Chapter XXXVI

Tom Pinch Departs To Seek His Fortune. What He Finds At Starting

Oh! What a different town Salisbury was in Tom Pinch's eyes to be sure, when the substantial Pecksniff of his heart melted away into an idle dream! He possessed the same faith in the wonderful shops, the same intensified appreciation of the mystery and wickedness of the place; made the same exalted estimate of its wealth, population, and resources; and yet it was not the old city nor anything like it. He walked into the market while they were getting breakfast ready for him at the Inn; and though it was the same market as of old, crowded by the same buyers and sellers; brisk with the same business; noisy with the same confusion of tongues and cluttering of fowls in coops; fair with the same display of rolls of butter, newly made, set forth in linen cloths of dazzling whiteness; green with the same fresh show of dewy vegetables; dainty with the same array in higglers' baskets of small shaving-glasses, laces, braces, trouser-straps, and hardware; savoury with the same unstinted show of delicate pigs' feet, and pies made precious by the pork that once had walked upon them; still it was strangely changed to Tom. For, in the centre of the market-place, he missed a statue he had set up there as in all other places of his personal resort; and it looked cold and bare without that ornament.

The change lay no deeper than this, for Tom was far from being sage enough to know, that, having been disappointed in one man, it would have been a strictly rational and eminently wise proceeding to have revenged himself upon mankind in general, by mistrusting them one and all. Indeed this piece of justice, though it is upheld by the authority of divers profound poets and honourable men, bears a nearer resemblance to the justice of that good Vizier in the Thousand-and-one Nights, who issues orders for the destruction of all the Porters in Bagdad because one of that unfortunate fraternity is supposed to have misconducted himself, than to any logical, not to say Christian, system of conduct, known to the world in later times.

Tom had so long been used to steep the Pecksniff of his fancy in his tea, and spread him out upon his toast, and take him as a relish with his beer, that he made but a poor breakfast on the first morning after his expulsion. Nor did he much improve his appetite for dinner by seriously considering his own affairs, and taking counsel thereon with his friend the organist's assistant.

The organist's assistant gave it as his decided opinion that whatever Tom did, he must go to London; for there was no place like it. Which may be true in the main, though hardly, perhaps, in itself, a sufficient reason for Tom's going there.

But Tom had thought of London before, and had coupled with it thoughts of his sister, and of his old friend John Westlock, whose advice he naturally felt disposed to seek in this important crisis of his fortunes. To London, therefore, he resolved to go; and he went away to the coach-office at once, to secure his place. The coach being already full, he was obliged to postpone his departure until the next night; but even this circumstance had its bright side as well as its dark one, for though it threatened to reduce his poor purse with unexpected country charges, it afforded him an opportunity of writing to Mrs Lupin and appointing his box to be brought to the old finger-post at the old time; which would enable him to take that treasure with him to the metropolis, and save the expense of its carriage. 'So,' said Tom, comforting himself, 'it's very nearly as broad as it's long.'

And it cannot be denied that, when he had made up his mind to even this extent, he felt an unaccustomed sense of freedom - a vague and indistinct impression of holiday-making - which was very luxurious. He had his moments of depression and anxiety, and they were, with good reason, pretty numerous; but still, it was wonderfully pleasant to reflect that he was his own master, and could plan and scheme for himself. It was startling, thrilling, vast, difficult to understand; it was a stupendous truth, teeming with responsibility and self-distrust; but in spite of all his cares, it gave a curious relish to the viands at the Inn, and interposed a dreamy haze between him and his prospects, in which they sometimes showed to magical advantage.

In this unsettled state of mind, Tom went once more to bed in the low four-poster, to the same immovable surprise of the effigies of the former landlord and the fat ox; and in this condition, passed the whole of the succeeding day. When the coach came round at last with 'London' blazoned in letters of gold upon the boot, it gave Tom such a turn, that he was half disposed to run away. But he didn't do it; for he took his seat upon the box instead, and looking down upon the four greys, felt as if he were another grey himself, or, at all events, a part of the turn-out; and was quite confused by the novelty and splendour of his situation.

And really it might have confused a less modest man than Tom to find himself sitting next that coachman; for of all the swells that ever flourished a whip professionally, he might have been elected emperor. He didn't handle his gloves like another man, but put them on - even when he was standing on the pavement, quite detached from the coach - as if the four greys were, somehow or other, at the ends of the fingers. It was the same with his hat. He did things with his hat, which nothing but an unlimited knowledge of horses and the wildest freedom of the road, could ever have made him perfect in. Valuable little parcels were brought to him with particular instructions, and he pitched them into this hat, and stuck it on again; as if the laws of

gravity did not admit of such an event as its being knocked off or blown off, and nothing like an accident could befall it. The guard, too! Seventy breezy miles a day were written in his very whiskers. His manners were a canter; his conversation a round trot. He was a fast coach upon a down-hill turnpike road; he was all pace. A waggon couldn't have moved slowly, with that guard and his key-bugle on the top of it.

These were all foreshadowings of London, Tom thought, as he sat upon the box, and looked about him. Such a coachman, and such a guard, never could have existed between Salisbury and any other place. The coach was none of your steady-going, yokel coaches, but a swaggering, rakish, dissipated London coach; up all night, and lying by all day, and leading a devil of a life. It cared no more for Salisbury than if it had been a hamlet. It rattled noisily through the best streets, defied the Cathedral, took the worst corners sharpest, went cutting in everywhere, making everything get out of its way; and spun along the open country-road, blowing a lively defiance out of its key-bugle, as its last glad parting legacy.

It was a charming evening. Mild and bright. And even with the weight upon his mind which arose out of the immensity and uncertainty of London, Tom could not resist the captivating sense of rapid motion through the pleasant air. The four greys skimmed along, as if they liked it quite as well as Tom did; the bugle was in as high spirits as the greys; the coachman chimed in sometimes with his voice; the wheels hummed cheerfully in unison; the brass work on the harness was an orchestra of little bells; and thus, as they went clinking, jingling, rattling smoothly on, the whole concern, from the buckles of the leaders' coupling-reins to the handle of the hind boot, was one great instrument of music.

Yoho, past hedges, gates, and trees; past cottages and barns, and people going home from work. Yoho, past donkey-chaises, drawn aside into the ditch, and empty carts with rampant horses, whipped up at a bound upon the little watercourse, and held by struggling carters close to the five-barred gate, until the coach had passed the narrow turning in the road. Yoho, by churches dropped down by themselves in quiet nooks, with rustic burial-grounds about them, where the graves are green, and daisies sleep - for it is evening - on the bosoms of the dead. Yoho, past streams, in which the cattle cool their feet, and where the rushes grow; past paddock-fences, farms, and rick-yards; past last year's stacks, cut, slice by slice, away, and showing, in the waning light, like ruined gables, old and brown. Yoho, down the pebbly dip, and through the merry water-splash and up at a canter to the level road again. Yoho! Yoho!

Was the box there, when they came up to the old finger-post? The box! Was Mrs Lupin herself? Had she turned out magnificently as a hostess should, in her own chaise-cart, and was she sitting in a mahogany chair, driving her own horse Dragon (who ought to have been called Dumpling), and looking lovely? Did the stage-coach pull up beside her, shaving her very wheel, and even while the guard helped her man up with the trunk, did he send the glad echoes of his bugle careering down the chimneys of the distant Pecksniff, as if the coach expressed its exultation in the rescue of Tom Pinch?

'This is kind indeed!' said Tom, bending down to shake hands with her. 'I didn't mean to give you this trouble.'

'Trouble, Mr Pinch!' cried the hostess of the Dragon.

'Well! It's a pleasure to you, I know,' said Tom, squeezing her hand heartily. 'Is there any news?'

The hostess shook her head.

'Say you saw me,' said Tom, 'and that I was very bold and cheerful, and not a bit down-hearted; and that I entreated her to be the same, for all is certain to come right at last. Good-bye!'

'You'll write when you get settled, Mr Pinch?' said Mrs Lupin.

'When I get settled!' cried Tom, with an involuntary opening of his eyes. 'Oh, yes, I'll write when I get settled. Perhaps I had better write before, because I may find that it takes a little time to settle myself; not having too much money, and having only one friend. I shall give your love to the friend, by the way. You were always great with Mr Westlock, you know. Good-bye!'

'Good-bye!' said Mrs Lupin, hastily producing a basket with a long bottle sticking out of it. 'Take this. Good-bye!'

'Do you want me to carry it to London for you?' cried Tom. She was already turning the chaise-cart round.

'No, no,' said Mrs Lupin. 'It's only a little something for refreshment on the road. Sit fast, Jack. Drive on, sir. All right! Good-bye!'

She was a quarter of a mile off, before Tom collected himself; and then he was waving his hand lustily; and so was she.

'And that's the last of the old finger-post,' thought Tom, straining his eyes, 'where I have so often stood to see this very coach go by, and where I have parted with so many companions! I used to compare this

coach to some great monster that appeared at certain times to bear my friends away into the world. And now it's bearing me away, to seek my fortune, Heaven knows where and how!'

It made Tom melancholy to picture himself walking up the lane and back to Pecksniff's as of old; and being melancholy, he looked downwards at the basket on his knee, which he had for the moment forgotten.

'She is the kindest and most considerate creature in the world,' thought Tom. 'Now I KNOW that she particularly told that man of hers not to look at me, on purpose to prevent my throwing him a shilling! I had it ready for him all the time, and he never once looked towards me; whereas that man naturally, (for I know him very well,) would have done nothing but grin and stare. Upon my word, the kindness of people perfectly melts me.'

Here he caught the coachman's eye. The coachman winked. 'Remarkable fine woman for her time of life,' said the coachman.

'I quite agree with you,' returned Tom. 'So she is.'

'Finer than many a young 'un, I mean to say,' observed the coachman. 'Eh?'

'Than many a young one,' Tom assented.

'I don't care for 'em myself when they're too young,' remarked the coachman.

This was a matter of taste, which Tom did not feel himself called upon to discuss.

'You'll seldom find 'em possessing correct opinions about refreshment, for instance, when they're too young, you know,' said the coachman; 'a woman must have arrived at maturity, before her mind's equal to coming provided with a basket like that.'

'Perhaps you would like to know what it contains?' said Tom, smiling.

As the coachman only laughed, and as Tom was curious himself, he unpacked it, and put the articles, one by one, upon the footboard. A cold roast fowl, a packet of ham in slices, a crusty loaf, a piece of cheese, a paper of biscuits, half a dozen apples, a knife, some butter, a screw of salt, and a bottle of old sherry. There was a letter besides, which Tom put in his pocket.

The coachman was so earnest in his approval of Mrs Lupin's provident habits, and congratulated Torn so warmly on his good fortune, that Tom felt it necessary, for the lady's sake, to explain that the basket was a strictly Platonic basket, and had merely been presented to him in the way of friendship. When he had made the statement with perfect gravity; for he felt it incumbent on him to disabuse the mind of this lax rover of any incorrect impressions on the subject; he signified that he would be happy to share the gifts with him, and proposed that they should attack the basket in a spirit of good fellowship at any time in the course of the night which the coachman's experience and knowledge of the road might suggest, as being best adapted to the purpose. From this time they chatted so pleasantly together, that although Tom knew infinitely more of unicorns than horses, the coachman informed his friend the guard at the end of the next stage, 'that rum as the box-seat looked, he was as good a one to go, in pint of conversation, as ever he'd wish to sit by.'

Yoho, among the gathering shades; making of no account the deep reflections of the trees, but scampering on through light and darkness, all the same, as if the light of London fifty miles away, were quite enough to travel by, and some to spare. Yoho, beside the village green, where cricket-players linger yet, and every little indentation made in the fresh grass by bat or wicket, ball or player's foot, sheds out its perfume on the night. Away with four fresh horses from the Bald-faced Stag, where topers congregate about the door admiring; and the last team with traces hanging loose, go roaming off towards the pond, until observed and shouted after by a dozen throats, while volunteering boys pursue them. Now, with a clattering of hoofs and striking out of fiery sparks, across the old stone bridge, and down again into the shadowy road, and through the open gate, and far away, away, into the wold. Yoho!

Yoho, behind there, stop that bugle for a moment! Come creeping over to the front, along the coach-roof, guard, and make one at this basket! Not that we slacken in our pace the while, not we; we rather put the bits of blood upon their metal, for the greater glory of the snack. Ah! It is long since this bottle of old wine was brought into contact with the mellow breath of night, you may depend, and rare good stuff it is to wet a bugler's whistle with. Only try it. Don't be afraid of turning up your finger, Bill, another pull! Now, take your breath, and try the bugle, Bill. There's music! There's a tone!' over the hills and far away,' indeed. Yoho! The skittish mare is all alive to-night. Yoho! Yoho!

See the bright moon! High up before we know it; making the earth reflect the objects on its breast like water. Hedges, trees, low cottages, church steeples, blighted stumps and flourishing young slips, have all grown vain upon the sudden, and mean to contemplate their own fair images till morning. The poplars yonder rustle that their quivering

leaves may see themselves upon the ground. Not so the oak; trembling does not become HIM; and he watches himself in his stout old burly steadfastness, without the motion of a twig. The moss-grown gate, ill-poised upon its creaking hinges, crippled and decayed swings to and fro before its glass, like some fantastic dowager; while our own ghostly likeness travels on, Yoho! Yoho! through ditch and brake, upon the ploughed land and the smooth, along the steep hillside and steeper wall, as if it were a phantom-Hunter.

Clouds too! And a mist upon the Hollow! Not a dull fog that hides it, but a light airy gauze-like mist, which in our eyes of modest admiration gives a new charm to the beauties it is spread before; as real gauze has done ere now, and would again, so please you, though we were the Pope. Yoho! Why now we travel like the Moon herself. Hiding this minute in a grove of trees; next minute in a patch of vapour; emerging now upon our broad clear course; withdrawing now, but always dashing on, our journey is a counter-part of hers. Yoho! A match against the Moon!

The beauty of the night is hardly felt, when Day comes rushing up. Yoho! Two stages, and the country roads are almost changed to a continuous street. Yoho, past market-gardens, rows of houses, villas, crescents, terraces, and squares; past waggons, coaches, carts; past early workmen, late stragglers, drunken men, and sober carriers of loads; past brick and mortar in its every shape; and in among the rattling pavements, where a jaunty-seat upon a coach is not so easy to preserve! Yoho, down countless turnings, and through countless mazy ways, until an old Innyard is gained, and Tom Pinch, getting down quite stunned and giddy, is in London!

'Five minutes before the time, too!' said the driver, as he received his fee of Tom.

'Upon my word,' said Tom, 'I should not have minded very much, if we had been five hours after it; for at this early hour I don't know where to go, or what to do with myself.' 'Don't they expect you then?' inquired the driver.

'Who?' said Tom.

'Why them,' returned the driver.

His mind was so clearly running on the assumption of Tom's having come to town to see an extensive circle of anxious relations and friends, that it would have been pretty hard work to undeceive him. Tom did not try. He cheerfully evaded the subject, and going into the Inn, fell fast asleep before a fire in one of the public rooms opening from the yard. When he awoke, the people in the house were all astir,

so he washed and dressed himself; to his great refreshment after the journey; and, it being by that time eight o'clock, went forth at once to see his old friend John.

John Westlock lived in Furnival's Inn, High Holborn, which was within a quarter of an hour's walk of Tom's starting-point, but seemed a long way off, by reason of his going two or three miles out of the straight road to make a short cut. When at last he arrived outside John's door, two stories up, he stood faltering with his hand upon the knocker, and trembled from head to foot. For he was rendered very nervous by the thought of having to relate what had fallen out between himself and Pecksniff; and he had a misgiving that John would exult fearfully in the disclosure.

'But it must be made,' thought Tom, 'sooner or later; and I had better get it over.'

Rat tat.

'I am afraid that's not a London knock,' thought Tom. 'It didn't sound bold. Perhaps that's the reason why nobody answers the door.'

It is quite certain that nobody came, and that Tom stood looking at the knocker; wondering whereabouts in the neighbourhood a certain gentleman resided, who was roaring out to somebody 'Come in!' with all his might.

'Bless my soul!' thought Tom at last. 'Perhaps he lives here, and is calling to me. I never thought of that. Can I open the door from the outside, I wonder. Yes, to be sure I can.'

To be sure he could, by turning the handle; and to be sure when he did turn it the same voice came rushing out, crying 'Why don't you come in? Come in, do you hear? What are you standing there for?' - quite violently.

Tom stepped from the little passage into the room from which these sounds proceeded, and had barely caught a glimpse of a gentleman in a dressing-gown and slippers (with his boots beside him ready to put on), sitting at his breakfast with a newspaper in his hand, when the said gentleman, at the imminent hazard of oversetting his tea-table, made a plunge at Tom, and hugged him.

'Why, Tom, my boy!' cried the gentleman. 'Tom!'

'How glad I am to see you, Mr Westlock!' said Tom Pinch, shaking both his hands, and trembling more than ever. 'How kind you are!'

'Mr Westlock!' repeated John, 'what do you mean by that, Pinch? You have not forgotten my Christian name, I suppose?'

'No, John, no. I have not forgotten,' said Thomas Pinch. 'Good gracious me, how kind you are!'

'I never saw such a fellow in all my life!' cried John. 'What do you mean by saying THAT over and over again? What did you expect me to be, I wonder! Here, sit down, Tom, and be a reasonable creature. How are you, my boy? I am delighted to see you!'

'And I am delighted to see YOU,' said Tom.

'It's mutual, of course,' returned John. 'It always was, I hope. If I had known you had been coming, Tom, I would have had something for breakfast. I would rather have such a surprise than the best breakfast in the world, myself; but yours is another case, and I have no doubt you are as hungry as a hunter. You must make out as well as you can, Tom, and we'll recompense ourselves at dinner-time. You take sugar, I know; I recollect the sugar at Pecksniff's. Ha, ha, ha! How IS Pecksniff? When did you come to town? DO begin at something or other, Tom. There are only scraps here, but they are not at all bad. Boar's Head potted. Try it, Tom. Make a beginning whatever you do. What an old Blade you are! I am delighted to see you.'

While he delivered himself of these words in a state of great commotion, John was constantly running backwards and forwards to and from the closet, bringing out all sorts of things in pots, scooping extraordinary quantities of tea out of the caddy, dropping French rolls into his boots, pouring hot water over the butter, and making a variety of similar mistakes without disconcerting himself in the least.

'There!' said John, sitting down for the fiftieth time, and instantly starting up again to make some other addition to the breakfast. 'Now we are as well off as we are likely to be till dinner. And now let us have the news, Tom. Imprimis, how's Pecksniff?'

'I don't know how he is,' was Tom's grave answer.

John Westlock put the teapot down, and looked at him, in astonishment.

'I don't know how he is,' said Thomas Pinch; 'and, saving that I wish him no ill, I don't care. I have left him, John. I have left him for ever.'

'Voluntarily?'

'Why, no, for he dismissed me. But I had first found out that I was mistaken in him; and I could not have remained with him under any circumstances. I grieve to say that you were right in your estimate of his character. It may be a ridiculous weakness, John, but it has been very painful and bitter to me to find this out, I do assure you.'

Tom had no need to direct that appealing look towards his friend, in mild and gentle deprecation of his answering with a laugh. John Westlock would as soon have thought of striking him down upon the floor.

'It was all a dream of mine,' said Tom, 'and it is over. I'll tell you how it happened, at some other time. Bear with my folly, John. I do not, just now, like to think or speak about it.'

'I swear to you, Tom,' returned his friend, with great earnestness of manner, after remaining silent for a few moments, 'that when I see, as I do now, how deeply you feel this, I don't know whether to be glad or sorry that you have made the discovery at last. I reproach myself with the thought that I ever jested on the subject; I ought to have known better.'

'My dear friend,' said Tom, extending his hand, 'it is very generous and gallant in you to receive me and my disclosure in this spirit; it makes me blush to think that I should have felt a moment's uneasiness as I came along. You can't think what a weight is lifted off my mind,' said Tom, taking up his knife and fork again, and looking very cheerful. 'I shall punish the Boar's Head dreadfully.'

The host, thus reminded of his duties, instantly betook himself to piling up all kinds of irreconcilable and contradictory viands in Tom's plate, and a very capital breakfast Tom made, and very much the better for it Tom felt.

'That's all right,' said John, after contemplating his visitor's proceedings with infinite satisfaction. 'Now, about our plans. You are going to stay with me, of course. Where's your box?'

'It's at the Inn,' said Tom. 'I didn't intend - '

'Never mind what you didn't intend,' John Westlock interposed. 'What you DID intend is more to the purpose. You intended, in coming here, to ask my advice, did you not, Tom?'

'Certainly.'

'And to take it when I gave it to you?'

'Yes,' rejoined Tom, smiling, 'if it were good advice, which, being yours, I have no doubt it will be.'

'Very well. Then don't be an obstinate old humbug in the outset, Tom, or I shall shut up shop and dispense none of that invaluable commodity. You are on a visit to me. I wish I had an organ for you, Tom!'

'So do the gentlemen downstairs, and the gentlemen overhead I have no doubt,' was Tom's reply.

'Let me see. In the first place, you will wish to see your sister this morning,' pursued his friend, 'and of course you will like to go there alone. I'll walk part of the way with you; and see about a little business of my own, and meet you here again in the afternoon. Put that in your pocket, Tom. It's only the key of the door. If you come home first you'll want it.'

'Really,' said Tom, 'quartering one's self upon a friend in this way - '

'Why, there are two keys,' interposed John Westlock. 'I can't open the door with them both at once, can I? What a ridiculous fellow you are, Tom? Nothing particular you'd like for dinner, is there?'

'Oh dear no,' said Tom.

'Very well, then you may as well leave it to me. Have a glass of cherry brandy, Tom?'

'Not a drop! What remarkable chambers these are!' said Pinch 'there's everything in 'em!'

'Bless your soul, Tom, nothing but a few little bachelor contrivances! the sort of impromptu arrangements that might have suggested themselves to Philip Quarll or Robinson Crusoe, that's all. What do you say? Shall we walk?'

'By all means,' cried Tom. 'As soon as you like.'

Accordingly John Westlock took the French rolls out of his boots, and put his boots on, and dressed himself; giving Tom the paper to read in the meanwhile. When he returned, equipped for walking, he found Tom in a brown study, with the paper in his hand.

'Dreaming, Tom?'

'No,' said Mr Pinch, 'No. I have been looking over the advertising sheet, thinking there might be something in it which would be likely to suit

me. But, as I often think, the strange thing seems to be that nobody is suited. Here are all kinds of employers wanting all sorts of servants, and all sorts of servants wanting all kinds of employers, and they never seem to come together. Here is a gentleman in a public office in a position of temporary difficulty, who wants to borrow five hundred pounds; and in the very next advertisement here is another gentleman who has got exactly that sum to lend. But he'll never lend it to him, John, you'll find! Here is a lady possessing a moderate independence, who wants to board and lodge with a quiet, cheerful family; and here is a family describing themselves in those very words, ‘a quiet, cheerful family,’ who want exactly such a lady to come and live with them. But she'll never go, John! Neither do any of these single gentlemen who want an airy bedroom, with the occasional use of a parlour, ever appear to come to terms with these other people who live in a rural situation remarkable for its bracing atmosphere, within five minutes' walk of the Royal Exchange. Even those letters of the alphabet who are always running away from their friends and being entreated at the tops of columns to come back, never DO come back, if we may judge from the number of times they are asked to do it and don't. It really seems,' said Tom, relinquishing the paper with a thoughtful sigh, 'as if people had the same gratification in printing their complaints as in making them known by word of mouth; as if they found it a comfort and consolation to proclaim ‘I want such and such a thing, and I can't get it, and I don't expect I ever shall!"

John Westlock laughed at the idea, and they went out together. So many years had passed since Tom was last in London, and he had known so little of it then, that his interest in all he saw was very great. He was particularly anxious, among other notorious localities, to have those streets pointed out to him which were appropriated to the slaughter of countrymen; and was quite disappointed to find, after half-an-hour's walking, that he hadn't had his pocket picked. But on John Westlock's inventing a pickpocket for his gratification, and pointing out a highly respectable stranger as one of that fraternity, he was much delighted.

His friend accompanied him to within a short distance of Camberwell and having put him beyond the possibility of mistaking the wealthy brass-and-copper founder's, left him to make his visit. Arriving before the great bell-handle, Tom gave it a gentle pull. The porter appeared.

'Pray does Miss Pinch live here?' said Tom.

'Miss Pinch is governess here,' replied the porter.

At the same time he looked at Tom from head to foot, as if he would have said, 'You are a nice man, YOU are; where did YOU come from?'

'It's the same young lady,' said Tom. 'It's quite right. Is she at home?'

'I don't know, I'm sure,' rejoined the porter.

'Do you think you could have the goodness to ascertain?' said Tom. He had quite a delicacy in offering the suggestion, for the possibility of such a step did not appear to present itself to the porter's mind at all.

The fact was that the porter in answering the gate-bell had, according to usage, rung the house-bell (for it is as well to do these things in the Baronial style while you are about it), and that there the functions of his office had ceased. Being hired to open and shut the gate, and not to explain himself to strangers, he left this little incident to be developed by the footman with the tags, who, at this juncture, called out from the door steps:

'Hollo, there! wot are you up to? This way, young man!'

'Oh!' said Tom, hurrying towards him. 'I didn't observe that there was anybody else. Pray is Miss Pinch at home?'

'She's IN,' replied the footman. As much as to say to Tom: 'But if you think she has anything to do with the proprietorship of this place you had better abandon that idea.'

'I wish to see her, if you please,' said Tom.

The footman, being a lively young man, happened to have his attention caught at that moment by the flight of a pigeon, in which he took so warm an interest that his gaze was rivetted on the bird until it was quite out of sight. He then invited Tom to come in, and showed him into a parlour.

'Hany neem?' said the young man, pausing languidly at the door.

It was a good thought; because without providing the stranger, in case he should happen to be of a warm temper, with a sufficient excuse for knocking him down, it implied this young man's estimate of his quality, and relieved his breast of the oppressive burden of rating him in secret as a nameless and obscure individual.

'Say her brother, if you please,' said Tom.

'Mother?' drawled the footman.

'Brother,' repeated Tom, slightly raising his voice. 'And if you will say, in the first instance, a gentleman, and then say her brother, I shall be

obliged to you, as she does not expect me or know I am in London, and I do not wish to startle her.'

The young man's interest in Tom's observations had ceased long before this time, but he kindly waited until now; when, shutting the door, he withdrew.

'Dear me!' said Tom. 'This is very disrespectful and uncivil behaviour. I hope these are new servants here, and that Ruth is very differently treated.'

His cogitations were interrupted by the sound of voices in the adjoining room. They seemed to be engaged in high dispute, or in indignant reprimand of some offender; and gathering strength occasionally, broke out into a perfect whirlwind. It was in one of these gusts, as it appeared to Tom, that the footman announced him; for an abrupt and unnatural calm took place, and then a dead silence. He was standing before the window, wondering what domestic quarrel might have caused these sounds, and hoping Ruth had nothing to do with it, when the door opened, and his sister ran into his arms.

'Why, bless my soul!' said Tom, looking at her with great pride, when they had tenderly embraced each other, 'how altered you are Ruth! I should scarcely have known you, my love, if I had seen you anywhere else, I declare! You are so improved,' said Tom, with inexpressible delight; 'you are so womanly; you are so - positively, you know, you are so handsome!'

'If YOU think so Tom - '

'Oh, but everybody must think so, you know,' said Tom, gently smoothing down her hair. 'It's matter of fact; not opinion. But what's the matter?' said Tom, looking at her more intently, 'how flushed you are! and you have been crying.'

'No, I have not, Tom.'

'Nonsense,' said her brother stoutly. 'That's a story. Don't tell me! I know better. What is it, dear? I'm not with Mr Pecksniff now. I am going to try and settle myself in London; and if you are not happy here (as I very much fear you are not, for I begin to think you have been deceiving me with the kindest and most affectionate intention) you shall not remain here.'

Oh! Tom's blood was rising; mind that! Perhaps the Boar's Head had something to do with it, but certainly the footman had. So had the sight of his pretty sister - a great deal to do with it. Tom could bear a good deal himself, but he was proud of her, and pride is a sensitive

thing. He began to think, 'there are more Pecksniffs than one, perhaps,' and by all the pins and needles that run up and down in angry veins, Tom was in a most unusual tingle all at once!

'We will talk about it, Tom,' said Ruth, giving him another kiss to pacify him. 'I am afraid I cannot stay here.'

'Cannot!' replied Tom. 'Why then, you shall not, my love. Heyday! You are not an object of charity! Upon my word!'

Tom was stopped in these exclamations by the footman, who brought a message from his master, importing that he wished to speak with him before he went, and with Miss Pinch also.

'Show the way,' said Tom. 'I'll wait upon him at once.'

Accordingly they entered the adjoining room from which the noise of altercation had proceeded; and there they found a middle-aged gentleman, with a pompous voice and manner, and a middle-aged lady, with what may be termed an excisable face, or one in which starch and vinegar were decidedly employed. There was likewise present that eldest pupil of Miss Pinch, whom Mrs Todgers, on a previous occasion, had called a syrup, and who was now weeping and sobbing spitefully.

'My brother, sir,' said Ruth Pinch, timidly presenting Tom.

'Oh!' cried the gentleman, surveying Tom attentively. 'You really are Miss Pinch's brother, I presume? You will excuse my asking. I don't observe any resemblance.'

'Miss Pinch has a brother, I know,' observed the lady.

'Miss Pinch is always talking about her brother, when she ought to be engaged upon my education,' sobbed the pupil.

'Sophia! Hold your tongue!' observed the gentleman. 'Sit down, if you please,' addressing Tom.

Tom sat down, looking from one face to another, in mute surprise.

'Remain here, if you please, Miss Pinch,' pursued the gentleman, looking slightly over his shoulder.

Tom interrupted him here, by rising to place a chair for his sister. Having done which he sat down again.

'I am glad you chance to have called to see your sister to-day, sir,' resumed the brass-and-copper founder. 'For although I do not approve, as a principle, of any young person engaged in my family in the capacity of a governess, receiving visitors, it happens in this case to be well timed. I am sorry to inform you that we are not at all satisfied with your sister.'

'We are very much DISsatisfied with her,' observed the lady.

'I'd never say another lesson to Miss Pinch if I was to be beat to death for it!' sobbed the pupil.

'Sophia!' cried her father. 'Hold your tongue!'

'Will you allow me to inquire what your ground of dissatisfaction is?' asked Tom.

'Yes,' said the gentleman, 'I will. I don't recognize it as a right; but I will. Your sister has not the slightest innate power of commanding respect. It has been a constant source of difference between us. Although she has been in this family for some time, and although the young lady who is now present has almost, as it were, grown up under her tuition, that young lady has no respect for her. Miss Pinch has been perfectly unable to command my daughter's respect, or to win my daughter's confidence. Now,' said the gentleman, allowing the palm of his hand to fall gravely down upon the table: 'I maintain that there is something radically wrong in that! You, as her brother, may be disposed to deny it - '

'I beg your pardon, sir,' said Tom. 'I am not at all disposed to deny it. I am sure that there is something radically wrong; radically monstrous, in that.'

'Good Heavens!' cried the gentleman, looking round the room with dignity, 'what do I find to be the case! what results obtrude themselves upon me as flowing from this weakness of character on the part of Miss Pinch! What are my feelings as a father, when, after my desire (repeatedly expressed to Miss Pinch, as I think she will not venture to deny) that my daughter should be choice in her expressions, genteel in her deportment, as becomes her station in life, and politely distant to her inferiors in society, I find her, only this very morning, addressing Miss Pinch herself as a beggar!'

'A beggarly thing,' observed the lady, in correction.

'Which is worse,' said the gentleman, triumphantly; 'which is worse. A beggarly thing. A low, coarse, despicable expression!'

'Most despicable,' cried Tom. 'I am glad to find that there is a just appreciation of it here.'

'So just, sir,' said the gentleman, lowering his voice to be the more impressive. 'So just, that, but for my knowing Miss Pinch to be an unprotected young person, an orphan, and without friends, I would, as I assured Miss Pinch, upon my veracity and personal character, a few minutes ago, I would have severed the connection between us at that moment and from that time.'

'Bless my soul, sir!' cried Tom, rising from his seat; for he was now unable to contain himself any longer; 'don't allow such considerations as those to influence you, pray. They don't exist, sir. She is not unprotected. She is ready to depart this instant. Ruth, my dear, get your bonnet on!'

'Oh, a pretty family!' cried the lady. 'Oh, he's her brother! There's no doubt about that!'

'As little doubt, madam,' said Tom, 'as that the young lady yonder is the child of your teaching, and not my sister's. Ruth, my dear, get your bonnet on!'

'When you say, young man,' interposed the brass-and-copper founder, haughtily, 'with that impertinence which is natural to you, and which I therefore do not condescend to notice further, that the young lady, my eldest daughter, has been educated by any one but Miss Pinch, you - I needn't proceed. You comprehend me fully. I have no doubt you are used to it.'

'Sir!' cried Tom, after regarding him in silence for some little time. 'If you do not understand what I mean, I will tell you. If you do understand what I mean, I beg you not to repeat that mode of expressing yourself in answer to it. My meaning is, that no man can expect his children to respect what he degrades.'

'Ha, ha, ha!' laughed the gentleman. 'Cant! cant! The common cant!'

'The common story, sir!' said Tom; 'the story of a common mind. Your governess cannot win the confidence and respect of your children, forsooth! Let her begin by winning yours, and see what happens then.'

'Miss Pinch is getting her bonnet on, I trust, my dear?' said the gentleman.

'I trust she is,' said Tom, forestalling the reply. 'I have no doubt she is. In the meantime I address myself to you, sir. You made your statement to me, sir; you required to see me for that purpose; and I

have a right to answer it. I am not loud or turbulent,' said Tom, which was quite true, 'though I can scarcely say as much for you, in your manner of addressing yourself to me. And I wish, on my sister's behalf, to state the simple truth.'

'You may state anything you like, young man,' returned the gentleman, affecting to yawn. 'My dear, Miss Pinch's money.'

'When you tell me,' resumed Tom, who was not the less indignant for keeping himself quiet, 'that my sister has no innate power of commanding the respect of your children, I must tell you it is not so; and that she has. She is as well bred, as well taught, as well qualified by nature to command respect, as any hirer of a governess you know. But when you place her at a disadvantage in reference to every servant in your house, how can you suppose, if you have the gift of common sense, that she is not in a tenfold worse position in reference to your daughters?'

'Pretty well! Upon my word,' exclaimed the gentleman, 'this is pretty well!'

'It is very ill, sir,' said Tom. 'It is very bad and mean, and wrong and cruel. Respect! I believe young people are quick enough to observe and imitate; and why or how should they respect whom no one else respects, and everybody slights? And very partial they must grow - oh, very partial! - to their studies, when they see to what a pass proficiency in those same tasks has brought their governess! Respect! Put anything the most deserving of respect before your daughters in the light in which you place her, and you will bring it down as low, no matter what it is!'

'You speak with extreme impertinence, young man,' observed the gentleman.

'I speak without passion, but with extreme indignation and contempt for such a course of treatment, and for all who practice it,' said Tom. 'Why, how can you, as an honest gentleman, profess displeasure or surprise at your daughter telling my sister she is something beggarly and humble, when you are for ever telling her the same thing yourself in fifty plain, outspeaking ways, though not in words; and when your very porter and footman make the same delicate announcement to all comers? As to your suspicion and distrust of her; even of her word; if she is not above their reach, you have no right to employ her.'

'No right!' cried the brass-and-copper founder.

'Distinctly not,' Tom answered. 'If you imagine that the payment of an annual sum of money gives it to you, you immensely exaggerate its

power and value. Your money is the least part of your bargain in such a case. You may be punctual in that to half a second on the clock, and yet be Bankrupt. I have nothing more to say,' said Tom, much flushed and flustered, now that it was over, 'except to crave permission to stand in your garden until my sister is ready.'

Not waiting to obtain it, Tom walked out.

Before he had well begun to cool, his sister joined him. She was crying; and Tom could not bear that any one about the house should see her doing that.

'They will think you are sorry to go,' said Tom. 'You are not sorry to go?'

'No, Tom, no. I have been anxious to go for a very long time.'

'Very well, then! Don't cry!' said Tom.

'I am so sorry for YOU, dear,' sobbed Tom's sister.

'But you ought to be glad on my account,' said Tom. 'I shall be twice as happy with you for a companion. Hold up your head. There! Now we go out as we ought. Not blustering, you know, but firm and confident in ourselves.'

The idea of Tom and his sister blustering, under any circumstances, was a splendid absurdity. But Tom was very far from feeling it to be so, in his excitement; and passed out at the gate with such severe determination written in his face that the porter hardly knew him again.

It was not until they had walked some short distance, and Tom found himself getting cooler and more collected, that he was quite restored to himself by an inquiry from his sister, who said in her pleasant little voice:

'Where are we going, Tom?'

'Dear me!' said Tom, stopping, 'I don't know.'

'Don't you - don't you live anywhere, dear?' asked Tom's sister looking wistfully in his face.

'No,' said Tom. 'Not at present. Not exactly. I only arrived this morning. We must have some lodgings.'

He didn't tell her that he had been going to stay with his friend John, and could on no account think of billeting two inmates upon him, of whom one was a young lady; for he knew that would make her uncomfortable, and would cause her to regard herself as being an inconvenience to him. Neither did he like to leave her anywhere while he called on John, and told him of this change in his arrangements; for he was delicate of seeming to encroach upon the generous and hospitable nature of his friend. Therefore he said again, 'We must have some lodgings, of course;' and said it as stoutly as if he had been a perfect Directory and Guide-Book to all the lodgings in London.

'Where shall we go and look for 'em?' said Tom. 'What do you think?'

Tom's sister was not much wiser on such a topic than he was. So she squeezed her little purse into his coat-pocket, and folding the little hand with which she did so on the other little hand with which she clasped his arm, said nothing.

'It ought to be a cheap neighbourhood,' said Tom, 'and not too far from London. Let me see. Should you think Islington a good place?'

'I should think it was an excellent place, Tom.'

'It used to be called Merry Islington, once upon a time,' said Tom. 'Perhaps it's merry now; if so, it's all the better. Eh?'

'If it's not too dear,' said Tom's sister.

'Of course, if it's not too dear,' assented Tom. 'Well, where IS Islington? We can't do better than go there, I should think. Let's go.'

Tom's sister would have gone anywhere with him; so they walked off, arm in arm, as comfortably as possible. Finding, presently, that Islington was not in that neighbourhood, Tom made inquiries respecting a public conveyance thither; which they soon obtained. As they rode along they were very full of conversation indeed, Tom relating what had happened to him, and Tom's sister relating what had happened to her, and both finding a great deal more to say than time to say it in; for they had only just begun to talk, in comparison with what they had to tell each other, when they reached their journey's end.

'Now,' said Tom, 'we must first look out for some very unpretending streets, and then look out for bills in the windows.'

So they walked off again, quite as happily as if they had just stepped out of a snug little house of their own, to look for lodgings on account of somebody else. Tom's simplicity was unabated, Heaven knows; but

now that he had somebody to rely upon him, he was stimulated to rely a little more upon himself, and was, in his own opinion, quite a desperate fellow.

After roaming up and down for hours, looking at some scores of lodgings, they began to find it rather fatiguing, especially as they saw none which were at all adapted to their purpose. At length, however, in a singular little old-fashioned house, up a blind street, they discovered two small bedrooms and a triangular parlour, which promised to suit them well enough. Their desiring to take possession immediately was a suspicious circumstance, but even this was surmounted by the payment of their first week's rent, and a reference to John Westlock, Esquire, Furnival's Inn, High Holborn.

Ah! It was a goodly sight, when this important point was settled, to behold Tom and his sister trotting round to the baker's, and the butcher's, and the grocer's, with a kind of dreadful delight in the unaccustomed cares of housekeeping; taking secret counsel together as they gave their small orders, and distracted by the least suggestion on the part of the shopkeeper! When they got back to the triangular parlour, and Tom's sister, bustling to and fro, busy about a thousand pleasant nothings, stopped every now and then to give old Tom a kiss or smile upon him, Tom rubbed his hands as if all Islington were his.

It was late in the afternoon now, though, and high time for Tom to keep his appointment. So, after agreeing with his sister that in consideration of not having dined, they would venture on the extravagance of chops for supper at nine, he walked out again to narrate these marvellous occurrences to John.

'I am quite a family man all at once,' thought Tom. 'If I can only get something to do, how comfortable Ruth and I may be! Ah, that if! But it's of no use to despond. I can but do that, when I have tried everything and failed; and even then it won't serve me much. Upon my word,' thought Tom, quickening his pace, 'I don't know what John will think has become of me. He'll begin to be afraid I have strayed into one of those streets where the countrymen are murdered; and that I have been made meat pies of, or some such horrible thing.'