Chapter LXIV - An Appearance In The Marshalsea

The opinion of the community outside the prison gates bore hard on Clennam as time went on, and he made no friends among the community within. Too depressed to associate with the herd in the yard, who got together to forget their cares; too retiring and too unhappy to join in the poor socialities of the tavern; he kept his own room, and was held in distrust. Some said he was proud; some objected that he was sullen and reserved; some were contemptuous of him, for that he was a poor-spirited dog who pined under his debts. The whole population were shy of him on these various counts of indictment, but especially the last, which involved a species of domestic treason; and he soon became so confirmed in his seclusion, that his only time for walking up and down was when the evening Club were assembled at their songs and toasts and sentiments, and when the yard was nearly left to the women and children.

Imprisonment began to tell upon him. He knew that he idled and moped. After what he had known of the influences of imprisonment within the four small walls of the very room he occupied, this consciousness made him afraid of himself. Shrinking from the observation of other men, and shrinking from his own, he began to change very sensibly. Anybody might see that the shadow of the wall was dark upon him.

One day when he might have been some ten or twelve weeks in jail, and when he had been trying to read and had not been able to release even the imaginary people of the book from the Marshalsea, a footstep stopped at his door, and a hand tapped at it. He arose and opened it, and an agreeable voice accosted him with 'How do you do, Mr Clennam? I hope I am not unwelcome in calling to see you.'

It was the sprightly young Barnacle, Ferdinand. He looked very good-natured and prepossessing, though overpoweringly gay and free, in contrast with the squalid prison.

'You are surprised to see me, Mr Clennam,' he said, taking the seat which Clennam offered him.

'I must confess to being much surprised.'

'Not disagreeably, I hope?'

'By no means.'

'Thank you. Frankly,' said the engaging young Barnacle, 'I have been excessively sorry to hear that you were under the necessity of a

temporary retirement here, and I hope (of course as between two private gentlemen) that our place has had nothing to do with it?'

'Your office?'

'Our Circumlocution place.'

'I cannot charge any part of my reverses upon that remarkable establishment.'

Upon my life,' said the vivacious young Barnacle, 'I am heartily glad to know it. It is quite a relief to me to hear you say it. I should have so exceedingly regretted our place having had anything to do with your difficulties.'

Clennam again assured him that he absolved it of the responsibility.

'That's right,' said Ferdinand. 'I am very happy to hear it. I was rather afraid in my own mind that we might have helped to floor you, because there is no doubt that it is our misfortune to do that kind of thing now and then. We don't want to do it; but if men will be gravelled, why - we can't help it.'

'Without giving an unqualified assent to what you say,' returned Arthur, gloomily, 'I am much obliged to you for your interest in me.'

'No, but really! Our place is,' said the easy young Barnacle, 'the most inoffensive place possible. You'll say we are a humbug. I won't say we are not; but all that sort of thing is intended to be, and must be. Don't you see?'

'I do not,' said Clennam.

'You don't regard it from the right point of view. It is the point of view that is the essential thing. Regard our place from the point of view that we only ask you to leave us alone, and we are as capital a Department as you'll find anywhere.'

'Is your place there to be left alone?' asked Clennam.

'You exactly hit it,' returned Ferdinand. 'It is there with the express intention that everything shall be left alone. That is what it means. That is what it's for. No doubt there's a certain form to be kept up that it's for something else, but it's only a form. Why, good Heaven, we are nothing but forms! Think what a lot of our forms you have gone through. And you have never got any nearer to an end?'

'Never,' said Clennam.

'Look at it from the right point of view, and there you have us - official and effectual. It's like a limited game of cricket. A field of outsiders are always going in to bowl at the Public Service, and we block the balls.'

Clennam asked what became of the bowlers? The airy young Barnacle replied that they grew tired, got dead beat, got lamed, got their backs broken, died off, gave it up, went in for other games.

'And this occasions me to congratulate myself again,' he pursued, 'on the circumstance that our place has had nothing to do with your temporary retirement. It very easily might have had a hand in it; because it is undeniable that we are sometimes a most unlucky place, in our effects upon people who will not leave us alone. Mr Clennam, I am quite unreserved with you. As between yourself and myself, I know I may be. I was so, when I first saw you making the mistake of not leaving us alone; because I perceived that you were inexperienced and sanguine, and had - I hope you'll not object to my saying - some simplicity.'

'Not at all.'

'Some simplicity. Therefore I felt what a pity it was, and I went out of my way to hint to you (which really was not official, but I never am official when I can help it) something to the effect that if I were you, I wouldn't bother myself. However, you did bother yourself, and you have since bothered yourself. Now, don't do it any more.'

'I am not likely to have the opportunity,' said Clennam.

'Oh yes, you are! You'll leave here. Everybody leaves here. There are no ends of ways of leaving here. Now, don't come back to us. That entreaty is the second object of my call. Pray, don't come back to us. Upon my honour,' said Ferdinand in a very friendly and confiding way, 'I shall be greatly vexed if you don't take warning by the past and keep away from us.'

'And the invention?' said Clennam.

'My good fellow,' returned Ferdinand, 'if you'll excuse the freedom of that form of address, nobody wants to know of the invention, and nobody cares twopence-halfpenny about it.'

'Nobody in the Office, that is to say?'

'Nor out of it. Everybody is ready to dislike and ridicule any invention. You have no idea how many people want to be left alone.

You have no idea how the Genius of the country (overlook the Parliamentary nature of the phrase, and don't be bored by it) tends to being left alone. Believe me, Mr Clennam,' said the sprightly young Barnacle in his pleasantest manner, 'our place is not a wicked Giant to be charged at full tilt; but only a windmill showing you, as it grinds immense quantities of chaff, which way the country wind blows.'

'If I could believe that,' said Clennam, 'it would be a dismal prospect for all of us.'

'Oh! Don't say so!' returned Ferdinand. 'It's all right. We must have humbug, we all like humbug, we couldn't get on without humbug.

A little humbug, and a groove, and everything goes on admirably, if you leave it alone.'

With this hopeful confession of his faith as the head of the rising Barnacles who were born of woman, to be followed under a variety of watchwords which they utterly repudiated and disbelieved, Ferdinand rose. Nothing could be more agreeable than his frank and courteous bearing, or adapted with a more gentlemanly instinct to the circumstances of his visit.

'Is it fair to ask,' he said, as Clennam gave him his hand with a real feeling of thankfulness for his candour and good-humour, 'whether it is true that our late lamented Merdle is the cause of this passing inconvenience?'

'I am one of the many he has ruined. Yes.'

'He must have been an exceedingly clever fellow,' said Ferdinand Barnacle.

Arthur, not being in the mood to extol the memory of the deceased, was silent.

'A consummate rascal, of course,' said Ferdinand, 'but remarkably clever! One cannot help admiring the fellow. Must have been such a master of humbug. Knew people so well - got over them so completely - did so much with them!' In his easy way, he was really moved to genuine admiration.

'I hope,' said Arthur, 'that he and his dupes may be a warning to people not to have so much done with them again.'

'My dear Mr Clennam,' returned Ferdinand, laughing, 'have you really such a verdant hope? The next man who has as large a capacity and as genuine a taste for swindling, will succeed as well. Pardon me, but I

think you really have no idea how the human bees will swarm to the beating of any old tin kettle; in that fact lies the complete manual of governing them. When they can be got to believe that the kettle is made of the precious metals, in that fact lies the whole power of men like our late lamented. No doubt there are here and there,' said Ferdinand politely, 'exceptional cases, where people have been taken in for what appeared to them to be much better reasons; and I need not go far to find such a case; but they don't invalidate the rule. Good day! I hope that when I have the pleasure of seeing you, next, this passing cloud will have given place to sunshine. Don't come a step beyond the door. I know the way out perfectly. Good day!'

With those words, the best and brightest of the Barnacles went downstairs, hummed his way through the Lodge, mounted his horse in the front court-yard, and rode off to keep an appointment with his noble kinsman, who wanted a little coaching before he could triumphantly answer certain infidel Snobs who were going to question the Nobs about their statesmanship.

He must have passed Mr Rugg on his way out, for, a minute or two afterwards, that ruddy-headed gentleman shone in at the door, like an elderly Phoebus.

'How do you do to-day, sir?' said Mr Rugg. 'Is there any little thing I can do for you to-day, sir?'

'No, I thank you.'

Mr Rugg's enjoyment of embarrassed affairs was like a housekeeper's enjoyment in pickling and preserving, or a washerwoman's enjoyment of a heavy wash, or a dustman's enjoyment of an overflowing dust-bin, or any other professional enjoyment of a mess in the way of business.

'I still look round, from time to time, sir,' said Mr Rugg, cheerfully, 'to see whether any lingering Detainers are accumulating at the gate. They have fallen in pretty thick, sir; as thick as we could have expected.'

He remarked upon the circumstance as if it were matter of congratulation: rubbing his hands briskly, and rolling his head a little.

'As thick,' repeated Mr Rugg, 'as we could reasonably have expected. Quite a shower-bath of 'em. I don't often intrude upon you now, when I look round, because I know you are not inclined for company, and that if you wished to see me, you would leave word in the Lodge. But I am here pretty well every day, sir. Would this be an unseasonable time, sir,' asked Mr Rugg, coaxingly, 'for me to offer an observation?'

'As seasonable a time as any other.'

'Hum! Public opinion, sir,' said Mr Rugg, 'has been busy with you.'

'I don't doubt it.'

'Might it not be advisable, sir,' said Mr Rugg, more coaxingly yet, 'now to make, at last and after all, a trifling concession to public opinion? We all do it in one way or another. The fact is, we must do it.'

'I cannot set myself right with it, Mr Rugg, and have no business to expect that I ever shall.'

'Don't say that, sir, don't say that. The cost of being moved to the Bench is almost insignificant, and if the general feeling is strong that you ought to be there, why - really - '

'I thought you had settled, Mr Rugg,' said Arthur, 'that my determination to remain here was a matter of taste.'

'Well, sir, well! But is it good taste, is it good taste? That's the Question.' Mr Rugg was so soothingly persuasive as to be quite pathetic. 'I was almost going to say, is it good feeling? This is an extensive affair of yours; and your remaining here where a man can come for a pound or two, is remarked upon as not in keeping. It is not in keeping. I can't tell you, sir, in how many quarters I heard it mentioned. I heard comments made upon it last night in a Parlour frequented by what I should call, if I did not look in there now and then myself, the best legal company - I heard, there, comments on it that I was sorry to hear. They hurt me on your account. Again, only this morning at breakfast. My daughter (but a woman, you'll say: yet still with a feeling for these things, and even with some little personal experience, as the plaintiff in Rugg and Bawkins) was expressing her great surprise; her great surprise.

Now under these circumstances, and considering that none of us can quite set ourselves above public opinion, wouldn't a trifling concession to that opinion be - Come, sir,' said Rugg, 'I will put it on the lowest ground of argument, and say, amiable?'

Arthur's thoughts had once more wandered away to Little Dorrit, and the question remained unanswered.

'As to myself, sir,' said Mr Rugg, hoping that his eloquence had reduced him to a state of indecision, 'it is a principle of mine not to consider myself when a client's inclinations are in the scale. But, knowing your considerate character and general wish to oblige, I will repeat that I should prefer your being in the Bench.

Your case has made a noise; it is a creditable case to be professionally concerned in; I should feel on a better standing with my connection, if you went to the Bench. Don't let that influence you, sir. I merely state the fact.'

So errant had the prisoner's attention already grown in solitude and dejection, and so accustomed had it become to commune with only one silent figure within the ever-frowning walls, that Clennam had to shake off a kind of stupor before he could look at Mr Rugg, recall the thread of his talk, and hurriedly say, 'I am unchanged, and unchangeable, in my decision. Pray, let it be; let it be!' Mr Rugg, without concealing that he was nettled and mortified, replied:

'Oh! Beyond a doubt, sir. I have travelled out of the record, sir, I am aware, in putting the point to you. But really, when I herd it remarked in several companies, and in very good company, that however worthy of a foreigner, it is not worthy of the spirit of an Englishman to remain in the Marshalsea when the glorious liberties of his island home admit of his removal to the Bench, I thought I would depart from the narrow professional line marked out to me, and mention it. Personally,' said Mr Rugg, 'I have no opinion on the topic.'

'That's well,' returned Arthur.

'Oh! None at all, sir!' said Mr Rugg. 'If I had, I should have been

unwilling, some minutes ago, to see a client of mine visited in this place by a gentleman of a high family riding a saddle-horse. But it was not my business. If I had, I might have wished to be now empowered to mention to another gentleman, a gentleman of military

exterior at present waiting in the Lodge, that my client had never intended to remain here, and was on the eve of removal to a superior abode. But my course as a professional machine is clear; I have nothing to do with it. Is it your good pleasure to see the gentleman, sir?'

'Who is waiting to see me, did you say?'

'I did take that unprofessional liberty, sir. Hearing that I was your professional adviser, he declined to interpose before my very limited function was performed. Happily,' said Mr Rugg, with sarcasm, 'I did not so far travel out of the record as to ask the gentleman for his name.'

'I suppose I have no resource but to see him,' sighed Clennam, wearily.

'Then it IS your good pleasure, sir?' retorted Rugg. 'Am I honoured by your instructions to mention as much to the gentleman, as I pass out? I am? Thank you, sir. I take my leave.' His leave he took accordingly, in dudgeon.

The gentleman of military exterior had so imperfectly awakened Clennam's curiosity, in the existing state of his mind, that a half-forgetfulness of such a visitor's having been referred to, was already creeping over it as a part of the sombre veil which almost always dimmed it now, when a heavy footstep on the stairs aroused him. It appeared to ascend them, not very promptly or spontaneously, yet with a display of stride and clatter meant to be insulting. As it paused for a moment on the landing outside his door, he could not recall his association with the peculiarity of its sound, though he thought he had one. Only a moment was given him for consideration. His door was immediately swung open by a thump, and in the doorway stood the missing Blandois, the cause of many anxieties.

'Salve, fellow jail-bird !' said he. 'You want me, it seems. Here I am!'

Before Arthur could speak to him in his indignant wonder, Cavalletto followed him into the room. Mr Pancks followed Cavalletto. Neither of the two had been there since its present occupant had had possession of it. Mr Pancks, breathing hard, sidled near the window, put his hat on the ground, stirred his hair up with both hands, and folded his arms, like a man who had come to a pause in a hard day's work. Mr Baptist, never taking his eyes from his dreaded chum of old, softly sat down on the floor with his back against the door and one of his ankles in each hand: resuming the attitude (except that it was now expressive of unwinking watchfulness) in which he had sat before the same man in the deeper shade of another prison, one hot morning at Marseilles. 'I have it on the witnessing of these two madmen,' said Monsieur Blandois, otherwise Lagnier, otherwise Rigaud, 'that you want me, brother-bird. Here I am!' Glancing round contemptuously at the bedstead, which was turned up by day, he leaned his back against it as a resting-place, without removing his hat from his head, and stood defiantly lounging with his hands in his pockets.

'You villain of ill-omen!' said Arthur. 'You have purposely cast a dreadful suspicion upon my mother's house. Why have you done it?

What prompted you to the devilish invention?'

Monsieur Rigaud, after frowning at him for a moment, laughed. 'Hear this noble gentleman! Listen, all the world, to this creature of Virtue! But take care, take care. It is possible, my friend, that your ardour is a little compromising. Holy Blue! It is possible.'

'Signore!' interposed Cavalletto, also addressing Arthur: 'for to commence, hear me! I received your instructions to find him, Rigaud; is it not?'

'It is the truth.'

'I go, consequentementally,' - it would have given Mrs Plornish great concern if she could have been persuaded that his occasional lengthening of an adverb in this way, was the chief fault of his English, - 'first among my countrymen. I ask them what news in Londra, of foreigners arrived. Then I go among the French. Then I go among the Germans. They all tell me. The great part of us know well the other, and they all tell me. But! - no person can tell me nothing of him, Rigaud. Fifteen times,' said Cavalletto, thrice throwing out his left hand with all its fingers spread, and doing it so rapidly that the sense of sight could hardly follow the action, 'I ask of him in every place where go the foreigners; and fifteen times,' repeating the same swift performance, 'they know nothing. But! - ' At this significant Italian rest on the word 'But,' his backhanded shake of his right forefinger came into play; a very little, and very cautiously.

'But! - After a long time when I have not been able to find that he is here in Londra, some one tells me of a soldier with white hair - hey? - not hair like this that he carries - white - who lives retired secrettementally, in a certain place. But! - ' with another rest upon the word, 'who sometimes in the after-dinner, walks, and smokes. It is necessary, as they say in Italy (and as they know, poor people), to have patience. I have patience. I ask where is this certain place. One. believes it is here, one believes it is there. Eh well! It is not here, it is not there. I wait patientissamentally. At last I find it. Then I watch; then I hide, until he walks and smokes. He is a soldier with grey hair - But! - ' a very decided rest indeed, and a very vigorous play from side to side of the back-handed forefinger - 'he is also this man that you see.'

It was noticeable, that, in his old habit of submission to one who had been at the trouble of asserting superiority over him, he even then bestowed upon Rigaud a confused bend of his head, after thus pointing him out.

'Eh well, Signore!' he cried in conclusion, addressing Arthur again. 'I waited for a good opportunity. I writed some words to Signor Panco,' an air of novelty came over Mr Pancks with this designation, 'to come and help. I showed him, Rigaud, at his window, to Signor Panco, who was often the spy in the day. I slept at night near the door of the house. At last we entered, only this to-day, and now you see him! As he would not come up in presence of the illustrious Advocate,' such

was Mr Baptist's honourable mention of Mr Rugg, 'we waited down below there, together, and Signor Panco guarded the street.'

At the close of this recital, Arthur turned his eyes upon the impudent and wicked face. As it met his, the nose came down over the moustache and the moustache went up under the nose. When nose and moustache had settled into their places again, Monsieur Rigaud loudly snapped his fingers half-a-dozen times; bending forward to jerk the snaps at Arthur, as if they were palpable missiles which he jerked into his face.

'Now, Philosopher!' said Rigaud.'What do you want with me?'

'I want to know,' returned Arthur, without disguising his abhorrence, 'how you dare direct a suspicion of murder against my mother's house?'

'Dare!' cried Rigaud. 'Ho, ho! Hear him! Dare? Is it dare? By Heaven, my small boy, but you are a little imprudent!'

'I want that suspicion to be cleared away,' said Arthur. 'You shall be taken there, and be publicly seen. I want to know, moreover, what business you had there when I had a burning desire to fling you down-stairs. Don't frown at me, man! I have seen enough of you to know that you are a bully and coward. I need no revival of my spirits from the effects of this wretched place to tell you so plain a fact, and one that you know so well.'

White to the lips, Rigaud stroked his moustache, muttering, 'By Heaven, my small boy, but you are a little compromising of my lady, your respectable mother' - and seemed for a minute undecided how to act. His indecision was soon gone. He sat himself down with a threatening swagger, and said:

'Give me a bottle of wine. You can buy wine here. Send one of your madmen to get me a bottle of wine. I won't talk to you without wine. Come! Yes or no?'

'Fetch him what he wants, Cavalletto,' said Arthur, scornfully, producing the money.

'Contraband beast,' added Rigaud, 'bring Port wine! I'll drink nothing but Porto-Porto.'

The contraband beast, however, assuring all present, with his significant finger, that he peremptorily declined to leave his post at the door, Signor Panco offered his services. He soon returned with the bottle of wine: which, according to the custom of the place, originating

in a scarcity of corkscrews among the Collegians (in common with a scarcity of much else), was already opened for use. 'Madman! A large glass,' said Rigaud.

Signor Panco put a tumbler before him; not without a visible conflict of feeling on the question of throwing it at his head.

'Haha!' boasted Rigaud. 'Once a gentleman, and always a gentleman.

A gentleman from the beginning, and a gentleman to the end. What the Devil! A gentleman must be waited on, I hope? It's a part of my character to be waited on!'

He half filled the tumbler as he said it, and drank off the contents when he had done saying it. 'Hah!' smacking his lips. 'Not a very old prisoner that! I judge by your looks, brave sir, that imprisonment will subdue your blood much sooner than it softens this hot wine. You are mellowing - losing body and colour already. I salute you!'

He tossed off another half glass: holding it up both before and afterwards, so as to display his small, white hand.

'To business,' he then continued. 'To conversation. You have shown yourself more free of speech than body, sir.'

'I have used the freedom of telling you what you know yourself to be. You know yourself, as we all know you, to be far worse than that.'

'Add, always a gentleman, and it's no matter. Except in that regard, we are all alike. For example: you couldn't for your life be a gentleman; I couldn't for my life be otherwise. How great the difference! Let us go on. Words, sir, never influence the course of the cards, or the course of the dice. Do you know that? You do? I also play a game, and words are without power over it.'

Now that he was confronted with Cavalletto, and knew that his story was known - whatever thin disguise he had worn, he dropped; and faced it out, with a bare face, as the infamous wretch he was.

'No, my son,' he resumed, with a snap of his fingers. 'I play my game to the end in spite of words; and Death of my Body and Death of my Soul! I'll win it. You want to know why I played this little trick that you have interrupted? Know then that I had, and that I have - do you understand me? have - a commodity to sell to my lady your respectable mother. I described my precious commodity, and fixed my price. Touching the bargain, your admirable mother was a little too calm, too stolid, too immovable and statue-like. In fine, your admirable mother vexed me. To make variety in my position, and to

amuse myself - what! a gentleman must be amused at somebody's expense! - I conceived the happy idea of disappearing. An idea, see you, that your characteristic mother and my Flintwinch would have been well enough pleased to execute. Ah! Bah, bah, bah, don't look as from high to low at me! I repeat it. Well enough pleased, excessively enchanted, and with all their hearts ravished. How strongly will you have it?'

He threw out the lees of his glass on the ground, so that they nearly spattered Cavalletto. This seemed to draw his attention to him anew. He set down his glass and said:

'I'll not fill it. What! I am born to be served. Come then, you Cavalletto, and fill!'

The little man looked at Clennam, whose eyes were occupied with Rigaud, and, seeing no prohibition, got up from the ground, and poured out from the bottle into the glass. The blending, as he did so, of his old submission with a sense of something humorous; the striving of that with a certain smouldering ferocity, which might have flashed fire in an instant (as the born gentleman seemed to think, for he had a wary eye upon him); and the easy yielding of all to a good-natured, careless, predominant propensity to sit down on the ground again: formed a very remarkable combination of character.

'This happy idea, brave sir,' Rigaud resumed after drinking, 'was a happy idea for several reasons. It amused me, it worried your dear mama and my Flintwinch, it caused you agonies (my terms for a lesson in politeness towards a gentleman), and it suggested to all the amiable persons interested that your entirely devoted is a man to fear. By Heaven, he is a man to fear! Beyond this; it might have restored her wit to my lady your mother - might, under the pressing little suspicion your wisdom has recognised, have persuaded her at last to announce, covertly, in the journals, that the difficulties of a certain contract would be removed by the appearance of a certain important party to it. Perhaps yes, perhaps no. But that, you have interrupted. Now, what is it you say? What is it you want?'

Never had Clennam felt more acutely that he was a prisoner in bonds, than when he saw this man before him, and could not accompany him to his mother's house. All the undiscernible difficulties and dangers he had ever feared were closing in, when he could not stir hand or foot.

'Perhaps, my friend, philosopher, man of virtue, Imbecile, what you will; perhaps,' said Rigaud, pausing in his drink to look out of his glass with his horrible smile, 'you would have done better to leave me alone?'

'No! At least,' said Clennam, 'you are known to be alive and unharmed. At least you cannot escape from these two witnesses; and they can produce you before any public authorities, or before hundreds of people!'

'But will not produce me before one,' said Rigaud, snapping his fingers again with an air of triumphant menace. 'To the Devil with your witnesses! To the Devil with your produced! To the Devil with yourself! What! Do I know what I know, for that? Have I my commodity on sale, for that? Bah, poor debtor! You have interrupted my little project. Let it pass. How then? What remains? To you, nothing; to me, all. Produce me! Is that what you want? I will produce myself, only too quickly. Contrabandist!

Give me pen, ink, and paper.'

Cavalletto got up again as before, and laid them before him in his former manner. Rigaud, after some villainous thinking and smiling, wrote, and read aloud, as follows:

'To MRS CLENNAM.

'Wait answer.

'Prison of the Marshalsea. 'At the apartment of your son.

'Dear Madam, - I am in despair to be informed to-day by our prisoner here (who has had the goodness to employ spies to seek me, living for politic reasons in retirement), that you have had fears for my safety.

'Reassure yourself, dear madam. I am well, I am strong and constant.

'With the greatest impatience I should fly to your house, but that I foresee it to be possible, under the circumstances, that you will not yet have quite definitively arranged the little proposition I have had the honour to submit to you. I name one week from this day, for a last final visit on my part; when you will unconditionally accept it or reject it, with its train of consequences.

'I suppress my ardour to embrace you and achieve this interesting business, in order that you may have leisure to adjust its details to our perfect mutual satisfaction.

'In the meanwhile, it is not too much to propose (our prisoner having deranged my housekeeping), that my expenses of lodging and nourishment at an hotel shall be paid by you. 'Receive, dear madam, the assurance of my highest and most distinguished consideration,

'RIGAUD BLANDOIS.

'A thousand friendships to that dear Flintwinch.

'I kiss the hands of Madame F.'

When he had finished this epistle, Rigaud folded it and tossed it with a flourish at Clennam's feet. 'Hola you! Apropos of producing, let somebody produce that at its address, and produce the answer here.'

'Cavalletto,' said Arthur. 'Will you take this fellow's letter?'

But, Cavalletto's significant finger again expressing that his post was at the door to keep watch over Rigaud, now he had found him with so much trouble, and that the duty of his post was to sit on the floor backed up by the door, looking at Rigaud and holding his own ankles, - Signor Panco once more volunteered. His services being accepted, Cavalletto suffered the door to open barely wide enough to admit of his squeezing himself out, and immediately shut it on him.

'Touch me with a finger, touch me with an epithet, question my superiority as I sit here drinking my wine at my pleasure,' said Rigaud, 'and I follow the letter and cancel my week's grace. You wanted me? You have got me! How do you like me?'

'You know,' returned Clennam, with a bitter sense of his helplessness, 'that when I sought you, I was not a prisoner.'

'To the Devil with you and your prison,' retorted Rigaud, leisurely, as he took from his pocket a case containing the materials for making cigarettes, and employed his facile hands in folding a few for present use; 'I care for neither of you. Contrabandist! A light.'

Again Cavalletto got up, and gave him what he wanted. There had been something dreadful in the noiseless skill of his cold, white hands, with the fingers lithely twisting about and twining one over another like serpents. Clennam could not prevent himself from shuddering inwardly, as if he had been looking on at a nest of those creatures.

'Hola, Pig!' cried Rigaud, with a noisy stimulating cry, as if Cavalletto were an Italian horse or mule. 'What! The infernal old jail was a respectable one to this. There was dignity in the bars and stones of that place. It was a prison for men. But this? Bah! A hospital for imbeciles!'

He smoked his cigarette out, with his ugly smile so fixed upon his face that he looked as though he were smoking with his drooping beak of a

nose, rather than with his mouth; like a fancy in a weird picture. When he had lighted a second cigarette at the still burning end of the first, he said to Clennam:

'One must pass the time in the madman's absence. One must talk. One can't drink strong wine all day long, or I would have another bottle. She's handsome, sir. Though not exactly to my taste, still, by the Thunder and the Lightning! handsome. I felicitate you on your admiration.'

'I neither know nor ask,' said Clennam, 'of whom you speak.'

'Della bella Gowana, sir, as they say in Italy. Of the Gowan, the fair Gowan.'

'Of whose husband you were the - follower, I think?'

'Sir? Follower? You are insolent. The friend.'

'Do you sell all your friends?'

Rigaud took his cigarette from his mouth, and eyed him with a momentary revelation of surprise. But he put it between his lips again, as he answered with coolness:

'I sell anything that commands a price. How do your lawyers live, your politicians, your intriguers, your men of the Exchange? How do you live? How do you come here? Have you sold no friend? Lady of mine! I rather think, yes!'

Clennam turned away from him towards the window, and sat looking out at the wall.

'Effectively, sir,' said Rigaud, 'Society sells itself and sells me: and I sell Society. I perceive you have acquaintance with another lady. Also handsome. A strong spirit. Let us see. How do they call her? Wade.'

He received no answer, but could easily discern that he had hit the mark.

'Yes,' he went on, 'that handsome lady and strong spirit addresses me in the street, and I am not insensible. I respond. That handsome lady and strong spirit does me the favour to remark, in full confidence, 'I have my curiosity, and I have my chagrins. You are not more than ordinarily honourable, perhaps?' I announce myself, 'Madame, a gentleman from the birth, and a gentleman to the death; but NOT more than ordinarily honourable. I despise such a weak fantasy.' Thereupon she is pleased to compliment. 'The difference between you

and the rest is,' she answers, 'that you say so.' For she knows Society. I accept her congratulations with gallantry and politeness. Politeness and little gallantries are inseparable from my character. She then makes a proposition, which is, in effect, that she has seen us much together; that it appears to her that I am for the passing time the cat of the house, the friend of the family; that her curiosity and her chagrins awaken the fancy to be acquainted with their movements, to know the manner of their life, how the fair Gowana is beloved, how the fair Gowana is cherished, and so on. She is not rich, but offers such and such little recompenses for the little cares and derangements of such services; and I graciously - to do everything graciously is a part of my character - consent to accept them. O yes! So goes the world. It is the mode.'

Though Clennam's back was turned while he spoke, and thenceforth to the end of the interview, he kept those glittering eyes of his that were too near together, upon him, and evidently saw in the very carriage of the head, as he passed with his braggart recklessness from clause to clause of what he said, that he was saying nothing which Clennam did not already know.

'Whoof! The fair Gowana!' he said, lighting a third cigarette with a sound as if his lightest breath could blow her away. 'Charming, but imprudent! For it was not well of the fair Gowana to make mysteries of letters from old lovers, in her bedchamber on the mountain, that her husband might not see them. No, no. That was not well. Whoof! The Gowana was mistaken there.'

'I earnestly hope,' cried Arthur aloud, 'that Pancks may not be long gone, for this man's presence pollutes the room.'

'Ah! But he'll flourish here, and everywhere,' said Rigaud, with an exulting look and snap of his fingers. 'He always has; he always will!' Stretching his body out on the only three chairs in the room besides that on which Clennam sat, he sang, smiting himself on the breast as the gallant personage of the song.

'Who passes by this road so late? Compagnon de la Majolaine! Who passes by this road so late? Always gay!

'Sing the Refrain, pig! You could sing it once, in another jail. Sing it! Or, by every Saint who was stoned to death, I'll be affronted and compromising; and then some people who are not dead yet, had better have been stoned along with them!'

'Of all the king's knights 'tis the flower, Compagnon de la Majolaine! Of all the king's knights 'tis the flower, Always gay!'

Partly in his old habit of submission, partly because his not doing it might injure his benefactor, and partly because he would as soon do it as anything else, Cavalletto took up the Refrain this time. Rigaud laughed, and fell to smoking with his eyes shut.

Possibly another quarter of an hour elapsed before Mr Pancks's step was heard upon the stairs, but the interval seemed to Clennam insupportably long. His step was attended by another step; and when Cavalletto opened the door, he admitted Mr Pancks and Mr Flintwinch. The latter was no sooner visible, than Rigaud rushed at him and embraced him boisterously.

'How do you find yourself, sir?' said Mr Flintwinch, as soon as he could disengage himself, which he struggled to do with very little ceremony. 'Thank you, no; I don't want any more.' This was in reference to another menace of attention from his recovered friend.

'Well, Arthur. You remember what I said to you about sleeping dogs and missing ones. It's come true, you see.'

He was as imperturbable as ever, to all appearance, and nodded his head in a moralising way as he looked round the room.

'And this is the Marshalsea prison for debt!' said Mr Flintwinch. 'Hah! you have brought your pigs to a very indifferent market, Arthur.'

If Arthur had patience, Rigaud had not. He took his little Flintwinch, with fierce playfulness, by the two lapels of his coat, and cried:

'To the Devil with the Market, to the Devil with the Pigs, and to the Devil with the Pig-Driver! Now! Give me the answer to my letter.'

'If you can make it convenient to let go a moment, sir,' returned Mr Flintwinch, 'I'll first hand Mr Arthur a little note that I have for him.'

He did so. It was in his mother's maimed writing, on a slip of paper, and contained only these words:

'I hope it is enough that you have ruined yourself. Rest contented without more ruin. Jeremiah Flintwinch is my messenger and representative. Your affectionate M. C.'

Clennam read this twice, in silence, and then tore it to pieces. Rigaud in the meanwhile stepped into a chair, and sat himself on the back with his feet upon the seat.

'Now, Beau Flintwinch,' he said, when he had closely watched the note to its destruction, 'the answer to my letter?'

'Mrs Clennam did not write, Mr Blandois, her hands being cramped, and she thinking it as well to send it verbally by me.' Mr Flintwinch screwed this out of himself, unwillingly and rustily. 'She sends her compliments, and says she doesn't on the whole wish to term you unreasonable, and that she agrees. But without prejudicing the appointment that stands for this day week.'

Monsieur Rigaud, after indulging in a fit of laughter, descended from his throne, saying, 'Good! I go to seek an hotel!' But, there his eyes encountered Cavalletto, who was still at his post.

'Come, Pig,' he added, 'I have had you for a follower against my will; now, I'll have you against yours. I tell you, my little reptiles, I am born to be served. I demand the service of this contrabandist as my domestic until this day week.'

In answer to Cavalletto's look of inquiry, Clennam made him a sign to go; but he added aloud, 'unless you are afraid of him.' Cavalletto replied with a very emphatic finger-negative.'No, master, I am not afraid of him, when I no more keep it secrettementally that he was once my comrade.' Rigaud took no notice of either remark until he had lighted his last cigarette and was quite ready for walking.

'Afraid of him,' he said then, looking round upon them all. 'Whoof! My children, my babies, my little dolls, you are all afraid of him. You give him his bottle of wine here; you give him meat, drink, and lodging there; you dare not touch him with a finger or an epithet. No. It is his character to triumph! Whoof!

'Of all the king's knights he's the flower, And he's always gay!'

With this adaptation of the Refrain to himself, he stalked out of the room closely followed by Cavalletto, whom perhaps he had pressed into his service because he tolerably well knew it would not be easy to get rid of him. Mr Flintwinch, after scraping his chin, and looking about with caustic disparagement of the Pig- Market, nodded to Arthur, and followed. Mr Pancks, still penitent and depressed, followed too; after receiving with great attention a secret word or two of instructions from Arthur, and whispering back that he would see this affair out, and stand by it to the end.

The prisoner, with the feeling that he was more despised, more scorned and repudiated, more helpless, altogether more miserable and fallen than before, was left alone again.