Chapter XIX

The Reader Is Brought Into Communication With Some Professional Persons, And Sheds A Tear Over The Filail Piety Of Good Mr Jonas

Mr Pecksniff was in a hackney cabriolet, for Jonas Chuzzlewit had said 'Spare no expense.' Mankind is evil in its thoughts and in its base constructions, and Jonas was resolved it should not have an inch to stretch into an ell against him. It never should be charged upon his father's son that he had grudged the money for his father's funeral. Hence, until the obsequies should be concluded, Jonas had taken for his motto 'Spend, and spare not!'

Mr Pecksniff had been to the undertaker, and was now upon his way to another officer in the train of mourning - a female functionary, a nurse, and watcher, and performer of nameless offices about the persons of the dead - whom he had recommended. Her name, as Mr Pecksniff gathered from a scrap of writing in his hand, was Gamp; her residence in Kingsgate Street, High Holborn. So Mr Pecksniff, in a hackney cab, was rattling over Holborn stones, in quest of Mrs Gamp.

This lady lodged at a bird-fancier's, next door but one to the celebrated mutton-pie shop, and directly opposite to the original cat's-meat warehouse; the renown of which establishments was duly heralded on their respective fronts. It was a little house, and this was the more convenient; for Mrs Gamp being, in her highest walk of art, a monthly nurse, or, as her sign-board boldly had it, 'Midwife,' and lodging in the first-floor front, was easily assailable at night by pebbles, walking-sticks, and fragments of tobacco-pipe; all much more efficacious than the street-door knocker, which was so constructed as to wake the street with ease, and even spread alarms of fire in Holborn, without making the smallest impression on the premises to which it was addressed.

It chanced on this particular occasion, that Mrs Gamp had been up all the previous night, in attendance upon a ceremony to which the usage of gossips has given that name which expresses, in two syllables, the curse pronounced on Adam. It chanced that Mrs Gamp had not been regularly engaged, but had been called in at a crisis, in consequence of her great repute, to assist another professional lady with her advice; and thus it happened that, all points of interest in the case being over, Mrs Gamp had come home again to the bird-fancier's and gone to bed. So when Mr Pecksniff drove up in the hackney cab, Mrs Gamp's curtains were drawn close, and Mrs Gamp was fast asleep behind them.

If the bird-fancier had been at home, as he ought to have been, there would have been no great harm in this; but he was out, and his shop was closed. The shutters were down certainly; and in every pane of glass there was at least one tiny bird in a tiny bird-cage, twittering and hopping his little ballet of despair, and knocking his head against the roof; while one unhappy goldfinch who lived outside a red villa with his name on the door, drew the water for his own drinking, and mutely appealed to some good man to drop a farthing's-worth of poison in it. Still, the door was shut. Mr Pecksniff tried the latch, and shook it, causing a cracked bell inside to ring most mournfully; but no one came. The bird-fancier was an easy shaver also, and a fashionable hair-dresser also, and perhaps he had been sent for, express, from the court end of the town, to trim a lord, or cut and curl a lady; but however that might be, there, upon his own ground, he was not; nor was there any more distinct trace of him to assist the imagination of an inquirer, than a professional print or emblem of his calling (much favoured in the trade), representing a hair-dresser of easy manners curling a lady of distinguished fashion, in the presence of a patent upright grand pianoforte.

Noting these circumstances, Mr Pecksniff, in the innocence of his heart, applied himself to the knocker; but at the first double knock every window in the street became alive with female heads; and before he could repeat the performance whole troops of married ladies (some about to trouble Mrs Gamp themselves very shortly) came flocking round the steps, all crying out with one accord, and with uncommon interest, 'Knock at the winder, sir, knock at the winder. Lord bless you, don't lose no more time than you can help - knock at the winder!'

Acting upon this suggestion, and borrowing the driver's whip for the purpose, Mr Pecksniff soon made a commotion among the first floor flower-pots, and roused Mrs Gamp, whose voice - to the great satisfaction of the matrons - was heard to say, 'I'm coming.'

'He's as pale as a muffin,' said one lady, in allusion to Mr Pecksniff.

'So he ought to be, if he's the feelings of a man,' observed another.

A third lady (with her arms folded) said she wished he had chosen any other time for fetching Mrs Gamp, but it always happened so with HER.

It gave Mr Pecksniff much uneasiness to find, from these remarks, that he was supposed to have come to Mrs Gamp upon an errand touching - not the close of life, but the other end. Mrs Gamp herself was under the same impression, for, throwing open the window, she cried behind the curtains, as she hastily attired herself -

'Is it Mrs Perkins?'

'No!' returned Mr Pecksniff, sharply. 'Nothing of the sort.'

'What, Mr Whilks!' cried Mrs Gamp. 'Don't say it's you, Mr Whilks, and that poor creetur Mrs Whilks with not even a pincushion ready. Don't say it's you, Mr Whilks!'

'It isn't Mr Whilks,' said Pecksniff. 'I don't know the man. Nothing of the kind. A gentleman is dead; and some person being wanted in the house, you have been recommended by Mr Mould the undertaker.'

As she was by this time in a condition to appear, Mrs Gamp, who had a face for all occasions, looked out of the window with her mourning countenance, and said she would be down directly. But the matrons took it very ill that Mr Pecksniff's mission was of so unimportant a kind; and the lady with her arms folded rated him in good round terms, signifying that she would be glad to know what he meant by terrifying delicate females 'with his corpses;' and giving it as her opinion that he was quite ugly enough to know better. The other ladies were not at all behind-hand in expressing similar sentiments; and the children, of whom some scores had now collected, hooted and defied Mr Pecksniff quite savagely. So when Mrs Gamp appeared, the unoffending gentleman was glad to hustle her with very little ceremony into the cabriolet, and drive off, overwhelmed with popular execration.

Mrs Gamp had a large bundle with her, a pair of pattens, and a species of gig umbrella; the latter article in colour like a faded leaf, except where a circular patch of a lively blue had been dexterously let in at the top. She was much flurried by the haste she had made, and laboured under the most erroneous views of cabriolets, which she appeared to confound with mail-coaches or stage-wagons, inasmuch as she was constantly endeavouring for the first half mile to force her luggage through the little front window, and clamouring to the driver to 'put it in the boot.' When she was disabused of this idea, her whole being resolved itself into an absorbing anxiety about her pattens, with which she played innumerable games at quoits on Mr Pecksniff's legs. It was not until they were close upon the house of mourning that she had enough composure to observe -

'And so the gentleman's dead, sir! Ah! The more's the pity.' She didn't even know his name. 'But it's what we must all come to. It's as certain as being born, except that we can't make our calculations as exact. Ah! Poor dear!'

She was a fat old woman, this Mrs Gamp, with a husky voice and a moist eye, which she had a remarkable power of turning up, and only

showing the white of it. Having very little neck, it cost her some trouble to look over herself, if one may say so, at those to whom she talked. She wore a very rusty black gown, rather the worse for snuff, and a shawl and bonnet to correspond. In these dilapidated articles of dress she had, on principle, arrayed herself, time out of mind, on such occasions as the present; for this at once expressed a decent amount of veneration for the deceased, and invited the next of kin to present her with a fresher suit of weeds; an appeal so frequently successful, that the very fetch and ghost of Mrs Gamp, bonnet and all, might be seen hanging up, any hour in the day, in at least a dozen of the second-hand clothes shops about Holborn. The face of Mrs Gamp - the nose in particular - was somewhat red and swollen, and it was difficult to enjoy her society without becoming conscious of a smell of spirits. Like most persons who have attained to great eminence in their profession, she took to hers very kindly; insomuch that, setting aside her natural predilections as a woman, she went to a lying-in or a laying-out with equal zest and relish.

'Ah!' repeated Mrs Gamp; for it was always a safe sentiment in cases of mourning. 'Ah dear! When Gamp was summoned to his long home, and I see him a-lying in Guy's Hospital with a penny-piece on each eye, and his wooden leg under his left arm, I thought I should have fainted away. But I bore up.'

If certain whispers current in the Kingsgate Street circles had any truth in them, she had indeed borne up surprisingly; and had exerted such uncommon fortitude as to dispose of Mr Gamp's remains for the benefit of science. But it should be added, in fairness, that this had happened twenty years before; and that Mr and Mrs Gamp had long been separated on the ground of incompatibility of temper in their drink.

'You have become indifferent since then, I suppose?' said Mr Pecksniff. 'Use is second nature, Mrs Gamp.'

'You may well say second nater, sir,' returned that lady. 'One's first ways is to find sich things a trial to the feelings, and so is one's lasting custom. If it wasn't for the nerve a little sip of liquor gives me (I never was able to do more than taste it), I never could go through with what I sometimes has to do. 'Mrs Harris,' I says, at the very last case as ever I acted in, which it was but a young person, 'Mrs Harris,' I says, 'leave the bottle on the chimley-piece, and don't ask me to take none, but let me put my lips to it when I am so dispoged, and then I will do what I'm engaged to do, according to the best of my ability.' 'Mrs Gamp,' she says, in answer, 'if ever there was a sober creetur to be got at eighteen pence a day for working people, and three and six for gentlefolks - night watching," said Mrs Gamp with emphasis, "'being a extra charge - you are that inwallable person.' 'Mrs Harris,' I says to

her, ‘don't name the charge, for if I could afford to lay all my feller creeturs out for nothink, I would gladly do it, sich is the love I bears 'em. But what I always says to them as has the management of matters, Mrs Harris” - here she kept her eye on Mr Pecksniff - '“be they gents or be they ladies, is, don't ask me whether I won't take none, or whether I will, but leave the bottle on the chimley-piece, and let me put my lips to it when I am so dispoged.”

The conclusion of this affecting narrative brought them to the house. In the passage they encountered Mr Mould the undertaker; a little elderly gentleman, bald, and in a suit of black; with a notebook in his hand, a massive gold watch-chain dangling from his fob, and a face in which a queer attempt at melancholy was at odds with a smirk of satisfaction; so that he looked as a man might, who, in the very act of smacking his lips over choice old wine, tried to make believe it was physic.

'Well, Mrs Gamp, and how are YOU, Mrs Gamp?' said this gentleman, in a voice as soft as his step.

'Pretty well, I thank you, sir,' dropping a curtsey.

'You'll be very particular here, Mrs Gamp. This is not a common case, Mrs Gamp. Let everything be very nice and comfortable, Mrs Gamp, if you please,' said the undertaker, shaking his head with a solemn air.

'It shall be, sir,' she replied, curtseying again. 'You knows me of old, sir, I hope.'

'I hope so, too, Mrs Gamp,' said the undertaker, 'and I think so also.' Mrs Gamp curtseyed again. 'This is one of the most impressive cases, sir,' he continued, addressing Mr Pecksniff, 'that I have seen in the whole course of my professional experience.'

'Indeed, Mr Mould!' cried that gentleman.

'Such affectionate regret, sir, I never saw. There is no limitation, there is positively NO limitation' - opening his eyes wide, and standing on tiptoe - 'in point of expense! I have orders, sir, to put on my whole establishment of mutes; and mutes come very dear, Mr Pecksniff; not to mention their drink. To provide silver-plated handles of the very best description, ornamented with angels' heads from the most expensive dies. To be perfectly profuse in feathers. In short, sir, to turn out something absolutely gorgeous.'

'My friend Mr Jonas is an excellent man,' said Mr Pecksniff.

'I have seen a good deal of what is filial in my time, sir,' retorted Mould, 'and what is unfilial too. It is our lot. We come into the knowledge of those secrets. But anything so filial as this; anything so honourable to human nature; so calculated to reconcile all of us to the world we live in; never yet came under my observation. It only proves, sir, what was so forcibly observed by the lamented theatrical poet - buried at Stratford - that there is good in everything.'

'It is very pleasant to hear you say so, Mr Mould,' observed Pecksniff.

'You are very kind, sir. And what a man Mr Chuzzlewit was, sir! Ah! what a man he was. You may talk of your lord mayors,' said Mould, waving his hand at the public in general, 'your sheriffs, your common councilmen, your trumpery; but show me a man in this city who is worthy to walk in the shoes of the departed Mr Chuzzlewit. No, no,' cried Mould, with bitter sarcasm. 'Hang 'em up, hang 'em up; sole 'em and heel 'em, and have 'em ready for his son against he's old enough to wear 'em; but don't try 'em on yourselves, for they won't fit you. We knew him,' said Mould, in the same biting vein, as he pocketed his note-book; 'we knew him, and are not to be caught with chaff. Mr Pecksniff, sir, good morning.'

Mr Pecksniff returned the compliment; and Mould, sensible of having distinguished himself, was going away with a brisk smile, when he fortunately remembered the occasion. Quickly becoming depressed again, he sighed; looked into the crown of his hat, as if for comfort; put it on without finding any; and slowly departed.

Mrs Gamp and Mr Pecksniff then ascended the staircase; and the former, having been shown to the chamber in which all that remained of Anthony Chuzzlewit lay covered up, with but one loving heart, and that a halting one, to mourn it, left the latter free to enter the darkened room below, and rejoin Mr Jonas, from whom he had now been absent nearly two hours.

He found that example to bereaved sons, and pattern in the eyes of all performers of funerals, musing over a fragment of writing-paper on the desk, and scratching figures on it with a pen. The old man's chair, and hat, and walking-stick, were removed from their accustomed places, and put out of sight; the window-blinds as yellow as November fogs, were drawn down close; Jonas himself was so subdued, that he could scarcely be heard to speak, and only seen to walk across the room.

'Pecksniff,' he said, in a whisper, 'you shall have the regulation of it all, mind! You shall be able to tell anybody who talks about it that everything was correctly and nicely done. There isn't any one you'd like to ask to the funeral, is there?'

'No, Mr Jonas, I think not.'

'Because if there is, you know,' said Jonas, 'ask him. We don't want to make a secret of it.'

'No,' repeated Mr Pecksniff, after a little reflection. 'I am not the less obliged to you on that account, Mr Jonas, for your liberal hospitality; but there really is no one.'

'Very well,' said Jonas; 'then you, and I, and Chuffey, and the doctor, will be just a coachful. We'll have the doctor, Pecksniff, because he knows what was the matter with him, and that it couldn't be helped.'

'Where is our dear friend, Mr Chuffey?' asked Pecksniff, looking round the chamber, and winking both his eyes at once - for he was overcome by his feelings.

But here he was interrupted by Mrs Gamp, who, divested of her bonnet and shawl, came sidling and bridling into the room; and with some sharpness demanded a conference outside the door with Mr Pecksniff.

'You may say whatever you wish to say here, Mrs Gamp,' said that gentleman, shaking his head with a melancholy expression.

'It is not much as I have to say when people is a-mourning for the dead and gone,' said Mrs Gamp; 'but what I have to say is TO the pint and purpose, and no offence intended, must be so considered. I have been at a many places in my time, gentlemen, and I hope I knows what my duties is, and how the same should be performed; in course, if I did not, it would be very strange, and very wrong in sich a gentleman as Mr Mould, which has undertook the highest families in this land, and given every satisfaction, so to recommend me as he does. I have seen a deal of trouble my own self,' said Mrs Gamp, laying greater and greater stress upon her words, 'and I can feel for them as has their feelings tried, but I am not a Rooshan or a Prooshan, and consequently cannot suffer Spies to be set over me.'

Before it was possible that an answer could be returned, Mrs Gamp, growing redder in the face, went on to say:

'It is not a easy matter, gentlemen, to live when you are left a widder woman; particular when your feelings works upon you to that extent that you often find yourself a-going out on terms which is a certain loss, and never can repay. But in whatever way you earns your bread, you may have rules and regulations of your own which cannot be broke through. Some people,' said Mrs Gamp, again entrenching herself behind her strong point, as if it were not assailable by human

ingenuity, 'may be Rooshans, and others may be Prooshans; they are born so, and will please themselves. Them which is of other naturs thinks different.'

'If I understand this good lady,' said Mr Pecksniff, turning to Jonas, 'Mr Chuffey is troublesome to her. Shall I fetch him down?'

'Do,' said Jonas. 'I was going to tell you he was up there, when she came in. I'd go myself and bring him down, only - only I'd rather you went, if you don't mind.'

Mr Pecksniff promptly departed, followed by Mrs Gamp, who, seeing that he took a bottle and glass from the cupboard, and carried it in his hand, was much softened.

'I am sure,' she said, 'that if it wasn't for his own happiness, I should no more mind him being there, poor dear, than if he was a fly. But them as isn't used to these things, thinks so much of 'em afterwards, that it's a kindness to 'em not to let 'em have their wish. And even,' said Mrs Gamp, probably in reference to some flowers of speech she had already strewn on Mr Chuffey, 'even if one calls 'em names, it's only done to rouse 'em.'

Whatever epithets she had bestowed on the old clerk, they had not roused HIM. He sat beside the bed, in the chair he had occupied all the previous night, with his hands folded before him, and his head bowed down; and neither looked up, on their entrance, nor gave any sign of consciousness, until Mr Pecksniff took him by the arm, when he meekly rose.

'Three score and ten,' said Chuffey, 'ought and carry seven. Some men are so strong that they live to four score - four times ought's an ought, four times two's an eight - eighty. Oh! why - why - why didn't he live to four times ought's an ought, and four times two's an eight, eighty?'

'Ah! what a wale of grief!' cried Mrs Gamp, possessing herself of the bottle and glass.

'Why did he die before his poor old crazy servant?' said Chuffey, clasping his hands and looking up in anguish. 'Take him from me, and what remains?'

'Mr Jonas,' returned Pecksniff, 'Mr Jonas, my good friend.'

'I loved him,' cried the old man, weeping. 'He was good to me. We learnt Tare and Tret together at school. I took him down once, six boys in the arithmetic class. God forgive me! Had I the heart to take him down!'

'Come, Mr Chuffey,' said Pecksniff. 'Come with me. Summon up your fortitude, Mr Chuffey.'

'Yes, I will,' returned the old clerk. 'Yes. I'll sum up my forty - How many times forty - Oh, Chuzzlewit and Son - Your own son Mr Chuzzlewit; your own son, sir!'

He yielded to the hand that guided him, as he lapsed into this familiar expression, and submitted to be led away. Mrs Gamp, with the bottle on one knee, and the glass on the other, sat upon a stool, shaking her head for a long time, until, in a moment of abstraction, she poured out a dram of spirits, and raised it to her lips. It was succeeded by a second, and by a third, and then her eyes - either in the sadness of her reflections upon life and death, or in her admiration of the liquor - were so turned up, as to be quite invisible. But she shook her head still.

Poor Chuffey was conducted to his accustomed corner, and there he remained, silent and quiet, save at long intervals, when he would rise, and walk about the room, and wring his hands, or raise some strange and sudden cry. For a whole week they all three sat about the hearth and never stirred abroad. Mr Pecksniff would have walked out in the evening time, but Mr Jonas was so averse to his being absent for a minute, that he abandoned the idea, and so, from morning until night, they brooded together in the dark room, without relief or occupation.

The weight of that which was stretched out, stiff and stark, in the awful chamber above-stairs, so crushed and bore down Jonas, that he bent beneath the load. During the whole long seven days and nights, he was always oppressed and haunted by a dreadful sense of its presence in the house. Did the door move, he looked towards it with a livid face and starting eye, as if he fully believed that ghostly fingers clutched the handle. Did the fire flicker in a draught of air, he glanced over his shoulder, as almost dreading to behold some shrouded figure fanning and flapping at it with its fearful dress. The lightest noise disturbed him; and once, in the night, at the sound of a footstep overhead, he cried out that the dead man was walking - tramp, tramp, tramp - about his coffin.

He lay at night upon a mattress on the floor of the sitting-room; his own chamber having been assigned to Mrs Gamp; and Mr Pecksniff was similarly accommodated. The howling of a dog before the house, filled him with a terror he could not disguise. He avoided the reflection in the opposite windows of the light that burned above, as though it had been an angry eye. He often, in every night, rose up from his fitful sleep, and looked and longed for dawn; all directions and arrangements, even to the ordering of their daily meals, he abandoned

to Mr Pecksniff. That excellent gentleman, deeming that the mourner wanted comfort, and that high feeding was likely to do him infinite service, availed himself of these opportunities to such good purpose, that they kept quite a dainty table during this melancholy season; with sweetbreads, stewed kidneys, oysters, and other such light viands for supper every night; over which, and sundry jorums of hot punch, Mr Pecksniff delivered such moral reflections and spiritual consolation as might have converted a Heathen - especially if he had had but an imperfect acquaintance with the English tongue.

Nor did Mr Pecksniff alone indulge in the creature comforts during this sad time. Mrs Gamp proved to be very choice in her eating, and repudiated hashed mutton with scorn. In her drinking too, she was very punctual and particular, requiring a pint of mild porter at lunch, a pint at dinner, half-a-pint as a species of stay or holdfast between dinner and tea, and a pint of the celebrated staggering ale, or Real Old Brighton Tipper, at supper; besides the bottle on the chimney-piece, and such casual invitations to refresh herself with wine as the good breeding of her employers might prompt them to offer. In like manner, Mr Mould's men found it necessary to drown their grief, like a young kitten in the morning of its existence, for which reason they generally fuddled themselves before they began to do anything, lest it should make head and get the better of them. In short, the whole of that strange week was a round of dismal joviality and grim enjoyment; and every one, except poor Chuffey, who came within the shadow of Anthony Chuzzlewit's grave, feasted like a Ghoul.

At length the day of the funeral, pious and truthful ceremony that it was, arrived. Mr Mould, with a glass of generous port between his eye and the light, leaned against the desk in the little glass office with his gold watch in his unoccupied hand, and conversed with Mrs Gamp; two mutes were at the house-door, looking as mournful as could be reasonably expected of men with such a thriving job in hand; the whole of Mr Mould's establishment were on duty within the house or without; feathers waved, horses snorted, silk and velvets fluttered; in a word, as Mr Mould emphatically said, 'Everything that money could do was done.'

'And what can do more, Mrs Gamp?' exclaimed the undertaker as he emptied his glass and smacked his lips.

'Nothing in the world, sir.'

'Nothing in the world,' repeated Mr Mould. 'You are right, Mrs Gamp. Why do people spend more money' - here he filled his glass again - 'upon a death, Mrs Gamp, than upon a birth? Come, that's in your way; you ought to know. How do you account for that now?'

'Perhaps it is because an undertaker's charges comes dearer than a nurse's charges, sir,' said Mrs Gamp, tittering, and smoothing down her new black dress with her hands.

'Ha, ha!' laughed Mr Mould. 'You have been breakfasting at somebody's expense this morning, Mrs Gamp.' But seeing, by the aid of a little shaving-glass which hung opposite, that he looked merry, he composed his features and became sorrowful.

'Many's the time that I've not breakfasted at my own expense along of your recommending, sir; and many's the time I hope to do the same in time to come,' said Mrs Gamp, with an apologetic curtsey.

'So be it,' replied Mr Mould, 'please Providence. No, Mrs Gamp; I'll tell you why it is. It's because the laying out of money with a well-conducted establishment, where the thing is performed upon the very best scale, binds the broken heart, and sheds balm upon the wounded spirit. Hearts want binding, and spirits want balming when people die; not when people are born. Look at this gentleman to-day; look at him.'

'An open-handed gentleman?' cried Mrs Gamp, with enthusiasm.

'No, no,' said the undertaker; 'not an open-handed gentleman in general, by any means. There you mistake him; but an afflicted gentleman, an affectionate gentleman, who knows what it is in the power of money to do, in giving him relief, and in testifying his love and veneration for the departed. It can give him,' said Mr Mould, waving his watch-chain slowly round and round, so that he described one circle after every item; 'it can give him four horses to each vehicle; it can give him velvet trappings; it can give him drivers in cloth cloaks and top-boots; it can give him the plumage of the ostrich, dyed black; it can give him any number of walking attendants, dressed in the first style of funeral fashion, and carrying batons tipped with brass; it can give him a handsome tomb; it can give him a place in Westminster Abbey itself, if he choose to invest it in such a purchase. Oh! do not let us say that gold is dross, when it can buy such things as these, Mrs Gamp.'

'But what a blessing, sir,' said Mrs Gamp, 'that there are such as you, to sell or let 'em out on hire!'

'Aye, Mrs Gamp, you are right,' rejoined the undertaker. 'We should be an honoured calling. We do good by stealth, and blush to have it mentioned in our little bills. How much consolation may I - even I,' cried Mr Mould, 'have diffused among my fellow-creatures by means of my four long-tailed prancers, never harnessed under ten pund ten!'

Mrs Gamp had begun to make a suitable reply, when she was interrupted by the appearance of one of Mr Mould's assistants - his chief mourner in fact - an obese person, with his waistcoat in closer connection with his legs than is quite reconcilable with the established ideas of grace; with that cast of feature which is figuratively called a bottle nose; and with a face covered all over with pimples. He had been a tender plant once upon a time, but from constant blowing in the fat atmosphere of funerals, had run to seed.

'Well, Tacker,' said Mr Mould, 'is all ready below?'

'A beautiful show, sir,' rejoined Tacker. 'The horses are prouder and fresher than ever I see 'em; and toss their heads, they do, as if they knowed how much their plumes cost. One, two, three, four,' said Mr Tacker, heaping that number of black cloaks upon his left arm.

'Is Tom there, with the cake and wine?' asked Mr Mould.

'Ready to come in at a moment's notice, sir,' said Tacker.

'Then,' rejoined Mr Mould, putting up his watch, and glancing at himself in the little shaving-glass, that he might be sure his face had the right expression on it; 'then I think we may proceed to business. Give me the paper of gloves, Tacker. Ah, what a man he was! Ah, Tacker, Tacker, what a man he was!'

Mr Tacker, who from his great experience in the performance of funerals, would have made an excellent pantomime actor, winked at Mrs Gamp without at all disturbing the gravity of his countenance, and followed his master into the next room.

It was a great point with Mr Mould, and a part of his professional tact, not to seem to know the doctor; though in reality they were near neighbours, and very often, as in the present instance, worked together. So he advanced to fit on his black kid gloves as if he had never seen him in all his life; while the doctor, on his part, looked as distant and unconscious as if he had heard and read of undertakers, and had passed their shops, but had never before been brought into communication with one.

'Gloves, eh?' said the doctor. 'Mr Pecksniff after you.'

'I couldn't think of it,' returned Mr Pecksniff.

'You are very good,' said the doctor, taking a pair. 'Well, sir, as I was saying - I was called up to attend that case at about half-past one o'clock. Cake and wine, eh? Which is port? Thank you.'

Mr Pecksniff took some also.

'At about half-past one o'clock in the morning, sir,' resumed the doctor, 'I was called up to attend that case. At the first pull of the night-bell I turned out, threw up the window, and put out my head. Cloak, eh? Don't tie it too tight. That'll do.'

Mr Pecksniff having been likewise inducted into a similar garment, the doctor resumed.

'And put out my head - hat, eh? My good friend, that is not mine. Mr Pecksniff, I beg your pardon, but I think we have unintentionally made an exchange. Thank you. Well, sir, I was going to tell you - '

'We are quite ready,' interrupted Mould in a low voice.

'Ready, eh?' said the doctor. 'Very good, Mr Pecksniff, I'll take an opportunity of relating the rest in the coach. It's rather curious. Ready, eh? No rain, I hope?'

'Quite fair, sir,' returned Mould.

'I was afraid the ground would have been wet,' said the doctor, 'for my glass fell yesterday. We may congratulate ourselves upon our good fortune.' But seeing by this time that Mr Jonas and Chuffey were going out at the door, he put a white pocket-handkerchief to his face as if a violent burst of grief had suddenly come upon him, and walked down side by side with Mr Pecksniff.

Mr Mould and his men had not exaggerated the grandeur of the arrangements. They were splendid. The four hearse-horses, especially, reared and pranced, and showed their highest action, as if they knew a man was dead, and triumphed in it. 'They break us, drive us, ride us; ill-treat, abuse, and maim us for their pleasure - But they die; Hurrah, they die!'

So through the narrow streets and winding city ways, went Anthony Chuzzlewit's funeral; Mr Jonas glancing stealthily out of the coach-window now and then, to observe its effect upon the crowd; Mr Mould as he walked along, listening with a sober pride to the exclamations of the bystanders; the doctor whispering his story to Mr Pecksniff, without appearing to come any nearer the end of it; and poor old Chuffey sobbing unregarded in a corner. But he had greatly scandalized Mr Mould at an early stage of the ceremony by carrying his handkerchief in his hat in a perfectly informal manner, and wiping his eyes with his knuckles. And as Mr Mould himself had said already, his behaviour was indecent, and quite unworthy of such an occasion; and he never ought to have been there.

There he was, however; and in the churchyard there he was, also, conducting himself in a no less unbecoming manner, and leaning for support on Tacker, who plainly told him that he was fit for nothing better than a walking funeral. But Chuffey, Heaven help him! heard no sound but the echoes, lingering in his own heart, of a voice for ever silent.

'I loved him,' cried the old man, sinking down upon the grave when all was done. 'He was very good to me. Oh, my dear old friend and master!'

'Come, come, Mr Chuffey,' said the doctor, 'this won't do; it's a clayey soil, Mr Chuffey. You mustn't, really.'

'If it had been the commonest thing we do, and Mr Chuffey had been a Bearer, gentlemen,' said Mould, casting an imploring glance upon them, as he helped to raise him, 'he couldn't have gone on worse than this.'

'Be a man, Mr Chuffey,' said Pecksniff.

'Be a gentleman, Mr Chuffey,' said Mould.

'Upon my word, my good friend,' murmured the doctor, in a tone of stately reproof, as he stepped up to the old man's side, 'this is worse than weakness. This is bad, selfish, very wrong, Mr Chuffey. You should take example from others, my good sir. You forget that you were not connected by ties of blood with our deceased friend; and that he had a very near and very dear relation, Mr Chuffey.'

'Aye, his own son!' cried the old man, clasping his hands with remarkable passion. 'His own, own, only son!'

'He's not right in his head, you know,' said Jonas, turning pale. 'You're not to mind anything he says. I shouldn't wonder if he was to talk some precious nonsense. But don't you mind him, any of you. I don't. My father left him to my charge; and whatever he says or does, that's enough. I'll take care of him.'

A hum of admiration rose from the mourners (including Mr Mould and his merry men) at this new instance of magnanimity and kind feeling on the part of Jonas. But Chuffey put it to the test no farther. He said not a word more, and being left to himself for a little while, crept back again to the coach.

It has been said that Mr Jonas turned pale when the behaviour of the old clerk attracted general attention; his discomposure, however, was but momentary, and he soon recovered. But these were not the only

changes he had exhibited that day. The curious eyes of Mr Pecksniff had observed that as soon as they left the house upon their mournful errand, he began to mend; that as the ceremonies proceeded he gradually, by little and little, recovered his old condition, his old looks, his old bearing, his old agreeable characteristics of speech and manner, and became, in all respects, his old pleasant self. And now that they were seated in the coach on their return home; and more when they got there, and found the windows open, the light and air admitted, and all traces of the late event removed; he felt so well convinced that Jonas was again the Jonas he had known a week ago, and not the Jonas of the intervening time, that he voluntarily gave up his recently-acquired power without one faint attempt to exercise it, and at once fell back into his former position of mild and deferential guest.

Mrs Gamp went home to the bird-fancier's, and was knocked up again that very night for a birth of twins; Mr Mould dined gayly in the bosom of his family, and passed the evening facetiously at his club; the hearse, after standing for a long time at the door of a roistering public-house, repaired to its stables with the feathers inside and twelve red-nosed undertakers on the roof, each holding on by a dingy peg, to which, in times of state, a waving plume was fitted; the various trappings of sorrow were carefully laid by in presses for the next hirer; the fiery steeds were quenched and quiet in their stalls; the doctor got merry with wine at a wedding-dinner, and forgot the middle of the story which had no end to it; the pageant of a few short hours ago was written nowhere half so legibly as in the undertaker's books.

Not in the churchyard? Not even there. The gates were closed; the night was dark and wet; the rain fell silently, among the stagnant weeds and nettles. One new mound was there which had not been there last night. Time, burrowing like a mole below the ground, had marked his track by throwing up another heap of earth. And that was all.