

## Chapter XIV

### **In Which Martin Bids Adieu To The Lady Of His Love; And Honours An Obscure Individual Whose Fortune He Intends To Make By Commending Her To His Protection**

The letter being duly signed, sealed, and delivered, was handed to Mark Tapley, for immediate conveyance if possible. And he succeeded so well in his embassy as to be enabled to return that same night, just as the house was closing, with the welcome intelligence that he had sent it upstairs to the young lady, enclosed in a small manuscript of his own, purporting to contain his further petition to be engaged in Mr Chuzzlewit's service; and that she had herself come down and told him, in great haste and agitation, that she would meet the gentleman at eight o'clock to-morrow morning in St. James's Park. It was then agreed between the new master and the new man, that Mark should be in waiting near the hotel in good time, to escort the young lady to the place of appointment; and when they had parted for the night with this understanding, Martin took up his pen again; and before he went to bed wrote another letter, whereof more will be seen presently.

He was up before daybreak, and came upon the Park with the morning, which was clad in the least engaging of the three hundred and sixty-five dresses in the wardrobe of the year. It was raw, damp, dark, and dismal; the clouds were as muddy as the ground; and the short perspective of every street and avenue was closed up by the mist as by a filthy curtain.

'Fine weather indeed,' Martin bitterly soliloquised, 'to be wandering up and down here in, like a thief! Fine weather indeed, for a meeting of lovers in the open air, and in a public walk! I need be departing, with all speed, for another country; for I have come to a pretty pass in this!'

He might perhaps have gone on to reflect that of all mornings in the year, it was not the best calculated for a young lady's coming forth on such an errand, either. But he was stopped on the road to this reflection, if his thoughts tended that way, by her appearance at a short distance, on which he hurried forward to meet her. Her squire, Mr Tapley, at the same time fell discreetly back, and surveyed the fog above him with an appearance of attentive interest.

'My dear Martin,' said Mary.

'My dear Mary,' said Martin; and lovers are such a singular kind of people that this is all they did say just then, though Martin took her arm, and her hand too, and they paced up and down a short walk that was least exposed to observation, half-a-dozen times.

'If you have changed at all, my love, since we parted,' said Martin at length, as he looked upon her with a proud delight, 'it is only to be more beautiful than ever!'

Had she been of the common metal of love-worn young ladies, she would have denied this in her most interesting manner; and would have told him that she knew she had become a perfect fright; or that she had wasted away with weeping and anxiety; or that she was dwindling gently into an early grave; or that her mental sufferings were unspeakable; or would, either by tears or words, or a mixture of both, have furnished him with some other information to that effect, and made him as miserable as possible. But she had been reared up in a sterner school than the minds of most young girls are formed in; she had had her nature strengthened by the hands of hard endurance and necessity; had come out from her young trials constant, self-denying, earnest, and devoted; had acquired in her maidenhood - whether happily in the end, for herself or him, is foreign to our present purpose to inquire - something of that nobler quality of gentle hearts which is developed often by the sorrows and struggles of matronly years, but often by their lessons only. Unspoiled, unpampered in her joys or griefs; with frank and full, and deep affection for the object of her early love; she saw in him one who for her sake was an outcast from his home and fortune, and she had no more idea of bestowing that love upon him in other than cheerful and sustaining words, full of high hope and grateful trustfulness, than she had of being unworthy of it, in her lightest thought or deed, for any base temptation that the world could offer.

'What change is there in YOU, Martin,' she replied; 'for that concerns me nearest? You look more anxious and more thoughtful than you used.'

'Why, as to that, my love,' said Martin as he drew her waist within his arm, first looking round to see that there were no observers near, and beholding Mr Tapley more intent than ever on the fog; 'it would be strange if I did not; for my life - especially of late - has been a hard one.'

'I know it must have been,' she answered. 'When have I forgotten to think of it and you?'

'Not often, I hope,' said Martin. 'Not often, I am sure. Not often, I have some right to expect, Mary; for I have undergone a great deal of vexation and privation, and I naturally look for that return, you know.'

'A very, very poor return,' she answered with a fainter smile. 'But you have it, and will have it always. You have paid a dear price for a poor heart, Martin; but it is at least your own, and a true one.'

'Of course I feel quite certain of that,' said Martin, 'or I shouldn't have put myself in my present position. And don't say a poor heart, Mary, for I say a rich one. Now, I am about to break a design to you, dearest, which will startle you at first, but which is undertaken for your sake. I am going,' he added slowly, looking far into the deep wonder of her bright dark eyes, 'abroad.'

'Abroad, Martin!'

'Only to America. See now. How you droop directly!'

'If I do, or, I hope I may say, if I did,' she answered, raising her head after a short silence, and looking once more into his face, 'it was for grief to think of what you are resolved to undergo for me. I would not venture to dissuade you, Martin; but it is a long, long distance; there is a wide ocean to be crossed; illness and want are sad calamities in any place, but in a foreign country dreadful to endure. Have you thought of all this?'

'Thought of it!' cried Martin, abating, in his fondness - and he WAS very fond of her - hardly an iota of his usual impetuosity. 'What am I to do? It's very well to say, 'Have I thought of it?' my love; but you should ask me in the same breath, have I thought of starving at home; have I thought of doing porter's work for a living; have I thought of holding horses in the streets to earn my roll of bread from day to day? Come, come,' he added, in a gentler tone, 'do not hang down your head, my dear, for I need the encouragement that your sweet face alone can give me. Why, that's well! Now you are brave again.'

'I am endeavouring to be,' she answered, smiling through her tears.

'Endavouring to be anything that's good, and being it, is, with you, all one. Don't I know that of old?' cried Martin, gayly. 'So! That's famous! Now I can tell you all my plans as cheerfully as if you were my little wife already, Mary.'

She hung more closely on his arm, and looking upwards in his face, bade him speak on.

'You see,' said Martin, playing with the little hand upon his wrist, 'that my attempts to advance myself at home have been baffled and rendered abortive. I will not say by whom, Mary, for that would give pain to us both. But so it is. Have you heard him speak of late of any relative of mine or his, called Pecksniff? Only tell me what I ask you, no more.'

'I have heard, to my surprise, that he is a better man than was supposed.'

'I thought so,' interrupted Martin.

'And that it is likely we may come to know him, if not to visit and reside with him and - I think - his daughters. He HAS daughters, has he, love?'

'A pair of them,' Martin answered. 'A precious pair! Gems of the first water!'

'Ah! You are jesting!'

'There is a sort of jesting which is very much in earnest, and includes some pretty serious disgust,' said Martin. 'I jest in reference to Mr Pecksniff (at whose house I have been living as his assistant, and at whose hands I have received insult and injury), in that vein. Whatever betides, or however closely you may be brought into communication with this family, never forget that, Mary; and never for an instant, whatever appearances may seem to contradict me, lose sight of this assurance - Pecksniff is a scoundrel.'

'Indeed!'

'In thought, and in deed, and in everything else. A scoundrel from the topmost hair of his head, to the nethermost atom of his heel. Of his daughters I will only say that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, they are dutiful young ladies, and take after their father closely. This is a digression from the main point, and yet it brings me to what I was going to say.'

He stopped to look into her eyes again, and seeing, in a hasty glance over his shoulder, that there was no one near, and that Mark was still intent upon the fog, not only looked at her lips, too, but kissed them into the bargain.

'Now I am going to America, with great prospects of doing well, and of returning home myself very soon; it may be to take you there for a few years, but, at all events, to claim you for my wife; which, after such trials, I should do with no fear of your still thinking it a duty to cleave to him who will not suffer me to live (for this is true), if he can help it, in my own land. How long I may be absent is, of course, uncertain; but it shall not be very long. Trust me for that.'

'In the meantime, dear Martin - '

'That's the very thing I am coming to. In the meantime you shall hear, constantly, of all my goings-on. Thus.'

He paused to take from his pocket the letter he had written overnight, and then resumed:

'In this fellow's employment, and living in this fellow's house (by fellow, I mean Mr Pecksniff, of course), there is a certain person of the name of Pinch. Don't forget; a poor, strange, simple oddity, Mary; but thoroughly honest and sincere; full of zeal; and with a cordial regard for me. Which I mean to return one of these days, by setting him up in life in some way or other.'

'Your old kind nature, Martin!'

'Oh!' said Martin, 'that's not worth speaking of, my love. He's very grateful and desirous to serve me; and I am more than repaid. Now one night I told this Pinch my history, and all about myself and you; in which he was not a little interested, I can tell you, for he knows you! Aye, you may look surprised - and the longer the better for it becomes you - but you have heard him play the organ in the church of that village before now; and he has seen you listening to his music; and has caught his inspiration from you, too!'

'Was HE the organist?' cried Mary. 'I thank him from my heart!'

'Yes, he was,' said Martin, 'and is, and gets nothing for it either. There never was such a simple fellow! Quite an infant! But a very good sort of creature, I assure you.'

'I am sure of that,' she said with great earnestness. 'He must be!'

'Oh, yes, no doubt at all about it,' rejoined Martin, in his usual careless way. 'He is. Well! It has occurred to me - but stay. If I read you what I have written and intend sending to him by post to-night it will explain itself. 'My dear Tom Pinch.' That's rather familiar perhaps,' said Martin, suddenly remembering that he was proud when they had last met, 'but I call him my dear Tom Pinch because he likes it, and it pleases him.'

'Very right, and very kind,' said Mary.

'Exactly so!' cried Martin. 'It's as well to be kind whenever one can; and, as I said before, he really is an excellent fellow. 'My dear Tom Pinch - I address this under cover to Mrs Lupin, at the Blue Dragon, and have begged her in a short note to deliver it to you without saying anything about it elsewhere; and to do the same with all future letters she may receive from me. My reason for so doing will be at once apparent to you' - I don't know that it will be, by the bye,' said Martin, breaking off, 'for he's slow of comprehension, poor fellow; but he'll find it out in time. My reason simply is, that I don't want my letters to be

read by other people; and particularly by the scoundrel whom he thinks an angel.'

'Mr Pecksniff again?' asked Mary.

'The same,' said Martin ' - will be at once apparent to you. I have completed my arrangements for going to America; and you will be surprised to hear that I am to be accompanied by Mark Tapley, upon whom I have stumbled strangely in London, and who insists on putting himself under my protection' - meaning, my love,' said Martin, breaking off again, 'our friend in the rear, of course.'

She was delighted to hear this, and bestowed a kind glance upon Mark, which he brought his eyes down from the fog to encounter and received with immense satisfaction. She said in his hearing, too, that he was a good soul and a merry creature, and would be faithful, she was certain; commendations which Mr Tapley inwardly resolved to deserve, from such lips, if he died for it.

'Now, my dear Pinch,' resumed Martin, proceeding with his letter; 'I am going to repose great trust in you, knowing that I may do so with perfect reliance on your honour and secrecy, and having nobody else just now to trust in.'

'I don't think I would say that, Martin.'

'Wouldn't you? Well! I'll take that out. It's perfectly true, though.'

'But it might seem ungracious, perhaps.'

'Oh, I don't mind Pinch,' said Martin. 'There's no occasion to stand on any ceremony with HIM. However, I'll take it out, as you wish it, and make the full stop at 'secrecy.' Very well! 'I shall not only' - this is the letter again, you know.'

'I understand.'

'I shall not only enclose my letters to the young lady of whom I have told you, to your charge, to be forwarded as she may request; but I most earnestly commit her, the young lady herself, to your care and regard, in the event of your meeting in my absence. I have reason to think that the probabilities of your encountering each other - perhaps very frequently - are now neither remote nor few; and although in our position you can do very little to lessen the uneasiness of hers, I trust to you implicitly to do that much, and so deserve the confidence I have reposed in you.' You see, my dear Mary,' said Martin, 'it will be a great consolation to you to have anybody, no matter how simple, with whom you can speak about ME; and the very first time you talk to Pinch,

you'll feel at once that there is no more occasion for any embarrassment or hesitation in talking to him, than if he were an old woman.'

'However that may be,' she returned, smiling, 'he is your friend, and that is enough.'

'Oh, yes, he's my friend,' said Martin, 'certainly. In fact, I have told him in so many words that we'll always take notice of him, and protect him; and it's a good trait in his character that he's grateful - very grateful indeed. You'll like him of all things, my love, I know. You'll observe very much that's comical and old-fashioned about Pinch, but you needn't mind laughing at him; for he'll not care about it. He'll rather like it indeed!'

'I don't think I shall put that to the test, Martin.'

'You won't if you can help it, of course,' he said, 'but I think you'll find him a little too much for your gravity. However, that's neither here nor there, and it certainly is not the letter; which ends thus: 'Knowing that I need not impress the nature and extent of that confidence upon you at any greater length, as it is already sufficiently established in your mind, I will only say, in bidding you farewell and looking forward to our next meeting, that I shall charge myself from this time, through all changes for the better, with your advancement and happiness, as if they were my own. You may rely upon that. And always believe me, my dear Tom Pinch, faithfully your friend, Martin Chuzzlewit. P.S. - I enclose the amount which you so kindly' - Oh,' said Martin, checking himself, and folding up the letter, 'that's nothing!'

At this crisis Mark Tapley interposed, with an apology for remarking that the clock at the Horse Guards was striking.

'Which I shouldn't have said nothing about, sir,' added Mark, 'if the young lady hadn't begged me to be particular in mentioning it.'

'I did,' said Mary. 'Thank you. You are quite right. In another minute I shall be ready to return. We have time for a very few words more, dear Martin, and although I had much to say, it must remain unsaid until the happy time of our next meeting. Heaven send it may come speedily and prosperously! But I have no fear of that.'

'Fear!' cried Martin. 'Why, who has? What are a few months? What is a whole year? When I come gayly back, with a road through life hewn out before me, then indeed, looking back upon this parting, it may seem a dismal one. But now! I swear I wouldn't have it happen under more favourable auspices, if I could; for then I should be less inclined to go, and less impressed with the necessity.'

'Yes, yes. I feel that too. When do you go?'

'To-night. We leave for Liverpool to-night. A vessel sails from that port, as I hear, in three days. In a month, or less, we shall be there. Why, what's a month! How many months have flown by, since our last parting!'

'Long to look back upon,' said Mary, echoing his cheerful tone, 'but nothing in their course!'

'Nothing at all!' cried Martin. 'I shall have change of scene and change of place; change of people, change of manners, change of cares and hopes! Time will wear wings indeed! I can bear anything, so that I have swift action, Mary.'

Was he thinking solely of her care for him, when he took so little heed of her share in the separation; of her quiet monotonous endurance, and her slow anxiety from day to day? Was there nothing jarring and discordant even in his tone of courage, with this one note 'self' for ever audible, however high the strain? Not in her ears. It had been better otherwise, perhaps, but so it was. She heard the same bold spirit which had flung away as dross all gain and profit for her sake, making light of peril and privation that she might be calm and happy; and she heard no more. That heart where self has found no place and raised no throne, is slow to recognize its ugly presence when it looks upon it. As one possessed of an evil spirit was held in old time to be alone conscious of the lurking demon in the breasts of other men, so kindred vices know each other in their hiding-places every day, when Virtue is incredulous and blind. 'The quarter's gone!' cried Mr Tapley, in a voice of admonition.

'I shall be ready to return immediately,' she said. 'One thing, dear Martin, I am bound to tell you. You entreated me a few minutes since only to answer what you asked me in reference to one theme, but you should and must know (otherwise I could not be at ease) that since that separation of which I was the unhappy occasion, he has never once uttered your name; has never coupled it, or any faint allusion to it, with passion or reproach; and has never abated in his kindness to me.'

'I thank him for that last act,' said Martin, 'and for nothing else. Though on consideration I may thank him for his other forbearance also, inasmuch as I neither expect nor desire that he will mention my name again. He may once, perhaps - to couple it with reproach - in his will. Let him, if he please! By the time it reaches me, he will be in his grave; a satire on his own anger, God help him!'



'Martin! If you would but sometimes, in some quiet hour; beside the winter fire; in the summer air; when you hear gentle music, or think of Death, or Home, or Childhood; if you would at such a season resolve to think, but once a month, or even once a year, of him, or any one who ever wronged you, you would forgive him in your heart, I know!'

'If I believed that to be true, Mary,' he replied, 'I would resolve at no such time to bear him in my mind; wishing to spare myself the shame of such a weakness. I was not born to be the toy and puppet of any man, far less his; to whose pleasure and caprice, in return for any good he did me, my whole youth was sacrificed. It became between us two a fair exchange - a barter - and no more; and there is no such balance against me that I need throw in a mawkish forgiveness to poise the scale. He has forbidden all mention of me to you, I know,' he added hastily. 'Come! Has he not?'

'That was long ago,' she returned; 'immediately after your parting; before you had left the house. He has never done so since.'

'He has never done so since because he has seen no occasion,' said Martin; 'but that is of little consequence, one way or other. Let all allusion to him between you and me be interdicted from this time forth. And therefore, love' - he drew her quickly to him, for the time of parting had now come - 'in the first letter that you write to me through the Post Office, addressed to New York; and in all the others that you send through Pinch; remember he has no existence, but has become to us as one who is dead. Now, God bless you! This is a strange place for such a meeting and such a parting; but our next meeting shall be in a better, and our next and last parting in a worse.'

'One other question, Martin, I must ask. Have you provided money for this journey?'

'Have I?' cried Martin; it might have been in his pride; it might have been in his desire to set her mind at ease: 'Have I provided money? Why, there's a question for an emigrant's wife! How could I move on land or sea without it, love?'

'I mean, enough.'

'Enough! More than enough. Twenty times more than enough. A pocket-full. Mark and I, for all essential ends, are quite as rich as if we had the purse of Fortunatus in our baggage.'

'The half-hour's a-going!' cried Mr Tapley.

'Good-bye a hundred times!' cried Mary, in a trembling voice.

But how cold the comfort in Good-bye! Mark Tapley knew it perfectly. Perhaps he knew it from his reading, perhaps from his experience, perhaps from intuition. It is impossible to say; but however he knew it, his knowledge instinctively suggested to him the wisest course of proceeding that any man could have adopted under the circumstances. He was taken with a violent fit of sneezing, and was obliged to turn his head another way. In doing which, he, in a manner fenced and screened the lovers into a corner by themselves.

There was a short pause, but Mark had an undefined sensation that it was a satisfactory one in its way. Then Mary, with her veil lowered, passed him with a quick step, and beckoned him to follow. She stopped once more before they lost that corner; looked back; and waved her hand to Martin. He made a start towards them at the moment as if he had some other farewell words to say; but she only hurried off the faster, and Mr Tapley followed as in duty bound.

When he rejoined Martin again in his own chamber, he found that gentleman seated moodily before the dusty grate, with his two feet on the fender, his two elbows on his knees, and his chin supported, in a not very ornamental manner, on the palms of his hands.

'Well, Mark!'

'Well, sir,' said Mark, taking a long breath, 'I see the young lady safe home, and I feel pretty comfortable after it. She sent a lot of kind words, sir, and this,' handing him a ring, 'for a parting keepsake.'

'Diamonds!' said Martin, kissing it - let us do him justice, it was for her sake; not for theirs - and putting it on his little finger. 'Splendid diamonds! My grandfather is a singular character, Mark. He must have given her this now.'

Mark Tapley knew as well that she had bought it, to the end that that unconscious speaker might carry some article of sterling value with him in his necessity; as he knew that it was day, and not night. Though he had no more acquaintance of his own knowledge with the history of the glittering trinket on Martin's outspread finger, than Martin himself had, he was as certain that in its purchase she had expended her whole stock of hoarded money, as if he had seen it paid down coin by coin. Her lover's strange obtuseness in relation to this little incident, promptly suggested to Mark's mind its real cause and root; and from that moment he had a clear and perfect insight into the one absorbing principle of Martin's character.

'She is worthy of the sacrifices I have made,' said Martin, folding his arms, and looking at the ashes in the stove, as if in resumption of some former thoughts. 'Well worthy of them. No riches' - here he

stroked his chin and mused - 'could have compensated for the loss of such a nature. Not to mention that in gaining her affection I have followed the bent of my own wishes, and baulked the selfish schemes of others who had no right to form them. She is quite worthy - more than worthy - of the sacrifices I have made. Yes, she is. No doubt of it.'

These ruminations might or might not have reached Mark Tapley; for though they were by no means addressed to him, yet they were softly uttered. In any case, he stood there, watching Martin with an indescribable and most involved expression on his visage, until that young man roused himself and looked towards him; when he turned away, as being suddenly intent upon certain preparations for the journey, and, without giving vent to any articulate sound, smiled with surpassing ghastliness, and seemed by a twist of his features and a motion of his lips, to release himself of this word:

'Jolly!'