Chapter V

Containing A Full Account Of The Installation Of Mr Pecksniff's New Pupil Into The Bosom Of Mr Pecksniff's Family. With All The Festivities Held On That Occasion, And The Great Enjoyment Of Mr Pinch

The best of architects and land surveyors kept a horse, in whom the enemies already mentioned more than once in these pages pretended to detect a fanciful resemblance to his master. Not in his outward person, for he was a raw-boned, haggard horse, always on a much shorter allowance of corn than Mr Pecksniff; but in his moral character, wherein, said they, he was full of promise, but of no performance. He was always in a manner, going to go, and never going. When at his slowest rate of travelling he would sometimes lift up his legs so high, and display such mighty action, that it was difficult to believe he was doing less than fourteen miles an hour; and he was for ever so perfectly satisfied with his own speed, and so little disconcerted by opportunities of comparing himself with the fastest trotters, that the illusion was the more difficult of resistance. He was a kind of animal who infused into the breasts of strangers a lively sense of hope, and possessed all those who knew him better with a grim despair. In what respect, having these points of character, he might be fairly likened to his master, that good man's slanderers only can explain. But it is a melancholy truth, and a deplorable instance of the uncharitableness of the world, that they made the comparison.

In this horse, and the hooded vehicle, whatever its proper name might be, to which he was usually harnessed - it was more like a gig with a tumour than anything else - all Mr Pinch's thoughts and wishes centred, one bright frosty morning; for with this gallant equipage he was about to drive to Salisbury alone, there to meet with the new pupil, and thence to bring him home in triumph.

Blessings on thy simple heart, Tom Pinch, how proudly dost thou button up that scanty coat, called by a sad misnomer, for these many years, a 'great' one; and how thoroughly, as with thy cheerful voice thou pleasantly adjurest Sam the hostler 'not to let him go yet,' dost thou believe that quadruped desires to go, and would go if he might! Who could repress a smile - of love for thee, Tom Pinch, and not in jest at thy expense, for thou art poor enough already, Heaven knows - to think that such a holiday as lies before thee should awaken that quick flow and hurry of the spirits, in which thou settest down again, almost untasted, on the kitchen window-sill, that great white mug (put by, by thy own hands, last night, that breakfast might not hold thee late), and layest yonder crust upon the seat beside thee, to be eaten on the road, when thou art calmer in thy high rejoicing! Who, as thou drivest off, a happy, man, and noddest with a grateful lovingness

to Pecksniff in his nightcap at his chamber-window, would not cry, 'Heaven speed thee, Tom, and send that thou wert going off for ever to some quiet home where thou mightst live at peace, and sorrow should not touch thee!'

What better time for driving, riding, walking, moving through the air by any means, than a fresh, frosty morning, when hope runs cheerily through the veins with the brisk blood, and tingles in the frame from head to foot! This was the glad commencement of a bracing day in early winter, such as may put the languid summer season (speaking of it when it can't be had) to the blush, and shame the spring for being sometimes cold by halves. The sheep-bells rang as clearly in the vigorous air, as if they felt its wholesome influence like living creatures; the trees, in lieu of leaves or blossoms, shed upon the ground a frosty rime that sparkled as it fell, and might have been the dust of diamonds. So it was to Tom. From cottage chimneys, smoke went streaming up high, high, as if the earth had lost its grossness, being so fair, and must not be oppressed by heavy vapour. The crust of ice on the else rippling brook was so transparent, and so thin in texture, that the lively water might of its own free will have stopped - in Tom's glad mind it had - to look upon the lovely morning. And lest the sun should break this charm too eagerly, there moved between him and the ground, a mist like that which waits upon the moon on summer nights - the very same to Tom - and wooed him to dissolve it gently.

Tom Pinch went on; not fast, but with a sense of rapid motion, which did just as well; and as he went, all kinds of things occurred to keep him happy. Thus when he came within sight of the turnpike, and was - oh a long way off! - he saw the tollman's wife, who had that moment checked a waggon, run back into the little house again like mad, to say (she knew) that Mr Pinch was coming up. And she was right, for when he drew within hail of the gate, forth rushed the tollman's children, shrieking in tiny chorus, 'Mr Pinch!' to Tom's intense delight. The very tollman, though an ugly chap in general, and one whom folks were rather shy of handling, came out himself to take the toll, and give him rough good morning; and that with all this, and a glimpse of the family breakfast on a little round table before the fire, the crust Tom Pinch had brought away with him acquired as rich a flavour as though it had been cut from a fairy loaf.

But there was more than this. It was not only the married people and the children who gave Tom Pinch a welcome as he passed. No, no. Sparkling eyes and snowy breasts came hurriedly to many an upper casement as he clattered by, and gave him back his greeting: not stinted either, but sevenfold, good measure. They were all merry. They all laughed. And some of the wickedest among them even kissed their

hands as Tom looked back. For who minded poor Mr Pinch? There was no harm in HIM.

And now the morning grew so fair, and all things were so wide awake and gay, that the sun seeming to say - Tom had no doubt he said - 'I can't stand it any longer; I must have a look,' streamed out in radiant majesty. The mist, too shy and gentle for such lusty company, fled off, quite scared, before it; and as it swept away, the hills and mounds and distant pasture lands, teeming with placid sheep and noisy crows, came out as bright as though they were unrolled bran new for the occasion. In compliment to which discovery, the brook stood still no longer, but ran briskly off to bear the tidings to the water-mill, three miles away.

Mr Pinch was jogging along, full of pleasant thoughts and cheerful influences, when he saw, upon the path before him, going in the same direction with himself, a traveller on foot, who walked with a light quick step, and sang as he went - for certain in a very loud voice, but not unmusically. He was a young fellow, of some five or six-and-twenty perhaps, and was dressed in such a free and fly-away fashion, that the long ends of his loose red neckcloth were streaming out behind him quite as often as before; and the bunch of bright winter berries in the buttonhole of his velveteen coat was as visible to Mr Pinch's rearward observation, as if he had worn that garment wrong side foremost. He continued to sing with so much energy, that he did not hear the sound of wheels until it was close behind him; when he turned a whimsical face and a very merry pair of blue eyes on Mr Pinch, and checked himself directly.

'Why, Mark?' said Tom Pinch, stopping. 'Who'd have thought of seeing you here? Well! this is surprising!'

Mark touched his hat, and said, with a very sudden decrease of vivacity, that he was going to Salisbury.

'And how spruce you are, too!' said Mr Pinch, surveying him with great pleasure. 'Really, I didn't think you were half such a tight-made fellow, Mark!'

'Thankee, Mr Pinch. Pretty well for that, I believe. It's not my fault, you know. With regard to being spruce, sir, that's where it is, you see.' And here he looked particularly gloomy.

'Where what is?' Mr Pinch demanded.

'Where the aggravation of it is. Any man may be in good spirits and good temper when he's well dressed. There an't much credit in that. If

I was very ragged and very jolly, then I should begin to feel I had gained a point, Mr Pinch.'

'So you were singing just now, to bear up, as it were, against being well dressed, eh, Mark?' said Pinch.

'Your conversation's always equal to print, sir,' rejoined Mark, with a broad grin. 'That was it.'

'Well!' cried Pinch, 'you are the strangest young man, Mark, I ever knew in my life. I always thought so; but now I am quite certain of it. I am going to Salisbury, too. Will you get in? I shall be very glad of your company.'

The young fellow made his acknowledgments and accepted the offer; stepping into the carriage directly, and seating himself on the very edge of the seat with his body half out of it, to express his being there on sufferance, and by the politeness of Mr Pinch. As they went along, the conversation proceeded after this manner.

'I more than half believed, just now, seeing you so very smart,' said Pinch, 'that you must be going to be married, Mark.'

'Well, sir, I've thought of that, too,' he replied. 'There might be some credit in being jolly with a wife, 'specially if the children had the measles and that, and was very fractious indeed. But I'm a'most afraid to try it. I don't see my way clear.'

'You're not very fond of anybody, perhaps?' said Pinch.

'Not particular, sir, I think.'

'But the way would be, you know, Mark, according to your views of things,' said Mr Pinch, 'to marry somebody you didn't like, and who was very disagreeable.'

'So it would, sir; but that might be carrying out a principle a little too far, mightn't it?'

'Perhaps it might,' said Mr Pinch. At which they both laughed gayly.

'Lord bless you, sir,' said Mark, 'you don't half know me, though. I don't believe there ever was a man as could come out so strong under circumstances that would make other men miserable, as I could, if I could only get a chance. But I can't get a chance. It's my opinion that nobody never will know half of what's in me, unless something very unexpected turns up. And I don't see any prospect of that. I'm a-going to leave the Dragon, sir.'

'Going to leave the Dragon!' cried Mr Pinch, looking at him with great astonishment. 'Why, Mark, you take my breath away!'

'Yes, sir,' he rejoined, looking straight before him and a long way off, as men do sometimes when they cogitate profoundly. 'What's the use of my stopping at the Dragon? It an't at all the sort of place for ME. When I left London (I'm a Kentish man by birth, though), and took that situation here, I quite made up my mind that it was the dullest little out-of-the-way corner in England, and that there would be some credit in being jolly under such circumstances. But, Lord, there's no dullness at the Dragon! Skittles, cricket, quoits, nine-pins, comic songs, choruses, company round the chimney corner every winter's evening. Any man could be jolly at the Dragon. There's no credit in THAT.'

'But if common report be true for once, Mark, as I think it is, being able to confirm it by what I know myself,' said Mr Pinch, 'you are the cause of half this merriment, and set it going.'

'There may be something in that, too, sir,' answered Mark. 'But that's no consolation.'

'Well!' said Mr Pinch, after a short silence, his usually subdued tone being even now more subdued than ever. 'I can hardly think enough of what you tell me. Why, what will become of Mrs Lupin, Mark?'

Mark looked more fixedly before him, and further off still, as he answered that he didn't suppose it would be much of an object to her. There were plenty of smart young fellows as would be glad of the place. He knew a dozen himself.

'That's probable enough,' said Mr Pinch, 'but I am not at all sure that Mrs Lupin would be glad of them. Why, I always supposed that Mrs Lupin and you would make a match of it, Mark; and so did every one, as far as I know.'

'I never,' Mark replied, in some confusion, 'said nothing as was in a direct way courting-like to her, nor she to me, but I don't know what I mightn't do one of these odd times, and what she mightn't say in answer. Well, sir, THAT wouldn't suit.'

'Not to be landlord of the Dragon, Mark?' cried Mr Pinch.

'No, sir, certainly not,' returned the other, withdrawing his gaze from the horizon, and looking at his fellow-traveller. 'Why that would be the ruin of a man like me. I go and sit down comfortably for life, and no man never finds me out. What would be the credit of the landlord of the Dragon's being jolly? Why, he couldn't help it, if he tried.'

'Does Mrs Lupin know you are going to leave her?' Mr Pinch inquired.

'I haven't broke it to her yet, sir, but I must. I'm looking out this morning for something new and suitable,' he said, nodding towards the city.

'What kind of thing now?' Mr Pinch demanded.

'I was thinking,' Mark replied, 'of something in the grave-digging. way.'

'Good gracious, Mark?' cried Mr Pinch.

'It's a good damp, wormy sort of business, sir,' said Mark, shaking his head argumentatively, 'and there might be some credit in being jolly, with one's mind in that pursuit, unless grave-diggers is usually given that way; which would be a drawback. You don't happen to know how that is in general, do you, sir?'

'No,' said Mr Pinch, 'I don't indeed. I never thought upon the subject.'

'In case of that not turning out as well as one could wish, you know,' said Mark, musing again, 'there's other businesses. Undertaking now. That's gloomy. There might be credit to be gained there. A broker's man in a poor neighbourhood wouldn't be bad perhaps. A jailor sees a deal of misery. A doctor's man is in the very midst of murder. A bailiff's an't a lively office nat'rally. Even a tax-gatherer must find his feelings rather worked upon, at times. There's lots of trades in which I should have an opportunity, I think.'

Mr Pinch was so perfectly overwhelmed by these remarks that he could do nothing but occasionally exchange a word or two on some indifferent subject, and cast sidelong glances at the bright face of his odd friend (who seemed quite unconscious of his observation), until they reached a certain corner of the road, close upon the outskirts of the city, when Mark said he would jump down there, if he pleased.

'But bless my soul, Mark,' said Mr Pinch, who in the progress of his observation just then made the discovery that the bosom of his companion's shirt was as much exposed as if it was Midsummer, and was ruffled by every breath of air, 'why don't you wear a waistcoat?'

'What's the good of one, sir?' asked Mark.

'Good of one?' said Mr Pinch. 'Why, to keep your chest warm.'

'Lord love you, sir!' cried Mark, 'you don't know me. My chest don't want no warming. Even if it did, what would no waistcoat bring it to?

Inflammation of the lungs, perhaps? Well, there'd be some credit in being jolly, with a inflammation of the lungs.'

As Mr Pinch returned no other answer than such as was conveyed in his breathing very hard, and opening his eyes very wide, and nodding his head very much, Mark thanked him for his ride, and without troubling him to stop, jumped lightly down. And away he fluttered, with his red neckerchief, and his open coat, down a cross-lane; turning back from time to time to nod to Mr Pinch, and looking one of the most careless, good-humoured comical fellows in life. His late companion, with a thoughtful face pursued his way to Salisbury.

Mr Pinch had a shrewd notion that Salisbury was a very desperate sort of place; an exceeding wild and dissipated city; and when he had put up the horse, and given the hostler to understand that he would look in again in the course of an hour or two to see him take his corn, he set forth on a stroll about the streets with a vague and not unpleasant idea that they teemed with all kinds of mystery and bedevilment. To one of his quiet habits this little delusion was greatly assisted by the circumstance of its being market-day, and the thoroughfares about the market-place being filled with carts, horses, donkeys, baskets, waggons, garden-stuff, meat, tripe, pies, poultry and huckster's wares of every opposite description and possible variety of character. Then there were young farmers and old farmers with smock-frocks, brown great-coats, drab great-coats, red worsted comforters, leather-leggings, wonderful shaped hats, hunting-whips, and rough sticks, standing about in groups, or talking noisily together on the tavern steps, or paying and receiving huge amounts of greasy wealth, with the assistance of such bulky pocket-books that when they were in their pockets it was apoplexy to get them out, and when they were out it was spasms to get them in again. Also there were farmers' wives in beaver bonnets and red cloaks, riding shaggy horses purged of all earthly passions, who went soberly into all manner of places without desiring to know why, and who, if required, would have stood stock still in a china shop, with a complete dinner-service at each hoof. Also a great many dogs, who were strongly interested in the state of the market and the bargains of their masters; and a great confusion of tongues, both brute and human.

Mr Pinch regarded everything exposed for sale with great delight, and was particularly struck by the itinerant cutlery, which he considered of the very keenest kind, insomuch that he purchased a pocket knife with seven blades in it, and not a cut (as he afterwards found out) among them. When he had exhausted the market-place, and watched the farmers safe into the market dinner, he went back to look after the horse. Having seen him eat unto his heart's content he issued forth again, to wander round the town and regale himself with the shop windows; previously taking a long stare at the bank, and wondering in

what direction underground the caverns might be where they kept the money; and turning to look back at one or two young men who passed him, whom he knew to be articled to solicitors in the town; and who had a sort of fearful interest in his eyes, as jolly dogs who knew a thing or two, and kept it up tremendously.

But the shops. First of all there were the jewellers' shops, with all the treasures of the earth displayed therein, and such large silver watches hanging up in every pane of glass, that if they were anything but first-rate goers it certainly was not because the works could decently complain of want of room. In good sooth they were big enough, and perhaps, as the saying is, ugly enough, to be the most correct of all mechanical performers; in Mr Pinch's eyes, however they were smaller than Geneva ware; and when he saw one very bloated watch announced as a repeater, gifted with the uncommon power of striking every quarter of an hour inside the pocket of its happy owner, he almost wished that he were rich enough to buy it.

But what were even gold and silver, precious stones and clockwork, to the bookshops, whence a pleasant smell of paper freshly pressed came issuing forth, awakening instant recollections of some new grammar had at school, long time ago, with 'Master Pinch, Grove House Academy,' inscribed in faultless writing on the fly-leaf! That whiff of russia leather, too, and all those rows on rows of volumes neatly ranged within - what happiness did they suggest! And in the window were the spick-and-span new works from London, with the title-pages, and sometimes even the first page of the first chapter, laid wide open; tempting unwary men to begin to read the book, and then, in the impossibility of turning over, to rush blindly in, and buy it! Here too were the dainty frontispiece and trim vignette, pointing like handposts on the outskirts of great cities, to the rich stock of incident beyond; and store of books, with many a grave portrait and time-honoured name, whose matter he knew well, and would have given mines to have, in any form, upon the narrow shell beside his bed at Mr Pecksniff's. What a heart-breaking shop it was!

There was another; not quite so bad at first, but still a trying shop; where children's books were sold, and where poor Robinson Crusoe stood alone in his might, with dog and hatchet, goat-skin cap and fowling-pieces; calmly surveying Philip Quarn and the host of imitators round him, and calling Mr Pinch to witness that he, of all the crowd, impressed one solitary footprint on the shore of boyish memory, whereof the tread of generations should not stir the lightest grain of sand. And there too were the Persian tales, with flying chests and students of enchanted books shut up for years in caverns; and there too was Abudah, the merchant, with the terrible little old woman hobbling out of the box in his bedroom; and there the mighty talisman, the rare Arabian Nights, with Cassim Baba, divided by four,

like the ghost of a dreadful sum, hanging up, all gory, in the robbers' cave. Which matchless wonders, coming fast on Mr Pinch's mind, did so rub up and chafe that wonderful lamp within him, that when he turned his face towards the busy street, a crowd of phantoms waited on his pleasure, and he lived again, with new delight, the happy days before the Pecksniff era.

He had less interest now in the chemists' shops, with their great glowing bottles (with smaller repositories of brightness in their very stoppers); and in their agreeable compromises between medicine and perfumery, in the shape of toothsome lozenges and virgin honey. Neither had he the least regard (but he never had much) for the tailors', where the newest metropolitan waistcoat patterns were hanging up, which by some strange transformation always looked amazing there, and never appeared at all like the same thing anywhere else. But he stopped to read the playbill at the theatre and surveyed the doorway with a kind of awe, which was not diminished when a sallow gentleman with long dark hair came out, and told a boy to run home to his lodgings and bring down his broadsword. Mr Pinch stood rooted to the spot on hearing this, and might have stood there until dark, but that the old cathedral bell began to ring for vesper service, on which he tore himself away.

Now, the organist's assistant was a friend of Mr Pinch's, which was a good thing, for he too was a very quiet gentle soul, and had been, like Tom, a kind of old-fashioned boy at school, though well liked by the noisy fellow too. As good luck would have it (Tom always said he had great good luck) the assistant chanced that very afternoon to be on duty by himself, with no one in the dusty organ loft but Tom; so while he played, Tom helped him with the stops; and finally, the service being just over, Tom took the organ himself. It was then turning dark, and the yellow light that streamed in through the ancient windows in the choir was mingled with a murky red. As the grand tones resounded through the church, they seemed, to Tom, to find an echo in the depth of every ancient tomb, no less than in the deep mystery of his own heart. Great thoughts and hopes came crowding on his mind as the rich music rolled upon the air and yet among them - something more grave and solemn in their purpose, but the same - were all the images of that day, down to its very lightest recollection of childhood. The feeling that the sounds awakened, in the moment of their existence, seemed to include his whole life and being; and as the surrounding realities of stone and wood and glass grew dimmer in the darkness, these visions grew so much the brighter that Tom might have forgotten the new pupil and the expectant master, and have sat there pouring out his grateful heart till midnight, but for a very earthy old verger insisting on locking up the cathedral forthwith. So he took leave of his friend, with many thanks, groped his way out, as well as

he could, into the now lamp-lighted streets, and hurried off to get his dinner.

All the farmers being by this time jogging homewards, there was nobody in the sanded parlour of the tavern where he had left the horse; so he had his little table drawn out close before the fire, and fell to work upon a well-cooked steak and smoking hot potatoes, with a strong appreciation of their excellence, and a very keen sense of enjoyment. Beside him, too, there stood a jug of most stupendous Wiltshire beer; and the effect of the whole was so transcendent, that he was obliged every now and then to lay down his knife and fork, rub his hands, and think about it. By the time the cheese and celery came, Mr Pinch had taken a book out of his pocket, and could afford to trifle with the viands; now eating a little, now drinking a little, now reading a little, and now stopping to wonder what sort of a young man the new pupil would turn out to be. He had passed from this latter theme and was deep in his book again, when the door opened, and another guest came in, bringing with him such a quantity of cold air, that he positively seemed at first to put the fire out.

'Very hard frost to-night, sir,' said the newcomer, courteously acknowledging Mr Pinch's withdrawal of the little table, that he might have place: 'Don't disturb yourself, I beg.'

Though he said this with a vast amount of consideration for Mr Pinch's comfort, he dragged one of the great leather-bottomed chairs to the very centre of the hearth, notwithstanding; and sat down in front of the fire, with a foot on each hob.

'My feet are quite numbed. Ah! Bitter cold to be sure.'

'You have been in the air some considerable time, I dare say?' said Mr Pinch.

'All day. Outside a coach, too.'

'That accounts for his making the room so cool,' thought Mr Pinch. 'Poor fellow! How thoroughly chilled he must be!'

The stranger became thoughtful likewise, and sat for five or ten minutes looking at the fire in silence. At length he rose and divested himself of his shawl and great-coat, which (far different from Mr Pinch's) was a very warm and thick one; but he was not a whit more conversational out of his great-coat than in it, for he sat down again in the same place and attitude, and leaning back in his chair, began to bite his nails. He was young - one-and-twenty, perhaps - and handsome; with a keen dark eye, and a quickness of look and manner

which made Tom sensible of a great contrast in his own bearing, and caused him to feel even more shy than usual.

There was a clock in the room, which the stranger often turned to look at. Tom made frequent reference to it also; partly from a nervous sympathy with its taciturn companion; and partly because the new pupil was to inquire for him at half after six, and the hands were getting on towards that hour. Whenever the stranger caught him looking at this clock, a kind of confusion came upon Tom as if he had been found out in something; and it was a perception of his uneasiness which caused the younger man to say, perhaps, with a smile:

'We both appear to be rather particular about the time. The fact is, I have an engagement to meet a gentleman here.'

'So have I,' said Mr Pinch.

'At half-past six,' said the stranger.

'At half-past six,' said Tom in the very same breath; whereupon the other looked at him with some surprise.

'The young gentleman, I expect,' remarked Tom, timidly, 'was to inquire at that time for a person by the name of Pinch.'

'Dear me!' cried the other, jumping up. 'And I have been keeping the fire from you all this while! I had no idea you were Mr Pinch. I am the Mr Martin for whom you were to inquire. Pray excuse me. How do you do? Oh, do draw nearer, pray!'

'Thank you,' said Tom, 'thank you. I am not at all cold, and you are; and we have a cold ride before us. Well, if you wish it, I will. I - I am very glad,' said Tom, smiling with an embarrassed frankness peculiarly his, and which was as plainly a confession of his own imperfections, and an appeal to the kindness of the person he addressed, as if he had drawn one up in simple language and committed it to paper: 'I am very glad indeed that you turn out to be the party I expected. I was thinking, but a minute ago, that I could wish him to be like you.'

'I am very glad to hear it,' returned Martin, shaking hands with him again; 'for I assure you, I was thinking there could be no such luck as Mr Pinch's turning out like you.'

'No, really!' said Tom, with great pleasure. 'Are you serious?'

'Upon my word I am,' replied his new acquaintance. 'You and I will get on excellently well, I know; which it's no small relief to me to feel, for to tell you the truth, I am not at all the sort of fellow who could get on with everybody, and that's the point on which I had the greatest doubts. But they're quite relieved now. - Do me the favour to ring the bell, will you?'

Mr Pinch rose, and complied with great alacrity - the handle hung just over Martin's head, as he warmed himself - and listened with a smiling face to what his friend went on to say. It was:

'If you like punch, you'll allow me to order a glass apiece, as hot as it can be made, that we may usher in our friendship in a becoming manner. To let you into a secret, Mr Pinch, I never was so much in want of something warm and cheering in my life; but I didn't like to run the chance of being found drinking it, without knowing what kind of person you were; for first impressions, you know, often go a long way, and last a long time.'

Mr Pinch assented, and the punch was ordered. In due course it came; hot and strong. After drinking to each other in the steaming mixture, they became quite confidential.

'I'm a sort of relation of Pecksniff's, you know,' said the young man.

'Indeed!' cried Mr Pinch.

'Yes. My grandfather is his cousin, so he's kith and kin to me, somehow, if you can make that out. I can't.'

'Then Martin is your Christian name?' said Mr Pinch, thoughtfully. 'Oh!'

'Of course it is,' returned his friend: 'I wish it was my surname for my own is not a very pretty one, and it takes a long time to sign Chuzzlewit is my name.'

'Dear me!' cried Mr Pinch, with an involuntary start.

'You're not surprised at my having two names, I suppose?' returned the other, setting his glass to his lips. 'Most people have.'

'Oh, no,' said Mr Pinch, 'not at all. Oh dear no! Well!' And then remembering that Mr Pecksniff had privately cautioned him to say nothing in reference to the old gentleman of the same name who had lodged at the Dragon, but to reserve all mention of that person for him, he had no better means of hiding his confusion than by raising his own glass to his mouth. They looked at each other out of their

respective tumblers for a few seconds, and then put them down empty.

'I told them in the stable to be ready for us ten minutes ago,' said Mr Pinch, glancing at the clock again. 'Shall we go?'

'If you please,' returned the other.

'Would you like to drive?' said Mr Pinch; his whole face beaming with a consciousness of the splendour of his offer. 'You shall, if you wish.'

'Why, that depends, Mr Pinch,' said Martin, laughing, 'upon what sort of a horse you have. Because if he's a bad one, I would rather keep my hands warm by holding them comfortably in my greatcoat pockets.'

He appeared to think this such a good joke, that Mr Pinch was quite sure it must be a capital one. Accordingly, he laughed too, and was fully persuaded that he enjoyed it very much. Then he settled his bill, and Mr Chuzzlewit paid for the punch; and having wrapped themselves up, to the extent of their respective means, they went out together to the front door, where Mr Pecksniff's property stopped the way. 'I won't drive, thank you, Mr Pinch,' said Martin, getting into the sitter's place. 'By the bye, there's a box of mine. Can we manage to take it?'

'Oh, certainly,' said Tom. 'Put it in, Dick, anywhere!'

It was not precisely of that convenient size which would admit of its being squeezed into any odd corner, but Dick the hostler got it in somehow, and Mr Chuzzlewit helped him. It was all on Mr Pinch's side, and Mr Chuzzlewit said he was very much afraid it would encumber him; to which Tom said, 'Not at all;' though it forced him into such an awkward position, that he had much ado to see anything but his own knees. But it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good; and the wisdom of the saying was verified in this instance; for the cold air came from Mr Pinch's side of the carriage, and by interposing a perfect wall of box and man between it and the new pupil, he shielded that young gentleman effectually; which was a great comfort.

It was a clear evening, with a bright moon. The whole landscape was silvered by its light and by the hoar-frost; and everything looked exquisitely beautiful. At first, the great serenity and peace through which they travelled, disposed them both to silence; but in a very short time the punch within them and the healthful air without, made them loquacious, and they talked incessantly. When they were halfway home, and stopped to give the horse some water, Martin (who was very generous with his money) ordered another glass of punch, which they drank between them, and which had not the effect of

making them less conversational than before. Their principal topic of discourse was naturally Mr Pecksniff and his family; of whom, and of the great obligations they had heaped upon him, Tom Pinch, with the tears standing in his eyes, drew such a picture as would have inclined any one of common feeling almost to revere them; and of which Mr Pecksniff had not the slightest foresight or preconceived idea, or he certainly (being very humble) would not have sent Tom Pinch to bring the pupil home.

In this way they went on, and on, and on - in the language of the story-books - until at last the village lights appeared before them, and the church spire cast a long reflection on the graveyard grass; as if it were a dial (alas, the truest in the world!) marking, whatever light shone out of Heaven, the flight of days and weeks and years, by some new shadow on that solemn ground.

'A pretty church!' said Martin, observing that his companion slackened the slack pace of the horse, as they approached.

'Is it not?' cried Tom, with great pride. 'There's the sweetest little organ there you ever heard. I play it for them.'

'Indeed?' said Martin. 'It is hardly worth the trouble, I should think. What do you get for that, now?'

'Nothing,' answered Tom.

'Well,' returned his friend, 'you ARE a very strange fellow!'

To which remark there succeeded a brief silence.

'When I say nothing,' observed Mr Pinch, cheerfully, 'I am wrong, and don't say what I mean, because I get a great deal of pleasure from it, and the means of passing some of the happiest hours I know. It led to something else the other day; but you will not care to hear about that I dare say?'

'Oh yes I shall. What?'

'It led to my seeing,' said Tom, in a lower voice, 'one of the loveliest and most beautiful faces you can possibly picture to yourself.'

'And yet I am able to picture a beautiful one,' said his friend, thoughtfully, 'or should be, if I have any memory.'

'She came' said Tom, laying his hand upon the other's arm, 'for the first time very early in the morning, when it was hardly light; and when I saw her, over my shoulder, standing just within the porch, I

turned quite cold, almost believing her to be a spirit. A moment's reflection got the better of that, of course, and fortunately it came to my relief so soon, that I didn't leave off playing.'

'Why fortunately?'

'Why? Because she stood there, listening. I had my spectacles on, and saw her through the chinks in the curtains as plainly as I see you; and she was beautiful. After a while she glided off, and I continued to play until she was out of hearing.'

'Why did you do that?'

'Don't you see?' responded Tom. 'Because she might suppose I hadn't seen her; and might return.'

'And did she?'

'Certainly she did. Next morning, and next evening too; but always when there were no people about, and always alone. I rose earlier and sat there later, that when she came, she might find the church door open, and the organ playing, and might not be disappointed. She strolled that way for some days, and always stayed to listen. But she is gone now, and of all unlikely things in this wide world, it is perhaps the most improbable that I shall ever look upon her face again.'

'You don't know anything more about her?'

'No.'

'And you never followed her when she went away?'

'Why should I distress her by doing that?' said Tom Pinch. 'Is it likely that she wanted my company? She came to hear the organ, not to see me; and would you have had me scare her from a place she seemed to grow quite fond of? Now, Heaven bless her!' cried Tom, 'to have given her but a minute's pleasure every day, I would have gone on playing the organ at those times until I was an old man; quite contented if she sometimes thought of a poor fellow like me, as a part of the music; and more than recompensed if she ever mixed me up with anything she liked as well as she liked that!'

The new pupil was clearly very much amazed by Mr Pinch's weakness, and would probably have told him so, and given him some good advice, but for their opportune arrival at Mr Pecksniff's door; the front door this time, on account of the occasion being one of ceremony and rejoicing. The same man was in waiting for the horse who had been adjured by Mr Pinch in the morning not to yield to his rabid desire to

start; and after delivering the animal into his charge, and beseeching Mr Chuzzlewit in a whisper never to reveal a syllable of what he had just told him in the fullness of his heart, Tom led the pupil in, for instant presentation.

Mr Pecksniff had clearly not expected them for hours to come; for he was surrounded by open books, and was glancing from volume to volume, with a black lead-pencil in his mouth, and a pair of compasses in his hand, at a vast number of mathematical diagrams, of such extraordinary shapes that they looked like designs for fireworks. Neither had Miss Charity expected them, for she was busied, with a capacious wicker basket before her, in making impracticable nightcaps for the poor. Neither had Miss Mercy expected them, for she was sitting upon her stool, tying on the - oh good gracious! - the petticoat of a large doll that she was dressing for a neighbour's child - really, quite a grown-up doll, which made it more confusing - and had its little bonnet dangling by the ribbon from one of her fair curls, to which she had fastened it lest it should be lost or sat upon. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to conceive a family so thoroughly taken by surprise as the Pecksniffs were, on this occasion.

Bless my life!' said Mr Pecksniff, looking up, and gradually exchanging his abstracted face for one of joyful recognition. 'Here already! Martin, my dear boy, I am delighted to welcome you to my poor house!'

With this kind greeting, Mr Pecksniff fairly took him to his arms, and patted him several times upon the back with his right hand the while, as if to express that his feelings during the embrace were too much for utterance.

'But here,' he said, recovering, 'are my daughters, Martin; my two only children, whom (if you ever saw them) you have not beheld - ah, these sad family divisions! - since you were infants together. Nay, my dears, why blush at being detected in your everyday pursuits? We had prepared to give you the reception of a visitor, Martin, in our little room of state,' said Mr Pecksniff, smiling, 'but I like this better, I like this better!'

Oh blessed star of Innocence, wherever you may be, how did you glitter in your home of ether, when the two Miss Pecksniffs put forth each her lily hand, and gave the same, with mantling cheeks, to Martin! How did you twinkle, as if fluttering with sympathy, when Mercy, reminded of the bonnet in her hair, hid her fair face and turned her head aside; the while her gentle sister plucked it out, and smote her with a sister's soft reproof, upon her buxom shoulder!

'And how,' said Mr Pecksniff, turning round after the contemplation of these passages, and taking Mr Pinch in a friendly manner by the elbow, 'how has our friend used you, Martin?'

'Very well indeed, sir. We are on the best terms, I assure you.'

'Old Tom Pinch!' said Mr Pecksniff, looking on him with affectionate sadness. 'Ah! It seems but yesterday that Thomas was a boy fresh from a scholastic course. Yet years have passed, I think, since Thomas Pinch and I first walked the world together!'

Mr Pinch could say nothing. He was too much moved. But he pressed his master's hand, and tried to thank him.

'And Thomas Pinch and I,' said Mr Pecksniff, in a deeper voice, 'will walk it yet, in mutual faithfulness and friendship! And if it comes to pass that either of us be run over in any of those busy crossings which divide the streets of life, the other will convey him to the hospital in Hope, and sit beside his bed in Bounty!'

'Well, well, well!' he added in a happier tone, as he shook Mr Pinch's elbow hard. 'No more of this! Martin, my dear friend, that you may be at home within these walls, let me show you how we live, and where. Come!'

With that he took up a lighted candle, and, attended by his young relative, prepared to leave the room. At the door, he stopped.

'You'll bear us company, Tom Pinch?'

Aye, cheerfully, though it had been to death, would Tom have followed him; glad to lay down his life for such a man!

'This,' said Mr Pecksniff, opening the door of an opposite parlour, 'is the little room of state, I mentioned to you. My girls have pride in it, Martin! This,' opening another door, 'is the little chamber in which my works (slight things at best) have been concocted. Portrait of myself by Spiller. Bust by Spoker. The latter is considered a good likeness. I seem to recognize something about the left-hand corner of the nose, myself.'

Martin thought it was very like, but scarcely intellectual enough. Mr Pecksniff observed that the same fault had been found with it before. It was remarkable it should have struck his young relation too. He was glad to see he had an eye for art.

'Various books you observe,' said Mr Pecksniff, waving his hand towards the wall, 'connected with our pursuit. I have scribbled myself,

but have not yet published. Be careful how you come upstairs. This,' opening another door, 'is my chamber. I read here when the family suppose I have retired to rest. Sometimes I injure my health rather more than I can quite justify to myself, by doing so; but art is long and time is short. Every facility you see for jotting down crude notions, even here.'

These latter words were explained by his pointing to a small round table on which were a lamp, divers sheets of paper, a piece of India rubber, and a case of instruments; all put ready, in case an architectural idea should come into Mr Pecksniff's head in the night; in which event he would instantly leap out of bed, and fix it for ever.

Mr Pecksniff opened another door on the same floor, and shut it again, all at once, as if it were a Blue Chamber. But before he had well done so, he looked smilingly round, and said, 'Why not?'

Martin couldn't say why not, because he didn't know anything at all about it. So Mr Pecksniff answered himself, by throwing open the door, and saying:

'My daughters' room. A poor first-floor to us, but a bower to them. Very neat. Very airy. Plants you observe; hyacinths; books again; birds.' These birds, by the bye, comprised, in all, one staggering old sparrow without a tail, which had been borrowed expressly from the kitchen. 'Such trifles as girls love are here. Nothing more. Those who seek heartless splendour, would seek here in vain.'

With that he led them to the floor above.

'This,' said Mr Pecksniff, throwing wide the door of the memorable two-pair front; 'is a room where some talent has been developed I believe. This is a room in which an idea for a steeple occurred to me that I may one day give to the world. We work here, my dear Martin. Some architects have been bred in this room; a few, I think, Mr Pinch?'

Tom fully assented; and, what is more, fully believed it.

'You see,' said Mr Pecksniff, passing the candle rapidly from roll to roll of paper, 'some traces of our doings here. Salisbury Cathedral from the north. From the south. From the east. From the west. From the south-east. From the nor'west. A bridge. An almshouse. A jail. A church. A powder-magazine. A wine-cellar. A portico. A summer-house. An ice-house. Plans, elevations, sections, every kind of thing. And this,' he added, having by this time reached another large chamber on the same story, with four little beds in it, 'this is your room, of which Mr Pinch here is the quiet sharer. A southern aspect; a

charming prospect; Mr Pinch's little library, you perceive; everything agreeable and appropriate. If there is any additional comfort you would desire to have here at anytime, pray mention it. Even to strangers, far less to you, my dear Martin, there is no restriction on that point.'

It was undoubtedly true, and may be stated in corroboration of Mr Pecksniff, that any pupil had the most liberal permission to mention anything in this way that suggested itself to his fancy. Some young gentlemen had gone on mentioning the very same thing for five years without ever being stopped.

'The domestic assistants,' said Mr Pecksniff, 'sleep above; and that is all.' After which, and listening complacently as he went, to the encomiums passed by his young friend on the arrangements generally, he led the way to the parlour again.

Here a great change had taken place; for festive preparations on a rather extensive scale were already completed, and the two Miss Pecksniffs were awaiting their return with hospitable looks. There were two bottles of currant wine, white and red; a dish of sandwiches (very long and very slim); another of apples; another of captain's biscuits (which are always a moist and jovial sort of viand); a plate of oranges cut up small and gritty; with powdered sugar, and a highly geological home-made cake. The magnitude of these preparations quite took away Tom Pinch's breath; for though the new pupils were usually let down softly, as one may say, particularly in the wine department, which had so many stages of declension, that sometimes a young gentleman was a whole fortnight in getting to the pump; still this was a banquet; a sort of Lord Mayor's feast in private life; a something to think of, and hold on by, afterwards.

To this entertainment, which apart from its own intrinsic merits, had the additional choice quality, that it was in strict keeping with the night, being both light and cool, Mr Pecksniff besought the company to do full justice.

'Martin,' he said, 'will seat himself between you two, my dears, and Mr Pinch will come by me. Let us drink to our new inmate, and may we be happy together! Martin, my dear friend, my love to you! Mr Pinch, if you spare the bottle we shall quarrel.'

And trying (in his regard for the feelings of the rest) to look as if the wine were not acid and didn't make him wink, Mr Pecksniff did honour to his own toast.

'This,' he said, in allusion to the party, not the wine, 'is a mingling that repays one for much disappointment and vexation. Let us be

merry.' Here he took a captain's biscuit. 'It is a poor heart that never rejoices; and our hearts are not poor. No!'

With such stimulants to merriment did he beguile the time, and do the honours of the table; while Mr Pinch, perhaps to assure himself that what he saw and heard was holiday reality, and not a charming dream, ate of everything, and in particular disposed of the slim sandwiches to a surprising extent. Nor was he stinted in his draughts of wine; but on the contrary, remembering Mr Pecksniff's speech, attacked the bottle with such vigour, that every time he filled his glass anew, Miss Charity, despite her amiable resolves, could not repress a fixed and stony glare, as if her eyes had rested on a ghost. Mr Pecksniff also became thoughtful at those moments, not to say dejected; but as he knew the vintage, it is very likely he may have been speculating on the probable condition of Mr Pinch upon the morrow, and discussing within himself the best remedies for colic.

Martin and the young ladies were excellent friends already, and compared recollections of their childish days, to their mutual liveliness and entertainment. Miss Mercy laughed immensely at everything that was said; and sometimes, after glancing at the happy face of Mr Pinch, was seized with such fits of mirth as brought her to the very confines of hysterics. But for these bursts of gaiety, her sister, in her better sense, reproved her; observing, in an angry whisper, that it was far from being a theme for jest; and that she had no patience with the creature; though it generally ended in her laughing too - but much more moderately - and saying that indeed it was a little too ridiculous and intolerable to be serious about.

At length it became high time to remember the first clause of that great discovery made by the ancient philosopher, for securing health, riches, and wisdom; the infallibility of which has been for generations verified by the enormous fortunes constantly amassed by chimney-sweepers and other persons who get up early and go to bed betimes. The young ladies accordingly rose, and having taken leave of Mr Chuzzlewit with much sweetness, and of their father with much duty and of Mr Pinch with much condescension, retired to their bower. Mr Pecksniff insisted on accompanying his young friend upstairs for personal superintendence of his comforts; and taking him by the arm, conducted him once more to his bedroom, followed by Mr Pinch, who bore the light.

'Mr Pinch,' said Pecksniff, seating himself with folded arms on one of the spare beds. 'I don't see any snuffers in that candlestick. Will you oblige me by going down, and asking for a pair?'

Mr Pinch, only too happy to be useful, went off directly.

'You will excuse Thomas Pinch's want of polish, Martin,' said Mr Pecksniff, with a smile of patronage and pity, as soon as he had left the room. 'He means well.'

'He is a very good fellow, sir.'

'Oh, yes,' said Mr Pecksniff. 'Yes. Thomas Pinch means well. He is very grateful. I have never regretted having befriended Thomas Pinch.'

'I should think you never would, sir.'

'No,' said Mr Pecksniff. 'No. I hope not. Poor fellow, he is always disposed to do his best; but he is not gifted. You will make him useful to you, Martin, if you please. If Thomas has a fault, it is that he is sometimes a little apt to forget his position. But that is soon checked. Worthy soul! You will find him easy to manage. Good night!'

'Good night, sir.'

By this time Mr Pinch had returned with the snuffers.

'And good night to YOU, Mr Pinch,' said Pecksniff. 'And sound sleep to you both. Bless you! Bless you!'

Invoking this benediction on the heads of his young friends with great fervour, he withdrew to his own room; while they, being tired, soon fell asleep. If Martin dreamed at all, some clue to the matter of his visions may possibly be gathered from the after-pages of this history. Those of Thomas Pinch were all of holidays, church organs, and seraphic Pecksniffs. It was some time before Mr Pecksniff dreamed at all, or even sought his pillow, as he sat for full two hours before the fire in his own chamber, looking at the coals and thinking deeply. But he, too, slept and dreamed at last. Thus in the quiet hours of the night, one house shuts in as many incoherent and incongruous fancies as a madman's head.