

Chapter XIII

Showing What Became Of Martin And His Desperate Resolve, After He Left Mr Pecksniff's House; What Persons He Encountered; What Anxieties He Suffered; And What News He Heard

Carrying Tom Pinch's book quite unconsciously under his arm, and not even buttoning his coat as a protection against the heavy rain, Martin went doggedly forward at the same quick pace, until he had passed the finger-post, and was on the high road to London. He slackened very little in his speed even then, but he began to think, and look about him, and to disengage his senses from the coil of angry passions which hitherto had held them prisoner.

It must be confessed that, at that moment, he had no very agreeable employment either for his moral or his physical perceptions. The day was dawning from a patch of watery light in the east, and sullen clouds came driving up before it, from which the rain descended in a thick, wet mist. It streamed from every twig and bramble in the hedge; made little gullies in the path; ran down a hundred channels in the road; and punched innumerable holes into the face of every pond and gutter. It fell with an oozy, slushy sound among the grass; and made a muddy kennel of every furrow in the ploughed fields. No living creature was anywhere to be seen. The prospect could hardly have been more desolate if animated nature had been dissolved in water, and poured down upon the earth again in that form.

The range of view within the solitary traveller was quite as cheerless as the scene without. Friendless and penniless; incensed to the last degree; deeply wounded in his pride and self-love; full of independent schemes, and perfectly destitute of any means of realizing them; his most vindictive enemy might have been satisfied with the extent of his troubles. To add to his other miseries, he was by this time sensible of being wet to the skin, and cold at his very heart.

In this deplorable condition he remembered Mr Pinch's book; more because it was rather troublesome to carry, than from any hope of being comforted by that parting gift. He looked at the dingy lettering on the back, and finding it to be an odd volume of the 'Bachelor of Salamanca,' in the French tongue, cursed Tom Pinch's folly twenty times. He was on the point of throwing it away, in his ill-humour and vexation, when he bethought himself that Tom had referred him to a leaf, turned down; and opening it at that place, that he might have additional cause of complaint against him for supposing that any cold scrap of the Bachelor's wisdom could cheer him in such circumstances, found! -

Well, well! not much, but Tom's all. The half-sovereign. He had wrapped it hastily in a piece of paper, and pinned it to the leaf. These words were scrawled in pencil on the inside: 'I don't want it indeed. I should not know what to do with it if I had it.'

There are some falsehoods, Tom, on which men mount, as on bright wings, towards Heaven. There are some truths, cold bitter taunting truths, wherein your worldly scholars are very apt and punctual, which bind men down to earth with leaden chains. Who would not rather have to fan him, in his dying hour, the lightest feather of a falsehood such as thine, than all the quills that have been plucked from the sharp porcupine, reproachful truth, since time began!

Martin felt keenly for himself, and he felt this good deed of Tom's keenly. After a few minutes it had the effect of raising his spirits, and reminding him that he was not altogether destitute, as he had left a fair stock of clothes behind him, and wore a gold hunting-watch in his pocket. He found a curious gratification, too, in thinking what a winning fellow he must be to have made such an impression on Tom; and in reflecting how superior he was to Tom; and how much more likely to make his way in the world. Animated by these thoughts, and strengthened in his design of endeavouring to push his fortune in another country, he resolved to get to London as a rallying-point, in the best way he could; and to lose no time about it.

He was ten good miles from the village made illustrious by being the abiding-place of Mr Pecksniff, when he stopped to breakfast at a little roadside alehouse; and resting upon a high-backed settle before the fire, pulled off his coat, and hung it before the cheerful blaze to dry. It was a very different place from the last tavern in which he had regaled; boasting no greater extent of accommodation than the brick-floored kitchen yielded; but the mind so soon accommodates itself to the necessities of the body, that this poor waggoner's house-of-call, which he would have despised yesterday, became now quite a choice hotel; while his dish of eggs and bacon, and his mug of beer, were not by any means the coarse fare he had supposed, but fully bore out the inscription on the window-shutter, which proclaimed those viands to be 'Good entertainment for Travellers.'

He pushed away his empty plate; and with a second mug upon the hearth before him, looked thoughtfully at the fire until his eyes ached. Then he looked at the highly-coloured scripture pieces on the walls, in little black frames like common shaving-glasses, and saw how the Wise Men (with a strong family likeness among them) worshipped in a pink manger; and how the Prodigal Son came home in red rags to a purple father, and already feasted his imagination on a sea-green calf. Then he glanced through the window at the falling rain, coming down aslant upon the sign-post over against the house, and overflowing the

horse-trough; and then he looked at the fire again, and seemed to descry a double distant London, retreating among the fragments of the burning wood.

He had repeated this process in just the same order, many times, as if it were a matter of necessity, when the sound of wheels called his attention to the window out of its regular turn; and there he beheld a kind of light van drawn by four horses, and laden, as well as he could see (for it was covered in), with corn and straw. The driver, who was alone, stopped at the door to water his team, and presently came stamping and shaking the wet off his hat and coat, into the room where Martin sat.

He was a red-faced burly young fellow; smart in his way, and with a good-humoured countenance. As he advanced towards the fire he touched his shining forehead with the forefinger of his stiff leather glove, by way of salutation; and said (rather unnecessarily) that it was an uncommon wet day.

'Very wet,' said Martin.

'I don't know as ever I see a wetter.'

'I never felt one,' said Martin.

The driver glanced at Martin's soiled dress, and his damp shirt-sleeves, and his coat hung up to dry; and said, after a pause, as he warmed his hands:

'You have been caught in it, sir?'

'Yes,' was the short reply.

'Out riding, maybe?' said the driver

'I should have been, if I owned a horse; but I don't,' returned Martin.

'That's bad,' said the driver.

'And may be worse,' said Martin.

Now the driver said 'That's bad,' not so much because Martin didn't own a horse, as because he said he didn't with all the reckless desperation of his mood and circumstances, and so left a great deal to be inferred. Martin put his hands in his pockets and whistled when he had retorted on the driver; thus giving him to understand that he didn't care a pin for Fortune; that he was above pretending to be her

favourite when he was not; and that he snapped his fingers at her, the driver, and everybody else.

The driver looked at him stealthily for a minute or so; and in the pauses of his warming whistled too. At length he asked, as he pointed his thumb towards the road.

'Up or down?'

'Which IS up?' said Martin.

'London, of course,' said the driver.

'Up then,' said Martin. He tossed his head in a careless manner afterwards, as if he would have added, 'Now you know all about it.' put his hands deeper into his pockets; changed his tune, and whistled a little louder.

'I'm going up,' observed the driver; 'Hounslow, ten miles this side London.'

'Are you?' cried Martin, stopping short and looking at him.

The driver sprinkled the fire with his wet hat until it hissed again and answered, 'Aye, to be sure he was.'

'Why, then,' said Martin, 'I'll be plain with you. You may suppose from my dress that I have money to spare. I have not. All I can afford for coach-hire is a crown, for I have but two. If you can take me for that, and my waistcoat, or this silk handkerchief, do. If you can't, leave it alone.'

'Short and sweet,' remarked the driver.

'You want more?' said Martin. 'Then I haven't got more, and I can't get it, so there's an end of that.' Whereupon he began to whistle again.

'I didn't say I wanted more, did I?' asked the driver, with something like indignation.

'You didn't say my offer was enough,' rejoined Martin.

'Why, how could I, when you wouldn't let me? In regard to the waistcoat, I wouldn't have a man's waistcoat, much less a gentleman's waistcoat, on my mind, for no consideration; but the silk handkerchief's another thing; and if you was satisfied when we got to Hounslow, I shouldn't object to that as a gift.'

'Is it a bargain, then?' said Martin.

'Yes, it is,' returned the other.

'Then finish this beer,' said Martin, handing him the mug, and pulling on his coat with great alacrity; 'and let us be off as soon as you like.'

In two minutes more he had paid his bill, which amounted to a shilling; was lying at full length on a truss of straw, high and dry at the top of the van, with the tilt a little open in front for the convenience of talking to his new friend; and was moving along in the right direction with a most satisfactory and encouraging briskness.

The driver's name, as he soon informed Martin, was William Simmons, better known as Bill; and his spruce appearance was sufficiently explained by his connection with a large stage-coaching establishment at Hounslow, whither he was conveying his load from a farm belonging to the concern in Wiltshire. He was frequently up and down the road on such errands, he said, and to look after the sick and rest horses, of which animals he had much to relate that occupied a long time in the telling. He aspired to the dignity of the regular box, and expected an appointment on the first vacancy. He was musical besides, and had a little key-bugle in his pocket, on which, whenever the conversation flagged, he played the first part of a great many tunes, and regularly broke down in the second.

'Ah!' said Bill, with a sigh, as he drew the back of his hand across his lips, and put this instrument in his pocket, after screwing off the mouth-piece to drain it; 'Lummy Ned of the Light Salisbury, HE was the one for musical talents. He WAS a guard. What you may call a Guard'an Angel, was Ned.'

'Is he dead?' asked Martin.

'Dead!' replied the other, with a contemptuous emphasis. 'Not he. You won't catch Ned a-dying easy. No, no. He knows better than that.'

'You spoke of him in the past tense,' observed Martin, 'so I supposed he was no more.'

'He's no more in England,' said Bill, 'if that's what you mean. He went to the U-nited States.'

'Did he?' asked Martin, with sudden interest. 'When?'

'Five year ago, or then about,' said Bill. 'He had set up in the public line here, and couldn't meet his engagements, so he cut off to

Liverpool one day, without saying anything about it, and went and shipped himself for the U-nited States.'

'Well?' said Martin.

'Well! as he landed there without a penny to bless himself with, of course they was very glad to see him in the U-nited States.'

'What do you mean?' asked Martin, with some scorn.

'What do I mean?' said Bill. 'Why, THAT. All men are alike in the U-nited States, an't they? It makes no odds whether a man has a thousand pound, or nothing, there. Particular in New York, I'm told, where Ned landed.'

'New York, was it?' asked Martin, thoughtfully.

'Yes,' said Bill. 'New York. I know that, because he sent word home that it brought Old York to his mind, quite vivid, in consequence of being so exactly unlike it in every respect. I don't understand what particular business Ned turned his mind to, when he got there; but he wrote home that him and his friends was always a-singing, Ale Columbia, and blowing up the President, so I suppose it was something in the public line; or free-and-easy way again. Anyhow, he made his fortune.'

'No!' cried Martin.

'Yes, he did,' said Bill. 'I know that, because he lost it all the day after, in six-and-twenty banks as broke. He settled a lot of the notes on his father, when it was ascertained that they was really stopped and sent 'em over with a dutiful letter. I know that, because they was shown down our yard for the old gentleman's benefit, that he might treat himself with tobacco in the workus.'

'He was a foolish fellow not to take care of his money when he had it,' said Martin, indignantly.

'There you're right,' said Bill, 'especially as it was all in paper, and he might have took care of it so very easy, by folding it up in a small parcel.'

Martin said nothing in reply, but soon afterwards fell asleep, and remained so for an hour or more. When he awoke, finding it had ceased to rain, he took his seat beside the driver, and asked him several questions; as how long had the fortunate guard of the Light Salisbury been in crossing the Atlantic; at what time of the year had he sailed; what was the name of the ship in which he made the

voyage; how much had he paid for passage-money; did he suffer greatly from sea-sickness? and so forth. But on these points of detail his friend was possessed of little or no information; either answering obviously at random or acknowledging that he had never heard, or had forgotten; nor, although he returned to the charge very often, could he obtain any useful intelligence on these essential particulars.

They jogged on all day, and stopped so often - now to refresh, now to change their team of horses, now to exchange or bring away a set of harness, now on one point of business, and now upon another, connected with the coaching on that line of road - that it was midnight when they reached Hounslow. A little short of the stables for which the van was bound, Martin got down, paid his crown, and forced his silk handkerchief upon his honest friend, notwithstanding the many protestations that he didn't wish to deprive him of it, with which he tried to give the lie to his longing looks. That done, they parted company; and when the van had driven into its own yard and the gates were closed, Martin stood in the dark street, with a pretty strong sense of being shut out, alone, upon the dreary world, without the key of it.

But in this moment of despondency, and often afterwards, the recollection of Mr Pecksniff operated as a cordial to him; awakening in his breast an indignation that was very wholesome in nerving him to obstinate endurance. Under the influence of this fiery dram he started off for London without more ado. Arriving there in the middle of the night, and not knowing where to find a tavern open, he was fain to stroll about the streets and market-places until morning.

He found himself, about an hour before dawn, in the humbler regions of the Adelphi; and addressing himself to a man in a fur-cap, who was taking down the shutters of an obscure public-house, informed him that he was a stranger, and inquired if he could have a bed there. It happened by good luck that he could. Though none of the gaudiest, it was tolerably clean, and Martin felt very glad and grateful when he crept into it, for warmth, rest, and forgetfulness.

It was quite late in the afternoon when he awoke; and by the time he had washed and dressed, and broken his fast, it was growing dusk again. This was all the better, for it was now a matter of absolute necessity that he should part with his watch to some obliging pawn-broker. He would have waited until after dark for this purpose, though it had been the longest day in the year, and he had begun it without a breakfast.

He passed more Golden Balls than all the jugglers in Europe have juggled with, in the course of their united performances, before he could determine in favour of any particular shop where those symbols

were displayed. In the end he came back to one of the first he had seen, and entering by a side-door in a court, where the three balls, with the legend 'Money Lent,' were repeated in a ghastly transparency, passed into one of a series of little closets, or private boxes, erected for the accommodation of the more bashful and uninitiated customers. He bolted himself in; pulled out his watch; and laid it on the counter.

'Upon my life and soul!' said a low voice in the next box to the shopman who was in treaty with him, 'you must make it more; you must make it a trifle more, you must indeed! You must dispense with one half-quarter of an ounce in weighing out your pound of flesh, my best of friends, and make it two-and-six.'

Martin drew back involuntarily, for he knew the voice at once.

'You're always full of your chaff,' said the shopman, rolling up the article (which looked like a shirt) quite as a matter of course, and nibbing his pen upon the counter.

'I shall never be full of my wheat,' said Mr Tigg, 'as long as I come here. Ha, ha! Not bad! Make it two-and-six, my dear friend, positively for this occasion only. Half-a-crown is a delightful coin. Two-and-six. Going at two-and-six! For the last time at two-and-six!'

'It'll never be the last time till it's quite worn out,' rejoined the shopman. 'It's grown yellow in the service as it is.'

'Its master has grown yellow in the service, if you mean that, my friend,' said Mr Tigg; 'in the patriotic service of an ungrateful country. You are making it two-and-six, I think?'

'I'm making it,' returned the shopman, 'what it always has been - two shillings. Same name as usual, I suppose?'

'Still the same name,' said Mr Tigg; 'my claim to the dormant peerage not being yet established by the House of Lords.'

'The old address?'

'Not at all,' said Mr Tigg; 'I have removed my town establishment from thirty-eight, Mayfair, to number fifteen-hundred-and-forty-two, Park Lane.'

'Come, I'm not going to put down that, you know,' said the shopman with a grin.

'You may put down what you please, my friend,' quoth Mr Tigg. 'The fact is still the same. The apartments for the under-butler and the

fifth footman being of a most confounded low and vulgar kind at thirty-eight, Mayfair, I have been compelled, in my regard for the feelings which do them so much honour, to take on lease for seven, fourteen, or twenty-one years, renewable at the option of the tenant, the elegant and commodious family mansion, number fifteen-hundred-and-forty-two Park Lane. Make it two-and-six, and come and see me!

The shopman was so highly entertained by this piece of humour that Mr Tigg himself could not repress some little show of exultation. It vented itself, in part, in a desire to see how the occupant of the next box received his pleasantry; to ascertain which he glanced round the partition, and immediately, by the gaslight, recognized Martin.

'I wish I may die,' said Mr Tigg, stretching out his body so far that his head was as much in Martin's little cell as Martin's own head was, 'but this is one of the most tremendous meetings in Ancient or Modern History! How are you? What is the news from the agricultural districts? How are our friends the P.'s? Ha, ha! David, pay particular attention to this gentleman immediately, as a friend of mine, I beg.'

'Here! Please to give me the most you can for this,' said Martin, handing the watch to the shopman. 'I want money sorely.'

'He wants money, sorely!' cried Mr Tigg with excessive sympathy. 'David, will you have the goodness to do your very utmost for my friend, who wants money sorely. You will deal with my friend as if he were myself. A gold hunting-watch, David, engine-turned, capped and jewelled in four holes, escape movement, horizontal lever, and warranted to perform correctly, upon my personal reputation, who have observed it narrowly for many years, under the most trying circumstances' - here he winked at Martin, that he might understand this recommendation would have an immense effect upon the shopman; 'what do you say, David, to my friend? Be very particular to deserve my custom and recommendation, David.'

'I can lend you three pounds on this, if you like' said the shopman to Martin, confidentially. 'It is very old-fashioned. I couldn't say more.'

'And devilish handsome, too,' cried Mr Tigg. 'Two-twelve-six for the watch, and seven-and-six for personal regard. I am gratified; it may be weakness, but I am. Three pounds will do. We take it. The name of my friend is Smivey: Chicken Smivey, of Holborn, twenty-six-and-a-half B: lodger.' Here he winked at Martin again, to apprise him that all the forms and ceremonies prescribed by law were now complied with, and nothing remained but the receipt for the money.

In point of fact, this proved to be the case, for Martin, who had no resource but to take what was offered him, signified his acquiescence by a nod of his head, and presently came out with the cash in his pocket. He was joined in the entry by Mr Tigg, who warmly congratulated him, as he took his arm and accompanied him into the street, on the successful issue of the negotiation.

'As for my part in the same,' said Mr Tigg, 'don't mention it. Don't compliment me, for I can't bear it!'

'I have no such intention, I assure you,' retorted Martin, releasing his arm and stopping.

'You oblige me very much' said Mr Tigg. 'Thank you.'

'Now, sir,' observed Martin, biting his lip, 'this is a large town, and we can easily find different ways in it. If you will show me which is your way, I will take another.'

Mr Tigg was about to speak, but Martin interposed:

'I need scarcely tell you, after what you have just seen, that I have nothing to bestow upon your friend Mr Slyme. And it is quite as unnecessary for me to tell you that I don't desire the honour of your company.'

'Stop' cried Mr Tigg, holding out his hand. 'Hold! There is a most remarkably long-headed, flowing-bearded, and patriarchal proverb, which observes that it is the duty of a man to be just before he is generous. Be just now, and you can be generous presently. Do not confuse me with the man Slyme. Do not distinguish the man Slyme as a friend of mine, for he is no such thing. I have been compelled, sir, to abandon the party whom you call Slyme. I have no knowledge of the party whom you call Slyme. I am, sir,' said Mr Tigg, striking himself upon the breast, 'a premium tulip, of a very different growth and cultivation from the cabbage Slyme, sir.'

'It matters very little to me,' said Martin coolly, 'whether you have set up as a vagabond on your own account, or are still trading on behalf of Mr Slyme. I wish to hold no correspondence with you. In the devil's name, man' said Martin, scarcely able, despite his vexation, to repress a smile as Mr Tigg stood leaning his back against the shutters of a shop window, adjusting his hair with great composure, 'will you go one way or other?'

'You will allow me to remind you, sir,' said Mr Tigg, with sudden dignity, 'that you - not I - that you - I say emphatically, YOU - have reduced the proceedings of this evening to a cold and distant matter of

business, when I was disposed to place them on a friendly footing. It being made a matter of business, sir, I beg to say that I expect a trifle (which I shall bestow in charity) as commission upon the pecuniary advance, in which I have rendered you my humble services. After the terms in which you have addressed me, sir,' concluded Mr Tigg, 'you will not insult me, if you please, by offering more than half-a-crown.'

Martin drew that piece of money from his pocket, and tossed it towards him. Mr Tigg caught it, looked at it to assure himself of its goodness, spun it in the air after the manner of a pisan, and buttoned it up. Finally, he raised his hat an inch or two from his head with a military air, and, after pausing a moment with deep gravity, as to decide in which direction he should go, and to what Earl or Marquis among his friends he should give the preference in his next call, stuck his hands in his skirt-pockets and swaggered round the corner. Martin took the directly opposite course; and so, to his great content, they parted company.

It was with a bitter sense of humiliation that he cursed, again and again, the mischance of having encountered this man in the pawnbroker's shop. The only comfort he had in the recollection was, Mr Tigg's voluntary avowal of a separation between himself and Slyme, that would at least prevent his circumstances (so Martin argued) from being known to any member of his family, the bare possibility of which filled him with shame and wounded pride. Abstractedly there was greater reason, perhaps, for supposing any declaration of Mr Tigg's to be false, than for attaching the least credence to it; but remembering the terms on which the intimacy between that gentleman and his bosom friend had subsisted, and the strong probability of Mr Tigg's having established an independent business of his own on Mr Slyme's connection, it had a reasonable appearance of probability; at all events, Martin hoped so; and that went a long way.

His first step, now that he had a supply of ready money for his present necessities, was, to retain his bed at the public-house until further notice, and to write a formal note to Tom Pinch (for he knew Pecksniff would see it) requesting to have his clothes forwarded to London by coach, with a direction to be left at the office until called for. These measures taken, he passed the interval before the box arrived - three days - in making inquiries relative to American vessels, at the offices of various shipping-agents in the city; and in lingering about the docks and wharves, with the faint hope of stumbling upon some engagement for the voyage, as clerk or supercargo, or custodian of something or somebody, which would enable him to procure a free passage. But finding, soon, that no such means of employment were likely to present themselves, and dreading the consequences of delay, he drew up a short advertisement, stating what he wanted, and inserted it in the leading newspapers. Pending the receipt of the

twenty or thirty answers which he vaguely expected, he reduced his wardrobe to the narrowest limits consistent with decent respectability, and carried the overplus at different times to the pawnbroker's shop, for conversion into money.

And it was strange, very strange, even to himself, to find how, by quick though almost imperceptible degrees, he lost his delicacy and self-respect, and gradually came to do that as a matter of course, without the least compunction, which but a few short days before had galled him to the quick. The first time he visited the pawnbroker's, he felt on his way there as if every person whom he passed suspected whither he was going; and on his way back again, as if the whole human tide he stemmed, knew well where he had come from. When did he care to think of their discernment now! In his first wanderings up and down the weary streets, he counterfeited the walk of one who had an object in his view; but soon there came upon him the sauntering, slipshod gait of listless idleness, and the lounging at street-corners, and plucking and biting of stray bits of straw, and strolling up and down the same place, and looking into the same shop-windows, with a miserable indifference, fifty times a day. At first, he came out from his lodging with an uneasy sense of being observed - even by those chance passers-by, on whom he had never looked before, and hundreds to one would never see again - issuing in the morning from a public-house; but now, in his comings-out and goings-in he did not mind to lounge about the door, or to stand sunning himself in careless thought beside the wooden stem, studded from head to heel with pegs, on which the beer-pots dangled like so many boughs upon a pewter-tree. And yet it took but five weeks to reach the lowest round of this tall ladder!

Oh, moralists, who treat of happiness and self-respect, innate in every sphere of life, and shedding light on every grain of dust in God's highway, so smooth below your carriage-wheels, so rough beneath the tread of naked feet, bethink yourselves in looking on the swift descent of men who HAVE lived in their own esteem, that there are scores of thousands breathing now, and breathing thick with painful toil, who in that high respect have never lived at all, nor had a chance of life! Go ye, who rest so placidly upon the sacred Bard who had been young, and when he strung his harp was old, and had never seen the righteous forsaken, or his seed begging their bread; go, Teachers of content and honest pride, into the mine, the mill, the forge, the squalid depths of deepest ignorance, and uttermost abyss of man's neglect, and say can any hopeful plant spring up in air so foul that it extinguishes the soul's bright torch as fast as it is kindled! And, oh! ye Pharisees of the nineteen hundredth year of Christian Knowledge, who soundingly appeal to human nature, see that it be human first. Take heed it has not been transformed, during your slumber and the sleep of generations, into the nature of the Beasts!

Five weeks! Of all the twenty or thirty answers, not one had come. His money - even the additional stock he had raised from the disposal of his spare clothes (and that was not much, for clothes, though dear to buy, are cheap to pawn) - was fast diminishing. Yet what could he do? At times an agony came over him in which he darted forth again, though he was but newly home, and, returning to some place where he had been already twenty times, made some new attempt to gain his end, but always unsuccessfully. He was years and years too old for a cabin-boy, and years upon years too inexperienced to be accepted as a common seaman. His dress and manner, too, militated fatally against any such proposal as the latter; and yet he was reduced to making it; for even if he could have contemplated the being set down in America totally without money, he had not enough left now for a steerage passage and the poorest provisions upon the voyage.

It is an illustration of a very common tendency in the mind of man, that all this time he never once doubted, one may almost say the certainty of doing great things in the New World, if he could only get there. In proportion as he became more and more dejected by his present circumstances, and the means of gaining America receded from his grasp, the more he fretted himself with the conviction that that was the only place in which he could hope to achieve any high end, and worried his brain with the thought that men going there in the meanwhile might anticipate him in the attainment of those objects which were dearest to his heart. He often thought of John Westlock, and besides looking out for him on all occasions, actually walked about London for three days together for the express purpose of meeting with him. But although he failed in this; and although he would not have scrupled to borrow money of him; and although he believed that John would have lent it; yet still he could not bring his mind to write to Pinch and inquire where he was to be found. For although, as we have seen, he was fond of Tom after his own fashion, he could not endure the thought (feeling so superior to Tom) of making him the stepping-stone to his fortune, or being anything to him but a patron; and his pride so revolted from the idea that it restrained him even now.

It might have yielded, however; and no doubt must have yielded soon, but for a very strange and unlooked-for occurrence.

The five weeks had quite run out, and he was in a truly desperate plight, when one evening, having just returned to his lodging, and being in the act of lighting his candle at the gas jet in the bar before stalking moodily upstairs to his own room, his landlord called him by his name. Now as he had never told it to the man, but had scrupulously kept it to himself, he was not a little startled by this; and so plainly showed his agitation that the landlord, to reassure him, said 'it was only a letter.'

'A letter!' cried Martin.

'For Mr Martin Chuzzlewit,' said the landlord, reading the superscription of one he held in his hand. 'Noon. Chief office. Paid.'

Martin took it from him, thanked him, and walked upstairs. It was not sealed, but pasted close; the handwriting was quite unknown to him. He opened it and found enclosed, without any name, address, or other inscription or explanation of any kind whatever, a Bank of England note for Twenty Pounds.

To say that he was perfectly stunned with astonishment and delight; that he looked again and again at the note and the wrapper; that he hurried below stairs to make quite certain that the note was a good note; and then hurried up again to satisfy himself for the fiftieth time that he had not overlooked some scrap of writing on the wrapper; that he exhausted and bewildered himself with conjectures; and could make nothing of it but that there the note was, and he was suddenly enriched; would be only to relate so many matters of course to no purpose. The final upshot of the business at that time was, that he resolved to treat himself to a comfortable but frugal meal in his own chamber; and having ordered a fire to be kindled, went out to purchase it forthwith.

He bought some cold beef, and ham, and French bread, and butter, and came back with his pockets pretty heavily laden. It was somewhat of a damping circumstance to find the room full of smoke, which was attributable to two causes; firstly, to the flue being naturally vicious and a smoker; and secondly, to their having forgotten, in lighting the fire, an odd sack or two and some trifles, which had been put up the chimney to keep the rain out. They had already remedied this oversight, however; and propped up the window-sash with a bundle of firewood to keep it open; so that except in being rather inflammatory to the eyes and choking to the lungs, the apartment was quite comfortable.

Martin was in no vein to quarrel with it, if it had been in less tolerable order, especially when a gleaming pint of porter was set upon the table, and the servant-girl withdrew, bearing with her particular instructions relative to the production of something hot when he should ring the bell. The cold meat being wrapped in a playbill, Martin laid the cloth by spreading that document on the little round table with the print downwards, and arranging the collation upon it. The foot of the bed, which was very close to the fire, answered for a sideboard; and when he had completed these preparations, he squeezed an old arm-chair into the warmest corner, and sat down to enjoy himself.

He had begun to eat with great appetite, glancing round the room meanwhile with a triumphant anticipation of quitting it for ever on the morrow, when his attention was arrested by a stealthy footstep on the stairs, and presently by a knock at his chamber door, which, although it was a gentle knock enough, communicated such a start to the bundle of firewood, that it instantly leaped out of window, and plunged into the street.

'More coals, I suppose,' said Martin. 'Come in!'

'It an't a liberty, sir, though it seems so,' rejoined a man's voice. 'Your servant, sir. Hope you're pretty well, sir.'

Martin stared at the face that was bowing in the doorway, perfectly remembering the features and expression, but quite forgetting to whom they belonged.

'Tapley, sir,' said his visitor. 'Him as formerly lived at the Dragon, sir, and was forced to leave in consequence of a want of jollity, sir.'

'To be sure!' cried Martin. 'Why, how did you come here?'

'Right through the passage, and up the stairs, sir,' said Mark.

'How did you find me out, I mean?' asked Martin.

'Why, sir,' said Mark, 'I've passed you once or twice in the street, if I'm not mistaken; and when I was a-looking in at the beef-and-ham shop just now, along with a hungry sweep, as was very much calculated to make a man jolly, sir - I see you a-buying that.'

Martin reddened as he pointed to the table, and said, somewhat hastily:

'Well! What then?'

'Why, then, sir,' said Mark, 'I made bold to foller; and as I told 'em downstairs that you expected me, I was let up.'

'Are you charged with any message, that you told them you were expected?' inquired Martin.

'No, sir, I an't,' said Mark. 'That was what you may call a pious fraud, sir, that was.'

Martin cast an angry look at him; but there was something in the fellow's merry face, and in his manner - which with all its cheerfulness was far from being obtrusive or familiar - that quite disarmed him. He

had lived a solitary life too, for many weeks, and the voice was pleasant in his ear.

'Tapley,' he said, 'I'll deal openly with you. From all I can judge and from all I have heard of you through Pinch, you are not a likely kind of fellow to have been brought here by impertinent curiosity or any other offensive motive. Sit down. I'm glad to see you.'

'Thankee, sir,' said Mark. 'I'd as lieve stand.'

'If you don't sit down,' retorted Martin, 'I'll not talk to you.'

'Very good, sir,' observed Mark. 'Your will's a law, sir. Down it is;' and he sat down accordingly upon the bedstead.

'Help yourself,' said Martin, handing him the only knife.

'Thankee, sir,' rejoined Mark. 'After you've done.'

'If you don't take it now, you'll not have any,' said Martin.

'Very good, sir,' rejoined Mark. 'That being your desire - now it is.' With which reply he gravely helped himself and went on eating. Martin having done the like for a short time in silence, said abruptly:

'What are you doing in London?'

'Nothing at all, sir,' rejoined Mark.

'How's that?' asked Martin.

'I want a place,' said Mark.

'I'm sorry for you,' said Martin.

' - To attend upon a single gentleman,' resumed Mark. 'If from the country the more desirable. Makeshifts would be preferred. Wages no object.'

He said this so pointedly, that Martin stopped in his eating, and said:

'If you mean me - '

'Yes, I do, sir,' interposed Mark.

'Then you may judge from my style of living here, of my means of keeping a man-servant. Besides, I am going to America immediately.'

'Well, sir,' returned Mark, quite unmoved by this intelligence 'from all that ever I heard about it, I should say America is a very likely sort of place for me to be jolly in!'

Again Martin looked at him angrily; and again his anger melted away in spite of himself.

'Lord bless you, sir,' said Mark, 'what is the use of us a-going round and round, and hiding behind the corner, and dodging up and down, when we can come straight to the point in six words? I've had my eye upon you any time this fortnight. I see well enough there's a screw loose in your affairs. I know'd well enough the first time I see you down at the Dragon that it must be so, sooner or later. Now, sir here am I, without a sitiuation; without any want of wages for a year to come; for I saved up (I didn't mean to do it, but I couldn't help it) at the Dragon - here am I with a liking for what's wentersome, and a liking for you, and a wish to come out strong under circumstances as would keep other men down; and will you take me, or will you leave me?'

'How can I take you?' cried Martin.

'When I say take,' rejoined Mark, 'I mean will you let me go? and when I say will you let me go, I mean will you let me go along with you? for go I will, somehow or another. Now that you've said America, I see clear at once, that that's the place for me to be jolly in. Therefore, if I don't pay my own passage in the ship you go in, sir, I'll pay my own passage in another. And mark my words, if I go alone it shall be, to carry out the principle, in the rottenest, craziest, leakingest tub of a wessel that a place can be got in for love or money. So if I'm lost upon the way, sir, there'll be a drowned man at your door - and always a-knocking double knocks at it, too, or never trust me!'

'This is mere folly,' said Martin.

'Very good, sir,' returned Mark. 'I'm glad to hear it, because if you don't mean to let me go, you'll be more comfortable, perhaps, on account of thinking so. Therefore I contradict no gentleman. But all I say is, that if I don't emigrate to America in that case, in the beastliest old cockle-shell as goes out of port, I'm - '

'You don't mean what you say, I'm sure,' said Martin.

'Yes I do,' cried Mark.

'I tell you I know better,' rejoined Martin.

'Very good, sir,' said Mark, with the same air of perfect satisfaction. 'Let it stand that way at present, sir, and wait and see how it turns out. Why, love my heart alive! the only doubt I have is, whether there's any credit in going with a gentleman like you, that's as certain to make his way there as a gimlet is to go through soft deal.'

This was touching Martin on his weak point, and having him at a great advantage. He could not help thinking, either, what a brisk fellow this Mark was, and how great a change he had wrought in the atmosphere of the dismal little room already.

'Why, certainly, Mark,' he said, 'I have hopes of doing well there, or I shouldn't go. I may have the qualifications for doing well, perhaps.'

'Of course you have, sir,' returned Mark Tapley. 'Everybody knows that.'

'You see,' said Martin, leaning his chin upon his hand, and looking at the fire, 'ornamental architecture applied to domestic purposes, can hardly fail to be in great request in that country; for men are constantly changing their residences there, and moving further off; and it's clear they must have houses to live in.'

'I should say, sir,' observed Mark, 'that that's a state of things as opens one of the jolliest look-outs for domestic architecture that ever I heard tell on.'

Martin glanced at him hastily, not feeling quite free from a suspicion that this remark implied a doubt of the successful issue of his plans. But Mr Tapley was eating the boiled beef and bread with such entire good faith and singleness of purpose expressed in his visage that he could not but be satisfied. Another doubt arose in his mind however, as this one disappeared. He produced the blank cover in which the note had been enclosed, and fixing his eyes on Mark as he put it in his hands, said:

'Now tell me the truth. Do you know anything about that?'

Mark turned it over and over; held it near his eyes; held it away from him at arm's length; held it with the superscription upwards and with the superscription downwards; and shook his head with such a genuine expression of astonishment at being asked the question, that Martin said, as he took it from him again:

'No, I see you don't. How should you! Though, indeed, your knowing about it would not be more extraordinary than its being here. Come, Tapley,' he added, after a moment's thought, 'I'll trust you with my

history, such as it is, and then you'll see more clearly what sort of fortunes you would link yourself to, if you followed me.'

'I beg your pardon, sir,' said Mark; 'but afore you enter upon it will you take me if I choose to go? Will you turn off me - Mark Tapley - formerly of the Blue Dragon, as can be well recommended by Mr Pinch, and as wants a gentleman of your strength of mind to look up to; or will you, in climbing the ladder as you're certain to get to the top of, take me along with you at a respectful dutance? Now, sir,' said Mark, 'it's of very little importance to you, I know, there's the difficulty; but it's of very great importance to me, and will you be so good as to consider of it?'

If this were meant as a second appeal to Martin's weak side, founded on his observation of the effect of the first, Mr Tapley was a skillful and shrewd observer. Whether an intentional or an accidental shot, it hit the mark fully for Martin, relenting more and more, said with a condescension which was inexpressibly delicious to him, after his recent humiliation:

'We'll see about it, Tapley. You shall tell me in what disposition you find yourself to-morrow.'

'Then, sir,' said Mark, rubbing his hands, 'the job's done. Go on, sir, if you please. I'm all attention.'

Throwing himself back in his arm-chair, and looking at the fire, with now and then a glance at Mark, who at such times nodded his head sagely, to express his profound interest and attention. Martin ran over the chief points in his history, to the same effect as he had related them, weeks before, to Mr Pinch. But he adapted them, according to the best of his judgment, to Mr Tapley's comprehension; and with that view made as light of his love affair as he could, and referred to it in very few words. But here he reckoned without his host; for Mark's interest was keenest in this part of the business, and prompted him to ask sundry questions in relation to it; for which he apologised as one in some measure privileged to do so, from having seen (as Martin explained to him) the young lady at the Blue Dragon.

'And a young lady as any gentleman ought to feel more proud of being in love with,' said Mark, energetically, 'don't draw breath.'

'Aye! You saw her when she was not happy,' said Martin, gazing at the fire again. 'If you had seen her in the old times, indeed - '

'Why, she certainly was a little down-hearted, sir, and something paler in her colour than I could have wished,' said Mark, 'but none the

worse in her looks for that. I think she seemed better, sir, after she come to London.'

Martin withdrew his eyes from the fire; stared at Mark as if he thought he had suddenly gone mad; and asked him what he meant.

'No offence intended, sir,' urged Mark. 'I don't mean to say she was any the happier without you; but I thought she was a-looking better, sir.'

'Do you mean to tell me she has been in London?' asked Martin, rising hurriedly, and pushing back his chair.

'Of course I do,' said Mark, rising too, in great amazement from the bedstead.

'Do you mean to tell me she is in London now?'

'Most likely, sir. I mean to say she was a week ago.'

'And you know where?'

'Yes!' cried Mark. 'What! Don't you?'

'My good fellow!' exclaimed Martin, clutching him by both arms, 'I have never seen her since I left my grandfather's house.'

'Why, then!' cried Mark, giving the little table such a blow with his clenched fist that the slices of beef and ham danced upon it, while all his features seemed, with delight, to be going up into his forehead, and never coming back again any more, 'if I an't your nat'ral born servant, hired by Fate, there an't such a thing in natur' as a Blue Dragon. What! when I was a-rambling up and down a old churchyard in the City, getting myself into a jolly state, didn't I see your grandfather a-toddlin' to and fro for pretty nigh a mortal hour! Didn't I watch him into Todgers's commercial boarding-house, and watch him out, and watch him home to his hotel, and go and tell him as his was the service for my money, and I had said so, afore I left the Dragon! Wasn't the young lady a-sitting with him then, and didn't she fall a-laughing in a manner as was beautiful to see! Didn't your grandfather say, 'Come back again next week,' and didn't I go next week; and didn't he say that he couldn't make up his mind to trust nobody no more; and therefore wouldn't engage me, but at the same time stood something to drink as was handsome! Why,' cried Mr Tapley, with a comical mixture of delight and chagrin, 'where's the credit of a man's being jolly under such circumstances! Who could help it, when things come about like this!'

For some moments Martin stood gazing at him, as if he really doubted the evidence of his senses, and could not believe that Mark stood there, in the body, before him. At length he asked him whether, if the young lady were still in London, he thought he could contrive to deliver a letter to her secretly.

'Do I think I can?' cried Mark. 'THINK I can? Here, sit down, sir. Write it out, sir!'

With that he cleared the table by the summary process of tilting everything upon it into the fireplace; snatched some writing materials from the mantel-shelf; set Martin's chair before them; forced him down into it; dipped a pen into the ink; and put it in his hand.

'Cut away, sir!' cried Mark. 'Make it strong, sir. Let it be very panted, sir. Do I think so? I should think so. Go to work, sir!'

Martin required no further adjuration, but went to work at a great rate; while Mr Tapley, installing himself without any more formalities into the functions of his valet and general attendant, divested himself of his coat, and went on to clear the fireplace and arrange the room; talking to himself in a low voice the whole time.

'Jolly sort of lodgings,' said Mark, rubbing his nose with the knob at the end of the fire-shovel, and looking round the poor chamber; 'that's a comfort. The rain's come through the roof too. That an't bad. A lively old bedstead, I'll be bound; populated by lots of wampires, no doubt. Come! my spirits is a-getting up again. An uncommon ragged nightcap this. A very good sign. We shall do yet! Here, Jane, my dear,' calling down the stairs, 'bring up that there hot tumbler for my master as was a-mixing when I come in. That's right, sir,' to Martin. 'Go at it as if you meant it, sir. Be very tender, sir, if you please. You can't make it too strong, sir!'