

Chapter XVII

Martin Enlarges His Circle Of Acquaintance; Increases His Stock Of Wisdom; And Has An Excellent Opportunity Of Comparing His Own Experiences With Those Of Lummy Ned Of The Light Salisbury, As Related By His Friend Mr William Simmons

It was characteristic of Martin, that all this while he had either forgotten Mark Tapley as completely as if there had been no such person in existence, or, if for a moment the figure of that gentleman rose before his mental vision, had dismissed it as something by no means of a pressing nature, which might be attended to by-and-bye, and could wait his perfect leisure. But, being now in the streets again, it occurred to him as just coming within the bare limits of possibility that Mr Tapley might, in course of time, grow tired of waiting on the threshold of the Rowdy Journal Office, so he intimated to his new friend, that if they could conveniently walk in that direction, he would be glad to get this piece of business off his mind.

'And speaking of business,' said Martin, 'may I ask, in order that I may not be behind-hand with questions either, whether your occupation holds you to this city, or like myself, you are a visitor here?'

'A visitor,' replied his friend. 'I was 'raised' in the State of Massachusetts, and reside there still. My home is in a quiet country town. I am not often in these busy places; and my inclination to visit them does not increase with our better acquaintance, I assure you.'

'You have been abroad?' asked Martin.

'Oh yes.'

'And, like most people who travel, have become more than ever attached to your home and native country,' said Martin, eyeing him curiously.

'To my home - yes,' rejoined his friend. 'To my native country AS my home - yes, also.'

'You imply some reservation,' said Martin.

'Well,' returned his new friend, 'if you ask me whether I came back here with a greater relish for my country's faults; with a greater fondness for those who claim (at the rate of so many dollars a day) to be her friends; with a cooler indifference to the growth of principles among us in respect of public matters and of private dealings between man and man, the advocacy of which, beyond the foul atmosphere of

a criminal trial, would disgrace your own old Bailey lawyers; why, then I answer plainly, No.'

'Oh!' said Martin; in so exactly the same key as his friend's No, that it sounded like an echo.

'If you ask me,' his companion pursued, 'whether I came back here better satisfied with a state of things which broadly divides society into two classes - whereof one, the great mass, asserts a spurious independence, most miserably dependent for its mean existence on the disregard of humanizing conventionalities of manner and social custom, so that the coarser a man is, the more distinctly it shall appeal to his taste; while the other, disgusted with the low standard thus set up and made adaptable to everything, takes refuge among the graces and refinements it can bring to bear on private life, and leaves the public weal to such fortune as may betide it in the press and uproar of a general scramble - then again I answer, No.'

And again Martin said 'Oh!' in the same odd way as before, being anxious and disconcerted; not so much, to say the truth, on public grounds, as with reference to the fading prospects of domestic architecture.

'In a word,' resumed the other, 'I do not find and cannot believe and therefore will not allow, that we are a model of wisdom, and an example to the world, and the perfection of human reason, and a great deal more to the same purpose, which you may hear any hour in the day; simply because we began our political life with two inestimable advantages.'

'What were they?' asked Martin.

'One, that our history commenced at so late a period as to escape the ages of bloodshed and cruelty through which other nations have passed; and so had all the light of their probation, and none of its darkness. The other, that we have a vast territory, and not - as yet - too many people on it. These facts considered, we have done little enough, I think.'

'Education?' suggested Martin, faintly.

'Pretty well on that head,' said the other, shrugging his shoulders, 'still no mighty matter to boast of; for old countries, and despotic countries too, have done as much, if not more, and made less noise about it. We shine out brightly in comparison with England, certainly; but hers is a very extreme case. You complimented me on my frankness, you know,' he added, laughing.

'Oh! I am not at all astonished at your speaking thus openly when my country is in question,' returned Martin. 'It is your plain-speaking in reference to your own that surprises me.'

'You will not find it a scarce quality here, I assure you, saving among the Colonel Divers, and Jefferson Bricks, and Major Pawkinses; though the best of us are something like the man in Goldsmith's comedy, who wouldn't suffer anybody but himself to abuse his master. Come!' he added. 'Let us talk of something else. You have come here on some design of improving your fortune, I dare say; and I should grieve to put you out of heart. I am some years older than you, besides; and may, on a few trivial points, advise you, perhaps.'

There was not the least curiosity or impertinence in the manner of this offer, which was open-hearted, unaffected, and good-natured. As it was next to impossible that he should not have his confidence awakened by a deportment so prepossessing and kind, Martin plainly stated what had brought him into those parts, and even made the very difficult avowal that he was poor. He did not say how poor, it must be admitted, rather throwing off the declaration with an air which might have implied that he had money enough for six months, instead of as many weeks; but poor he said he was, and grateful he said he would be, for any counsel that his friend would give him.

It would not have been very difficult for any one to see; but it was particularly easy for Martin, whose perceptions were sharpened by his circumstances, to discern; that the stranger's face grew infinitely longer as the domestic-architecture project was developed. Nor, although he made a great effort to be as encouraging as possible, could he prevent his head from shaking once involuntarily, as if it said in the vulgar tongue, upon its own account, 'No go!' But he spoke in a cheerful tone, and said, that although there was no such opening as Martin wished, in that city, he would make it matter of immediate consideration and inquiry where one was most likely to exist; and then he made Martin acquainted with his name, which was Bevan; and with his profession, which was physic, though he seldom or never practiced; and with other circumstances connected with himself and family, which fully occupied the time, until they reached the Rowdy Journal Office.

Mr Tapley appeared to be taking his ease on the landing of the first floor; for sounds as of some gentleman established in that region whistling 'Rule Britannia' with all his might and main, greeted their ears before they reached the house. On ascending to the spot from whence this music proceeded, they found him recumbent in the midst of a fortification of luggage, apparently performing his national anthem for the gratification of a grey-haired black man, who sat on one of the outworks (a portmanteau), staring intently at Mark, while

Mark, with his head reclining on his hand, returned the compliment in a thoughtful manner, and whistled all the time. He seemed to have recently dined, for his knife, a casebottle, and certain broken meats in a handkerchief, lay near at hand. He had employed a portion of his leisure in the decoration of the Rowdy Journal door, whereon his own initials now appeared in letters nearly half a foot long, together with the day of the month in smaller type; the whole surrounded by an ornamental border, and looking very fresh and bold.

'I was a'most afraid you was lost, sir!' cried Mark, rising, and stopping the tune at that point where Britons generally are supposed to declare (when it is whistled) that they never, never, never -

'Nothing gone wrong, I hope, sir?'

'No, Mark. Where's your friend?'

'The mad woman, sir?' said Mr Tapley. 'Oh! she's all right, sir.'

'Did she find her husband?'

'Yes, sir. Leastways she's found his remains,' said Mark, correcting himself.

'The man's not dead, I hope?'

'Not altogether dead, sir,' returned Mark; 'but he's had more fevers and agues than is quite reconcilable with being alive. When she didn't see him a-waiting for her, I thought she'd have died herself, I did!'

'Was he not here, then?'

'HE wasn't here. There was a feeble old shadow come a-creeping down at last, as much like his substance when she know'd him, as your shadow when it's drawn out to its very finest and longest by the sun, is like you. But it was his remains, there's no doubt about that. She took on with joy, poor thing, as much as if it had been all of him!'

'Had he bought land?' asked Mr Bevan.

'Ah! He'd bought land,' said Mark, shaking his head, 'and paid for it too. Every sort of nateral advantage was connected with it, the agents said; and there certainly was ONE, quite unlimited. No end to the water!'

'It's a thing he couldn't have done without, I suppose,' observed Martin, peevishly.

'Certainly not, sir. There it was, any way; always turned on, and no water-rate. Independent of three or four slimy old rivers close by, it varied on the farm from four to six foot deep in the dry season. He couldn't say how deep it was in the rainy time, for he never had anything long enough to sound it with.'

'Is this true?' asked Martin of his companion.

'Extremely probable,' he answered. 'Some Mississippi or Missouri lot, I dare say.'

'However,' pursued Mark, 'he came from I-don't-know-where-and-all, down to New York here, to meet his wife and children; and they started off again in a steamboat this blessed afternoon, as happy to be along with each other as if they were going to Heaven. I should think they was, pretty straight, if I may judge from the poor man's looks.'

'And may I ask,' said Martin, glancing, but not with any displeasure, from Mark to the negro, 'who this gentleman is? Another friend of yours?'

'Why sir,' returned Mark, taking him aside, and speaking confidentially in his ear, 'he's a man of colour, sir!'

'Do you take me for a blind man,' asked Martin, somewhat impatiently, 'that you think it necessary to tell me that, when his face is the blackest that ever was seen?'

'No, no; when I say a man of colour,' returned Mark, 'I mean that he's been one of them as there's picters of in the shops. A man and a brother, you know, sir,' said Mr Tapley, favouring his master with a significant indication of the figure so often represented in tracts and cheap prints.

'A slave!' cried Martin, in a whisper.

'Ah!' said Mark in the same tone. 'Nothing else. A slave. Why, when that there man was young - don't look at him while I'm a-telling it - he was shot in the leg; gashed in the arm; scored in his live limbs, like crimped fish; beaten out of shape; had his neck galled with an iron collar, and wore iron rings upon his wrists and ankles. The marks are on him to this day. When I was having my dinner just now, he stripped off his coat, and took away my appetite.'

'Is THIS true?' asked Martin of his friend, who stood beside them.

'I have no reason to doubt it,' he answered, shaking his head 'It very often is.'

'Bless you,' said Mark, 'I know it is, from hearing his whole story. That master died; so did his second master from having his head cut open with a hatchet by another slave, who, when he'd done it, went and drowned himself; then he got a better one; in years and years he saved up a little money, and bought his freedom, which he got pretty cheap at last, on account of his strength being nearly gone, and he being ill. Then he come here. And now he's a-saving up to treat himself, afore he dies, to one small purchase - it's nothing to speak of. Only his own daughter; that's all!' cried Mr Tapley, becoming excited. 'Liberty for ever! Hurrah! Hail, Columbia!'

'Hush!' cried Martin, clapping his hand upon his mouth; 'and don't be an idiot. What is he doing here?'

'Waiting to take our luggage off upon a truck,' said Mark. 'He'd have come for it by-and-bye, but I engaged him for a very reasonable charge (out of my own pocket) to sit along with me and make me jolly; and I am jolly; and if I was rich enough to contract with him to wait upon me once a day, to be looked at, I'd never be anything else.'

The fact may cause a solemn impeachment of Mark's veracity, but it must be admitted nevertheless, that there was that in his face and manner at the moment, which militated strongly against this emphatic declaration of his state of mind.

'Lord love you, sir,' he added, 'they're so fond of Liberty in this part of the globe, that they buy her and sell her and carry her to market with 'em. They've such a passion for Liberty, that they can't help taking liberties with her. That's what it's owing to.'

'Very well,' said Martin, wishing to change the theme. 'Having come to that conclusion, Mark, perhaps you'll attend to me. The place to which the luggage is to go is printed on this card. Mrs Pawkins's Boarding House.'

'Mrs Pawkins's boarding-house,' repeated Mark. 'Now, Cicero.'

'Is that his name?' asked Martin

'That's his name, sir,' rejoined Mark. And the negro grinning assent from under a leathern portmanteau, than which his own face was many shades deeper, hobbled downstairs with his portion of their worldly goods; Mark Tapley having already gone before with his share.

Martin and his friend followed them to the door below, and were about to pursue their walk, when the latter stopped, and asked, with some hesitation, whether that young man was to be trusted?

'Mark! oh certainly! with anything.'

'You don't understand me - I think he had better go with us. He is an honest fellow, and speaks his mind so very plainly.'

'Why, the fact is,' said Martin, smiling, 'that being unaccustomed to a free republic, he is used to do so.'

'I think he had better go with us,' returned the other. 'He may get into some trouble otherwise. This is not a slave State; but I am ashamed to say that a spirit of Tolerance is not so common anywhere in these latitudes as the form. We are not remarkable for behaving very temperately to each other when we differ; but to strangers! no, I really think he had better go with us.'

Martin called to him immediately to be of their party; so Cicero and the truck went one way, and they three went another.

They walked about the city for two or three hours; seeing it from the best points of view, and pausing in the principal streets, and before such public buildings as Mr Bevan pointed out. Night then coming on apace, Martin proposed that they should adjourn to Mrs Pawkins's establishment for coffee; but in this he was overruled by his new acquaintance, who seemed to have set his heart on carrying him, though it were only for an hour, to the house of a friend of his who lived hard by. Feeling (however disinclined he was, being weary) that it would be in bad taste, and not very gracious, to object that he was unacquainted, when this open-hearted gentleman was so ready to be his sponsor, Martin - for once in his life, at all events - sacrificed his own will and pleasure to the wishes of another, and consented with a fair grace. So travelling had done him that much good, already.

Mr Bevan knocked at the door of a very neat house of moderate size, from the parlour windows of which, lights were shining brightly into the now dark street. It was quickly opened by a man with such a thoroughly Irish face, that it seemed as if he ought, as a matter of right and principle, to be in rags, and could have no sort of business to be looking cheerfully at anybody out of a whole suit of clothes.

Commending Mark to the care of this phenomenon - for such he may be said to have been in Martin's eyes - Mr Bevan led the way into the room which had shed its cheerfulness upon the street, to whose occupants he introduced Mr Chuzzlewit as a gentleman from England, whose acquaintance he had recently had the pleasure to make. They gave him welcome in all courtesy and politeness; and in less than five minutes' time he found himself sitting very much at his ease by the fireside, and becoming vastly well acquainted with the whole family.

There were two young ladies - one eighteen; the other twenty - both very slender, but very pretty; their mother, who looked, as Martin thought much older and more faded than she ought to have looked; and their grandmother, a little sharp-eyed, quick old woman, who seemed to have got past that stage, and to have come all right again. Besides these, there were the young ladies' father, and the young ladies' brother; the first engaged in mercantile affairs; the second, a student at college; both, in a certain cordiality of manner, like his own friend, and not unlike him in face. Which was no great wonder, for it soon appeared that he was their near relation. Martin could not help tracing the family pedigree from the two young ladies, because they were foremost in his thoughts; not only from being, as aforesaid, very pretty, but by reason of their wearing miraculously small shoes, and the thinnest possible silk stockings; the which their rocking-chairs developed to a distracting extent.

There is no doubt that it was a monstrous comfortable circumstance to be sitting in a snug, well-furnished room, warmed by a cheerful fire, and full of various pleasant decorations, including four small shoes, and the like amount of silk stockings, and - yes, why not? - the feet and legs therein enshrined. And there is no doubt that Martin was monstrous well-disposed to regard his position in that light, after his recent experience of the Screw, and of Mrs Pawkins's boarding-house. The consequence was that he made himself very agreeable indeed; and by the time the tea and coffee arrived (with sweet preserves, and cunning tea-cakes in its train), was in a highly genial state, and much esteemed by the whole family.

Another delightful circumstance turned up before the first cup of tea was drunk. The whole family had been in England. There was a pleasant thing! But Martin was not quite so glad of this, when he found that they knew all the great dukes, lords, viscounts, marquesses, duchesses, knights, and baronets, quite affectionately, and were beyond everything interested in the least particular concerning them. However, when they asked, after the wearer of this or that coronet, and said, 'Was he quite well?' Martin answered, 'Yes, oh yes. Never better;' and when they said, 'his lordship's mother, the duchess, was she much changed?' Martin said, 'Oh dear no, they would know her anywhere, if they saw her to-morrow;' and so got on pretty well. In like manner when the young ladies questioned him touching the Gold Fish in that Grecian fountain in such and such a nobleman's conservatory, and whether there were as many as there used to be, he gravely reported, after mature consideration, that there must be at least twice as many; and as to the exotics, 'Oh! well! it was of no use talking about THEM; they must be seen to be believed;' which improved state of circumstances reminded the family of the splendour of that brilliant festival (comprehending the whole British Peerage and Court Calendar) to which they were specially invited, and

which indeed had been partly given in their honour; and recollections of what Mr Norris the father had said to the marquess, and of what Mrs Norris the mother had said to the marchioness, and of what the marquess and marchioness had both said, when they said that upon their words and honours they wished Mr Norris the father and Mrs Norris the mother, and the Misses Norris the daughters, and Mr Norris Junior, the son, would only take up their permanent residence in England, and give them the pleasure of their everlasting friendship, occupied a very considerable time.

Martin thought it rather stange, and in some sort inconsistent, that during the whole of these narrations, and in the very meridian of their enjoyment thereof, both Mr Norris the father, and Mr Norris Junior, the son (who corresponded, every post, with four members of the English Peerage), enlarged upon the inestimable advantage of having no such arbitrary distinctions in that enlightened land, where there were no noblemen but nature's noblemen, and where all society was based on one broad level of brotherly love and natural equality. Indeed, Mr Norris the father gradually expanding into an oration on this swelling theme, was becoming tedious, when Mr Bevan diverted his thoughts by happening to make some causal inquiry relative to the occupier of the next house; in reply to which, this same Mr Norris the father observed, that 'that person entertained religious opinions of which he couldn't approve; and therefore he hadn't the honour of knowing the gentleman.' Mrs Norris the mother added another reason of her own, the same in effect, but varying in words; to wit, that she believed the people were well enough in their way, but they were not genteel.

Another little trait came out, which impressed itself on Martin forcibly. Mr Bevan told them about Mark and the negro, and then it appeared that all the Norrises were abolitionists. It was a great relief to hear this, and Martin was so much encouraged on finding himself in such company, that he expressed his sympathy with the oppressed and wretched blacks. Now, one of the young ladies - the prettiest and most delicate - was mightily amused at the earnestness with which he spoke; and on his craving leave to ask her why, was quite unable for a time to speak for laughing. As soon however as she could, she told him that the negroes were such a funny people, so excessively ludicrous in their manners and appearance, that it was wholly impossible for those who knew them well, to associate any serious ideas with such a very absurd part of the creation. Mr Norris the father, and Mrs Norris the mother, and Miss Norris the sister, and Mr Norris Junior the brother, and even Mrs Norris Senior the grandmother, were all of this opinion, and laid it down as an absolute matter of fact - as if there were nothing in suffering and slavery, grim enough to cast a solemn air on any human animal; though it were as

ridiculous, physically, as the most grotesque of apes, or morally, as the mildest Nimrod among tuft-hunting republicans!

'In short,' said Mr Norris the father, settling the question comfortably, 'there is a natural antipathy between the races.'

'Extending,' said Martin's friend, in a low voice, 'to the cruellest of tortures, and the bargain and sale of unborn generations.'

Mr Norris the son said nothing, but he made a wry face, and dusted his fingers as Hamlet might after getting rid of Yorick's skull; just as though he had that moment touched a negro, and some of the black had come off upon his hands.

In order that their talk might fall again into its former pleasant channel, Martin dropped the subject, with a shrewd suspicion that it would be a dangerous theme to revive under the best of circumstances; and again addressed himself to the young ladies, who were very gorgeously attired in very beautiful colours, and had every article of dress on the same extensive scale as the little shoes and the thin silk stockings. This suggested to him that they were great proficient in the French fashions, which soon turned out to be the case, for though their information appeared to be none of the newest, it was very extensive; and the eldest sister in particular, who was distinguished by a talent for metaphysics, the laws of hydraulic pressure, and the rights of human kind, had a novel way of combining these acquirements and bringing them to bear on any subject from Millinery to the Millennium, both inclusive, which was at once improving and remarkable; so much so, in short, that it was usually observed to reduce foreigners to a state of temporary insanity in five minutes.

Martin felt his reason going; and as a means of saving himself, besought the other sister (seeing a piano in the room) to sing. With this request she willingly complied; and a bravura concert, solely sustained by the Misses Norris, presently began. They sang in all languages - except their own. German, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Swiss; but nothing native; nothing so low as native. For, in this respect, languages are like many other travellers - ordinary and commonplace enough at home, but 'specially genteel abroad.

There is little doubt that in course of time the Misses Norris would have come to Hebrew, if they had not been interrupted by an announcement from the Irishman, who, flinging open the door, cried in a loud voice -

'Jiniral Fladdock!'

'My!' cried the sisters, desisting suddenly. 'The general come back!'

As they made the exclamation, the general, attired in full uniform for a ball, came darting in with such precipitancy that, hitching his boot in the carpet, and getting his sword between his legs, he came down headlong, and presented a curious little bald place on the crown of his head to the eyes of the astonished company. Nor was this the worst of it; for being rather corpulent and very tight, the general being down, could not get up again, but lay there writing and doing such things with his boots, as there is no other instance of in military history.

Of course there was an immediate rush to his assistance; and the general was promptly raised. But his uniform was so fearfully and wonderfully made, that he came up stiff and without a bend in him like a dead Clown, and had no command whatever of himself until he was put quite flat upon the soles of his feet, when he became animated as by a miracle, and moving edgewise that he might go in a narrower compass and be in less danger of fraying the gold lace on his epaulettes by brushing them against anything, advanced with a smiling visage to salute the lady of the house.

To be sure, it would have been impossible for the family to testify purer delight and joy than at this unlooked-for appearance of General Fladdock! The general was as warmly received as if New York had been in a state of siege and no other general was to be got for love or money. He shook hands with the Norrises three times all round, and then reviewed them from a little distance as a brave commander might, with his ample cloak drawn forward over the right shoulder and thrown back upon the left side to reveal his manly breast.

'And do I then,' cried the general, 'once again behold the choicest spirits of my country!'

'Yes,' said Mr Norris the father. 'Here we are, general.'

Then all the Norrises pressed round the general, inquiring how and where he had been since the date of his letter, and how he had enjoyed himself in foreign parts, and particularly and above all, to what extent he had become acquainted with the great dukes, lords, viscounts, marquesses, duchesses, knights, and baronets, in whom the people of those benighted countries had delight.

'Well, then, don't ask me,' said the general, holding up his hand. 'I was among 'em all the time, and have got public journals in my trunk with my name printed' - he lowered his voice and was very impressive here - 'among the fashionable news. But, oh, the conventionalities of that a-mazing Europe!'

'Ah!' cried Mr Norris the father, giving his head a melancholy shake, and looking towards Martin as though he would say, 'I can't deny it, sir. I would if I could.'

'The limited diffusion of a moral sense in that country!' exclaimed the general. 'The absence of a moral dignity in man!'

'Ah!' sighed all the Norrises, quite overwhelmed with despondency.

'I couldn't have realised it,' pursued the general, 'without being located on the spot. Norris, your imagination is the imagination of a strong man, but YOU couldn't have realised it, without being located on the spot!'

'Never,' said Mr Norris.

'The ex-clusiveness, the pride, the form, the ceremony,' exclaimed the general, emphasizing the article more vigorously at every repetition. 'The artificial barriers set up between man and man; the division of the human race into court cards and plain cards, of every denomination - into clubs, diamonds, spades - anything but heart!'

'Ah!' cried the whole family. 'Too true, general!'

'But stay!' cried Mr Norris the father, taking him by the arm. 'Surely you crossed in the Screw, general?'

'Well! so I did,' was the reply.

'Possible!' cried the young ladies. 'Only think!'

The general seemed at a loss to understand why his having come home in the Screw should occasion such a sensation, nor did he seem at all clearer on the subject when Mr Norris, introducing him to Martin, said:

'A fellow-passenger of yours, I think?'

'Of mine?' exclaimed the general; 'No!'

He had never seen Martin, but Martin had seen him, and recognized him, now that they stood face to face, as the gentleman who had stuck his hands in his pockets towards the end of the voyage, and walked the deck with his nostrils dilated.

Everybody looked at Martin. There was no help for it. The truth must out.

'I came over in the same ship as the general,' said Martin, 'but not in the same cabin. It being necessary for me to observe strict economy, I took my passage in the steerage.'

If the general had been carried up bodily to a loaded cannon, and required to let it off that moment, he could not have been in a state of greater consternation than when he heard these words. He, Fladdock - Fladdock in full militia uniform, Fladdock the General, Fladdock, the caressed of foreign noblemen - expected to know a fellow who had come over in the steerage of line-of-packet ship, at the cost of four pound ten! And meeting that fellow in the very sanctuary of New York fashion, and nestling in the bosom of the New York aristocracy! He almost laid his hand upon his sword.

A death-like stillness fell upon the Norrises. If this story should get wind, their country relation had, by his imprudence, for ever disgraced them. They were the bright particular stars of an exalted New York sphere. There were other fashionable spheres above them, and other fashionable spheres below, and none of the stars in any one of these spheres had anything to say to the stars in any other of these spheres. But, through all the spheres it would go forth that the Norrises, deceived by gentlemanly manners and appearances, had, falling from their high estate, 'received' a dollarless and unknown man. O guardian eagle of the pure Republic, had they lived for this!

'You will allow me,' said Martin, after a terrible silence, 'to take my leave. I feel that I am the cause of at least as much embarrassment here, as I have brought upon myself. But I am bound, before I go, to exonerate this gentleman, who, in introducing me to such society, was quite ignorant of my unworthiness, I assure you.'

With that he made his bow to the Norrises, and walked out like a man of snow; very cool externally, but pretty hot within.

'Come, come,' said Mr Norris the father, looking with a pale face on the assembled circle as Martin closed the door, 'the young man has this night beheld a refinement of social manner, and an easy magnificence of social decoration, to which he is a stranger in his own country. Let us hope it may awake a moral sense within him.'

If that peculiarly transatlantic article, a moral sense - for, if native statesmen, orators, and pamphleteers, are to be believed, America quite monopolises the commodity - if that peculiarly transatlantic article be supposed to include a benevolent love of all mankind, certainly Martin's would have borne, just then, a deal of waking. As he strode along the street, with Mark at his heels, his immoral sense was in active operation; prompting him to the utterance of some rather sanguinary remarks, which it was well for his own credit that nobody

overheard. He had so far cooled down, however, that he had begun to laugh at the recollection of these incidents, when he heard another step behind him, and turning round encountered his friend Bevan, quite out of breath.

He drew his arm through Martin's, and entreating him to walk slowly, was silent for some minutes. At length he said:

'I hope you exonerate me in another sense?'

'How do you mean?' asked Martin.

'I hope you acquit me of intending or foreseeing the termination of our visit. But I scarcely need ask you that.'

'Scarcely indeed,' said Martin. 'I am the more beholden to you for your kindness, when I find what kind of stuff the good citizens here are made of.'

'I reckon,' his friend returned, 'that they are made of pretty much the same stuff as other folks, if they would but own it, and not set up on false pretences.'

'In good faith, that's true,' said Martin.

'I dare say,' resumed his friend, 'you might have such a scene as that in an English comedy, and not detect any gross improbability or anomaly in the matter of it?'

'Yes, indeed!'

'Doubtless it is more ridiculous here than anywhere else,' said his companion; 'but our professions are to blame for that. So far as I myself am concerned, I may add that I was perfectly aware from the first that you came over in the steerage, for I had seen the list of passengers, and knew it did not comprise your name.'

'I feel more obliged to you than before,' said Martin.

'Norris is a very good fellow in his way,' observed Mr Bevan.

'Is he?' said Martin drily.

'Oh yes! there are a hundred good points about him. If you or anybody else addressed him as another order of being, and sued to him IN FORMA PAUPERIS, he would be all kindness and consideration.'

'I needn't have travelled three thousand miles from home to find such a character as THAT,' said Martin. Neither he nor his friend said anything more on the way back; each appearing to find sufficient occupation in his own thoughts.

The tea, or the supper, or whatever else they called the evening meal, was over when they reached the Major's; but the cloth, ornamented with a few additional smears and stains, was still upon the table. At one end of the board Mrs Jefferson Brick and two other ladies were drinking tea; out of the ordinary course, evidently, for they were bonneted and shawled, and seemed to have just come home. By the light of three flaring candles of different lengths, in as many candlesticks of different patterns, the room showed to almost as little advantage as in broad day.

These ladies were all three talking together in a very loud tone when Martin and his friend entered; but seeing those gentlemen, they stopped directly, and became excessively genteel, not to say frosty. As they went on to exchange some few remarks in whispers, the very water in the teapot might have fallen twenty degrees in temperature beneath their chilling coldness.

'Have you been to meeting, Mrs Brick?' asked Martin's friend, with something of a roguish twinkle in his eye.

'To lecture, sir.'

'I beg your pardon. I forgot. You don't go to meeting, I think?'

Here the lady on the right of Mrs Brick gave a pious cough as much as to say 'I do!' - as, indeed, she did nearly every night in the week.

'A good discourse, ma'am?' asked Mr Bevan, addressing this lady.

The lady raised her eyes in a pious manner, and answered 'Yes.' She had been much comforted by some good, strong, peppery doctrine, which satisfactorily disposed of all her friends and acquaintances, and quite settled their business. Her bonnet, too, had far outshone every bonnet in the congregation; so she was tranquil on all accounts.

'What course of lectures are you attending now, ma'am?' said Martin's friend, turning again to Mrs Brick.

'The Philosophy of the Soul, on Wednesdays.'

'On Mondays?'

'The Philosophy of Crime.'

'On Fridays?'

'The Philosophy of Vegetables.'

'You have forgotten Thursdays; the Philosophy of Government, my dear,' observed the third lady.

'No,' said Mrs Brick. 'That's Tuesdays.'

'So it is!' cried the lady. 'The Philosophy of Matter on Thursdays, of course.'

'You see, Mr Chuzzlewit, our ladies are fully employed,' said Bevan.

'Indeed you have reason to say so,' answered Martin. 'Between these very grave pursuits abroad, and family duties at home, their time must be pretty well engrossed.'

Martin stopped here, for he saw that the ladies regarded him with no very great favour, though what he had done to deserve the disdainful expression which appeared in their faces he was at a loss to divine. But on their going upstairs to their bedrooms - which they very soon did - Mr Bevan informed him that domestic drudgery was far beneath the exalted range of these Philosophers, and that the chances were a hundred to one that not one of the three could perform the easiest woman's work for herself, or make the simplest article of dress for any of her children.

'Though whether they might not be better employed with such blunt instruments as knitting-needles than with these edge-tools,' he said, 'is another question; but I can answer for one thing - they don't often cut themselves. Devotions and lectures are our balls and concerts. They go to these places of resort, as an escape from monotony; look at each other's clothes; and come home again.'

'When you say 'home,' do you mean a house like this?'

'Very often. But I see you are tired to death, and will wish you good night. We will discuss your projects in the morning. You cannot but feel already that it is useless staying here, with any hope of advancing them. You will have to go further.'

'And to fare worse?' said Martin, pursuing the old adage.

'Well, I hope not. But sufficient for the day, you know - good night'

They shook hands heartily and separated. As soon as Martin was left alone, the excitement of novelty and change which had sustained him

through all the fatigues of the day, departed; and he felt so thoroughly dejected and worn out, that he even lacked the energy to crawl upstairs to bed.

In twelve or fifteen hours, how great a change had fallen on his hopes and sanguine plans! New and strange as he was to the ground on which he stood, and to the air he breathed, he could not - recalling all that he had crowded into that one day - but entertain a strong misgiving that his enterprise was doomed. Rash and ill-considered as it had often looked on shipboard, but had never seemed on shore, it wore a dismal aspect, now, that frightened him. Whatever thoughts he called up to his aid, they came upon him in depressing and discouraging shapes, and gave him no relief. Even the diamonds on his finger sparkled with the brightness of tears, and had no ray of hope in all their brilliant lustre.

He continued to sit in gloomy rumination by the stove, unmindful of the boarders who dropped in one by one from their stores and counting-houses, or the neighbouring bar-rooms, and, after taking long pulls from a great white waterjug upon the sideboard, and lingering with a kind of hideous fascination near the brass spittoons, lounged heavily to bed; until at length Mark Tapley came and shook him by the arm, supposing him asleep.

'Mark!' he cried, starting.

'All right, sir,' said that cheerful follower, snuffing with his fingers the candle he bore. 'It ain't a very large bed, your'n, sir; and a man as wasn't thirsty might drink, afore breakfast, all the water you've got to wash in, and afterwards eat the towel. But you'll sleep without rocking to-night, sir.'

'I feel as if the house were on the sea' said Martin, staggering when he rose; 'and am utterly wretched.'

'I'm as jolly as a sandboy, myself, sir,' said Mark. 'But, Lord, I have reason to be! I ought to have been born here; that's my opinion. Take care how you go' - for they were now ascending the stairs. 'You recollect the gentleman aboard the Screw as had the very small trunk, sir?'

'The valise? Yes.'

'Well, sir, there's been a delivery of clean clothes from the wash to-night, and they're put outside the bedroom doors here. If you take notice as we go up, what a very few shirts there are, and what a many fronts, you'll penetrate the mystery of his packing.'

But Martin was too weary and despondent to take heed of anything, so had no interest in this discovery. Mr Tapley, nothing dashed by his indifference, conducted him to the top of the house, and into the bed-chamber prepared for his reception; which was a very little narrow room, with half a window in it; a bedstead like a chest without a lid; two chairs; a piece of carpet, such as shoes are commonly tried upon at a ready-made establishment in England; a little looking-glass nailed against the wall; and a washing-table, with a jug and ewer, that might have been mistaken for a milk-pot and slop-basin.

'I suppose they polish themselves with a dry cloth in this country,' said Mark. 'They've certainly got a touch of the 'phoby, sir.'

'I wish you would pull off my boots for me,' said Martin, dropping into one of the chairs 'I am quite knocked up - dead beat, Mark.'

'You won't say that to-morrow morning, sir,' returned Mr Tapley; 'nor even to-night, sir, when you've made a trial of this.' With which he produced a very large tumbler, piled up to the brim with little blocks of clear transparent ice, through which one or two thin slices of lemon, and a golden liquid of delicious appearance, appealed from the still depths below, to the loving eye of the spectator.

'What do you call this?' said Martin.

But Mr Tapley made no answer; merely plunging a reed into the mixture - which caused a pleasant commotion among the pieces of ice - and signifying by an expressive gesture that it was to be pumped up through that agency by the enraptured drinker.

Martin took the glass with an astonished look; applied his lips to the reed; and cast up his eyes once in ecstasy. He paused no more until the goblet was drained to the last drop.

'There, sir!' said Mark, taking it from him with a triumphant face; 'if ever you should happen to be dead beat again, when I ain't in the way, all you've got to do is to ask the nearest man to go and fetch a cobbler.'

'To go and fetch a cobbler?' repeated Martin.

'This wonderful invention, sir,' said Mark, tenderly patting the empty glass, 'is called a cobbler. Sherry cobbler when you name it long; cobbler, when you name it short. Now you're equal to having your boots took off, and are, in every particular worth mentioning, another man.'

Having delivered himself of this solemn preface, he brought the bootjack.

'Mind! I am not going to relapse, Mark,' said Martin; 'but, good Heaven, if we should be left in some wild part of this country without goods or money!'

'Well, sir!' replied the imperturbable Tapley; 'from what we've seen already, I don't know whether, under those circumstances, we shouldn't do better in the wild parts than in the tame ones.'

'Oh, Tom Pinch, Tom Pinch!' said Martin, in a thoughtful tone; 'what would I give to be again beside you, and able to hear your voice, though it were even in the old bedroom at Pecksniff's!'

'Oh, Dragon, Dragon!' echoed Mark, cheerfully, 'if there warn't any water between you and me, and nothing faint-hearted-like in going back, I don't know that I mightn't say the same. But here am I, Dragon, in New York, America; and there are you in Wiltshire, Europe; and there's a fortune to make, Dragon, and a beautiful young lady to make it for; and whenever you go to see the Monument, Dragon, you mustn't give in on the doorsteps, or you'll never get up to the top!'

'Wisely said, Mark,' cried Martin. 'We must look forward.'

'In all the story-books as ever I read, sir, the people as looked backward was turned into stones,' replied Mark; 'and my opinion always was, that they brought it on themselves, and it served 'em right. I wish you good night, sir, and pleasant dreams!'

'They must be of home, then,' said Martin, as he lay down in bed.

'So I say, too,' whispered Mark Tapley, when he was out of hearing and in his own room; 'for if there don't come a time afore we're well out of this, when there'll be a little more credit in keeping up one's jollity, I'm a United Statesman!'

Leaving them to blend and mingle in their sleep the shadows of objects afar off, as they take fantastic shapes upon the wall in the dim light of thought without control, be it the part of this slight chronicle - a dream within a dream - as rapidly to change the scene, and cross the ocean to the English shore.