

## Chapter LII - I Assist At An Explosion

When the time Mr Micawber had appointed so mysteriously, was within four-and-twenty hours of being come, my aunt and I consulted how we should proceed; for my aunt was very unwilling to leave Dora. Ah! how easily I carried Dora up and down stairs, now!

We were disposed, notwithstanding Mr Micawber's stipulation for my aunt's attendance, to arrange that she should stay at home, and be represented by Mr Dick and me. In short, we had resolved to take this course, when Dora again unsettled us by declaring that she never would forgive herself, and never would forgive her bad boy, if my aunt remained behind, on any pretence.

'I won't speak to you,' said Dora, shaking her curls at my aunt. 'I'll be disagreeable! I'll make Jip bark at you all day. I shall be sure that you really are a cross old thing, if you don't go!'

'Tut, Blossom!' laughed my aunt. 'You know you can't do without me!'

'Yes, I can,' said Dora. 'You are no use to me at all. You never run up and down stairs for me, all day long. You never sit and tell me stories about Doody, when his shoes were worn out, and he was covered with dust - oh, what a poor little mite of a fellow! You never do anything at all to please me, do you, dear?' Dora made haste to kiss my aunt, and say, 'Yes, you do! I'm only joking!'- lest my aunt should think she really meant it.

'But, aunt,' said Dora, coaxingly, 'now listen. You must go. I shall tease you, 'till you let me have my own way about it. I shall lead my naughty boy such a life, if he don't make you go. I shall make myself so disagreeable - and so will Jip! You'll wish you had gone, like a good thing, for ever and ever so long, if you don't go. Besides,' said Dora, putting back her hair, and looking wonderingly at my aunt and me, 'why shouldn't you both go? I am not very ill indeed. Am I?'

'Why, what a question!' cried my aunt.

'What a fancy!' said I.

'Yes! I know I am a silly little thing!' said Dora, slowly looking from one of us to the other, and then putting up her pretty lips to kiss us as she lay upon her couch. 'Well, then, you must both go, or I shall not believe you; and then I shall cry!'

I saw, in my aunt's face, that she began to give way now, and Dora brightened again, as she saw it too.

'You'll come back with so much to tell me, that it'll take at least a week to make me understand!' said Dora. 'Because I know I shan't understand, for a length of time, if there's any business in it. And there's sure to be some business in it! If there's anything to add up, besides, I don't know when I shall make it out; and my bad boy will look so miserable all the time. There! Now you'll go, won't you? You'll only be gone one night, and Jip will take care of me while you are gone. Doady will carry me upstairs before you go, and I won't come down again till you come back; and you shall take Agnes a dreadfully scolding letter from me, because she has never been to see us!'

We agreed, without any more consultation, that we would both go, and that Dora was a little Impostor, who feigned to be rather unwell, because she liked to be petted. She was greatly pleased, and very merry; and we four, that is to say, my aunt, Mr Dick, Traddles, and I, went down to Canterbury by the Dover mail that night.

At the hotel where Mr Micawber had requested us to await him, which we got into, with some trouble, in the middle of the night, I found a letter, importing that he would appear in the morning punctually at half past nine. After which, we went shivering, at that uncomfortable hour, to our respective beds, through various close passages; which smelt as if they had been steeped, for ages, in a solution of soup and stables.

Early in the morning, I sauntered through the dear old tranquil streets, and again mingled with the shadows of the venerable gateways and churches. The rooks were sailing about the cathedral towers; and the towers themselves, overlooking many a long unaltered mile of the rich country and its pleasant streams, were cutting the bright morning air, as if there were no such thing as change on earth. Yet the bells, when they sounded, told me sorrowfully of change in everything; told me of their own age, and my pretty Dora's youth; and of the many, never old, who had lived and loved and died, while the reverberations of the bells had hummed through the rusty armour of the Black Prince hanging up within, and, motes upon the deep of Time, had lost themselves in air, as circles do in water.

I looked at the old house from the corner of the street, but did not go nearer to it, lest, being observed, I might unwittingly do any harm to the design I had come to aid. The early sun was striking edgewise on its gables and lattice-windows, touching them with gold; and some beams of its old peace seemed to touch my heart.

I strolled into the country for an hour or so, and then returned by the main street, which in the interval had shaken off its last night's sleep. Among those who were stirring in the shops, I saw my ancient enemy the butcher, now advanced to top-boots and a baby, and in business

for himself. He was nursing the baby, and appeared to be a benignant member of society.

We all became very anxious and impatient, when we sat down to breakfast. As it approached nearer and nearer to half past nine o'clock, our restless expectation of Mr Micawber increased. At last we made no more pretence of attending to the meal, which, except with Mr Dick, had been a mere form from the first; but my aunt walked up and down the room, Traddles sat upon the sofa affecting to read the paper with his eyes on the ceiling; and I looked out of the window to give early notice of Mr Micawber's coming. Nor had I long to watch, for, at the first chime of the half hour, he appeared in the street.

'Here he is,' said I, 'and not in his legal attire!'

My aunt tied the strings of her bonnet (she had come down to breakfast in it), and put on her shawl, as if she were ready for anything that was resolute and uncompromising. Traddles buttoned his coat with a determined air. Mr Dick, disturbed by these formidable appearances, but feeling it necessary to imitate them, pulled his hat, with both hands, as firmly over his ears as he possibly could; and instantly took it off again, to welcome Mr Micawber.

'Gentlemen, and madam,' said Mr Micawber, 'good morning! My dear sir,' to Mr Dick, who shook hands with him violently, 'you are extremely good.'

'Have you breakfasted?' said Mr Dick. 'Have a chop!'

'Not for the world, my good sir!' cried Mr Micawber, stopping him on his way to the bell; 'appetite and myself, Mr Dixon, have long been strangers.'

Mr Dixon was so well pleased with his new name, and appeared to think it so obliging in Mr Micawber to confer it upon him, that he shook hands with him again, and laughed rather childishly.

'Dick,' said my aunt, 'attention!'

Mr Dick recovered himself, with a blush.

'Now, sir,' said my aunt to Mr Micawber, as she put on her gloves, 'we are ready for Mount Vesuvius, or anything else, as soon as YOU please.'

'Madam,' returned Mr Micawber, 'I trust you will shortly witness an eruption. Mr Traddles, I have your permission, I believe, to mention here that we have been in communication together?'

'It is undoubtedly the fact, Copperfield,' said Traddles, to whom I looked in surprise. 'Mr Micawber has consulted me in reference to what he has in contemplation; and I have advised him to the best of my judgement.'

'Unless I deceive myself, Mr Traddles,' pursued Mr Micawber, 'what I contemplate is a disclosure of an important nature.'

'Highly so,' said Traddles.

'Perhaps, under such circumstances, madam and gentlemen,' said Mr Micawber, 'you will do me the favour to submit yourselves, for the moment, to the direction of one who, however unworthy to be regarded in any other light but as a Waif and Stray upon the shore of human nature, is still your fellow-man, though crushed out of his original form by individual errors, and the accumulative force of a combination of circumstances?'

'We have perfect confidence in you, Mr Micawber,' said I, 'and will do what you please.'

'Mr Copperfield,' returned Mr Micawber, 'your confidence is not, at the existing juncture, ill-bestowed. I would beg to be allowed a start of five minutes by the clock; and then to receive the present company, inquiring for Miss Wickfield, at the office of Wickfield and Heep, whose Stipendiary I am.'

My aunt and I looked at Traddles, who nodded his approval.

'I have no more,' observed Mr Micawber, 'to say at present.'

With which, to my infinite surprise, he included us all in a comprehensive bow, and disappeared; his manner being extremely distant, and his face extremely pale.

Traddles only smiled, and shook his head (with his hair standing upright on the top of it), when I looked to him for an explanation; so I took out my watch, and, as a last resource, counted off the five minutes. My aunt, with her own watch in her hand, did the like. When the time was expired, Traddles gave her his arm; and we all went out together to the old house, without saying one word on the way.

We found Mr Micawber at his desk, in the turret office on the ground floor, either writing, or pretending to write, hard. The large office-ruler was stuck into his waistcoat, and was not so well concealed but that a foot or more of that instrument protruded from his bosom, like a new kind of shirt-frill.

As it appeared to me that I was expected to speak, I said aloud:

'How do you do, Mr Micawber?'

'Mr Copperfield,' said Mr Micawber, gravely, 'I hope I see you well?'

'Is Miss Wickfield at home?' said I.

'Mr Wickfield is unwell in bed, sir, of a rheumatic fever,' he returned; 'but Miss Wickfield, I have no doubt, will be happy to see old friends. Will you walk in, sir?'

He preceded us to the dining-room - the first room I had entered in that house - and flinging open the door of Mr Wickfield's former office, said, in a sonorous voice:

'Miss Trotwood, Mr David Copperfield, Mr Thomas Traddles, and Mr Dixon!'

I had not seen Uriah Heep since the time of the blow. Our visit astonished him, evidently; not the less, I dare say, because it astonished ourselves. He did not gather his eyebrows together, for he had none worth mentioning; but he frowned to that degree that he almost closed his small eyes, while the hurried raising of his grisly hand to his chin betrayed some trepidation or surprise. This was only when we were in the act of entering his room, and when I caught a glance at him over my aunt's shoulder. A moment afterwards, he was as fawning and as humble as ever.

'Well, I am sure,' he said. 'This is indeed an unexpected pleasure! To have, as I may say, all friends round St. Paul's at once, is a treat unlooked for! Mr Copperfield, I hope I see you well, and - if I may umbly express myself so - friendly towards them as is ever your friends, whether or not. Mrs Copperfield, sir, I hope she's getting on. We have been made quite uneasy by the poor accounts we have had of her state, lately, I do assure you.'

I felt ashamed to let him take my hand, but I did not know yet what else to do.

'Things are changed in this office, Miss Trotwood, since I was an umble clerk, and held your pony; ain't they?' said Uriah, with his sickliest smile. 'But I am not changed, Miss Trotwood.'

'Well, sir,' returned my aunt, 'to tell you the truth, I think you are pretty constant to the promise of your youth; if that's any satisfaction to you.'

'Thank you, Miss Trotwood,' said Uriah, writhing in his ungainly manner, 'for your good opinion! Micawber, tell 'em to let Miss Agnes know - and mother. Mother will be quite in a state, when she sees the present company!' said Uriah, setting chairs.

'You are not busy, Mr Heep?' said Traddles, whose eye the cunning red eye accidentally caught, as it at once scrutinized and evaded us.

'No, Mr Traddles,' replied Uriah, resuming his official seat, and squeezing his bony hands, laid palm to palm between his bony knees. 'Not so much so as I could wish. But lawyers, sharks, and leeches, are not easily satisfied, you know! Not but what myself and Micawber have our hands pretty full, in general, on account of Mr Wickfield's being hardly fit for any occupation, sir. But it's a pleasure as well as a duty, I am sure, to work for him. You've not been intimate with Mr Wickfield, I think, Mr Traddles? I believe I've only had the honour of seeing you once myself?'

'No, I have not been intimate with Mr Wickfield,' returned Traddles; 'or I might perhaps have waited on you long ago, Mr Heep.'

There was something in the tone of this reply, which made Uriah look at the speaker again, with a very sinister and suspicious expression. But, seeing only Traddles, with his good-natured face, simple manner, and hair on end, he dismissed it as he replied, with a jerk of his whole body, but especially his throat:

'I am sorry for that, Mr Traddles. You would have admired him as much as we all do. His little failings would only have endeared him to you the more. But if you would like to hear my fellow-partner eloquently spoken of, I should refer you to Copperfield. The family is a subject he's very strong upon, if you never heard him.'

I was prevented from disclaiming the compliment (if I should have done so, in any case), by the entrance of Agnes, now ushered in by Mr Micawber. She was not quite so self-possessed as usual, I thought; and had evidently undergone anxiety and fatigue. But her earnest cordiality, and her quiet beauty, shone with the gentler lustre for it.

I saw Uriah watch her while she greeted us; and he reminded me of an ugly and rebellious genie watching a good spirit. In the meanwhile, some slight sign passed between Mr Micawber and Traddles; and Traddles, unobserved except by me, went out.

'Don't wait, Micawber,' said Uriah.

Mr Micawber, with his hand upon the ruler in his breast, stood erect before the door, most unmistakably contemplating one of his fellow-men, and that man his employer.

'What are you waiting for?' said Uriah. 'Micawber! did you hear me tell you not to wait?'

'Yes!' replied the immovable Mr Micawber.

'Then why DO you wait?' said Uriah.

'Because I - in short, choose,' replied Mr Micawber, with a burst.

Uriah's cheeks lost colour, and an unwholesome paleness, still faintly tinged by his pervading red, overspread them. He looked at Mr Micawber attentively, with his whole face breathing short and quick in every feature.

'You are a dissipated fellow, as all the world knows,' he said, with an effort at a smile, 'and I am afraid you'll oblige me to get rid of you. Go along! I'll talk to you presently.'

'If there is a scoundrel on this earth,' said Mr Micawber, suddenly breaking out again with the utmost vehemence, 'with whom I have already talked too much, that scoundrel's name is - HEEP!'

Uriah fell back, as if he had been struck or stung. Looking slowly round upon us with the darkest and wickedest expression that his face could wear, he said, in a lower voice:

'Oho! This is a conspiracy! You have met here by appointment! You are playing Booty with my clerk, are you, Copperfield? Now, take care. You'll make nothing of this. We understand each other, you and me. There's no love between us. You were always a puppy with a proud stomach, from your first coming here; and you envy me my rise, do you? None of your plots against me; I'll counterplot you! Micawber, you be off. I'll talk to you presently.'

'Mr Micawber,' said I, 'there is a sudden change in this fellow. in more respects than the extraordinary one of his speaking the truth in one particular, which assures me that he is brought to bay. Deal with him as he deserves!'

'You are a precious set of people, ain't you?' said Uriah, in the same low voice, and breaking out into a clammy heat, which he wiped from his forehead, with his long lean hand, 'to buy over my clerk, who is the very scum of society, - as you yourself were, Copperfield, you know it, before anyone had charity on you, - to defame me with his

lies? Miss Trotwood, you had better stop this; or I'll stop your husband shorter than will be pleasant to you. I won't know your story professionally, for nothing, old lady! Miss Wickfield, if you have any love for your father, you had better not join that gang. I'll ruin him, if you do. Now, come! I have got some of you under the harrow. Think twice, before it goes over you. Think twice, you, Micawber, if you don't want to be crushed. I recommend you to take yourself off, and be talked to presently, you fool! while there's time to retreat. Where's mother?' he said, suddenly appearing to notice, with alarm, the absence of Traddles, and pulling down the bell-rope. 'Fine doings in a person's own house!'

'Mrs Heep is here, sir,' said Traddles, returning with that worthy mother of a worthy son. 'I have taken the liberty of making myself known to her.'

'Who are you to make yourself known?' retorted Uriah. 'And what do you want here?'

'I am the agent and friend of Mr Wickfield, sir,' said Traddles, in a composed and business-like way. 'And I have a power of attorney from him in my pocket, to act for him in all matters.'

'The old ass has drunk himself into a state of dotage,' said Uriah, turning uglier than before, 'and it has been got from him by fraud!'

'Something has been got from him by fraud, I know,' returned Traddles quietly; 'and so do you, Mr Heep. We will refer that question, if you please, to Mr Micawber.'

'Ury -!' Mrs Heep began, with an anxious gesture.

'YOU hold your tongue, mother,' he returned; 'least said, soonest mended.'

'But, my Ury -'

'Will you hold your tongue, mother, and leave it to me?'

Though I had long known that his servility was false, and all his pretences knavish and hollow, I had had no adequate conception of the extent of his hypocrisy, until I now saw him with his mask off. The suddenness with which he dropped it, when he perceived that it was useless to him; the malice, insolence, and hatred, he revealed; the leer with which he exulted, even at this moment, in the evil he had done - all this time being desperate too, and at his wits' end for the means of getting the better of us - though perfectly consistent with the



experience I had of him, at first took even me by surprise, who had known him so long, and disliked him so heartily.

I say nothing of the look he conferred on me, as he stood eyeing us, one after another; for I had always understood that he hated me, and I remembered the marks of my hand upon his cheek. But when his eyes passed on to Agnes, and I saw the rage with which he felt his power over her slipping away, and the exhibition, in their disappointment, of the odious passions that had led him to aspire to one whose virtues he could never appreciate or care for, I was shocked by the mere thought of her having lived, an hour, within sight of such a man.

After some rubbing of the lower part of his face, and some looking at us with those bad eyes, over his grisly fingers, he made one more address to me, half whining, and half abusive.

'You think it justifiable, do you, Copperfield, you who pride yourself so much on your honour and all the rest of it, to sneak about my place, eaves-dropping with my clerk? If it had been ME, I shouldn't have wondered; for I don't make myself out a gentleman (though I never was in the streets either, as you were, according to Micawber), but being you! - And you're not afraid of doing this, either? You don't think at all of what I shall do, in return; or of getting yourself into trouble for conspiracy and so forth? Very well. We shall see! Mr What's-your-name, you were going to refer some question to Micawber. There's your referee. Why don't you make him speak? He has learnt his lesson, I see.'

Seeing that what he said had no effect on me or any of us, he sat on the edge of his table with his hands in his pockets, and one of his splay feet twisted round the other leg, waiting doggedly for what might follow.

Mr Micawber, whose impetuosity I had restrained thus far with the greatest difficulty, and who had repeatedly interposed with the first syllable Of SCOUN-drel! without getting to the second, now burst forward, drew the ruler from his breast (apparently as a defensive weapon), and produced from his pocket a foolscap document, folded in the form of a large letter. Opening this packet, with his old flourish, and glancing at the contents, as if he cherished an artistic admiration of their style of composition, he began to read as follows:

'Dear Miss Trotwood and gentlemen -'

'Bless and save the man!' exclaimed my aunt in a low voice. 'He'd write letters by the ream, if it was a capital offence!'

Mr Micawber, without hearing her, went on.

"In appearing before you to denounce probably the most consummate Villain that has ever existed," Mr Micawber, without looking off the letter, pointed the ruler, like a ghostly truncheon, at Uriah Heep, 'I ask no consideration for myself. The victim, from my cradle, of pecuniary liabilities to which I have been unable to respond, I have ever been the sport and toy of debasing circumstances. Ignominy, Want, Despair, and Madness, have, collectively or separately, been the attendants of my career."

The relish with which Mr Micawber described himself as a prey to these dismal calamities, was only to be equalled by the emphasis with which he read his letter; and the kind of homage he rendered to it with a roll of his head, when he thought he had hit a sentence very hard indeed.

"In an accumulation of Ignominy, Want, Despair, and Madness, I entered the office - or, as our lively neighbour the Gaul would term it, the Bureau - of the Firm, nominally conducted under the appellation of Wickfield and - HEEP, but in reality, wielded by - HEEP alone. HEEP, and only HEEP, is the mainspring of that machine. HEEP, and only HEEP, is the Forger and the Cheat."

Uriah, more blue than white at these words, made a dart at the letter, as if to tear it in pieces. Mr Micawber, with a perfect miracle of dexterity or luck, caught his advancing knuckles with the ruler, and disabled his right hand. It dropped at the wrist, as if it were broken. The blow sounded as if it had fallen on wood.

'The Devil take you!' said Uriah, writhing in a new way with pain. 'I'll be even with you.'

'Approach me again, you - you - you HEEP of infamy,' gasped Mr Micawber, 'and if your head is human, I'll break it. Come on, come on!'

I think I never saw anything more ridiculous - I was sensible of it, even at the time - than Mr Micawber making broad-sword guards with the ruler, and crying, 'Come on!' while Traddles and I pushed him back into a corner, from which, as often as we got him into it, he persisted in emerging again.

His enemy, muttering to himself, after wringing his wounded hand for sometime, slowly drew off his neck-kerchief and bound it up; then held it in his other hand, and sat upon his table with his sullen face looking down.

Mr Micawber, when he was sufficiently cool, proceeded with his letter.

"The stipendiary emoluments in consideration of which I entered into the service of - HEEP," always pausing before that word and uttering it with astonishing vigour, "were not defined, beyond the pittance of twenty-two shillings and six per week. The rest was left contingent on the value of my professional exertions; in other and more expressive words, on the baseness of my nature, the cupidity of my motives, the poverty of my family, the general moral (or rather immoral) resemblance between myself and - HEEP. Need I say, that it soon became necessary for me to solicit from - HEEP - pecuniary advances towards the support of Mrs Micawber, and our blighted but rising family? Need I say that this necessity had been foreseen by - HEEP? That those advances were secured by I.O.U.'s and other similar acknowledgements, known to the legal institutions of this country? And that I thus became immeshed in the web he had spun for my reception?"

Mr Micawber's enjoyment of his epistolary powers, in describing this unfortunate state of things, really seemed to outweigh any pain or anxiety that the reality could have caused him. He read on:

"Then it was that - HEEP - began to favour me with just so much of his confidence, as was necessary to the discharge of his infernal business. Then it was that I began, if I may so Shakespearianly express myself, to dwindle, peak, and pine. I found that my services were constantly called into requisition for the falsification of business, and the mystification of an individual whom I will designate as Mr W. That Mr W. was imposed upon, kept in ignorance, and deluded, in every possible way; yet, that all this while, the ruffian - HEEP - was professing unbounded gratitude to, and unbounded friendship for, that much-abused gentleman. This was bad enough; but, as the philosophic Dane observes, with that universal applicability which distinguishes the illustrious ornament of the Elizabethan Era, worse remains behind!"

Mr Micawber was so very much struck by this happy rounding off with a quotation, that he indulged himself, and us, with a second reading of the sentence, under pretence of having lost his place.

"It is not my intention," he continued reading on, "to enter on a detailed list, within the compass of the present epistle (though it is ready elsewhere), of the various malpractices of a minor nature, affecting the individual whom I have denominated Mr W., to which I have been a tacitly consenting party. My object, when the contest within myself between stipend and no stipend, baker and no baker, existence and non-existence, ceased, was to take advantage of my opportunities to discover and expose the major malpractices

committed, to that gentleman's grievous wrong and injury, by - HEEP. Stimulated by the silent monitor within, and by a no less touching and appealing monitor without - to whom I will briefly refer as Miss W. - I entered on a not unlaborious task of clandestine investigation, protracted - now, to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief, over a period exceeding twelve calendar months."

He read this passage as if it were from an Act of Parliament; and appeared majestically refreshed by the sound of the words.

"My charges against - HEEP," he read on, glancing at him, and drawing the ruler into a convenient position under his left arm, in case of need, "are as follows."

We all held our breath, I think. I am sure Uriah held his.

"First," said Mr Micawber, "When Mr W.'s faculties and memory for business became, through causes into which it is not necessary or expedient for me to enter, weakened and confused, - HEEP - designedly perplexed and complicated the whole of the official transactions. When Mr W. was least fit to enter on business, - HEEP was always at hand to force him to enter on it. He obtained Mr W.'s signature under such circumstances to documents of importance, representing them to be other documents of no importance. He induced Mr W. to empower him to draw out, thus, one particular sum of trust-money, amounting to twelve six fourteen, two and nine, and employed it to meet pretended business charges and deficiencies which were either already provided for, or had never really existed. He gave this proceeding, throughout, the appearance of having originated in Mr W.'s own dishonest intention, and of having been accomplished by Mr W.'s own dishonest act; and has used it, ever since, to torture and constrain him."

'You shall prove this, you Copperfield!' said Uriah, with a threatening shake of the head. 'All in good time!'

'Ask - HEEP - Mr Traddles, who lived in his house after him,' said Mr Micawber, breaking off from the letter; 'will you?'

'The fool himself- and lives there now,' said Uriah, disdainfully.

'Ask - HEEP - if he ever kept a pocket-book in that house,' said Mr Micawber; 'will you?'

I saw Uriah's lank hand stop, involuntarily, in the scraping of his chin.

'Or ask him,' said Mr Micawber, 'if he ever burnt one there. If he says yes, and asks you where the ashes are, refer him to Wilkins Micawber, and he will hear of something not at all to his advantage!'

The triumphant flourish with which Mr Micawber delivered himself of these words, had a powerful effect in alarming the mother; who cried out, in much agitation:

'Ury, Ury! Be umble, and make terms, my dear!'

'Mother!' he retorted, 'will you keep quiet? You're in a fright, and don't know what you say or mean. Uumble!' he repeated, looking at me, with a snarl; 'I've umbled some of 'em for a pretty long time back, umble as I was!'

Mr Micawber, genteelly adjusting his chin in his cravat, presently proceeded with his composition.

"Second. HEEP has, on several occasions, to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief -"

'But that won't do,' muttered Uriah, relieved. 'Mother, you keep quiet.'

'We will endeavour to provide something that WILL do, and do for you finally, sir, very shortly,' replied Mr Micawber.

"Second. HEEP has, on several occasions, to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief, systematically forged, to various entries, books, and documents, the signature of Mr W.; and has distinctly done so in one instance, capable of proof by me. To wit, in manner following, that is to say:"

Again, Mr Micawber had a relish in this formal piling up of words, which, however ludicrously displayed in his case, was, I must say, not at all peculiar to him. I have observed it, in the course of my life, in numbers of men. It seems to me to be a general rule. In the taking of legal oaths, for instance, deponents seem to enjoy themselves mightily when they come to several good words in succession, for the expression of one idea; as, that they utterly detest, abominate, and abjure, or so forth; and the old anathemas were made relishing on the same principle. We talk about the tyranny of words, but we like to tyrannize over them too; we are fond of having a large superfluous establishment of words to wait upon us on great occasions; we think it looks important, and sounds well. As we are not particular about the meaning of our liveries on state occasions, if they be but fine and numerous enough, so, the meaning or necessity of our words is a secondary consideration, if there be but a great parade of them. And as individuals get into trouble by making too great a show of liveries,

or as slaves when they are too numerous rise against their masters, so I think I could mention a nation that has got into many great difficulties, and will get into many greater, from maintaining too large a retinue of words.

Mr Micawber read on, almost smacking his lips:

'To wit, in manner following, that is to say. Mr W. being infirm, and it being within the bounds of probability that his decease might lead to some discoveries, and to the downfall of - HEEP'S - power over the W. family, - as I, Wilkins Micawber, the undersigned, assume - unless the filial affection of his daughter could be secretly influenced from allowing any investigation of the partnership affairs to be ever made, the said - HEEP - deemed it expedient to have a bond ready by him, as from Mr W., for the before-mentioned sum of twelve six fourteen, two and nine, with interest, stated therein to have been advanced by - HEEP - to Mr W. to save Mr W. from dishonour; though really the sum was never advanced by him, and has long been replaced. The signatures to this instrument purporting to be executed by Mr W. and attested by Wilkins Micawber, are forgeries by - HEEP. I have, in my possession, in his hand and pocket-book, several similar imitations of Mr W.'s signature, here and there defaced by fire, but legible to anyone. I never attested any such document. And I have the document itself, in my possession.'" Uriah Heep, with a start, took out of his pocket a bunch of keys, and opened a certain drawer; then, suddenly bethought himself of what he was about, and turned again towards us, without looking in it.

"And I have the document," Mr Micawber read again, looking about as if it were the text of a sermon, "in my possession, - that is to say, I had, early this morning, when this was written, but have since relinquished it to Mr Traddles."

'It is quite true,' assented Traddles.

'Ury, Ury!' cried the mother, 'be umble and make terms. I know my son will be umble, gentlemen, if you'll give him time to think. Mr Copperfield, I'm sure you know that he was always very umble, sir!'

It was singular to see how the mother still held to the old trick, when the son had abandoned it as useless.

'Mother,' he said, with an impatient bite at the handkerchief in which his hand was wrapped, 'you had better take and fire a loaded gun at me.'

'But I love you, Ury,' cried Mrs Heep. And I have no doubt she did; or that he loved her, however strange it may appear; though, to be sure,

they were a congenial couple. 'And I can't bear to hear you provoking the gentlemen, and endangering of yourself more. I told the gentleman at first, when he told me upstairs it was come to light, that I would answer for your being umble, and making amends. Oh, see how umble I am, gentlemen, and don't mind him!'

'Why, there's Copperfield, mother,' he angrily retorted, pointing his lean finger at me, against whom all his animosity was levelled, as the prime mover in the discovery; and I did not undeceive him; 'there's Copperfield, would have given you a hundred pound to say less than you've blurted out!'

'I can't help it, Ury,' cried his mother. 'I can't see you running into danger, through carrying your head so high. Better be umble, as you always was.'

He remained for a little, biting the handkerchief, and then said to me with a scowl:

'What more have you got to bring forward? If anything, go on with it. What do you look at me for?'

Mr Micawber promptly resumed his letter, glad to revert to a performance with which he was so highly satisfied.

'Third. And last. I am now in a condition to show, by - HEEP'S - false books, and - HEEP'S - real memoranda, beginning with the partially destroyed pocket-book (which I was unable to comprehend, at the time of its accidental discovery by Mrs Micawber, on our taking possession of our present abode, in the locker or bin devoted to the reception of the ashes calcined on our domestic hearth), that the weaknesses, the faults, the very virtues, the parental affections, and the sense of honour, of the unhappy Mr W. have been for years acted on by, and warped to the base purposes of - HEEP. That Mr W. has been for years deluded and plundered, in every conceivable manner, to the pecuniary aggrandisement of the avaricious, false, and grasping - HEEP. That the engrossing object of- HEEP - was, next to gain, to subdue Mr and Miss W. (of his ulterior views in reference to the latter I say nothing) entirely to himself. That his last act, completed but a few months since, was to induce Mr W. to execute a relinquishment of his share in the partnership, and even a bill of sale on the very furniture of his house, in consideration of a certain annuity, to be well and truly paid by - HEEP - on the four common quarter-days in each and every year. That these meshes; beginning with alarming and falsified accounts of the estate of which Mr W. is the receiver, at a period when Mr W. had launched into imprudent and ill-judged speculations, and may not have had the money, for which he was morally and legally responsible, in hand; going on with pretended

borrowings of money at enormous interest, really coming from - HEEP - and by - HEEP - fraudulently obtained or withheld from Mr W. himself, on pretence of such speculations or otherwise; perpetuated by a miscellaneous catalogue of unscrupulous chicaneries - gradually thickened, until the unhappy Mr W. could see no world beyond. Bankrupt, as he believed, alike in circumstances, in all other hope, and in honour, his sole reliance was upon the monster in the garb of man," - Mr Micawber made a good deal of this, as a new turn of expression, - "who, by making himself necessary to him, had achieved his destruction. All this I undertake to show. Probably much more!"

I whispered a few words to Agnes, who was weeping, half joyfully, half sorrowfully, at my side; and there was a movement among us, as if Mr Micawber had finished. He said, with exceeding gravity, 'Pardon me,' and proceeded, with a mixture of the lowest spirits and the most intense enjoyment, to the peroration of his letter.

"I have now concluded. It merely remains for me to substantiate these accusations; and then, with my ill-starred family, to disappear from the landscape on which we appear to be an encumbrance. That is soon done. It may be reasonably inferred that our baby will first expire of inanition, as being the frailest member of our circle; and that our twins will follow next in order. So be it! For myself, my Canterbury Pilgrimage has done much; imprisonment on civil process, and want, will soon do more. I trust that the labour and hazard of an investigation - of which the smallest results have been slowly pieced together, in the pressure of arduous avocations, under grinding penurious apprehensions, at rise of morn, at dewy eve, in the shadows of night, under the watchful eye of one whom it were superfluous to call Demon - combined with the struggle of parental Poverty to turn it, when completed, to the right account, may be as the sprinkling of a few drops of sweet water on my funeral pyre. I ask no more. Let it be, in justice, merely said of me, as of a gallant and eminent naval Hero, with whom I have no pretensions to cope, that what I have done, I did, in despite of mercenary and selfish objects,

For England, home, and Beauty.

"Remaining always, &c. &c., WILKINS MICAWBER."

Much affected, but still intensely enjoying himself, Mr Micawber folded up his letter, and handed it with a bow to my aunt, as something she might like to keep. There was, as I had noticed on my first visit long ago, an iron safe in the room. The key was in it. A hasty suspicion seemed to strike Uriah; and, with a glance at Mr Micawber, he went to it, and threw the doors clanking open. It was empty.



'Where are the books?' he cried, with a frightful face. 'Some thief has stolen the books!'

Mr Micawber tapped himself with the ruler. 'I did, when I got the key from you as usual - but a little earlier - and opened it this morning.'

'Don't be uneasy,' said Traddles. 'They have come into my possession. I will take care of them, under the authority I mentioned.'

'You receive stolen goods, do you?' cried Uriah.

'Under such circumstances,' answered Traddles, 'yes.'

What was my astonishment when I beheld my aunt, who had been profoundly quiet and attentive, make a dart at Uriah Heep, and seize him by the collar with both hands!

'You know what I want?' said my aunt.

'A strait-waistcoat,' said he.

'No. My property!' returned my aunt. 'Agnes, my dear, as long as I believed it had been really made away with by your father, I wouldn't - and, my dear, I didn't, even to Trot, as he knows - breathe a syllable of its having been placed here for investment. But, now I know this fellow's answerable for it, and I'll have it! Trot, come and take it away from him!'

Whether my aunt supposed, for the moment, that he kept her property in his neck-kerchief, I am sure I don't know; but she certainly pulled at it as if she thought so. I hastened to put myself between them, and to assure her that we would all take care that he should make the utmost restitution of everything he had wrongly got. This, and a few moments' reflection, pacified her; but she was not at all disconcerted by what she had done (though I cannot say as much for her bonnet) and resumed her seat composedly.

During the last few minutes, Mrs Heep had been clamouring to her son to be 'umble'; and had been going down on her knees to all of us in succession, and making the wildest promises. Her son sat her down in his chair; and, standing sulkily by her, holding her arm with his hand, but not rudely, said to me, with a ferocious look:

'What do you want done?'

'I will tell you what must be done,' said Traddles.

'Has that Copperfield no tongue?' muttered Uriah, 'I would do a good deal for you if you could tell me, without lying, that somebody had cut it out.'

'My Uriah means to be umble!' cried his mother. 'Don't mind what he says, good gentlemen!' 'What must be done,' said Traddles, 'is this. First, the deed of relinquishment, that we have heard of, must be given over to me now - here.'

'Suppose I haven't got it,' he interrupted.

'But you have,' said Traddles; 'therefore, you know, we won't suppose so.' And I cannot help avowing that this was the first occasion on which I really did justice to the clear head, and the plain, patient, practical good sense, of my old schoolfellow. 'Then,' said Traddles, 'you must prepare to disgorge all that your rapacity has become possessed of, and to make restoration to the last farthing. All the partnership books and papers must remain in our possession; all your books and papers; all money accounts and securities, of both kinds. In short, everything here.'

'Must it? I don't know that,' said Uriah. 'I must have time to think about that.'

'Certainly,' replied Traddles; 'but, in the meanwhile, and until everything is done to our satisfaction, we shall maintain possession of these things; and beg you - in short, compel you - to keep to your own room, and hold no communication with anyone.'

'I won't do it!' said Uriah, with an oath.

'Maidstone jail is a safer place of detention,' observed Traddles; 'and though the law may be longer in righting us, and may not be able to right us so completely as you can, there is no doubt of its punishing YOU. Dear me, you know that quite as well as I! Copperfield, will you go round to the Guildhall, and bring a couple of officers?'

Here, Mrs Heep broke out again, crying on her knees to Agnes to interfere in their behalf, exclaiming that he was very humble, and it was all true, and if he didn't do what we wanted, she would, and much more to the same purpose; being half frantic with fears for her darling. To inquire what he might have done, if he had had any boldness, would be like inquiring what a mongrel cur might do, if it had the spirit of a tiger. He was a coward, from head to foot; and showed his dastardly nature through his sullenness and mortification, as much as at any time of his mean life.

'Stop!' he growled to me; and wiped his hot face with his hand. 'Mother, hold your noise. Well! Let 'em have that deed. Go and fetch it!'

'Do you help her, Mr Dick,' said Traddles, 'if you please.'

Proud of his commission, and understanding it, Mr Dick accompanied her as a shepherd's dog might accompany a sheep. But, Mrs Heep gave him little trouble; for she not only returned with the deed, but with the box in which it was, where we found a banker's book and some other papers that were afterwards serviceable.

'Good!' said Traddles, when this was brought. 'Now, Mr Heep, you can retire to think: particularly observing, if you please, that I declare to you, on the part of all present, that there is only one thing to be done; that it is what I have explained; and that it must be done without delay.'

Uriah, without lifting his eyes from the ground, shuffled across the room with his hand to his chin, and pausing at the door, said:

'Copperfield, I have always hated you. You've always been an upstart, and you've always been against me.'

'As I think I told you once before,' said I, 'it is you who have been, in your greed and cunning, against all the world. It may be profitable to you to reflect, in future, that there never were greed and cunning in the world yet, that did not do too much, and overreach themselves. It is as certain as death.'

'Or as certain as they used to teach at school (the same school where I picked up so much umbleness), from nine o'clock to eleven, that labour was a curse; and from eleven o'clock to one, that it was a blessing and a cheerfulness, and a dignity, and I don't know what all, eh?' said he with a sneer. 'You preach, about as consistent as they did. Won't umbleness go down? I shouldn't have got round my gentleman fellow-partner without it, I think. - Micawber, you old bully, I'll pay YOU!'

Mr Micawber, supremely defiant of him and his extended finger, and making a great deal of his chest until he had slunk out at the door, then addressed himself to me, and proffered me the satisfaction of 'witnessing the re-establishment of mutual confidence between himself and Mrs Micawber'. After which, he invited the company generally to the contemplation of that affecting spectacle.

'The veil that has long been interposed between Mrs Micawber and myself, is now withdrawn,' said Mr Micawber; 'and my children and

the Author of their Being can once more come in contact on equal terms.'

As we were all very grateful to him, and all desirous to show that we were, as well as the hurry and disorder of our spirits would permit, I dare say we should all have gone, but that it was necessary for Agnes to return to her father, as yet unable to bear more than the dawn of hope; and for someone else to hold Uriah in safe keeping. So, Traddles remained for the latter purpose, to be presently relieved by Mr Dick; and Mr Dick, my aunt, and I, went home with Mr Micawber. As I parted hurriedly from the dear girl to whom I owed so much, and thought from what she had been saved, perhaps, that morning - her better resolution notwithstanding - I felt devoutly thankful for the miseries of my younger days which had brought me to the knowledge of Mr Micawber.

His house was not far off; and as the street door opened into the sitting-room, and he bolted in with a precipitation quite his own, we found ourselves at once in the bosom of the family. Mr Micawber exclaiming, 'Emma! my life!' rushed into Mrs Micawber's arms. Mrs Micawber shrieked, and folded Mr Micawber in her embrace. Miss Micawber, nursing the unconscious stranger of Mrs Micawber's last letter to me, was sensibly affected. The stranger leaped. The twins testified their joy by several inconvenient but innocent demonstrations. Master Micawber, whose disposition appeared to have been soured by early disappointment, and whose aspect had become morose, yielded to his better feelings, and blubbered.

'Emma!' said Mr Micawber. 'The cloud is past from my mind. Mutual confidence, so long preserved between us once, is restored, to know no further interruption. Now, welcome poverty!' cried Mr Micawber, shedding tears. 'Welcome misery, welcome houselessness, welcome hunger, rags, tempest, and beggary! Mutual confidence will sustain us to the end!'

With these expressions, Mr Micawber placed Mrs Micawber in a chair, and embraced the family all round; welcoming a variety of bleak prospects, which appeared, to the best of my judgement, to be anything but welcome to them; and calling upon them to come out into Canterbury and sing a chorus, as nothing else was left for their support.

But Mrs Micawber having, in the strength of her emotions, fainted away, the first thing to be done, even before the chorus could be considered complete, was to recover her. This my aunt and Mr Micawber did; and then my aunt was introduced, and Mrs Micawber recognized me.

'Excuse me, dear Mr Copperfield,' said the poor lady, giving me her hand, 'but I am not strong; and the removal of the late misunderstanding between Mr Micawber and myself was at first too much for me.'

'Is this all your family, ma'am?' said my aunt.

'There are no more at present,' returned Mrs Micawber.

'Good gracious, I didn't mean that, ma'am,' said my aunt. 'I mean, are all these yours?'

'Madam,' replied Mr Micawber, 'it is a true bill.'

'And that eldest young gentleman, now,' said my aunt, musing, 'what has he been brought up to?'

'It was my hope when I came here,' said Mr Micawber, 'to have got Wilkins into the Church: or perhaps I shall express my meaning more strictly, if I say the Choir. But there was no vacancy for a tenor in the venerable Pile for which this city is so justly eminent; and he has - in short, he has contracted a habit of singing in public-houses, rather than in sacred edifices.'

'But he means well,' said Mrs Micawber, tenderly.

'I dare say, my love,' rejoined Mr Micawber, 'that he means particularly well; but I have not yet found that he carries out his meaning, in any given direction whatsoever.'

Master Micawber's moroseness of aspect returned upon him again, and he demanded, with some temper, what he was to do? Whether he had been born a carpenter, or a coach-painter, any more than he had been born a bird? Whether he could go into the next street, and open a chemist's shop? Whether he could rush to the next assizes, and proclaim himself a lawyer? Whether he could come out by force at the opera, and succeed by violence? Whether he could do anything, without being brought up to something?

My aunt mused a little while, and then said:

'Mr Micawber, I wonder you have never turned your thoughts to emigration.'

'Madam,' returned Mr Micawber, 'it was the dream of my youth, and the fallacious aspiration of my riper years.' I am thoroughly persuaded, by the by, that he had never thought of it in his life.

'Aye?' said my aunt, with a glance at me. 'Why, what a thing it would be for yourselves and your family, Mr and Mrs Micawber, if you were to emigrate now.'

'Capital, madam, capital,' urged Mr Micawber, gloomily.

'That is the principal, I may say the only difficulty, my dear Mr Copperfield,' assented his wife.

'Capital?' cried my aunt. 'But you are doing us a great service - have done us a great service, I may say, for surely much will come out of the fire - and what could we do for you, that would be half so good as to find the capital?'

'I could not receive it as a gift,' said Mr Micawber, full of fire and animation, 'but if a sufficient sum could be advanced, say at five per cent interest, per annum, upon my personal liability - say my notes of hand, at twelve, eighteen, and twenty-four months, respectively, to allow time for something to turn up -'

'Could be? Can be and shall be, on your own terms,' returned my aunt, 'if you say the word. Think of this now, both of you. Here are some people David knows, going out to Australia shortly. If you decide to go, why shouldn't you go in the same ship? You may help each other. Think of this now, Mr and Mrs Micawber. Take your time, and weigh it well.'

'There is but one question, my dear ma'am, I could wish to ask,' said Mrs Micawber. 'The climate, I believe, is healthy?'

'Finest in the world!' said my aunt.

'Just so,' returned Mrs Micawber. 'Then my question arises. Now, are the circumstances of the country such, that a man of Mr Micawber's abilities would have a fair chance of rising in the social scale? I will not say, at present, might he aspire to be Governor, or anything of that sort; but would there be a reasonable opening for his talents to develop themselves - that would be amply sufficient - and find their own expansion?'

'No better opening anywhere,' said my aunt, 'for a man who conducts himself well, and is industrious.'

'For a man who conducts himself well,' repeated Mrs Micawber, with her clearest business manner, 'and is industrious. Precisely. It is evident to me that Australia is the legitimate sphere of action for Mr Micawber!'

'I entertain the conviction, my dear madam,' said Mr Micawber, 'that it is, under existing circumstances, the land, the only land, for myself and family; and that something of an extraordinary nature will turn up on that shore. It is no distance - comparatively speaking; and though consideration is due to the kindness of your proposal, I assure you that is a mere matter of form.'

Shall I ever forget how, in a moment, he was the most sanguine of men, looking on to fortune; or how Mrs Micawber presently discoursed about the habits of the kangaroo! Shall I ever recall that street of Canterbury on a market-day, without recalling him, as he walked back with us; expressing, in the hardy roving manner he assumed, the unsettled habits of a temporary sojourner in the land; and looking at the bullocks, as they came by, with the eye of an Australian farmer!