Chapter XXI

More American Experiences, Martin Takes A Partner, And Makes A Purchase. Some Account Of Eden, As It Appeared On Paper. Also Of The British Lion. Also Of The Kind Of Sympathy Professed And Entertained By The Watertoast Association Of United Sympathisers

The knocking at Mr Pecksniff's door, though loud enough, bore no resemblance whatever to the noise of an American railway train at full speed. It may be well to begin the present chapter with this frank admission, lest the reader should imagine that the sounds now deafening this history's ears have any connection with the knocker on Mr Pecksniff's door, or with the great amount of agitation pretty equally divided between that worthy man and Mr Pinch, of which its strong performance was the cause.

Mr Pecksniff's house is more than a thousand leagues away; and again this happy chronicle has Liberty and Moral Sensibility for its high companions. Again it breathes the blessed air of Independence; again it contemplates with pious awe that moral sense which renders unto Ceasar nothing that is his; again inhales that sacred atmosphere which was the life of him - oh noble patriot, with many followers! - who dreamed of Freedom in a slave's embrace, and waking sold her offspring and his own in public markets.

How the wheels clank and rattle, and the tram-road shakes, as the train rushes on! And now the engine yells, as it were lashed and tortured like a living labourer, and writhed in agony. A poor fancy; for steel and iron are of infinitely greater account, in this commonwealth, than flesh and blood. If the cunning work of man be urged beyond its power of endurance, it has within it the elements of its own revenge; whereas the wretched mechanism of the Divine Hand is dangerous with no such property, but may be tampered with, and crushed, and broken, at the driver's pleasure. Look at that engine! It shall cost a man more dollars in the way of penalty and fine, and satisfaction of the outraged law, to deface in wantonness that senseless mass of metal, than to take the lives of twenty human creatures! Thus the stars wink upon the bloody stripes; and Liberty pulls down her cap upon her eyes, and owns Oppression in its vilest aspect, for her sister.

The engine-driver of the train whose noise awoke us to the present chapter was certainly troubled with no such reflections as these; nor is it very probable that his mind was disturbed by any reflections at all. He leaned with folded arms and crossed legs against the side of the carriage, smoking; and, except when he expressed, by a grunt as short as his pipe, his approval of some particularly dexterous aim on the part of his colleague, the fireman, who beguiled his leisure by

throwing logs of wood from the tender at the numerous stray cattle on the line, he preserved a composure so immovable, and an indifference so complete, that if the locomotive had been a sucking-pig, he could not have been more perfectly indifferent to its doings. Notwithstanding the tranquil state of this officer, and his unbroken peace of mind, the train was proceeding with tolerable rapidity; and the rails being but poorly laid, the jolts and bumps it met with in its progress were neither slight nor few.

There were three great caravans or cars attached. The ladies' car, the gentlemen's car, and the car for negroes; the latter painted black, as an appropriate compliment to its company. Martin and Mark Tapley were in the first, as it was the most comfortable; and, being far from full, received other gentlemen who, like them, were unblessed by the society of ladies of their own. They were seated side by side, and were engaged in earnest conversation.

'And so, Mark,' said Martin, looking at him with an anxious expression, 'and so you are glad we have left New York far behind us, are you?'

'Yes, sir,' said Mark. 'I am. Precious glad.'

'Were you not ‘jolly’ there?' asked Martin.

'On the contrairy, sir,' returned Mark. 'The jolliest week as ever I spent in my life, was that there week at Pawkins's.'

'What do you think of our prospects?' inquired Martin, with an air that plainly said he had avoided the question for some time.

'Uncommon bright, sir,' returned Mark. 'Impossible for a place to have a better name, sir, than the Walley of Eden. No man couldn't think of settling in a better place than the Walley of Eden. And I'm told,' added Mark, after a pause, 'as there's lots of serpents there, so we shall come out, quite complete and reg'lar.'

So far from dwelling upon this agreeable piece of information with the least dismay, Mark's face grew radiant as he called it to mind; so very radiant, that a stranger might have supposed he had all his life been yearning for the society of serpents, and now hailed with delight the approaching consummation of his fondest wishes.

'Who told you that?' asked Martin, sternly.

'A military officer,' said Mark.

'Confound you for a ridiculous fellow!' cried Martin, laughing heartily in spite of himself. 'What military officer? You know they spring up in every field.'

'As thick as scarecrows in England, sir,' interposed Mark, 'which is a sort of milita themselves, being entirely coat and wescoat, with a stick inside. Ha, ha! - Don't mind me, sir; it's my way sometimes. I can't help being jolly. Why it was one of them inwading conquerors at Pawkins's, as told me. 'Am I rightly informed,' he says - not exactly through his nose, but as if he'd got a stoppage in it, very high up - 'that you're a-going to the Walley of Eden?' 'I heard some talk on it,' I told him. 'Oh!' says he, 'if you should ever happen to go to bed there - you MAY, you know,' he says, 'in course of time as civilisation progresses - don't forget to take a axe with you.' I looks at him tolerable hard. 'Fleas?' says I. 'And more,' says he. 'Wampires?' says I. 'And more,' says he. 'Musquitoes, perhaps?' says I. 'And more,' says he. 'What more?' says I. 'Snakes more,' says he; 'rattle-snakes. You're right to a certain extent, stranger. There air some catawampous chawers in the small way too, as graze upon a human pretty strong; but don't mind THEM - they're company. It's snakes,' he says, 'as you'll object to; and whenever you wake and see one in a upright poster on your bed,' he says, 'like a corkscrew with the handle off a-sittin' on its bottom ring, cut him down, for he means wenom."

'Why didn't you tell me this before!' cried Martin, with an expression of face which set off the cheerfulness of Mark's visage to great advantage.

'I never thought on it, sir,' said Mark. 'It come in at one ear, and went out at the other. But Lord love us, he was one of another Company, I dare say, and only made up the story that we might go to his Eden, and not the opposition one.'

'There's some probability in that,' observed Martin. 'I can honestly say that I hope so, with all my heart.'

'I've not a doubt about it, sir,' returned Mark, who, full of the inspiriting influence of the anecodote upon himself, had for the moment forgotten its probable effect upon his master; 'anyhow, we must live, you know, sir.'

'Live!' cried Martin. 'Yes, it's easy to say live; but if we should happen not to wake when rattlesnakes are making corkscrews of themselves upon our beds, it may be not so easy to do it.'

'And that's a fact,' said a voice so close in his ear that it tickled him. 'That's dreadful true.'

Martin looked round, and found that a gentleman, on the seat behind, had thrust his head between himself and Mark, and sat with his chin resting on the back rail of their little bench, entertaining himself with their conversation. He was as languid and listless in his looks as most of the gentlemen they had seen; his cheeks were so hollow that he seemed to be always sucking them in; and the sun had burnt him, not a wholesome red or brown, but dirty yellow. He had bright dark eyes, which he kept half closed; only peeping out of the corners, and even then with a glance that seemed to say, 'Now you won't overreach me; you want to, but you won't.' His arms rested carelessly on his knees as he leant forward; in the palm of his left hand, as English rustics have their slice of cheese, he had a cake of tobacco; in his right a penknife. He struck into the dialogue with as little reserve as if he had been specially called in, days before, to hear the arguments on both sides, and favour them with his opinion; and he no more contemplated or cared for the possibility of their not desiring the honour of his acquaintance or interference in their private affairs than if he had been a bear or a buffalo.

'That,' he repeated, nodding condescendingly to Martin, as to an outer barbarian and foreigner, 'is dreadful true. Darn all manner of vermin.'

Martin could not help frowning for a moment, as if he were disposed to insinuate that the gentleman had unconsciously 'darned' himself. But remembering the wisdom of doing at Rome as Romans do, he smiled with the pleasantest expression he could assume upon so short a notice.

Their new friend said no more just then, being busily employed in cutting a quid or plug from his cake of tobacco, and whistling softly to himself the while. When he had shaped it to his liking, he took out his old plug, and deposited the same on the back of the seat between Mark and Martin, while he thrust the new one into the hollow of his cheek, where it looked like a large walnut, or tolerable pippin. Finding it quite satisfactory, he stuck the point of his knife into the old plug, and holding it out for their inspection, remarked with the air of a man who had not lived in vain, that it was 'used up considerable.' Then he tossed it away; put his knife into one pocket and his tobacco into another; rested his chin upon the rail as before; and approving of the pattern on Martin's waistcoat, reached out his hand to feel the texture of that garment.

'What do you call this now?' he asked.

'Upon my word' said Martin, 'I don't know what it's called.'

'It'll cost a dollar or more a yard, I reckon?'

'I really don't know.'

'In my country,' said the gentleman, 'we know the cost of our own produce.'

Martin not discussing the question, there was a pause.

'Well!' resumed their new friend, after staring at them intently during the whole interval of silence; 'how's the unnat'ral old parent by this time?'

Mr Tapley regarding this inquiry as only another version of the impertinent English question, 'How's your mother?' would have resented it instantly, but for Martin's prompt interposition.

'You mean the old country?' he said.

'Ah!' was the reply. 'How's she? Progressing back'ards, I expect, as usual? Well! How's Queen Victoria?'

'In good health, I believe,' said Martin.

'Queen Victoria won't shake in her royal shoes at all, when she hears to-morrow named,' observed the stranger, 'No.'

'Not that I am aware of. Why should she?'

'She won't be taken with a cold chill, when she realises what is being done in these diggings,' said the stranger. 'No.'

'No,' said Martin. 'I think I could take my oath of that.'

The strange gentleman looked at him as if in pity for his ignorance or prejudice, and said:

'Well, sir, I tell you this - there ain't a engine with its biler bust, in God A'mighty's free U-nited States, so fixed, and nipped, and frizzled to a most e-tarnal smash, as that young critter, in her luxurious location in the Tower of London will be, when she reads the next double-extra Watertoast Gazette.'

Several other gentlemen had left their seats and gathered round during the foregoing dialogue. They were highly delighted with this speech. One very lank gentleman, in a loose limp white cravat, long white waistcoat, and a black great-coat, who seemed to be in authority among them, felt called upon to acknowledge it.

'Hem! Mr La Fayette Kettle,' he said, taking off his hat.

There was a grave murmur of 'Hush!'

'Mr La Fayette Kettle! Sir!'

Mr Kettle bowed.

'In the name of this company, sir, and in the name of our common country, and in the name of that righteous cause of holy sympathy in which we are engaged, I thank you. I thank you, sir, in the name of the Watertoast Sympathisers; and I thank you, sir, in the name of the Watertoast Gazette; and I thank you, sir, in the name of the star-spangled banner of the Great United States, for your eloquent and categorical exposition. And if, sir,' said the speaker, poking Martin with the handle of his umbrella to bespeak his attention, for he was listening to a whisper from Mark; 'if, sir, in such a place, and at such a time, I might venture to con-clude with a sentiment, glancing - however slantin'dicularly - at the subject in hand, I would say, sir, may the British Lion have his talons eradicated by the noble bill of the American Eagle, and be taught to play upon the Irish Harp and the Scotch Fiddle that music which is breathed in every empty shell that lies upon the shores of green Co-lumbia!'

Here the lank gentleman sat down again, amidst a great sensation; and every one looked very grave.

'General Choke,' said Mr La Fayette Kettle, 'you warm my heart; sir, you warm my heart. But the British Lion is not unrepresented here, sir; and I should be glad to hear his answer to those remarks.'

'Upon my word,' cried Martin, laughing, 'since you do me the honour to consider me his representative, I have only to say that I never heard of Queen Victoria reading the What's-his-name Gazette and that I should scarcely think it probable.'

General Choke smiled upon the rest, and said, in patient and benignant explanation:

'It is sent to her, sir. It is sent to her. Her mail.'

'But if it is addressed to the Tower of London, it would hardly come to hand, I fear,' returned Martin; 'for she don't live there.'

'The Queen of England, gentlemen,' observed Mr Tapley, affecting the greatest politeness, and regarding them with an immovable face, 'usually lives in the Mint to take care of the money. She HAS lodgings, in virtue of her office, with the Lord Mayor at the Mansion House; but don't often occupy them, in consequence of the parlour chimney smoking.'

'Mark,' said Martin, 'I shall be very much obliged to you if you'll have the goodness not to interfere with preposterous statements, however jocose they may appear to you. I was merely remarking gentlemen - though it's a point of very little import - that the Queen of England does not happen to live in the Tower of London.'

'General!' cried Mr La Fayette Kettle. 'You hear?'

'General!' echoed several others. 'General!'

'Hush! Pray, silence!' said General Choke, holding up his hand, and speaking with a patient and complacent benevolence that was quite touching. 'I have always remarked it as a very extraordinary circumstance, which I impute to the natur' of British Institutions and their tendency to suppress that popular inquiry and information which air so widely diffused even in the trackless forests of this vast Continent of the Western Ocean; that the knowledge of Britishers themselves on such points is not to be compared with that possessed by our intelligent and locomotive citizens. This is interesting, and confirms my observation. When you say, sir,' he continued, addressing Martin, 'that your Queen does not reside in the Tower of London, you fall into an error, not uncommon to your countrymen, even when their abilities and moral elements air such as to command respect. But, sir, you air wrong. She DOES live there - '

'When she is at the Court of Saint James's,' interposed Kettle.

'When she is at the Court of Saint James's, of course,' returned the General, in the same benignant way; 'for if her location was in Windsor Pavilion it couldn't be in London at the same time. Your Tower of London, sir,' pursued the General, smiling with a mild consciousness of his knowledge, 'is nat'rally your royal residence. Being located in the immediate neighbourhood of your Parks, your Drives, your Triumphant Arches, your Opera, and your Royal Almacks, it nat'rally suggests itself as the place for holding a luxurious and thoughtless court. And, consequently,' said the General, 'consequently, the court is held there.'

'Have you been in England?' asked Martin.

'In print I have, sir,' said the General, 'not otherwise. We air a reading people here, sir. You will meet with much information among us that will surprise you, sir.'

'I have not the least doubt of it,' returned Martin. But here he was interrupted by Mr La Fayette Kettle, who whispered in his ear:

'You know General Choke?'

'No,' returned Martin, in the same tone.

'You know what he is considered?'

'One of the most remarkable men in the country?' said Martin, at a venture.

'That's a fact,' rejoined Kettle. 'I was sure you must have heard of him!'

'I think,' said Martin, addressing himself to the General again, 'that I have the pleasure of being the bearer of a letter of introduction to you, sir. From Mr Bevan, of Massachusetts,' he added, giving it to him.

The General took it and read it attentively; now and then stopping to glance at the two strangers. When he had finished the note, he came over to Martin, sat down by him, and shook hands.

'Well!' he said, 'and you think of settling in Eden?'

'Subject to your opinion, and the agent's advice,' replied Martin. 'I am told there is nothing to be done in the old towns.'

'I can introduce you to the agent, sir,' said the General. 'I know him. In fact, I am a member of the Eden Land Corporation myself.'

This was serious news to Martin, for his friend had laid great stress upon the General's having no connection, as he thought, with any land company, and therefore being likely to give him disinterested advice. The General explained that he had joined the Corporation only a few weeks ago, and that no communication had passed between himself and Mr Bevan since.

'We have very little to venture,' said Martin anxiously - 'only a few pounds - but it is our all. Now, do you think that for one of my profession, this would be a speculation with any hope or chance in it?'

'Well,' observed the General, gravely, 'if there wasn't any hope or chance in the speculation, it wouldn't have engaged my dollars, I opinionate.'

'I don't mean for the sellers,' said Martin. 'For the buyers - for the buyers!'

'For the buyers, sir?' observed the General, in a most impressive manner. 'Well! you come from an old country; from a country, sir, that has piled up golden calves as high as Babel, and worshipped 'em for ages. We are a new country, sir; man is in a more primeval state here,

sir; we have not the excuse of having lapsed in the slow course of time into degenerate practices; we have no false gods; man, sir, here, is man in all his dignity. We fought for that or nothing. Here am I, sir,' said the General, setting up his umbrella to represent himself, and a villanous-looking umbrella it was; a very bad counter to stand for the sterling coin of his benevolence, 'here am I with grey hairs sir, and a moral sense. Would I, with my principles, invest capital in this speculation if I didn't think it full of hopes and chances for my brother man?'

Martin tried to look convinced, but he thought of New York, and found it difficult.

'What are the Great United States for, sir,' pursued the General 'if not for the regeneration of man? But it is nat'ral in you to make such an enquerry, for you come from England, and you do not know my country.'

'Then you think,' said Martin, 'that allowing for the hardships we are prepared to undergo, there is a reasonable - Heaven knows we don't expect much - a reasonable opening in this place?'

'A reasonable opening in Eden, sir! But see the agent, see the agent; see the maps and plans, sir; and conclude to go or stay, according to the natur' of the settlement. Eden hadn't need to go a-begging yet, sir,' remarked the General.

'It is an awful lovely place, sure-ly. And frightful wholesome, likewise!' said Mr Kettle, who had made himself a party to this conversation as a matter of course.

Martin felt that to dispute such testimony, for no better reason than because he had his secret misgivings on the subject, would be ungentlemanly and indecent. So he thanked the General for his promise to put him in personal communication with the agent; and 'concluded' to see that officer next morning. He then begged the General to inform him who the Watertoast Sympathisers were, of whom he had spoken in addressing Mr La Fayette Kettle, and on what grievances they bestowed their Sympathy. To which the General, looking very serious, made answer, that he might fully enlighten himself on those points to-morrow by attending a Great Meeting of the Body, which would then be held at the town to which they were travelling; 'over which, sir,' said the General, 'my fellow-citizens have called on me to preside.'

They came to their journey's end late in the evening. Close to the railway was an immense white edifice, like an ugly hospital, on which was painted 'NATIONAL HOTEL.' There was a wooden gallery or

verandah in front, in which it was rather startling, when the train stopped, to behold a great many pairs of boots and shoes, and the smoke of a great many cigars, but no other evidences of human habitation. By slow degrees, however, some heads and shoulders appeared, and connecting themselves with the boots and shoes, led to the discovery that certain gentlemen boarders, who had a fancy for putting their heels where the gentlemen boarders in other countries usually put their heads, were enjoying themselves after their own manner in the cool of the evening.

There was a great bar-room in this hotel, and a great public room in which the general table was being set out for supper. There were interminable whitewashed staircases, long whitewashed galleries upstairs and downstairs, scores of little whitewashed bedrooms, and a four-sided verandah to every story in the house, which formed a large brick square with an uncomfortable courtyard in the centre, where some clothes were drying. Here and there, some yawning gentlemen lounged up and down with their hands in their pockets; but within the house and without, wherever half a dozen people were collected together, there, in their looks, dress, morals, manners, habits, intellect, and conversation, were Mr Jefferson Brick, Colonel Diver, Major Pawkins, General Choke, and Mr La Fayette Kettle, over, and over, and over again. They did the same things; said the same things; judged all subjects by, and reduced all subjects to, the same standard. Observing how they lived, and how they were always in the enchanting company of each other, Martin even began to comprehend their being the social, cheerful, winning, airy men they were.

At the sounding of a dismal gong, this pleasant company went trooping down from all parts of the house to the public room; while from the neighbouring stores other guests came flocking in, in shoals; for half the town, married folks as well as single, resided at the National Hotel. Tea, coffee, dried meats, tongue, ham, pickles, cake, toast, preserves, and bread and butter, were swallowed with the usual ravaging speed; and then, as before, the company dropped off by degrees, and lounged away to the desk, the counter, or the bar-room. The ladies had a smaller ordinary of their own, to which their husbands and brothers were admitted if they chose; and in all other respects they enjoyed themselves as at Pawkins's.

'Now, Mark, my good fellow, said Martin, closing the door of his little chamber, 'we must hold a solemn council, for our fate is decided to-morrow morning. You are determined to invest these savings of yours in the common stock, are you?'

'If I hadn't been determined to make that wentur, sir,' answered Mr Tapley, 'I shouldn't have come.'

'How much is there here, did you say' asked Martin, holding up a little bag.

'Thirty-seven pound ten and sixpence. The Savings' Bank said so at least. I never counted it. But THEY know, bless you!' said Mark, with a shake of the head expressive of his unbounded confidence in the wisdom and arithmetic of those Institutions.

'The money we brought with us,' said Martin, 'is reduced to a few shillings less than eight pounds.'

Mr Tapley smiled, and looked all manner of ways, that he might not be supposed to attach any importance to this fact.

'Upon the ring - HER ring, Mark,' said Martin, looking ruefully at his empty finger -

'Ah!' sighed Mr Tapley. 'Beg your pardon, sir.'

' - We raised, in English money, fourteen pounds. So, even with that, your share of the stock is still very much the larger of the two you see. Now, Mark,' said Martin, in his old way, just as he might have spoken to Tom Pinch, 'I have thought of a means of making this up to you - more than making it up to you, I hope - and very materially elevating your prospects in life.'

'Oh! don't talk of that, you know, sir,' returned Mark. 'I don't want no elevating, sir. I'm all right enough, sir, I am.'

'No, but hear me,' said Martin, 'because this is very important to you, and a great satisfaction to me. Mark, you shall be a partner in the business; an equal partner with myself. I will put in, as my additional capital, my professional knowledge and ability; and half the annual profits, as long as it is carried on, shall be yours.'

Poor Martin! For ever building castles in the air. For ever, in his very selfishness, forgetful of all but his own teeming hopes and sanguine plans. Swelling, at that instant, with the consciousness of patronizing and most munificently rewarding Mark!

'I don't know, sir,' Mark rejoined, much more sadly than his custom was, though from a very different cause than Martin supposed, 'what I can say to this, in the way of thanking you. I'll stand by you, sir, to the best of my ability, and to the last. That's all.'

'We quite understand each other, my good fellow,' said Martin rising in self-approval and condescension. 'We are no longer master and servant, but friends and partners; and are mutually gratified. If we

determine on Eden, the business shall be commenced as soon as we get there. Under the name,' said Martin, who never hammered upon an idea that wasn't red hot, 'under the name of Chuzzlewit and Tapley.'

'Lord love you, sir,' cried Mark, 'don't have my name in it. I ain't acquainted with the business, sir. I must be Co., I must. I've often thought,' he added, in a low voice, 'as I should like to know a Co.; but I little thought as ever I should live to be one.'

'You shall have your own way, Mark.'

'Thank'ee, sir. If any country gentleman thereabouts, in the public way, or otherwise, wanted such a thing as a skittle-ground made, I could take that part of the bis'ness, sir.'

'Against any architect in the States,' said Martin. 'Get a couple of sherry-cobblers, Mark, and we'll drink success to the firm.'

Either he forgot already (and often afterwards), that they were no longer master and servant, or considered this kind of duty to be among the legitimate functions of the Co. But Mark obeyed with his usual alacrity; and before they parted for the night, it was agreed between them that they should go together to the agent's in the morning, but that Martin should decide the Eden question, on his own sound judgment. And Mark made no merit, even to himself in his jollity, of this concession; perfectly well knowing that the matter would come to that in the end, any way.

The General was one of the party at the public table next day, and after breakfast suggested that they should wait upon the agent without loss of time. They, desiring nothing more, agreed; so off they all four started for the office of the Eden Settlement, which was almost within rifle-shot of the National Hotel.

It was a small place - something like a turnpike. But a great deal of land may be got into a dice-box, and why may not a whole territory be bargained for in a shed? It was but a temporary office too; for the Edeners were 'going' to build a superb establishment for the transaction of their business, and had already got so far as to mark out the site. Which is a great way in America. The office-door was wide open, and in the doorway was the agent; no doubt a tremendous fellow to get through his work, for he seemed to have no arrears, but was swinging backwards and forwards in a rocking-chair, with one of his legs planted high up against the door-post, and the other doubled up under him, as if he were hatching his foot.

He was a gaunt man in a huge straw hat, and a coat of green stuff. The weather being hot, he had no cravat, and wore his shirt collar wide open; so that every time he spoke something was seen to twitch and jerk up in his throat, like the little hammers in a harpsichord when the notes are struck. Perhaps it was the Truth feebly endeavouring to leap to his lips. If so, it never reached them.

Two grey eyes lurked deep within this agent's head, but one of them had no sight in it, and stood stock still. With that side of his face he seemed to listen to what the other side was doing. Thus each profile had a distinct expression; and when the movable side was most in action, the rigid one was in its coldest state of watchfulness. It was like turning the man inside out, to pass to that view of his features in his liveliest mood, and see how calculating and intent they were.

Each long black hair upon his head hung down as straight as any plummet line; but rumpled tufts were on the arches of his eyes, as if the crow whose foot was deeply printed in the corners had pecked and torn them in a savage recognition of his kindred nature as a bird of prey.

Such was the man whom they now approached, and whom the General saluted by the name of Scadder.

'Well, Gen'ral,' he returned, 'and how are you?'

'Ac-tive and spry, sir, in my country's service and the sympathetic cause. Two gentlemen on business, Mr Scadder.'

He shook hands with each of them - nothing is done in America without shaking hands - then went on rocking.

'I think I know what bis'ness you have brought these strangers here upon, then, Gen'ral?'

'Well, sir. I expect you may.'

'You air a tongue-y person, Gen'ral. For you talk too much, and that's fact,' said Scadder. 'You speak a-larming well in public, but you didn't ought to go ahead so fast in private. Now!'

'If I can realise your meaning, ride me on a rail!' returned the General, after pausing for consideration.

'You know we didn't wish to sell the lots off right away to any loafer as might bid,' said Scadder; 'but had con-cluded to reserve 'em for Aristocrats of Natur'. Yes!'

'And they are here, sir!' cried the General with warmth. 'They are here, sir!'

'If they air here,' returned the agent, in reproachful accents, 'that's enough. But you didn't ought to have your dander ris with ME, Gen'ral.'

The General whispered Martin that Scadder was the honestest fellow in the world, and that he wouldn't have given him offence designedly, for ten thousand dollars. 'I do my duty; and I raise the dander of my feller critters, as I wish to serve,' said Scadder in a low voice, looking down the road and rocking still. 'They rile up rough, along of my objecting to their selling Eden off too cheap. That's human natur'! Well!'

'Mr Scadder,' said the General, assuming his oratorical deportment. 'Sir! Here is my hand, and here my heart. I esteem you, sir, and ask your pardon. These gentlemen air friends of mine, or I would not have brought 'em here, sir, being well aware, sir, that the lots at present go entirely too cheap. But these air friends, sir; these air partick'ler friends.'

Mr Scadder was so satisfied by this explanation, that he shook the General warmly by the hand, and got out of the rocking-chair to do it. He then invited the General's particular friends to accompany him into the office. As to the General, he observed, with his usual benevolence, that being one of the company, he wouldn't interfere in the transaction on any account; so he appropriated the rocking-chair to himself, and looked at the prospect, like a good Samaritan waiting for a traveller.

'Heyday!' cried Martin, as his eye rested on a great plan which occupied one whole side of the office. Indeed, the office had little else in it, but some geological and botanical specimens, one or two rusty ledgers, a homely desk, and a stool. 'Heyday! what's that?'

'That's Eden,' said Scadder, picking his teeth with a sort of young bayonet that flew out of his knife when he touched a spring.

'Why, I had no idea it was a city.'

'Hadn't you? Oh, it's a city.'

A flourishing city, too! An architectural city! There were banks, churches, cathedrals, market-places, factories, hotels, stores, mansions, wharves; an exchange, a theatre; public buildings of all kinds, down to the office of the Eden Stinger, a daily journal; all faithfully depicted in the view before them.

'Dear me! It's really a most important place!' cried Martin turning round.

'Oh! it's very important,' observed the agent.

'But, I am afraid,' said Martin, glancing again at the Public Buildings, 'that there's nothing left for me to do.'

'Well! it ain't all built,' replied the agent. 'Not quite.'

This was a great relief.

'The market-place, now,' said Martin. 'Is that built?'

'That?' said the agent, sticking his toothpick into the weathercock on the top. 'Let me see. No; that ain't built.'

'Rather a good job to begin with - eh, Mark?' whispered Martin nudging him with his elbow.

Mark, who, with a very stolid countenance had been eyeing the plan and the agent by turns, merely rejoined 'Uncommon!'

A dead silence ensued, Mr Scadder in some short recesses or vacations of his toothpick, whistled a few bars of Yankee Doodle, and blew the dust off the roof of the Theatre.

'I suppose,' said Martin, feigning to look more narrowly at the plan, but showing by his tremulous voice how much depended, in his mind, upon the answer; 'I suppose there are - several architects there?'

'There ain't a single one,' said Scadder.

'Mark,' whispered Martin, pulling him by the sleeve, 'do you hear that? But whose work is all this before us, then?' he asked aloud.

'The soil being very fruitful, public buildings grows spontaneous, perhaps,' said Mark.

He was on the agent's dark side as he said it; but Scadder instantly changed his place, and brought his active eye to bear upon him.

'Feel of my hands, young man,' he said.

'What for?' asked Mark, declining.

'Air they dirty, or air they clean, sir?' said Scadder, holding them out.

In a physical point of view they were decidedly dirty. But it being obvious that Mr Scadder offered them for examination in a figurative sense, as emblems of his moral character, Martin hastened to pronounce them pure as the driven snow.

'I entreat, Mark,' he said, with some irritation, 'that you will not obtrude remarks of that nature, which, however harmless and well-intentioned, are quite out of place, and cannot be expected to be very agreeable to strangers. I am quite surprised.'

'The Co.'s a-putting his foot in it already,' thought Mark. 'He must be a sleeping partner - fast asleep and snoring - Co. must; I see.'

Mr Scadder said nothing, but he set his back against the plan, and thrust his toothpick into the desk some twenty times; looking at Mark all the while as if he were stabbing him in effigy.

'You haven't said whose work it is,' Martin ventured to observe at length, in a tone of mild propitiation.

'Well, never mind whose work it is, or isn't,' said the agent sulkily. 'No matter how it did eventuate. P'raps he cleared off, handsome, with a heap of dollars; p'raps he wasn't worth a cent. P'raps he was a loafin' rowdy; p'raps a ring-tailed roarer. Now!'

'All your doing, Mark!' said Martin.

'P'raps,' pursued the agent, 'them ain't plants of Eden's raising. No! P'raps that desk and stool ain't made from Eden lumber. No! P'raps no end of squatters ain't gone out there. No! P'raps there ain't no such location in the territoary of the Great U-nited States. Oh, no!'

'I hope you're satisfied with the success of your joke, Mark,' said Martin.

But here, at a most opportune and happy time, the General interposed, and called out to Scadder from the doorway to give his friends the particulars of that little lot of fifty acres with the house upon it; which, having belonged to the company formerly, had lately lapsed again into their hands.

'You air a deal too open-handed, Gen'ral,' was the answer. 'It is a lot as should be rose in price. It is.'

He grumblingly opened his books notwithstanding, and always keeping his bright side towards Mark, no matter at what amount of inconvenience to himself, displayed a certain leaf for their perusal. Martin read it greedily, and then inquired:

'Now where upon the plan may this place be?'

'Upon the plan?' said Scadder.

'Yes.'

He turned towards it, and reflected for a short time, as if, having been put upon his mettle, he was resolved to be particular to the very minutest hair's breadth of a shade. At length, after wheeling his toothpick slowly round and round in the air, as if it were a carrier pigeon just thrown up, he suddenly made a dart at the drawing, and pierced the very centre of the main wharf, through and through.

'There!' he said, leaving his knife quivering in the wall; 'that's where it is!'

Martin glanced with sparkling eyes upon his Co., and his Co. saw that the thing was done.

The bargain was not concluded as easily as might have been expected though, for Scadder was caustic and ill-humoured, and cast much unnecessary opposition in the way; at one time requesting them to think of it, and call again in a week or a fortnight; at another, predicting that they wouldn't like it; at another, offering to retract and let them off, and muttering strong imprecations upon the folly of the General. But the whole of the astoundingly small sum total of purchase-money - it was only one hundred and fifty dollars, or something more than thirty pounds of the capital brought by Co. into the architectural concern - was ultimately paid down; and Martin's head was two inches nearer the roof of the little wooden office, with the consciousness of being a landed proprietor in the thriving city of Eden.

'If it shouldn't happen to fit,' said Scadder, as he gave Martin the necessary credentials on recepit of his money, 'don't blame me.'

'No, no,' he replied merrily. 'We'll not blame you. General, are you going?'

'I am at your service, sir; and I wish you,' said the General, giving him his hand with grave cordiality, 'joy of your po-ssession. You air now, sir, a denizen of the most powerful and highly-civilised dominion that has ever graced the world; a do-minion, sir, where man is bound to man in one vast bond of equal love and truth. May you, sir, be worthy of your a-dopted country!'

Martin thanked him, and took leave of Mr Scadder; who had resumed his post in the rocking-chair, immediately on the General's rising from

it, and was once more swinging away as if he had never been disturbed. Mark looked back several times as they went down the road towards the National Hotel, but now his blighted profile was towards them, and nothing but attentive thoughtfulness was written on it. Strangely different to the other side! He was not a man much given to laughing, and never laughed outright; but every line in the print of the crow's foot, and every little wiry vein in that division of his head, was wrinkled up into a grin! The compound figure of Death and the Lady at the top of the old ballad was not divided with a greater nicety, and hadn't halves more monstrously unlike each other, than the two profiles of Zephaniah Scadder.

The General posted along at a great rate, for the clock was on the stroke of twelve; and at that hour precisely, the Great Meeting of the Watertoast Sympathisers was to be holden in the public room of the National Hotel. Being very curious to witness the demonstration, and know what it was all about, Martin kept close to the General; and, keeping closer than ever when they entered the Hall, got by that means upon a little platform of tables at the upper end; where an armchair was set for the General, and Mr La Fayette Kettle, as secretary, was making a great display of some foolscap documents. Screamers, no doubt.

'Well, sir!' he said, as he shook hands with Martin, 'here is a spectacle calc'lated to make the British Lion put his tail between his legs, and howl with anguish, I expect!'

Martin certainly thought it possible that the British Lion might have been rather out of his element in that Ark; but he kept the idea to himself. The General was then voted to the chair, on the motion of a pallid lad of the Jefferson Brick school; who forthwith set in for a high-spiced speech, with a good deal about hearths and homes in it, and unriveting the chains of Tyranny.

Oh but it was a clincher for the British Lion, it was! The indignation of the glowing young Columbian knew no bounds. If he could only have been one of his own forefathers, he said, wouldn't he have peppered that same Lion, and been to him as another Brute Tamer with a wire whip, teaching him lessons not easily forgotten. 'Lion! (cried that young Columbian) where is he? Who is he? What is he? Show him to me. Let me have him here. Here!' said the young Columbian, in a wrestling attitude, 'upon this sacred altar. Here!' cried the young Columbian, idealising the dining-table, 'upon ancestral ashes, cemented with the glorious blood poured out like water on our native plains of Chickabiddy Lick! Bring forth that Lion!' said the young Columbian. 'Alone, I dare him! I taunt that Lion. I tell that Lion, that Freedom's hand once twisted in his mane, he rolls a corse before me, and the Eagles of the Great Republic laugh ha, ha!'

When it was found that the Lion didn't come, but kept out of the way; that the young Columbian stood there, with folded arms, alone in his glory; and consequently that the Eagles were no doubt laughing wildly on the mountain tops; such cheers arose as might have shaken the hands upon the Horse-Guards' clock, and changed the very mean time of the day in England's capital.

'Who is this?' Martin telegraphed to La Fayette.

The Secretary wrote something, very gravely, on a piece of paper, twisted it up, and had it passed to him from hand to hand. It was an improvement on the old sentiment: 'Perhaps as remarkable a man as any in our country.'

This young Columbian was succeeded by another, to the full as eloquent as he, who drew down storms of cheers. But both remarkable youths, in their great excitement (for your true poetry can never stoop to details), forgot to say with whom or what the Watertoasters sympathized, and likewise why or wherefore they were sympathetic. Thus Martin remained for a long time as completely in the dark as ever; until at length a ray of light broke in upon him through the medium of the Secretary, who, by reading the minutes of their past proceedings, made the matter somewhat clearer. He then learned that the Watertoast Association sympathized with a certain Public Man in Ireland, who held a contest upon certain points with England; and that they did so, because they didn't love England at all - not by any means because they loved Ireland much; being indeed horribly jealous and distrustful of its people always, and only tolerating them because of their working hard, which made them very useful; labour being held in greater indignity in the simple republic than in any other country upon earth. This rendered Martin curious to see what grounds of sympathy the Watertoast Association put forth; nor was he long in suspense, for the General rose to read a letter to the Public Man, which with his own hands he had written.

'Thus,' said the General, 'thus, my friends and fellow-citizens, it runs:

'"SIR - I address you on behalf of the Watertoast Association of United Sympathisers. It is founded, sir, in the great republic of America! and now holds its breath, and swells the blue veins in its forehead nigh to bursting, as it watches, sir, with feverish intensity and sympathetic ardour, your noble efforts in the cause of Freedom."

At the name of Freedom, and at every repetition of that name, all the Sympathisers roared aloud; cheering with nine times nine, and nine times over.

'"In Freedom's name, sir - holy Freedom - I address you. In Freedom's name, I send herewith a contribution to the funds of your society. In Freedom's name, sir, I advert with indignation and disgust to that accursed animal, with gore-stained whiskers, whose rampant cruelty and fiery lust have ever been a scourge, a torment to the world. The naked visitors to Crusoe's Island, sir; the flying wives of Peter Wilkins; the fruit-smeared children of the tangled bush; nay, even the men of large stature, anciently bred in the mining districts of Cornwall; alike bear witness to its savage nature. Where, sir, are the Cormorans, the Blunderbores, the Great Feefofums, named in History? All, all, exterminated by its destroying hand.

'"I allude, sir, to the British Lion.

'"Devoted, mind and body, heart and soul, to Freedom, sir - to Freedom, blessed solace to the snail upon the cellar-door, the oyster in his pearly bed, the still mite in his home of cheese, the very winkle of your country in his shelly lair - in her unsullied name, we offer you our sympathy. Oh, sir, in this our cherished and our happy land, her fires burn bright and clear and smokeless; once lighted up in yours, the lion shall be roasted whole.

'"I am, sir, in Freedom's name,

'"Your affectionate friend and faithful Sympathiser,

'"CYRUS CHOKE,

'"General, U.S.M."

It happened that just as the General began to read this letter, the railroad train arrived, bringing a new mail from England; and a packet had been handed in to the Secretary, which during its perusal and the frequent cheerings in homage to freedom, he had opened. Now, its contents disturbed him very much, and the moment the General sat down, he hurried to his side, and placed in his hand a letter and several printed extracts from English newspapers; to which, in a state of infinite excitement, he called his immediate attention.

The General, being greatly heated by his own composition, was in a fit state to receive any inflammable influence; but he had no sooner possessed himself of the contents of these documents, than a change came over his face, involving such a huge amount of choler and passion, that the noisy concourse were silent in a moment, in very wonder at the sight of him.

'My friends!' cried the General, rising; 'my friends and fellow citizens, we have been mistaken in this man.'

'In what man?' was the cry.

'In this,' panted the General, holding up the letter he had read aloud a few minutes before. 'I find that he has been, and is, the advocate - consistent in it always too - of Nigger emancipation!'

If anything beneath the sky be real, those Sons of Freedom would have pistolled, stabbed - in some way slain - that man by coward hands and murderous violence, if he had stood among them at that time. The most confiding of their own countrymen would not have wagered then - no, nor would they ever peril - one dunghill straw, upon the life of any man in such a strait. They tore the letter, cast the fragments in the air, trod down the pieces as they fell; and yelled, and groaned, and hissed, till they could cry no longer.

'I shall move,' said the General, when he could make himself heard, 'that the Watertoast Association of United Sympathisers be immediately dissolved!'

Down with it! Away with it! Don't hear of it! Burn its records! Pull the room down! Blot it out of human memory!

'But, my fellow-countrymen!' said the General, 'the contributions. We have funds. What is to be done with the funds?'

It was hastily resolved that a piece of plate should be presented to a certain constitutional Judge, who had laid down from the Bench the noble principle that it was lawful for any white mob to murder any black man; and that another piece of plate, of similar value should be presented to a certain Patriot, who had declared from his high place in the Legislature, that he and his friends would hang without trial, any Abolitionist who might pay them a visit. For the surplus, it was agreed that it should be devoted to aiding the enforcement of those free and equal laws, which render it incalculably more criminal and dangerous to teach a negro to read and write than to roast him alive in a public city. These points adjusted, the meeting broke up in great disorder, and there was an end of the Watertoast Sympathy.

As Martin ascended to his bedroom, his eye was attracted by the Republican banner, which had been hoisted from the house-top in honour of the occasion, and was fluttering before a window which he passed.

'Tut!' said Martin. 'You're a gay flag in the distance. But let a man be near enough to get the light upon the other side and see through you; and you are but sorry fustian!'