and looked about him.

'Mr Allen,' said Mr Pickwick, 'what is the matter, Sir?'

'Never mind, Sir!' replied Mr Allen, with haughty defiance.

'What is it?' inquired Mr Pickwick, looking at Bob Sawyer. 'Is he unwell?'

Before Bob could reply, Mr Ben Allen seized Mr Pickwick by the hand, and murmured, in sorrowful accents, 'My sister, my dear Sir; my sister.'

'Oh, is that all!' said Mr Pickwick. 'We shall easily arrange that matter, I hope. Your sister is safe and well, and I am here, my dear Sir, to - '

'Sorry to do anythin' as may cause an interruption to such verry pleasant proceedin's, as the king said wen he dissolved the parliament,' interposed Mr Weller, who had been peeping through the glass door; 'but there's another experiment here, sir. Here's a

wenerable old lady a - lyin' on the carpet waitin' for dissection, or galwinism, or some other rewivin' and scientific invention.'

'I forgot,' exclaimed Mr Ben Allen. 'It is my aunt.'

'Dear me!' said Mr Pickwick. 'Poor lady! Gently Sam, gently.'

'Strange sitivation for one o' the family,' observed Sam Weller, hoisting the aunt into a chair. 'Now depitty sawbones, bring out the wollatilly!'

The latter observation was addressed to the boy in gray, who, having handed over the fly to the care of the street-keeper, had come back to see what all the noise was about. Between the boy in gray, and Mr Bob Sawyer, and Mr Benjamin Allen (who having frightened his aunt into a fainting fit, was affectionately solicitous for her recovery) the old lady was at length restored to consciousness; then Mr Ben Allen, turning with a puzzled countenance to Mr Pickwick, asked him what he was about to say, when he had been so alarmingly interrupted.

'We are all friends here, I presume?' said Mr Pickwick, clearing his voice, and looking towards the man of few words with the surly countenance, who drove the fly with the chubby horse.

This reminded Mr Bob Sawyer that the boy in gray was looking on, with eyes wide open, and greedy ears. The incipient chemist having been lifted up by his coat collar, and dropped outside the door, Bob Sawyer assured Mr Pickwick that he might speak without reserve.

'Your sister, my dear Sir,' said Mr Pickwick, turning to Benjamin Allen, 'is in London; well and happy.'

'Her happiness is no object to me, sir,' said Benjamin Allen, with a flourish of the hand.

'Her husband IS an object to ME, Sir,' said Bob Sawyer. 'He shall be an object to me, sir, at twelve paces, and a pretty object I'll make of him, sir - a mean-spirited scoundrel!' This, as it stood, was a very pretty denunciation, and magnanimous withal; but Mr Bob Sawyer rather weakened its effect, by winding up with some general observations concerning the punching of heads and knocking out of eyes, which were commonplace by comparison.

'Stay, sir,' said Mr Pickwick; 'before you apply those epithets to the gentleman in question, consider, dispassionately, the extent of his fault, and above all remember that he is a friend of mine.'

'What!' said Mr Bob Sawyer. 'His name!' cried Ben Allen. 'His name!'



'Mr Nathaniel Winkle,' said Mr, Pickwick.

Mr Benjamin Allen deliberately crushed his spectacles beneath the heel of his boot, and having picked up the pieces, and put them into three separate pockets, folded his arms, bit his lips, and looked in a threatening manner at the bland features of Mr Pickwick.

'Then it's you, is it, Sir, who have encouraged and brought about this match?' inquired Mr Benjamin Allen at length.

'And it's this gentleman's servant, I suppose,' interrupted the old lady, 'who has been skulking about my house, and endeavouring to entrap my servants to conspire against their mistress. - Martin!'

'Well?' said the surly man, coming forward.

'Is that the young man you saw in the lane, whom you told me about, this morning?'

Mr Martin, who, as it has already appeared, was a man of few words, looked at Sam Weller, nodded his head, and growled forth, 'That's the man.' Mr Weller, who was never proud, gave a smile of friendly recognition as his eyes encountered those of the surly groom, and admitted in courteous terms, that he had 'knowed him afore.'

'And this is the faithful creature,' exclaimed Mr Ben Allen, 'whom I had nearly suffocated! - Mr Pickwick, how dare you allow your fellow to be employed in the abduction of my sister? I demand that you explain this matter, sir.'

'Explain it, sir!' cried Bob Sawyer fiercely.

'It's a conspiracy,' said Ben Allen.

'A regular plant,' added Mr Bob Sawyer.

'A disgraceful imposition,' observed the old lady.

'Nothing but a do,' remarked Martin. 'Pray hear me,' urged Mr Pickwick, as Mr Ben Allen fell into a chair that patients were bled in, and gave way to his pocket- handkerchief. 'I have rendered no assistance in this matter, beyond being present at one interview between the young people which I could not prevent, and from which I conceived my presence would remove any slight colouring of impropriety that it might otherwise have had; this is the whole share I have had in the transaction, and I had no suspicion that an immediate marriage was even contemplated. Though, mind,' added Mr

Pickwick, hastily checking himself - 'mind, I do not say I should have prevented it, if I had known that it was intended.'

'You hear that, all of you; you hear that?' said Mr Benjamin Allen.

'I hope they do,' mildly observed Mr Pickwick, looking round, 'and,' added that gentleman, his colour mounting as he spoke, 'I hope they hear this, Sir, also. That from what has been stated to me, sir, I assert that you were by no means justified in attempting to force your sister's inclinations as you did, and that you should rather have endeavoured by your kindness and forbearance to have supplied the place of other nearer relations whom she had never known, from a child. As regards my young friend, I must beg to add, that in every point of worldly advantage he is, at least, on an equal footing with yourself, if not on a much better one, and that unless I hear this question discussed with becoming temper and moderation, I decline hearing any more said upon the subject.'

'I wish to make a wery few remarks in addition to wot has been put for'ard by the honourable gen'l'm'n as has jist give over,' said Mr Weller, stepping forth, 'wich is this here: a indiividual in company has called me a feller.'

'That has nothing whatever to do with the matter, Sam,' interposed Mr Pickwick. 'Pray hold your tongue.'

'I ain't a-goin' to say nothin' on that 'ere pint, sir,' replied Sam, 'but merely this here. P'raps that gen'l'm'n may think as there was a priory 'tachment; but there worn't nothin' o' the sort, for the young lady said in the wery beginnin' o' the keepin' company, that she couldn't abide him. Nobody's cut him out, and it 'ud ha' been jist the wery same for him if the young lady had never seen Mr Vinkle. That's what I wished to say, sir, and I hope I've now made that 'ere gen'l'm'n's mind easy.'

A short pause followed these consolatory remarks of Mr Weller. Then Mr Ben Allen rising from his chair, protested that he would never see Arabella's face again; while Mr Bob Sawyer, despite Sam's flattering assurance, vowed dreadful vengeance on the happy bridegroom.

But, just when matters were at their height, and threatening to remain so, Mr Pickwick found a powerful assistant in the old lady, who, evidently much struck by the mode in which he had advocated her niece's cause, ventured to approach Mr Benjamin Allen with a few comforting reflections, of which the chief were, that after all, perhaps, it was well it was no worse; the least said the soonest mended, and upon her word she did not know that it was so very bad after all; what was over couldn't be begun, and what couldn't be cured must be endured; with various other assurances of the like novel and

strengthening description. To all of these, Mr Benjamin Allen replied that he meant no disrespect to his aunt, or anybody there, but if it were all the same to them, and they would allow him to have his own way, he would rather have the pleasure of hating his sister till death, and after it.

At length, when this determination had been announced half a hundred times, the old lady suddenly bridling up and looking very majestic, wished to know what she had done that no respect was to be paid to her years or station, and that she should be obliged to beg and pray, in that way, of her own nephew, whom she remembered about five-and-twenty years before he was born, and whom she had known, personally, when he hadn't a tooth in his head; to say nothing of her presence on the first occasion of his having his hair cut, and assistance at numerous other times and ceremonies during his babyhood, of sufficient importance to found a claim upon his affection, obedience, and sympathies, for ever.

While the good lady was bestowing this objugation on Mr Ben Allen, Bob Sawyer and Mr Pickwick had retired in close conversation to the inner room, where Mr Sawyer was observed to apply himself several times to the mouth of a black bottle, under the influence of which, his features gradually assumed a cheerful and even jovial expression. And at last he emerged from the room, bottle in hand, and, remarking that he was very sorry to say he had been making a fool of himself, begged to propose the health and happiness of Mr and Mrs. Winkle, whose felicity, so far from envying, he would be the first to congratulate them upon. Hearing this, Mr Ben Allen suddenly arose from his chair, and, seizing the black bottle, drank the toast so heartily, that, the liquor being strong, he became nearly as black in the face as the bottle. Finally, the black bottle went round till it was empty, and there was so much shaking of hands and interchanging of compliments, that even the metal-visaged Mr Martin condescended to smile.

'And now,' said Bob Sawyer, rubbing his hands, 'we'll have a jolly night.'

'I am sorry,' said Mr Pickwick, 'that I must return to my inn. I have not been accustomed to fatigue lately, and my journey has tired me exceedingly.'

'You'll take some tea, Mr Pickwick?' said the old lady, with irresistible sweetness.

'Thank you, I would rather not,' replied that gentleman. The truth is, that the old lady's evidently increasing admiration was Mr Pickwick's principal inducement for going away. He thought of Mrs. Bardell; and every glance of the old lady's eyes threw him into a cold perspiration.

As Mr Pickwick could by no means be prevailed upon to stay, it was arranged at once, on his own proposition, that Mr Benjamin Allen should accompany him on his journey to the elder Mr Winkle's, and that the coach should be at the door, at nine o'clock next morning. He then took his leave, and, followed by Samuel Weller, repaired to the Bush. It is worthy of remark, that Mr Martin's face was horribly convulsed as he shook hands with Sam at parting, and that he gave vent to a smile and an oath simultaneously; from which tokens it has been inferred by those who were best acquainted with that gentleman's peculiarities, that he expressed himself much pleased with Mr Weller's society, and requested the honour of his further acquaintance.

'Shall I order a private room, Sir?' inquired Sam, when they reached the Bush.

'Why, no, Sam,' replied Mr Pickwick; 'as I dined in the coffee-room, and shall go to bed soon, it is hardly worth while. See who there is in the travellers' room, Sam.'

Mr Weller departed on his errand, and presently returned to say that there was only a gentleman with one eye; and that he and the landlord were drinking a bowl of bishop together.

'I will join them,' said Mr Pickwick.

'He's a queer customer, the vun-eyed vun, sir,' observed Mr Weller, as he led the way. 'He's a-gammonin' that 'ere landlord, he is, sir, till he don't rightly know wether he's a-standing on the soles of his boots or the crown of his hat.'

The individual to whom this observation referred, was sitting at the upper end of the room when Mr Pickwick entered, and was smoking a large Dutch pipe, with his eye intently fixed on the round face of the landlord; a jolly-looking old personage, to whom he had recently been relating some tale of wonder, as was testified by sundry disjointed exclamations of, 'Well, I wouldn't have believed it! The strangest thing I ever heard! Couldn't have supposed it possible!' and other expressions of astonishment which burst spontaneously from his lips, as he returned the fixed gaze of the one-eyed man.

'Servant, sir,' said the one-eyed man to Mr Pickwick. 'Fine night, sir.'

'Very much so indeed,' replied Mr Pickwick, as the waiter placed a small decanter of brandy, and some hot water before him.

While Mr Pickwick was mixing his brandy-and-water, the one-eyed man looked round at him earnestly, from time to time, and at length said -

'I think I've seen you before.'

'I don't recollect you,' rejoined Mr Pickwick.

'I dare say not,' said the one-eyed man. 'You didn't know me, but I knew two friends of yours that were stopping at the Peacock at Eatanswill, at the time of the election.'

'Oh, indeed!' exclaimed Mr Pickwick.

'Yes,' rejoined the one-eyed man. 'I mentioned a little circumstance to them about a friend of mine of the name of Tom Smart. Perhaps you've heard them speak of it.'

'Often,' rejoined Mr Pickwick, smiling. 'He was your uncle, I think?'

'No, no; only a friend of my uncle's,' replied the one-eyed man.

'He was a wonderful man, that uncle of yours, though,' remarked the landlord shaking his head.

'Well, I think he was; I think I may say he was,' answered the one-eyed man. 'I could tell you a story about that same uncle, gentlemen, that would rather surprise you.'

'Could you?' said Mr Pickwick. 'Let us hear it, by all means.'

The one-eyed bagman ladled out a glass of negus from the bowl, and drank it; smoked a long whiff out of the Dutch pipe; and then, calling to Sam Weller who was lingering near the door, that he needn't go away unless he wanted to, because the story was no secret, fixed his eye upon the landlord's, and proceeded, in the words of the next chapter.