Chapter XII

Will Be Seen In The Long Run, If Not In The Short One, To Concern Mr Pinch And Others, Nearly. Mr Pecksniff Asserts The Dignity Of Outraged Virtue. Young Martin Chuzzlewit Forms A Desperate Resolution

Mr Pinch and Martin, little dreaming of the stormy weather that impended, made themselves very comfortable in the Pecksniffian halls, and improved their friendship daily. Martin's facility, both of invention and execution, being remarkable, the grammar-school proceeded with great vigour; and Tom repeatedly declared, that if there were anything like certainty in human affairs, or impartiality in human judges, a design so new and full of merit could not fail to carry off the first prize when the time of competition arrived. Without being quite so sanguine himself, Martin had his hopeful anticipations too; and they served to make him brisk and eager at his task.

'If I should turn out a great architect, Tom,' said the new pupil one day, as he stood at a little distance from his drawing, and eyed it with much complacency, 'I'll tell you what should be one of the things I'd build.'

'Aye!' cried Tom. 'What?'

'Why, your fortune.'

'No!' said Tom Pinch, quite as much delighted as if the thing were done. 'Would you though? How kind of you to say so.'

'I'd build it up, Tom,' returned Martin, 'on such a strong foundation, that it should last your life - aye, and your children's lives too, and their children's after them. I'd be your patron, Tom. I'd take you under my protection. Let me see the man who should give the cold shoulder to anybody I chose to protect and patronise, if I were at the top of the tree, Tom!'

'Now, I don't think,' said Mr Pinch, 'upon my word, that I was ever more gratified than by this. I really don't.'

'Oh! I mean what I say,' retorted Martin, with a manner as free and easy in its condescension to, not to say in its compassion for, the other, as if he were already First Architect in ordinary to all the Crowned Heads in Europe. 'I'd do it. I'd provide for you.'

'I am afraid,' said Tom, shaking his head, 'that I should be a mighty awkward person to provide for.'

'Pooh, pooh!' rejoined Martin. 'Never mind that. If I took it in my head to say, 'Pinch is a clever fellow; I approve of Pinch;' I should like to know the man who would venture to put himself in opposition to me. Besides, confound it, Tom, you could be useful to me in a hundred ways.'

'If I were not useful in one or two, it shouldn't be for want of trying,' said Tom.

'For instance,' pursued Martin, after a short reflection, 'you'd be a capital fellow, now, to see that my ideas were properly carried out; and to overlook the works in their progress before they were sufficiently advanced to be very interesting to ME; and to take all that sort of plain sailing. Then you'd be a splendid fellow to show people over my studio, and to talk about Art to 'em, when I couldn't be bored myself, and all that kind of thing. For it would be devilish creditable, Tom (I'm quite in earnest, I give you my word), to have a man of your information about one, instead of some ordinary blockhead. Oh, I'd take care of you. You'd be useful, rely upon it!'

To say that Tom had no idea of playing first fiddle in any social orchestra, but was always quite satisfied to be set down for the hundred and fiftieth violin in the band, or thereabouts, is to express his modesty in very inadequate terms. He was much delighted, therefore, by these observations.

'I should be married to her then, Tom, of course,' said Martin.

What was that which checked Tom Pinch so suddenly, in the high flow of his gladness; bringing the blood into his honest cheeks, and a remorseful feeling to his honest heart, as if he were unworthy of his friend's regard?

'I should be married to her then,' said Martin, looking with a smile towards the light; 'and we should have, I hope, children about us. They'd be very fond of you, Tom.'

But not a word said Mr Pinch. The words he would have uttered died upon his lips, and found a life more spiritual in self-denying thoughts. 'All the children hereabouts are fond of you, Tom, and mine would be, of course,' pursued Martin. 'Perhaps I might name one of 'em after you. Tom, eh? Well, I don't know. Tom's not a bad name. Thomas Pinch Chuzzlewit. T. P. C. on his pinafores - no objection to that, I should say?'

Tom cleared his throat, and smiled.

'SHE would like you, Tom, I know,' said Martin.

'Aye!' cried Tom Pinch, faintly.

'I can tell exactly what she would think of you,' said Martin leaning his chin upon his hand, and looking through the window-glass as if he read there what he said; 'I know her so well. She would smile, Tom, often at first when you spoke to her, or when she looked at you - merrily too - but you wouldn't mind that. A brighter smile you never saw.'

'No, no,' said Tom. 'I wouldn't mind that.'

'She would be as tender with you, Tom,' said Martin, 'as if you were a child yourself. So you are almost, in some things, an't you, Tom?'

Mr Pinch nodded his entire assent.

'She would always be kind and good-humoured, and glad to see you,' said Martin; 'and when she found out exactly what sort of fellow you were (which she'd do very soon), she would pretend to give you little commissions to execute, and to ask little services of you, which she knew you were burning to render; so that when she really pleased you most, she would try to make you think you most pleased her. She would take to you uncommonly, Tom; and would understand you far more delicately than I ever shall; and would often say, I know, that you were a harmless, gentle, well-intentioned, good fellow.'

How silent Tom Pinch was!

'In honour of old time,' said Martin, 'and of her having heard you play the organ in this damp little church down here - for nothing too - we will have one in the house. I shall build an architectural music-room on a plan of my own, and it'll look rather knowing in a recess at one end. There you shall play away, Tom, till you tire yourself; and, as you like to do so in the dark, it shall BE dark; and many's the summer evening she and I will sit and listen to you, Tom; be sure of that!'

It may have required a stronger effort on Tom Pinch's part to leave the seat on which he sat, and shake his friend by both hands, with nothing but serenity and grateful feeling painted on his face; it may have required a stronger effort to perform this simple act with a pure heart, than to achieve many and many a deed to which the doubtful trumpet blown by Fame has lustily resounded. Doubtful, because from its long hovering over scenes of violence, the smoke and steam of death have clogged the keys of that brave instrument; and it is not always that its notes are either true or tuneful.

'It's a proof of the kindness of human nature,' said Tom, characteristically putting himself quite out of sight in the matter, 'that

everybody who comes here, as you have done, is more considerate and affectionate to me than I should have any right to hope, if I were the most sanguine creature in the world; or should have any power to express, if I were the most eloquent. It really overpowers me. But trust me,' said Tom, 'that I am not ungrateful - that I never forget - and that if I can ever prove the truth of my words to you, I will.'

'That's all right,' observed Martin, leaning back in his chair with a hand in each pocket, and yawning drearily. 'Very fine talking, Tom; but I'm at Pecksniff's, I remember, and perhaps a mile or so out of the high-road to fortune just at this minute. So you've heard again this morning from what's his name, eh?'

'Who may that be?' asked Tom, seeming to enter a mild protest on behalf of the dignity of an absent person.

'YOU know. What is it? Northkey.'

'Westlock,' rejoined Tom, in rather a louder tone than usual.

'Ah! to be sure,' said Martin, 'Westlock. I knew it was something connected with a point of the compass and a door. Well! and what says Westlock?'

'Oh! he has come into his property,' answered Tom, nodding his head, and smiling.

'He's a lucky dog,' said Martin. 'I wish it were mine instead. Is that all the mystery you were to tell me?'

'No,' said Tom; 'not all.'

'What's the rest?' asked Martin.

'For the matter of that,' said Tom, 'it's no mystery, and you won't think much of it; but it's very pleasant to me. John always used to say when he was here, 'Mark my words, Pinch. When my father's executors cash up' - he used strange expressions now and then, but that was his way.'

'Cash-up's a very good expression,' observed Martin, 'when other people don't apply it to you. Well! - What a slow fellow you are, Pinch!'

'Yes, I am I know,' said Tom; 'but you'll make me nervous if you tell me so. I'm afraid you have put me out a little now, for I forget what I was going to say.'

'When John's father's executors cashed up,' said Martin impatiently.

'Oh yes, to be sure,' cried Tom; 'yes. 'Then,' says John, 'I'll give you a dinner, Pinch, and come down to Salisbury on purpose.' Now, when John wrote the other day - the morning Pecksniff left, you know - he said his business was on the point of being immediately settled, and as he was to receive his money directly, when could I meet him at Salisbury? I wrote and said, any day this week; and I told him besides, that there was a new pupil here, and what a fine fellow you were, and what friends we had become. Upon which John writes back this letter' - Tom produced it - 'fixes to-morrow; sends his compliments to you; and begs that we three may have the pleasure of dining together; not at the house where you and I were, either; but at the very first hotel in the town. Read what he says.'

'Very well,' said Martin, glancing over it with his customary coolness; 'much obliged to him. I'm agreeable.'

Tom could have wished him to be a little more astonished, a little more pleased, or in some form or other a little more interested in such a great event. But he was perfectly self-possessed; and falling into his favourite solace of whistling, took another turn at the grammar-school, as if nothing at all had happened.

Mr Pecksniff's horse being regarded in the light of a sacred animal, only to be driven by him, the chief priest of that temple, or by some person distinctly nominated for the time being to that high office by himself, the two young men agreed to walk to Salisbury; and so, when the time came, they set off on foot; which was, after all, a better mode of travelling than in the gig, as the weather was very cold and very dry.

Better! A rare strong, hearty, healthy walk - four statute miles an hour - preferable to that rumbling, tumbling, jolting, shaking, scraping, creaking, villanous old gig? Why, the two things will not admit of comparison. It is an insult to the walk, to set them side by side. Where is an instance of a gig having ever circulated a man's blood, unless when, putting him in danger of his neck, it awakened in his veins and in his ears, and all along his spine, a tingling heat, much more peculiar than agreeable? When did a gig ever sharpen anybody's wits and energies, unless it was when the horse bolted, and, crashing madly down a steep hill with a stone wall at the bottom, his desperate circumstances suggested to the only gentleman left inside, some novel and unheard-of mode of dropping out behind? Better than the gig!

The air was cold, Tom; so it was, there was no denying it; but would it have been more genial in the gig? The blacksmith's fire burned very bright, and leaped up high, as though it wanted men to warm; but would it have been less tempting, looked at from the clammy cushions of a gig? The wind blew keenly, nipping the features of the hardy wight

who fought his way along; blinding him with his own hair if he had enough to it, and wintry dust if he hadn't; stopping his breath as though he had been soused in a cold bath; tearing aside his wrappings-up, and whistling in the very marrow of his bones; but it would have done all this a hundred times more fiercely to a man in a gig, wouldn't it? A fig for gigs!

Better than the gig! When were travellers by wheels and hoofs seen with such red-hot cheeks as those? when were they so good-humouredly and merrily bloused? when did their laughter ring upon the air, as they turned them round, what time the stronger gusts came sweeping up; and, facing round again as they passed by, dashed on, in such a glow of ruddy health as nothing could keep pace with, but the high spirits it engendered? Better than the gig! Why, here is a man in a gig coming the same way now. Look at him as he passes his whip into his left hand, chafes his numbed right fingers on his granite leg, and beats those marble toes of his upon the foot-board. Ha, ha, ha! Who would exchange this rapid hurry of the blood for yonder stagnant misery, though its pace were twenty miles for one?

Better than the gig! No man in a gig could have such interest in the milestones. No man in a gig could see, or feel, or think, like merry users of their legs. How, as the wind sweeps on, upon these breezy downs, it tracks its flight in darkening ripples on the grass, and smoothest shadows on the hills! Look round and round upon this bare bleak plain, and see even here, upon a winter's day, how beautiful the shadows are! Alas! it is the nature of their kind to be so. The loveliest things in life, Tom, are but shadows; and they come and go, and change and fade away, as rapidly as these!

Another mile, and then begins a fall of snow, making the crow, who skims away so close above the ground to shirk the wind, a blot of ink upon the landscape. But though it drives and drifts against them as they walk, stiffening on their skirts, and freezing in the lashes of their eyes, they wouldn't have it fall more sparingly, no, not so much as by a single flake, although they had to go a score of miles. And, lo! the towers of the Old Cathedral rise before them, even now! and by-and-bye they come into the sheltered streets, made strangely silent by their white carpet; and so to the Inn for which they are bound; where they present such flushed and burning faces to the cold waiter, and are so brimful of vigour, that he almost feels assaulted by their presence; and, having nothing to oppose to the attack (being fresh, or rather stale, from the blazing fire in the coffee-room), is quite put out of his pale countenance.

A famous Inn! the hall a very grove of dead game, and dangling joints of mutton; and in one corner an illustrious larder, with glass doors, developing cold fowls and noble joints, and tarts wherein the

raspberry jam coyly withdrew itself, as such a precious creature should, behind a lattice work of pastry. And behold, on the first floor, at the court-end of the house, in a room with all the window-curtains drawn, a fire piled half-way up the chimney, plates warming before it, wax candles gleaming everywhere, and a table spread for three, with silver and glass enough for thirty - John Westlock; not the old John of Pecksniff's, but a proper gentleman; looking another and a grander person, with the consciousness of being his own master and having money in the bank; and yet in some respects the old John too, for he seized Tom Pinch by both his hands the instant he appeared, and fairly hugged him, in his cordial welcome.

'And this,' said John, 'is Mr Chuzzlewit. I am very glad to see him!' - John had an off-hand manner of his own; so they shook hands warmly, and were friends in no time.

'Stand off a moment, Tom,' cried the old pupil, laying one hand on each of Mr Pinch's shoulders, and holding him out at arm's length. 'Let me look at you! Just the same! Not a bit changed!'

'Why, it's not so very long ago, you know,' said Tom Pinch, 'after all.'

'It seems an age to me,' cried John, 'and so it ought to seem to you, you dog.' And then he pushed Tom down into the easiest chair, and clapped him on the back so heartily, and so like his old self in their old bedroom at old Pecksniff's that it was a toss-up with Tom Pinch whether he should laugh or cry. Laughter won it; and they all three laughed together.

'I have ordered everything for dinner, that we used to say we'd have, Tom,' observed John Westlock.

'No!' said Tom Pinch. 'Have you?'

'Everything. Don't laugh, if you can help it, before the waiters. I couldn't when I was ordering it. It's like a dream.'

John was wrong there, because nobody ever dreamed such soup as was put upon the table directly afterwards; or such fish; or such side-dishes; or such a top and bottom; or such a course of birds and sweets; or in short anything approaching the reality of that entertainment at ten-and-sixpence a head, exclusive of wines. As to THEM, the man who can dream such iced champagne, such claret, port, or sherry, had better go to bed and stop there.

But perhaps the finest feature of the banquet was, that nobody was half so much amazed by everything as John himself, who in his high delight was constantly bursting into fits of laughter, and then

endeavouring to appear preternaturally solemn, lest the waiters should conceive he wasn't used to it. Some of the things they brought him to carve, were such outrageous practical jokes, though, that it was impossible to stand it; and when Tom Pinch insisted, in spite of the deferential advice of an attendant, not only on breaking down the outer wall of a raised pie with a tablespoon, but on trying to eat it afterwards, John lost all dignity, and sat behind the gorgeous dish-cover at the head of the table, roaring to that extent that he was audible in the kitchen. Nor had he the least objection to laugh at himself, as he demonstrated when they had all three gathered round the fire and the dessert was on the table; at which period the head waiter inquired with respectful solicitude whether that port, being a light and tawny wine, was suited to his taste, or whether he would wish to try a fruity port with greater body. To this John gravely answered that he was well satisfied with what he had, which he esteemed, as one might say, a pretty tidy vintage; for which the waiter thanked him and withdrew. And then John told his friends, with a broad grin, that he supposed it was all right, but he didn't know; and went off into a perfect shout.

They were very merry and full of enjoyment the whole time, but not the least pleasant part of the festival was when they all three sat about the fire, cracking nuts, drinking wine and talking cheerfully. It happened that Tom Pinch had a word to say to his friend the organist's assistant, and so deserted his warm corner for a few minutes at this season, lest it should grow too late; leaving the other two young men together.

They drank his health in his absence, of course; and John Westlock took that opportunity of saying, that he had never had even a peevish word with Tom during the whole term of their residence in Mr Pecksniff's house. This naturally led him to dwell upon Tom's character, and to hint that Mr Pecksniff understood it pretty well. He only hinted this, and very distantly; knowing that it pained Tom Pinch to have that gentleman disparaged, and thinking it would be as well to leave the new pupil to his own discoveries.

'Yes,' said Martin. 'It's impossible to like Pinch better than I do, or to do greater justice to his good qualities. He is the most willing fellow I ever saw.'

'He's rather too willing,' observed John, who was quick in observation. 'It's quite a fault in him.'

'So it is,' said Martin. 'Very true. There was a fellow only a week or so ago - a Mr Tigg - who borrowed all the money he had, on a promise to repay it in a few days. It was but half a sovereign, to be sure; but it's well it was no more, for he'll never see it again.'

'Poor fellow!' said John, who had been very attentive to these few words. 'Perhaps you have not had an opportunity of observing that, in his own pecuniary transactions, Tom's proud.'

'You don't say so! No, I haven't. What do you mean? Won't he borrow?'

John Westlock shook his head.

'That's very odd,' said Martin, setting down his empty glass. 'He's a strange compound, to be sure.'

'As to receiving money as a gift,' resumed John Westlock; 'I think he'd die first.'

'He's made up of simplicity,' said Martin. 'Help yourself.'

'You, however,' pursued John, filling his own glass, and looking at his companion with some curiosity, 'who are older than the majority of Mr Pecksniff's assistants, and have evidently had much more experience, understand him, I have no doubt, and see how liable he is to be imposed upon.'

'Certainly,' said Martin, stretching out his legs, and holding his wine between his eye and the light. 'Mr Pecksniff knows that too. So do his daughters. Eh?'

John Westlock smiled, but made no answer.

'By the bye,' said Martin, 'that reminds me. What's your opinion of Pecksniff? How did he use you? What do you think of him now? - Coolly, you know, when it's all over?'

'Ask Pinch,' returned the old pupil. 'He knows what my sentiments used to be upon the subject. They are not changed, I assure you.'

'No, no,' said Martin, 'I'd rather have them from you.'

'But Pinch says they are unjust,' urged John with a smile.

'Oh! well! Then I know what course they take beforehand,' said Martin; 'and, therefore, you can have no delicacy in speaking plainly. Don't mind me, I beg. I don't like him I tell you frankly. I am with him because it happens from particular circumstances to suit my convenience. I have some ability, I believe, in that way; and the obligation, if any, will most likely be on his side and not mine. At the lowest mark, the balance will be even, and there'll be no obligation at all. So you may talk to me, as if I had no connection with him.'

'If you press me to give my opinion - ' returned John Westlock.

'Yes, I do,' said Martin. 'You'll oblige me.'

' - I should say,' resumed the other, 'that he is the most consummate scoundrel on the face of the earth.'

'Oh!' said Martin, as coolly as ever. 'That's rather strong.'

'Not stronger than he deserves,' said John; 'and if he called upon me to express my opinion of him to his face, I would do so in the very same terms, without the least qualification. His treatment of Pinch is in itself enough to justify them; but when I look back upon the five years I passed in that house, and remember the hyprocrisy, the knavery, the meannesses, the false pretences, the lip service of that fellow, and his trading in saintly semblances for the very worst realities; when I remember how often I was the witness of all this and how often I was made a kind of party to it, by the fact of being there, with him for my teacher; I swear to you that I almost despise myself.'

Martin drained his glass, and looked at the fire.

'I don't mean to say that is a right feeling,' pursued John Westlock 'because it was no fault of mine; and I can quite understand - you for instance, fully appreciating him, and yet being forced by circumstances to remain there. I tell you simply what my feeling is; and even now, when, as you say, it's all over; and when I have the satisfaction of knowing that he always hated me, and we always quarrelled, and I always told him my mind; even now, I feel sorry that I didn't yield to an impulse I often had, as a boy, of running away from him and going abroad.'

'Why abroad?' asked Martin, turning his eyes upon the speaker.

'In search,' replied John Westlock, shrugging his shoulders, 'of the livelihood I couldn't have earned at home. There would have been something spirited in that. But, come! Fill your glass, and let us forget him.'

'As soon as you please,' said Martin. 'In reference to myself and my connection with him, I have only to repeat what I said before. I have taken my own way with him so far, and shall continue to do so, even more than ever; for the fact is, to tell you the truth, that I believe he looks to me to supply his defects, and couldn't afford to lose me. I had a notion of that in first going there. Your health!'

'Thank you,' returned young Westlock. 'Yours. And may the new pupil turn out as well as you can desire!'

'What new pupil?'

'The fortunate youth, born under an auspicious star,' returned John Westlock, laughing; 'whose parents, or guardians, are destined to be hooked by the advertisement. What! Don't you know that he has advertised again?'

'No.'

'Oh, yes. I read it just before dinner in the old newspaper. I know it to be his; having some reason to remember the style. Hush! Here's Pinch. Strange, is it not, that the more he likes Pecksniff (if he can like him better than he does), the greater reason one has to like HIM? Not a word more, or we shall spoil his whole enjoyment.'

Tom entered as the words were spoken, with a radiant smile upon his face; and rubbing his hands, more from a sense of delight than because he was cold (for he had been running fast), sat down in his warm corner again, and was as happy as only Tom Pinch could be. There is no other simile that will express his state of mind.

'And so,' he said, when he had gazed at his friend for some time in silent pleasure, 'so you really are a gentleman at last, John. Well, to be sure!'

'Trying to be, Tom; trying to be,' he rejoined good-humouredly. 'There is no saying what I may turn out, in time.'

'I suppose you wouldn't carry your own box to the mail now?' said Tom Pinch, smiling; 'although you lost it altogether by not taking it.'

'Wouldn't I?' retorted John. 'That's all you know about it, Pinch. It must be a very heavy box that I wouldn't carry to get away from Pecksniff's, Tom.'

'There!' cried Pinch, turning to Martin, 'I told you so. The great fault in his character is his injustice to Pecksniff. You mustn't mind a word he says on that subject. His prejudice is most extraordinary.'

'The absence of anything like prejudice on Tom's part, you know,' said John Westlock, laughing heartily, as he laid his hand on Mr Pinch's shoulder, 'is perfectly wonderful. If one man ever had a profound knowledge of another, and saw him in a true light, and in his own proper colours, Tom has that knowledge of Mr Pecksniff.'

'Why, of course I have,' cried Tom. 'That's exactly what I have so often said to you. If you knew him as well as I do - John, I'd give almost any money to bring that about - you'd admire, respect, and reverence him.

You couldn't help it. Oh, how you wounded his feelings when you went away!'

'If I had known whereabout his feelings lay,' retorted young Westlock, 'I'd have done my best, Tom, with that end in view, you may depend upon it. But as I couldn't wound him in what he has not, and in what he knows nothing of, except in his ability to probe them to the quick in other people, I am afraid I can lay no claim to your compliment.'

Mr Pinch, being unwilling to protract a discussion which might possibly corrupt Martin, forbore to say anything in reply to this speech; but John Westlock, whom nothing short of an iron gag would have silenced when Mr Pecksniff's merits were once in question, continued notwithstanding.

'HIS feelings! Oh, he's a tender-hearted man. HIS feelings! Oh, he's a considerate, conscientious, self-examining, moral vagabond, he is! HIS feelings! Oh! - what's the matter, Tom?'

Mr Pinch was by this time erect upon the hearth-rug, buttoning his coat with great energy.

'I can't bear it,' said Tom, shaking his head. 'No. I really cannot. You must excuse me, John. I have a great esteem and friendship for you; I love you very much; and have been perfectly charmed and overjoyed to-day, to find you just the same as ever; but I cannot listen to this.'

'Why, it's my old way, Tom; and you say yourself that you are glad to find me unchanged.'

'Not in this respect,' said Tom Pinch. 'You must excuse me, John. I cannot, really; I will not. It's very wrong; you should be more guarded in your expressions. It was bad enough when you and I used to be alone together, but under existing circumstances, I can't endure it, really. No. I cannot, indeed.'

'You are quite right!' exclaimed the other, exchanging looks with Martin. 'and I am quite wrong, Tom, I don't know how the deuce we fell on this unlucky theme. I beg your pardon with all my heart.'

'You have a free and manly temper, I know,' said Pinch; 'and therefore, your being so ungenerous in this one solitary instance, only grieves me the more. It's not my pardon you have to ask, John. You have done ME nothing but kindnesses.'

'Well! Pecksniff's pardon then,' said young Westlock. 'Anything Tom, or anybody. Pecksniff's pardon - will that do? Here! let us drink Pecksniff's health!'

'Thank you,' cried Tom, shaking hands with him eagerly, and filling a bumper. 'Thank you; I'll drink it with all my heart, John. Mr Pecksniff's health, and prosperity to him!'

John Westlock echoed the sentiment, or nearly so; for he drank Mr Pecksniff's health, and Something to him - but what, was not quite audible. The general unanimity being then completely restored, they drew their chairs closer round the fire, and conversed in perfect harmony and enjoyment until bed-time.

No slight circumstance, perhaps, could have better illustrated the difference of character between John Westlock and Martin Chuzzlewit, than the manner in which each of the young men contemplated Tom Pinch, after the little rupture just described. There was a certain amount of jocularity in the looks of both, no doubt, but there all resemblance ceased. The old pupil could not do enough to show Tom how cordially he felt towards him, and his friendly regard seemed of a graver and more thoughtful kind than before. The new one, on the other hand, had no impulse but to laugh at the recollection of Tom's extreme absurdity; and mingled with his amusement there was something slighting and contemptuous, indicative, as it appeared, of his opinion that Mr Pinch was much too far gone in simplicity to be admitted as the friend, on serious and equal terms, of any rational man.

John Westlock, who did nothing by halves, if he could help it, had provided beds for his two guests in the hotel; and after a very happy evening, they retired. Mr Pinch was sitting on the side of his bed with his cravat and shoes off, ruminating on the manifold good qualities of his old friend, when he was interrupted by a knock at his chamber door, and the voice of John himself.

'You're not asleep yet, are you, Tom?'

'Bless you, no! not I. I was thinking of you,' replied Tom, opening the door. 'Come in.'

'I am not going to detail you,' said John; 'but I have forgotten all the evening a little commission I took upon myself; and I am afraid I may forget it again, if I fail to discharge it at once. You know a Mr Tigg, Tom, I believe?'

'Tigg!' cried Tom. 'Tigg! The gentleman who borrowed some money of me?'

'Exactly,' said John Westlock. 'He begged me to present his compliments, and to return it with many thanks. Here it is. I suppose it's a good one, but he is rather a doubtful kind of customer, Tom.'

Mr Pinch received the little piece of gold with a face whose brightness might have shamed the metal; and said he had no fear about that. He was glad, he added, to find Mr Tigg so prompt and honourable in his dealings; very glad.

'Why, to tell you the truth, Tom,' replied his friend, 'he is not always so. If you'll take my advice, you'll avoid him as much as you can, in the event of your encountering him again. And by no means, Tom - pray bear this in mind, for I am very serious - by no means lend him money any more.'

'Aye, aye!' said Tom, with his eyes wide open.

'He is very far from being a reputable acquaintance,' returned young Westlock; 'and the more you let him know you think so, the better for you, Tom.'

'I say, John,' quoth Mr Pinch, as his countenance fell, and he shook his head in a dejected manner. 'I hope you are not getting into bad company.'

'No, no,' he replied laughing. 'Don't be uneasy on that score.'

'Oh, but I AM uneasy,' said Tom Pinch; 'I can't help it, when I hear you talking in that way. If Mr Tigg is what you describe him to be, you have no business to know him, John. You may laugh, but I don't consider it by any means a laughing matter, I assure you.'

'No, no,' returned his friend, composing his features. 'Quite right. It is not, certainly.'

'You know, John,' said Mr Pinch, 'your very good nature and kindness of heart make you thoughtless, and you can't be too careful on such a point as this. Upon my word, if I thought you were falling among bad companions, I should be quite wretched, for I know how difficult you would find it to shake them off. I would much rather have lost this money, John, than I would have had it back again on such terms.'

'I tell you, my dear good old fellow,' cried his friend, shaking him to and fro with both hands, and smiling at him with a cheerful, open countenance, that would have carried conviction to a mind much more suspicious than Tom's; 'I tell you there is no danger.'

'Well!' cried Tom, 'I am glad to hear it; I am overjoyed to hear it. I am sure there is not, when you say so in that manner. You won't take it ill, John, that I said what I did just now!'

'Ill!' said the other, giving his hand a hearty squeeze; 'why what do you think I am made of? Mr Tigg and I are not on such an intimate footing that you need be at all uneasy, I give you my solemn assurance of that, Tom. You are quite comfortable now?'

'Quite,' said Tom.

'Then once more, good night!'

'Good night!' cried Tom; 'and such pleasant dreams to you as should attend the sleep of the best fellow in the world!'

' - Except Pecksniff,' said his friend, stopping at the door for a moment, and looking gayly back.

'Except Pecksniff,' answered Tom, with great gravity; 'of course.'

And thus they parted for the night; John Westlock full of light-heartedness and good humour, and poor Tom Pinch quite satisfied; though still, as he turned over on his side in bed, he muttered to himself, 'I really do wish, for all that, though, that he wasn't acquainted with Mr Tigg.'

They breakfasted together very early next morning, for the two young men desired to get back again in good season; and John Westlock was to return to London by the coach that day. As he had some hours to spare, he bore them company for three or four miles on their walk, and only parted from them at last in sheer necessity. The parting was an unusually hearty one, not only as between him and Tom Pinch, but on the side of Martin also, who had found in the old pupil a very different sort of person from the milksop he had prepared himself to expect.

Young Westlock stopped upon a rising ground, when he had gone a little distance, and looked back. They were walking at a brisk pace, and Tom appeared to be talking earnestly. Martin had taken off his greatcoat, the wind being now behind them, and carried it upon his arm. As he looked, he saw Tom relieve him of it, after a faint resistance, and, throwing it upon his own, encumber himself with the weight of both. This trivial incident impressed the old pupil mightily, for he stood there, gazing after them, until they were hidden from his view; when he shook his head, as if he were troubled by some uneasy reflection, and thoughtfully retraced his steps to Salisbury.

In the meantime, Martin and Tom pursued their way, until they halted, safe and sound, at Mr Pecksniff's house, where a brief epistle from that good gentleman to Mr Pinch announced the family's return by that night's coach. As it would pass the corner of the lane at about

six o'clock in the morning, Mr Pecksniff requested that the gig might be in waiting at the finger-post about that time, together with a cart for the luggage. And to the end that he might be received with the greater honour, the young men agreed to rise early, and be upon the spot themselves.

It was the least cheerful day they had yet passed together. Martin was out of spirits and out of humour, and took every opportunity of comparing his condition and prospects with those of young Westlock; much to his own disadvantage always. This mood of his depressed Tom; and neither that morning's parting, nor yesterday's dinner, helped to mend the matter. So the hours dragged on heavily enough; and they were glad to go to bed early.

They were not quite so glad to get up again at half-past four o'clock, in all the shivering discomfort of a dark winter's morning; but they turned out punctually, and were at the finger-post full half-an-hour before the appointed time. It was not by any means a lively morning, for the sky was black and cloudy, and it rained hard; but Martin said there was some satisfaction in seeing that brute of a horse (by this, he meant Mr Pecksniff's Arab steed) getting very wet; and that he rejoiced, on his account, that it rained so fast. From this it may be inferred that Martin's spirits had not improved, as indeed they had not; for while he and Mr Pinch stood waiting under a hedge, looking at the rain, the gig, the cart, and its reeking driver, he did nothing but grumble; and, but that it is indispensable to any dispute that there should be two parties to it, he would certainly have picked a quarrel with Tom.

At length the noise of wheels was faintly audible in the distance and presently the coach came splashing through the mud and mire with one miserable outside passenger crouching down among wet straw, under a saturated umbrella; and the coachman, guard, and horses, in a fellowship of dripping wretchedness. Immediately on its stopping, Mr Pecksniff let down the window-glass and hailed Tom Pinch.

'Dear me, Mr Pinch! Is it possible that you are out upon this very inclement morning?'

'Yes, sir,' cried Tom, advancing eagerly, 'Mr Chuzzlewit and I, sir.'

'Oh!' said Mr Pecksniff, looking not so much at Martin as at the spot on which he stood. 'Oh! Indeed. Do me the favour to see to the trunks, if you please, Mr Pinch.'

Then Mr Pecksniff descended, and helped his daughters to alight; but neighter he nor the young ladies took the slightest notice of Martin, who had advanced to offer his assistance, but was repulsed by Mr

Pecksniff's standing immediately before his person, with his back towards him. In the same manner, and in profound silence, Mr Pecksniff handed his daughters into the gig; and following himself and taking the reins, drove off home.

Lost in astonishment, Martin stood staring at the coach, and when the coach had driven away, at Mr Pinch, and the luggage, until the cart moved off too; when he said to Tom:

'Now will you have the goodness to tell me what THIS portends?'

'What?' asked Tom.

'This fellow's behaviour. Mr Pecksniff's, I mean. You saw it?'

'No. Indeed I did not,' cried Tom. 'I was busy with the trunks.'

'It is no matter,' said Martin. 'Come! Let us make haste back!' And without another word started off at such a pace, that Tom had some difficulty in keeping up with him.

He had no care where he went, but walked through little heaps of mud and little pools of water with the utmost indifference; looking straight before him, and sometimes laughing in a strange manner within himself. Tom felt that anything he could say would only render him the more obstinate, and therefore trusted to Mr Pecksniff's manner when they reached the house, to remove the mistaken impression under which he felt convinced so great a favourite as the new pupil must unquestionably be labouring. But he was not a little amazed himself, when they did reach it, and entered the parlour where Mr Pecksniff was sitting alone before the fire, drinking some hot tea, to find that instead of taking favourable notice of his relative and keeping him, Mr Pinch, in the background, he did exactly the reverse, and was so lavish in his attentions to Tom, that Tom was thoroughly confounded.

'Take some tea, Mr Pinch - take some tea,' said Pecksniff, stirring the fire. 'You must be very cold and damp. Pray take some tea, and come into a warm place, Mr Pinch.'

Tom saw that Martin looked at Mr Pecksniff as though he could have easily found it in his heart to give HIM an invitation to a very warm place; but he was quite silent, and standing opposite that gentleman at the table, regarded him attentively.

'Take a chair, Pinch,' said Pecksniff. 'Take a chair, if you please. How have things gone on in our absence, Mr Pinch?'

'You - you will be very much pleased with the grammar-school, sir,' said Tom. 'It's nearly finished.'

'If you will have the goodness, Mr Pinch,' said Pecksniff, waving his hand and smiling, 'we will not discuss anything connected with that question at present. What have YOU been doing, Thomas, humph?'

Mr Pinch looked from master to pupil, and from pupil to master, and was so perplexed and dismayed that he wanted presence of mind to answer the question. In this awkward interval, Mr Pecksniff (who was perfectly conscious of Martin's gaze, though he had never once glanced towards him) poked the fire very much, and when he couldn't do that any more, drank tea assiduously.

'Now, Mr Pecksniff,' said Martin at last, in a very quiet voice, 'if you have sufficiently refreshed and recovered yourself, I shall be glad to hear what you mean by this treatment of me.'

'And what,' said Mr Pecksniff, turning his eyes on Tom Pinch, even more placidly and gently than before, 'what have YOU been doing, Thomas, humph?'

When he had repeated this inquiry, he looked round the walls of the room as if he were curious to see whether any nails had been left there by accident in former times.

Tom was almost at his wit's end what to say between the two, and had already made a gesture as if he would call Mr Pecksniff's attention to the gentleman who had last addressed him, when Martin saved him further trouble, by doing so himself.

'Mr Pecksniff,' he said, softly rapping the table twice or thrice, and moving a step or two nearer, so that he could have touched him with his hand; 'you heard what I said just now. Do me the favour to reply, if you please. I ask you' - he raised his voice a little here - 'what you mean by this?'

'I will talk to you, sir,' said Mr Pecksniff in a severe voice, as he looked at him for the first time, 'presently.'

'You are very obliging,' returned Martin; 'presently will not do. I must trouble you to talk to me at once.'

Mr Pecksniff made a feint of being deeply interested in his pocketbook, but it shook in his hands; he trembled so.

'Now,' retorted Martin, rapping the table again. 'Now. Presently will not do. Now!'

'Do you threaten me, sir?' cried Mr Pecksniff.

Martin looked at him, and made no answer; but a curious observer might have detected an ominous twitching at his mouth, and perhaps an involuntary attraction of his right hand in the direction of Mr Pecksniff's cravat.

'I lament to be obliged to say, sir,' resumed Mr Pecksniff, 'that it would be quite in keeping with your character if you did threaten me. You have deceived me. You have imposed upon a nature which you knew to be confiding and unsuspicious. You have obtained admission, sir,' said Mr Pecksniff, rising, 'to this house, on perverted statements and on false pretences.'

'Go on,' said Martin, with a scornful smile. 'I understand you now. What more?'

'Thus much more, sir,' cried Mr Pecksniff, trembling from head to foot, and trying to rub his hands, as though he were only cold. 'Thus much more, if you force me to publish your shame before a third party, which I was unwilling and indisposed to do. This lowly roof, sir, must not be contaminated by the presence of one who has deceived, and cruelly deceived, an honourable, beloved, venerated, and venerable gentleman; and who wisely suppressed that deceit from me when he sought my protection and favour, knowing that, humble as I am, I am an honest man, seeking to do my duty in this carnal universe, and setting my face against all vice and treachery. I weep for your depravity, sir,' said Mr Pecksniff; 'I mourn over your corruption, I pity your voluntary withdrawal of yourself from the flowery paths of purity and peace;' here he struck himself upon his breast, or moral garden; 'but I cannot have a leper and a serpent for an inmate. Go forth,' said Mr Pecksniff, stretching out his hand: 'go forth, young man! Like all who know you, I renounce you!'

With what intention Martin made a stride forward at these words, it is impossible to say. It is enough to know that Tom Pinch caught him in his arms, and that, at the same moment, Mr Pecksniff stepped back so hastily, that he missed his footing, tumbled over a chair, and fell in a sitting posture on the ground; where he remained without an effort to get up again, with his head in a corner, perhaps considering it the safest place.

'Let me go, Pinch!' cried Martin, shaking him away. 'Why do you hold me? Do you think a blow could make him a more abject creature than he is? Do you think that if I spat upon him, I could degrade him to a lower level than his own? Look at him. Look at him, Pinch!'

Mr Pinch involuntarily did so. Mr Pecksniff sitting, as has been already mentioned, on the carpet, with his head in an acute angle of the wainscot, and all the damage and detriment of an uncomfortable journey about him, was not exactly a model of all that is prepossessing and dignified in man, certainly. Still he WAS Pecksniff; it was impossible to deprive him of that unique and paramount appeal to Tom. And he returned Tom's glance, as if he would have said, 'Aye, Mr Pinch, look at me! Here I am! You know what the Poet says about an honest man; and an honest man is one of the few great works that can be seen for nothing! Look at me!'

'I tell you,' said Martin, 'that as he lies there, disgraced, bought, used; a cloth for dirty hands, a mat for dirty feet, a lying, fawning, servile hound, he is the very last and worst among the vermin of the world. And mark me, Pinch! The day will come - he knows it; see it written on his face, while I speak! - when even you will find him out, and will know him as I do, and as he knows I do. HE renounce ME! Cast your eyes on the Renouncer, Pinch, and be the wiser for the recollection!'

He pointed at him as he spoke, with unutterable contempt, and flinging his hat upon his head, walked from the room and from the house. He went so rapidly that he was already clear of the village, when he heard Tom Pinch calling breathlessly after him in the distance.

'Well! what now?' he said, when Tom came up.

'Dear, dear!' cried Tom, 'are you going?'

'Going!' he echoed. 'Going!'

'I didn't so much mean that, as were you going now at once - in this bad weather - on foot - without your clothes - with no money?' cried Tom.

'Yes,' he answered sternly, 'I am.'

'And where?' cried Tom. 'Oh where will you go?'

'I don't know,' he said. 'Yes, I do. I'll go to America!'

'No, no,' cried Tom, in a kind of agony. 'Don't go there. Pray don't. Think better of it. Don't be so dreadfully regardless of yourself. Don't go to America!'

'My mind is made up,' he said. 'Your friend was right. I'll go to America. God bless you, Pinch!'

'Take this!' cried Tom, pressing a book upon him in great agitation. 'I must make haste back, and can't say anything I would. Heaven be with you. Look at the leaf I have turned down. Good-bye, good-bye!'

The simple fellow wrung him by the hand, with tears stealing down his cheeks; and they parted hurriedly upon their separate ways.