A STUDY OF THE HUMOR IN DICKENS' NOVELS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Charles Dickens has, since he first began writing, been acclaimed as one of the outstanding English humorists. Although this fact is true, no complete and detailed discussion of the nature, variety, and extent of his humor is available. No work, or even chapter, has been devoted exclusively to an analysis of this quality. Only three writings purport to be in part a study of his humor:

English Comic Characters--John Boynton Priestley.

Four Humorists of the 19th Century--W. S. Lilly.

"Studien Uber Dickens Und Den Humor" by Von Julian Schmidt in Westermann's Jahrbuch der Illustrirten Deutschen Monetshefte.

The first of these contains chapters dealing with four of Dickens' characters, the two Wellers, Dick Swiveller, and Mr. Pickwick. This is, of course, incomplete as a study of Dickens' humor. Lilly's book discusses Dickens as the humorist of democracy, showing his democratic position rather than his style of humor. The information contained in a series of articles by Schmidt published in 1870 in a German magazine is more a study of Dickens' general characteristics than of his humor. These sources then are seen to be inadequate.

In general biographies of the author we find rather

detailed information concerning his books but only brief mention of the style of humor. Almost every history of English literature refers to him as a humorist and discusses in a brief and general way the characteristics of his style as a whole. In none of these works has his humor been treated, at any length as a separate phase, nor has his humor been analyzed and illustrated. The recent revival of interest in Dickens, too, makes this a timely subject.

The purpose of this study is to analyze and classify the elements and methods of Dickens' humor.

Method of Research

All available material on Dickens as a humorist has first been examined. Biographies, histories of English literature, histories of the novel, general discussions of humor and humorists, and encyclopaedias have been consulted.

After a careful study of the meaning of the term humor, all the novels by Charles Dickens have been read and notations made of humorous parts. These passages then were divided into three classes: humor of characters, of expressions, and of incidents.

Method of Presentation

In presenting the material, one first must state some definitions of humor to be used as a criterion in selecting passages and characters from the novels. The second step will consider the general characteristics of Charles Dickens as a humorist. Since the type of humor in all his novels is essentially the same, we shall discuss the elements of his humor as a whole rather than the humor of each book. In this way a broader and more general presentation of his characteristics may be made. Therefore, the fourth chapter will discuss his humor of expression; the fifth, his humor of character; and the sixth, his humor of incident. A summary of results will complete the study.

CHAPTER II

HUMOR

Since it is the purpose of this thesis to make a study of the humor in Dickens' novels, it will be necessary to arrive at some definition of the term humor. The word has been loosely applied to anything and everything which produces merriment or amusement. However, some remarks, characters, or situations are witty, farcical, or burlesque but not necessarily humorous. Therefore, in spite of the fact that G. K. Chesterton says that it would commonly be regarded as a deficiency in humor to research for a definition of humor,[1] some sort of definition must be made before this study can be attempted.

Three of Dr. Johnson's nine definitions of the word acquaint us with some of the elements of humor: (5) grotesque imagery, jocularity, merriment; (8) a trick, a practice; (9) caprice, whim. The simple definition by Lowell, "Humor in its first analysis is a perception of the incongruous",[2] is augmented and elaborated upon in the definition in the same trend of thought given in Webster's Dictionary, according to which humour is "the mental faculty of discovering, expressing, or appreciating ludicrous and absurdly incongruous elements

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[1] G. K. Chesterton, "Humour", Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14th Edition, XI, 883-885.

in ideas, situations, happenings, or acts; droll imagination or its expression."

George Meredith in his Essay on Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit says:

> If you laugh all round him (to wit, the ridiculous person) tumble him, roll him about, deal him a smack, and drop a tear on him, own his likeness to you, and yours to your neighbor, spare him as little as you shun, pity him as much as you expose, it is the spirit of Humour that is moving you.[2]

As we might infer from this quotation and as we are assured by Buck,[3] Saintsbury, and others, humor must contain sympathy. Thackeray, too, says, "I should call humour . . . a mixture of love and wit."[4] The necessity for this feeling for others is stressed by Scherer:

> The perception of the contrasts of human destiny by a man who does not sever himself from humanity, but who takes his own shortcomings and those of his dear fellow-creatures cheerfully--that is the essence of humour.[5]

This sympathy might be of such a sort that it would be very closely akin to pathos; in fact, Werner says:

> True humour is never divorced from pathos; and it is usually allied with the power of seeing the poetry in common things.[6]

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[2]G. K. Chesterton, loc. cit.

[3]Philo M. Buck, Jr. Literary Criticism (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1930), p. 293.

[4]Loc. cit.

[5]Edmond Scherer, Essays on English Literature (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1891), p. 165.

[6]A. Werner, The Humour of Italy (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, n. d.), p. 295.

M. Staffer also states that the humorist is the tragi-comic painter of humanity and of human absurdity.[7]

Another important element of humor is truth, according to L'Estrange, who says:

> Many humorous sayings . . . fail for want of foundation. That would-be wit which has no element of truth is always a failure, and may appear romantic, dull or ludicrous--or simply nonsensical. In . . . humour . . . the imperfection must refer to some kind of right or truth, and revolve, as it were, round a fixed axis. "To laugh heartily we must have reality," writes Marmontel, and it is remarkable that most comic situations have been taken from the author's own experience.[8]

However according to the definition of Hobbes, humor does not necessarily lie in laughter.[9] Herbert Spenser is probably correct in saying that "we enjoy that humour most at which we laugh least." Humour need not evoke boisterous laughter. L'Estrange also says:

> Humour may be dry--may consist of subtle inuendoes of a somewhat uncertain character not devoid of pleasantry, perhaps, but indistinctly felt, and not calculated to raise laughter.[10]

G. K. Chesterton reminds us that humour originates in the half-conscious excentric, and that it is at least in part a confession of inconsistency.[11] Most philosophers, says

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[7]Edmond, Scherer, op. cit.

[8]A. G. L'Estrange, History of English Humour (London: Hurst and Blackett, n. d.) p. 295.

[9]David Hannay, "Humour", Encyclopaedia Brittannica (11th edition), XIII, p. 890.

[10]A. G. L'Estrange, op. cit. p. 343.

[11]G. K. Chesterton, loc. cit.

L'Estrange, acknowledge the existence of some conflict in humour. This inconsistency in many cases of the ludicrous seems to lie between the real and the ideal. External circumstances appear different from what we expect them to be, and think they ought to be. Often this conflict is dependent upon a breach of association, or some primary ideas or laws of nature.[12]

> Many have considered that humour consists of contrast or comparison, and it is true that a large portion of it owes much to attributes of relation. This kind of humourous complication is generally under the form of saying that a thing is like something--from which it is essentially different--merely because of the existence of some accidental similitude. . . . Similitudes in minute detail may be pointed out in things widely different; and from this range of significations the word like has been most prolific in humour. . . . our amusement is greatly increased when associations are violated, and much amusement may be made by showing there is some considerable likeness between two objects we have been accustomed to regard as very far apart. . . . the more we draw the objects together, the greater is the complication and the humour.[13]

Through this contrast or comparison exaggeration is often introduced. Forster makes the statement that all humour contains, is indeed identical with, what ordinary people are apt to call exaggeration.[14]

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[12] A. G. L'Estrange, op. cit., p. 289.

[13] Ibid., p. 291.

[14] John Forster, Life of Charles Dickens (London: Chapman and Hall, 1874), III, p. 308.

Summarizing these analyses, we may say then that HUMOR IS A SYMPATHETIC EXPRESSION OR APPRECIATION OF THE LUDICROUS AND INCONSISTENT; THAT IT IS BASED ON AN EXAGGERATION OF TRUTH, AND ARISES FROM CONTRAST OR CONFLICT BETWEEN THE IDEAL AND THE REAL. HUMOUR MAY BE PRODUCED THROUGH EXPRESSION, INCIDENT, OR CHARACTER.

Using this definition as a criterion, we shall select quotations from the novels of Charles Dickens.

CHAPTER III

DICKENS, THE HUMORIST

Dickens in one of his published letters describes himself as "a gentleman with rather long hair and no neckcloth, who writes and grins, as if he thought he was very funny indeed." With this opinion of himself the world seems to agree. Everywhere he is acclaimed as one of England's greatest humorists. Of him Temple Scott says:

> Charles Dickens, whatever else he may be, is the English humourist. He takes the place by the side of Swift, Steele, Goldsmith, Fielding, and Sterne. He differs from these, of course; but the difference is the difference of the centuries in which they lived.[15]

Samuel Davey compares him with Smollett:

> His boisterous fun and good-humour are like Smollett's, with this advantage that to find his best things we have not to go to a dunghill and scratch them out.[16]

A German critic believes that Dickens' works will always remain a treasure in the eyes of England because of their humorous and emotional characters and situations.[17] Fields.

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[15] Temple Scott, The Wisdom of Dickens (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1908), p. 1.

[16] Samuel Davey, Darwin, Carlyle and Dickens and Other Essays (London: James Clarke and Co., n. d.), p. 120.

[17] Von Julian Schmidt, "Studien Uber Dickens and den Humor," Brunswick, Westermann's Jahrbuch der Illustrirten Deutschen Monatshefte, July, 1870, p. 473.

calls him a "master of humor."[18] To Taine he is the most comic and the most jocose of English writers.[19] To comedy, as any reader will readily agree, he has undoubtedly added that sympathy which makes comedy humour.

When Dickens began writing, the "sporting" novel was a very popular type of literature. It originated in Pierce Egan's newspaper reports of the sports of the times. This comic style of writing was then adapted to other phases of life, and humorous accounts of the adventures of various people became popular with the reading public. It was this style of writing that Dickens followed in his first novel Pickwick Papers, begun in 1836. In this novel, unlike his later books, his sole object was to amuse, and perhaps there is no book in English Literature, frankly unserious, that hits the mark more surely. The Pickwick Papers are to a great extent the record of his humorously idealized perception of the various kinds of life he met in city and country while engaged in his duties as a reporter.[20]

> In Pickwick there is more fun and frolic than in any other single book of Dickens, or perhaps any other author. It is inflated with the laughing gas of wit and humor.

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[18] Fields, James Thomas, Yesterdays with Authors (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1882), p. 125.

[19] Taine, H. A., History of English Literature (New York: Holt and Co., 1896), III, p. 406.

[20] Samuel Davey, op. cit., p. 155.

> From beginning to end the mirth is 'fast and furious.' One humorous adventure follows another in rapid succession, interspersed with comic scenes and startling surprises.[21]

> It has been said that the Pickwick Papers was its author's best book; and, in certain respects, this judgment is sound. Humour was Mr. Dickens' greatest distinctive trait, and for humor, pure and simple, he produced nothing so sustained, so varied, so unstrained.[22]

Every character in the book has his ridiculous trait and appears all the more ridiculous because he takes himself so seriously. With any other set of characters the incidents would be too absurd and impossible to be amusing. Dickens, however, has described his characters so vividly and has made each so strongly individual that his fortunes and misfortunes seem natural and entertaining. Few, if any, books can surpass the humour of Pickwick.

Dickens' success as a novelist, however, did not depend entirely upon his ability to evoke laughter. His second novel, Oliver Twist, a study of melodramatic sentiment, is almost devoid of humour, except as it breaks out in an incidental phrase occasionally. In Nicholas Nickleby, his third novel, he has combined the comic and serious elements for the first time. This same general pattern has been used for his later works, "in which the strain of violent pathos or sinister

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Richard Grant White, "The Styles of Disraeli and of Dickens" The Galaxy, X, p. 258. (Quoted from Moulton's Library of Literary Criticism, VI, p. 562.

mystery is incessantly relieved by farce, either of incident or description."[23] Mrs. Nickleby, the Crummleses' strolling company, and Mr. and Mrs. Mantalini supply us with humorous action and dialogue.

Old Curiosity Shop contains some of the most attractive and imaginative humour in all Dickens' humorous works, Richard Swiveller furnishing the richest entertainment. The Marchioness and the wandering actors help to maintain the Dickens quality of humour.

In David Copperfield especially, Dickens' humor shows itself in the richest colors. There is the eccentric Betsey Trotwood who treats Mr. Dick the lunatic as if he were sane. Mr. Micawber and his loyal family have their pecuniary difficulties. There is the Peggotty group of characters, in depicting which:

> Dickens rendered the mingled humor and pathos and heroism of humble life in a surprising manner. And was there ever an undertaker like Mr. Omer? Streaks of pain and crime run through the book, but scoundrels like Steerforth and Uriah Heep are somewhat forgotten for the fun. 'David Copperfield', it has been observed, "is the perfection of English mirth."[24]

In discussing Great Expectations, Dickens says:

" . . . you will not have to complain of want of humour

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[23] Edmund Gosse, A Short History of Modern English Literature (New York: D. Appleton and Co.), 1915, p. 416.

[24] Wilbur L. Cross, "David Copperfield", Encyclopaedia Americana, VIII, pp. 502-503.

> as in the Tale of Two Cities. I have made the opening, I hope, in its general effect exceedingly droll. I have put a child and a good-natured foolish man in relations that seem to me very funny."[25]

The reader will agree that he has accomplished his purpose and has also placed them in relations true to life, and those which arouse our sympathy for both the man and the boy, fulfilling the requirements for humour. However, as the boy grows up and away from his friend and brother-in-law, Joe Gargery, the amount of humour decreases.

Martin Chuzzlewith Sairey Gamp, Mr. Frig, Mr. Moddle, and the Pecksniff family contains its share of witty dialogue and ludicrous situations. The Americans and their manners are amusing to Martin and to the reader of this delightful novel.

In Barnaby Rudge, his first attempt at the historical novel, most of the humor is caused by Miggs, Mrs. Varden, and Grip the Raven. Barnaby, the half-witted hero of the story, is more tragic than comic.

A Tale of Two Cities, his other historical novel, contains even less of the humorous element. Mr. Cruncher, the bank messenger and his wife who was always "floppin", supplying comic relief from the tragedy in the French Revo ution.

Dombey and Son, Little Dorrit, and Our Mutual Friend

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[25] John Forster, The Life of Charles Dickens (London: Chapman and Hall, 1873), III, p. 317.

please the reader with their minor humorous characters. None of these has a comic character of any great importance. Bleak House and the Mystery of Edwin Drood are filled more with bleakness and mystery than with humor though the old drunkard and the boy who stones him home do lighten the tone of the latter.

After the publication of Pickwick, all periods of Dickens' writing show approximately an equal amount of humor. With a few exceptions, such as A Tale of Two Cities, Bleak House, and Oliver Twist, the novels contain almost an equal amount of this great Dickensian gift, each one having several characters who lighten the tone of the story.

In the novels written after Oliver Twist, the humour and pathos are united in a sort of tragi-comedy.

> The pathos of Dickens is no less effective than his humour; perhaps he draws tears even more easily than he provokes laughter. . . . the critics were not altogether wrong in saying that while his humour always cheered, his pathos frequently enfeebled.[26]

As if in justification of this close association of humour and pathos, Dickens in Oliver Twist has written:

> It is the custom on the stage--in all good murderous melodramas--to present the tragic and the comic scenes in as regular alteration as the layers of red and white in the side of streaky, well-cured bacon . . . . We

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[26] Edwin Percy Whipple, "In Dickens Land", Outlooks on Society, Literature and Politics (Boston: Ticknor and Co., 1888), p. 340.

> behold with throbbing bosoms, the heroine in the grasp of a proud and ruthless baron, her virtue and her life alike in danger, drawing forth her dagger to preserve the one at the cost of the other; and just as our expectations are wrought up to the highest pitch, a whistle is heard, and we are straightway transported to the great hall of the castle, where a gray-headed seneschal sings a funny chorus with a funnier body of vassals, who are free of all sorts of places from church vaults to palaces, and roam about in company, carolling perpetually.
>
> Such changes appear absurd; but they are not so unnatural as they would seem at first sight. The transitions in real life from well-spread boards to death-beds, and from mourning weeds to holiday garments, are not a whit less startling; only, there we are busy actors, instead of passive on-lookers, which makes a vast difference. The actors in the mimic life of the theater are blind to violent transitions and abrupt impulses of passion or feeling, which, presented before the eyes of mere spectators, are at once condemned as outrageous and preposterous.[27]

Most of Dickens' novels follow this plan which he thinks the natural one. Although the comic scenes do not appear in as regular alteration as do the layers of bacon, humor is never absent for any great length of time and often appears suddenly and without warning.

> His humor is very much a result of two peculiarities: his power of detailed observation and his power of idealizing individual traits of character--sometimes of some or other of them, sometimes of both of them together. . . his peculiar humor is even more indebted to his habit of vivifying external traits, than to his power of external observation.[28]

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[27]Charles Dickens, Oliver Twist (New York: Peter Fenelon Collier, n. d.), Chapter XVII, pp. 151-152.

[28]Walter Bagehot, "Charles Dickens", Literary Studies (London: Longmans and Co., 1891, 4th Edition), II.

As an illustration of his habit of vivifying external traits of characters, a description of Mr. Pecksniff may be quoted (for his goodness, like Uriah Heep's " 'umbleness", was only external):

> It would be no description of Mr. Pecksniff's gentleness of manner to adopt the common parlance, and say that he looked at this moment as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. He rather looked as if any quantity of butter might have been made out of him, by churning the milk of human kindness as it spouted upward from his heart.[29]

or the amusing account of Mrs. Sparsit, Mr. Bounderby's housekeeper:

> She was a most remarkable woman for prowling about the house. How she got from story to story was a mystery beyond solution. A lady so decorous in herself, and so highly connected, was not to be suspected of dropping over the bannister or sliding down them, yet her extraordinary facility of locomotion suggested the wild idea.[30]

The humour of Dickens is genial and kindly. He never makes game of what is at all worthy of respect. His is the laughter of one who sees the foibles, and even the vices of his fellowmen, and yet looks on them lovingly and helpfully.[31] Of the characters whom he holds up to ridicule there are the Americans, for whom he has little respect, and such foolish characters as the one whom he describes thus:

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[29] Charles Dickens, Martin Chuzzlewit, I, p. 55.

[30] Charles Dickens, Hard Times, p. 344.

[31] Frank Thomas Marzials, Life of Charles Dickens (London: C. Scribner's Sons, 1887), p. 193.

> He had given so few signs of reason, that a byword went among his companions that his brain had been frozen up in a mighty frost which prevailed at St. John's, New Brunswick, at the period of his birth there, and had never thawed from that hour. Another byword represented him as having in his infancy, through the negligence of a nurse, fallen out of a high window on his head, which had been heard by responsible witnesses to crack. It is probable that both these representations were of ex post facto origin, the young gentleman (whose expressive name was Sparkler) being monomaniacal in offering marriage to all manner of undesirable young ladies, and in remarking of every successive young lady to whom he tendered a matrimonial proposal that she was a "doosed fine gal--well educated too--with no biggodd nonsense about her."[32]

Dickens was remarkable for his gentleness whenever his humour touched the poor, and while he made amusement out of their simplicity and ignorance, he endowed them with some sterling qualities.[33] This trait is evident in his treatment of such characters as Joe Gargary (Great Expectations), John Browdie (Nicholas Nickleby), Mrs. Gamp and Mrs. Prig (Martin Chuzzlewit), and Pegottys (David Copperfield). Just as so much of his humour originates in the characters and actions of people of the lower strata of society, so also can it be understood and appreciated by people of that class. His style is not intellectual nor witty. Dickens himself was of the commonality and wrote to please this group.

His humour is essentially original and quaint. A few short quotations might illustrate this quality of uniqueness:

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[32] Charles Dickens, Little Dorrit, I, p. 302.

[33] A. C. L'Estrange, History of English Humour (London: Hurst and Blackett, n.d.), II, p. 229.

> What words can paint the Pecksniffs in that trying hour? Oh, none; for words have naughty company among them, and the Pecksniffs were all goodness.[34]

> The (Tamaroo) was a perfect tomb for messages and small parcels; and when dispatched to the Post-office with letters, had been frequently seen endeavoring to insinuate them into casual chinks in private doors, under the delusion that any door with a hole in it would answer the purpose.[35]

> And Mrs. Sparsit got behind her eyebrows, and meditated in the gloom of that retreat all the evening.[36]

> "I shall shake hands," returned the landlord, putting his hands into his pockets, "with no man as goes to London on such nonsensical errands." The three cronies were therefore reduced to the necessity of shaking his elbows.[37]

> . . . Mr. Pickwick proceeded to put himself into his clothes and his clothes into his portmanteau.[38]

At times his imagination leads to an exaggerated comicality which can hardly be called humour because it lacks the qualities of truth and sympathy. The description of one of the Chuzzlewit relatives is of this sort.

> . . . there was Mr. Spottletoe, who was so bald and had such big whiskers that he seemed to have stopped his hair, by sudden application of some powerful remedy, in the very act of falling off his head, and to have fastened it irrevocably on his face.[39]

Buck has classified comedy as comedy with animus and comedy without animus.[40] It can be said that most of the comedy

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[34]Charles Dickens, Martin Chuzzlewit, I, p. 75.
[35]Ibid., II, p. 112.
[36]Charles Dickens, Hard Times, p. 193.
[37]Charles Dickens, Barnaby Rudge, I, p. 296.
[38]Charles Dickens, Pickwick Papers, I, p. 19.
[39]Charles Dickens, Martin Chuzzlewit, I, p. ...
[40]Philo M. Buck, op. cit.,

in Dickens' novels falls in the second class. This comedy may more often be humorous. Comedy with animus frequently lacks that quality of sympathy which makes comedy humor. For this reason the incidents and characters encountered by Martin Chuzzlewit in America cannot be classed as humor although they in some cases produce laughter or amusement. This is also true of some of the chapter which deal with the schools like those attended by David Copperfield and Nicholas Nickleby.

Mr. Dickens humor as a whole, however, is of such genial, non-intellectual sort that he is still widely read today.

> . . . when a modern specimen tells me he can't laugh at him, he makes me feel rather as Heine felt when somebody told him that he--the somebody--was an atheist; frightened.[41]

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[41] Edwin Watts Chubb, Stories of Authors (New York: Sturgis and Walton Co., 1910), p. 125.

CHAPTER IV

HUMOUR IN EXPRESSION

Because he has used so many of the devices for producing humor in expression and has employed them so artfully, Dickens' style is difficult to analyze. He does not give the effect of forced humour but merely chooses his words and expressions to suit the circumstances or atmosphere of his story. It is his effective use of words which is most characteristic of his humor in expression. The unexpectedness of his humour is what makes it so rich and delightful.

Though Dickens' novels do not contain much humorous description of inanimate objects, we find a few similar to the following:

> . . . It (the room) had more corners in it t an the brain of an obstinate man; was full of mad closets; into which nothing could be put that was not especially invented and made for that purpose.[42]

> . . . he there beheld a sing-board on which the painter's art had delineated something remotely resembling a cerulean elephant with an aquiline nose in lieu of trunk . . . this was the Blue Boar himself.[43]

> Then, he conducted me to a bower about a dozen yards off, but which was approached by such ingenious twists of path that it took quite a long time to get at; . . . Our punch

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[42] Martin Chuzzlewit, Vol. II, p. 159.

[43] Pickwick Papers, Vol. II, p. 45.

> was cooling in an ornamental lake, on whose margin the bower was raised. This piece of water (with an island) in the middle which might have been the salad for supper was of a circular form and he had constructed a fountain in it, which, when you set a little mill going and took a cork out of a pipe, played to that powerful extent that it made the back of your hand quite wet.[44]

One means which he has used repeatedly to good advantage is the minuteness of his character descriptions. Absurd details which are usually not observed are brought to our attention. Observations concerning the foolish appearance or actions of the characters are usually briefly but vividly stated. How revealing these short descriptions can be may be noted from the following:

> Stryver was rich; had married a florid widow with property and three boys, who had nothing particularly shining about them but the straight hair of their dumpling heads.[45]

> She was a smart, neat, bright little woman, with a great deal of cap and a good deal of stocking.[46]

> . . . . she shook her head to that extent when she was shown it, that we were terrified lest in her weak and shattered state she should dislocate her neck.[47]

Another means of describing characters is through the use of suggestive names. Mrs. Nerdle is often referred to as the Nosom while a gentleman whom Mr. Pickwick struck so hard

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[44] Great Expectation, p. 231.

[45] Tale of Two Cities, p. 235.

[46] Little Dorrit, Vol. I, p. 153.

[47] Great Expectations, p. 139.

on the chest as to deprive him of his wind, of which he had an unusually large amount, is known as Mr. Zephyr. Madam Mantalini is a dressmaker. Mr. Pancks, who is often seen towing the Patriarch about is call the Tug. Miss Witherfield is a rather dried-up all old maid. Mr. Jingle's speech is very suggestive of the jingling of a bell as far as rapidity and regularity is concerned.

Humorous comments are often made concerning the conversation of the humorous characters. These serve to emphasize the folly of the remark and of the character.

> ". . . I'm going to be married and lead a new life. . . ." It was a satisfactory thing to hear that the old gentleman was going to lead a new life, for it was pretty evident that his old one would not last him much longer.[48]

> "Cheer up, sir," said Mrs. Crupp, "I can't bear to see you so sir; I'm quite a mother myself." I did not quite see the application of this fact to myself, but I smiled on Mrs. Crupp as benignly as was in my power.[49]

> "If there is any additional comfort you would desire to have here at any time, pray mention it. Even to strangers--far less to you, my dear Martin--there is no restriction on that point."

> It was undoubtedly true, and may be stated in corroboration of Mr. Peckniff, that any pupil had the most liberal permission to mention anything in this way that suggested itself to his fancy. Some young gentleman had gone on mentioning the very same thing for five years

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[48] Nicholas Nickleby, Vol. I, p. 276.

[49] David Copperfield, Vol. I, p. 471

without ever being stopped.[50]

Very frequently parenthetical expressions have been used to produce a comic effect. These, usually quite short, are found in all his novels.

> . . . a government officer; in his way (and in most other people's too) a professed publicist.[51]

> . . . there was a great deal of love wasted (enough indeed to have set up half-a - dozen young gentlemen, as times go, with the utmost decency). . . .[52]

> . . . Joe having her hand in his (which he had no right to have, for Dolly only gave it to him to shake). . .[53]

> . . . a tear of large dimensions. . .might be observed (or rather, must be, for it insisted on public notice) . . . .[54]

Of the figures of speech, similes and personifications have a place in Dickens' humorous style. Because the objects which are declared to be alike are so dissimilar, the similes contain that element of surprise upon which much of Dickens' humor of expression depends.

> . . . her eyes, like a couple of lighthouses on an iron-bound coast, might have warned all prudent mariners from that bold rock, her Roman nose. . . .[55]

> He had eyes. . . much too near together--as if they were afraid of being found out in something singly, if they

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[50] Martin Chuzzlewit, Vol. I, pl 109.

[51] Hard Times, p. 147.

[52] Nicholas Nickleby, Vol. II, 292.

[53] Barnaby Rudge, Vol. I, p 292.

[54] Hard Times, p. 338.

[55] Ibid., p. 344.

> kept too far apart. They had a sinister expression, under an old cocked-hat like a three cornered spittoon.[56]
>
> She was glad to come out of the chariot, which smelled. . . like a stable put under a cucumber frame.[57]
>
> Such a downy tip was on his callow chin that he seemed half fledged like a young bird. . .[58]
>
> . . . Mr. Edward Chester was . . . standing among the rusty locks and keys, like love among the roses--for which apt comparison the historian may by no means take any credit to himself, the same being the invention, in a sentimental mood, of the chaste and modest Miggs, who, beholding him from the doorsteps she was then cleaning, did in her maiden meditation, give utterance to the simile.[59]

All sorts of objects are given human qualities, which seem more unusual than those given the same objects by other authors and which are expressed in a rather prosaic and unique way.

> 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.[60]
>
> Society (for that mysterious creature sat upon the Seven Hills too) . . .[61]
>
> . . . glimpses were to be caught of a roast leg of pork, bursting into tears of sage and onion,. . . of a stuffed fillet of veal in rapid cut, of a ham in a perspiration, with the pace it was going at, . . .[62]

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[56] *Tale of Two Cities*, p. 17.

[57] *David Copperfield*, Vol. II, p. 99.

[58] *Little Dorritt*, Vol. I, p. 133.

[59] *Barnaby Rudge*, Vol. I, p. 179.

[60] *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Vol. II, p. 170.

[61] *Little Dorritt*, Vol. II, p. 222.

[62] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 289.

> It was morning; and the beautiful Aurora of whom so much has been written, said, and sung, did, with her rosy fingers, nip and tweak Miss Pecksniff's nose. It was the frolicsome custom of the Goddess, in her intercourse with the fair Cherry, so to do; or in more prosaic phrase, the tip of that feature in the sweet girl's countenance was always very red at breakfast time.[63]

> The hours did no go through any of those rosy performances which foolish poets have ascribed to them at such times; neither did the clocks go any faster, or any slower, than at other seasons. The deadly statistical recorder in the Gradgrind observatory knocked every second on the head as it was born, and buried it with his accustomed regularity.[64]

For the sake of humour, Dickens has formulated general rules or statements with comments concerning them.

> Fathers should never kiss their daughters when young men are by. IT's too much. There are bounds to human endurance.[65]

> Everything has an end. Even young ladies in love cannot read their letters forever.[66]

> A bill--is the most extraordinary locomotive engine that the genius of man ever produced. It would keep on running during the longest lifetime; without ever once stopping of its own accord.[67]

The following selections from Little Dorrit point out Dickens' brevity of expression and the juxtaposition of contrasting words or thoughts:

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[63] Martin Chuzzlewit, Vol. I, p. 113.

[64] Hard Times, p. 255.

[65] Barnaby Rudge, Vol. I, p. 53.

[66] Ibid., p. 193.

[67] Pickwick Papers, Vol. II, p. 27.

Mrs. Merdle, during these passages, said little to Fanny, but said more about her.[68]

Again his moustache went up, and his nose came down.[69]

Mr. Merdle's right hand was filled with the evening paper, and the evening was full of Mr. Merdle.[70]

Much of our author's humor is due to the unexpectedness of his choice of words.

. . . Doily . . . bade Miggs hold her tongue directly. "Which was you pleased to observe, Miss Varden?" said Miggs, with a strong emphasis on the irrelative pronoun.[71]

Mr. Gradgrind, it will be observed, being much softened, Mr. Bounderby took particular pains to harden himself at all points. It was his amiable nature.[72]

I cannot express how extremely delighted they both were, by the idea of my aunt's being in difficulties, and how comfortable and friendly it made them.[73]

A device often used to produce humor is that of mistake in the use of words. This Dickens, too, has used, the mistake being made humorous because it is so well adapted to the character by whom it is made. We laugh when the pompous Mr. Micawber says:

"Gentlemen. . . do with me as you will! I am a straw upon the surface of the deep, and am tossed in all directions by the elephants--I beg pardon, I should have said the elements."[74]

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[68] Little Dorritt, Vol. II, p. 208.

[69] Ibid., p. 17.

[70] Ibid., p. 166.

[71] Barnaby Rudge, Vol. II, p. 149.

[72] Hard Times, p. 394.

[73] David Copperfield, Vol. II, p. 128.

[74] Ibid., p. 328.

Foreigners and uneducated people often use words incorrectly or coin new ones as did Cavelletto, an Italian in Little Dorrit.

> ". . . I now no more keep it secret mentally that he was once my comrade.[75]

Another element in Dickens' humorous style is a stately and roundabout way of telling a trivial incident, as where, for example, Mr. Roker "muttered certain unpleasant invocations concerning his own eyes, limbs, and circulating fluids." or where the drunken man who is singing comic songs in the street received from Mr. Smangle "a gentle intimation, through the medium of the water jug, that his audience were not musically disposed." This manner was original with Dickens, though he may have taken a hint from the mock heroic language of Jonathan Wild; but as practiced by a thousand imitators, ever since, it has gradually become a burden.[76]

These methods of expression, all skillfully woven into a whole, produce a type of writing which emphasizes and becomes a part of the humor in character discussed at length in Chapter V. It is principally as these devices relate to the characters that they are humorous; used alone, they might produce comedy or nonsense but not humor.

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[75] Little Dorritt, Vol. II, p. 402.

[76] Beers, op. cit., p. 201.

CHAPTER V

HUMOUR OF CHARACTER

It is for his humorous characters that Dickens has been best known. People everywhere speak of Mrs. Gamp, Dick Swiveller, the Wellers, and Mr. Micawber as old friends. While these represent his best characterizations, he has many minor characters without whom the atmosphere of the stories could not have been so well adjusted to the display of his masterpieces. Many of his novels depend entirely upon several minor figures for comic relief. Although his pathos seems over-drawn today, the modern reader can still appreciate his comic characters for, as Lang says, "No more than Cleopatra's can custom stale _their_ infinite variety.[77]

> He has . . . discovered and colonized one of the waste districts of Imagination which we may call Dickens-land or Dickens-ville; from his own brain he has peopled it with some fourteen hundred persons; and it agrees with the settlements made there by Scott in being better known than such geographical countries as Canada and Australia; and it agrees with them equally in confirming us in the belief of the _reality_ of a population which has no actual existence . . . whithersoever any of them wander, they are recognized at once, by an unmistakable birth-mark, as belonging to the race of Dickens.[78]

He has added more figures to the common store than any writer since Shakespeare. Most of these, as has already been

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[77] Andrew Lang, _Essays in Little_ (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), p. 120.

[78] Edwin Percy Whipple, _op. cit._, pp. 319-320.

mentioned, are taken from the lower strata of society. All of his most outstanding comic characters belong to this class. Of him Chubb said, "He would attempt-nothing--show no interest in anything--which he could not do, and which he did not understand."[79] His interest in and understanding of common people was such that he was a master in portraying them.

In spite of the fact that his characters are common people, they most assuredly are not ordinary people. As Beers has pointed out, "His best characters are studies of the eccentric, the abnormal, the whimsical, rather than typical or universal."[80] L'Estrange also notes that

> Dickens' strongest characters, and those he loved most to paint, are such as contain foibles and eccentricities, or much dulness and ignorance in conjunction with the best feelings and intentions. . . .[81]

> Reference is repeatedly made to some particular trait of character. Uriah Heep continually rubs his hands together; Sam Weller often places his finger on the side of his nose as an aid to thought or winks as an indication of his wisdom in the situation at hand; Mrs. Cruncher is always "floppin' ".

> . . . attitudes, gestures, and movements of the human body are laughable in exact proportion as that body reminds us of a mere machine. . . . this means that only those characters are ludicrous that have become, as it were, automatic or machine-like in their responses, and their eccentricities have become of such potency with them that

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[79] Edwin Chubb Watts, op. cit., p. 128.

[80] Henry A. Beers, From Chaucer to Tennyson (New York: Flood and Vincent, The Chautauqua Century Press, 1894), p. 201.

[81] A. G. L'Estrange, op. cit., p. 233.

> they can act in no other way and above all their ridiculousness is the more convincing as they are unaware of their defects.[82]

This humor of repeated performance is also produced by the mental reactions of various characters. Mr. Tony Weller never allows us to forget his aversions to widows. Through his education on the streets, Sam Weller has received a remarkable fund of knowledge and experiences which he draws upon whenever his master needs advice. Mrs. Gamp continually repeats what her mythical friend Mrs. Harris has told her. Barkis is "willin'", and Mr. Micawber, because of his chronic shortness of money, is always waiting "for something to turn up." However, we seldom grow tired of this recurrence of ideas. The trait is so characteristic that we look for its appearance as a matter of course. We should indeed be disappointed in Sam if he should cease to offer advice to Mr. Pickwick and in Mr. Micawber if he should not still be looking for something to turn up. Dickens' characters are, more or less, the personifications of traits, but this makes them even more amusing instead of detracting from their humorous qualities. Because of this exaggeration of natural characteristics, Dickens has been called "a caricaturist of life and character rather than

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[82]Philo M. Buck, op. cit., pp. 306-307.

a painter of portraits."[83] Since these exaggerations are usually based upon truth and are amusing, the characters or caricatures are the most concrete part of Dickens' humor.

Dickens has treated these figures with the utmost sympathy. He has laughed not only at his characters but also with them. He makes us forget the absurdness of these people through certain redeeming qualities. In spite of the ignorance of Joe Gargery, we admire him for his patience with his wife and his companionable care of Pip. Mrs. Nickleby's love for her children over-balances her extreme loquacity. It is because Dickens has showed us both sides of his characters that we find them so humerous; for, as L'Estrange says, "laughter is generally greatest when we are intimately acquainted with the person against whom it is directed."[84]

In Dickens' novels we may find growth or development of character, but seldom change of character. As soon as a person is introduced, we know to what type he belongs, and we know whether we shall ever have occasion to laugh at him. Mr. Pickwick may grow in wisdom and kindness as the story of his adventures progresses, but he never ceases to be an object for humor.

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[83] William H. Crawshaw, The Making of English Literature (Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1907), p. 363.

[84] A. G. L'Estrange, op. cit., p. 293.

MICAWBER

In J. B. Priestly's opinion Mr. Micawber is "unquestionably the greatest of all Dickens' comic figures" and "with the exception of Falstaff, he is the greatest comic figure in the whole range of English literature."[85]

Mr. Micawber, the landlord of David Copperfield when he was placed by his step-father in the warehouse of Murdstone and Grinby, is described thus when he first appears in the story:

> I (David Copperfield) went in, and found there a stoutish, middle-aged person, in a brown surtout and black tights and shoes, with no more hair upon his head (which was a large one, and very shining) than there is upon an egg, and with a very extensive face which he turned full upon me. His clothes were shabby; but he had an imposing shirt-collar on. He carried a jaunty sort of stick with a large pair of rusty tassels to it; and a quizzing-glass hung outside his coat,--for ornament, I afterwards found, as he very seldom looked through it, and couldn't see anything when he did. . . .
>
> "This," said the stranger, with a certain condescending roll in his voice, and a certain indescribably air of doing something genteel, which impressed me very much, "is master Copperfield."[86]

Not only David, but everybody, was impressed with Mr. Micawber's gentility; for no matter how great his debts, he

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[85] J. B. Priestly, The English Comic Characters (London: Lane, Dodd, 1925), p. 198.

[86] Charles Dickens, David Copperfield, Vol. I, pp. 188-189.

always kept up this appearance. Even at the time of his introduction into the story he was in a state of impecuniosity and waiting "for something to turn up", and it is in this condition that we find him at almost every point of the story until he finally becomes a prosperous magistrate in Australia, to which place he emigrated with the money he received, as a recompense for his share in the disclosure of the villainy of Uriah Heep.

In spite of the fact, or perhaps because of the fact, that he was always having pecuniary difficulties of his own, he offered this often-quoted bit of advice to David:

> "My dear young friend," said Mr. Micawber, "I am older than you; a man of some experience inlife, and-- and-- of some experience, in short, in difficulties, generally speaking. At present, and until something turns up (which I am, I may say, hourly expecting) I have nothing to bestow but advice. Still my advice is so far worth taking, that--in shot, that I have never taken it myself, and am the"--here Mr. Micawber, who had been beaming and smiling all over his head and face, up to the present moment, checked himself, and frowned,--"the miserable wretch you behold."
>
> "My dear Micawber!" urged his wife.
>
> "I say," returned Mr. Micawber, quite forgetting himself, and smiling again,--"the miserable wretch you behold. My advice is, never to do to-morrow what you can do today. Procrastination is the thief of time. Collar him!"
>
> "My poor papa's maxim," Mrs. Micawber observed.
>
> "My dear," said Mr. Micawber, "your papa was very well in his way, and heaven forbid that I should disparage him! Take him for all in all, we ne'er shall--in short, make the acquaintance, probably of anybody else possessing, at his time of life, the legs for gaiters, and able to read

> the same description of print without spectacles. But he applied that maxim to our marriage, my dear, and that was so far prematurely entered into, in consequence, that I never recovered the expense."
>
> Mr. Micawber looked aside at Mrs. Micawber, and added, "Not that I am sorry for it; quite the contrary, my love." After which he was grave for a minute or so.
>
> "My other piece of advice, Copperfield," said Mr. Micawber, "you know. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen, nineteen, six,--result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds nought and six,--result misery. The blossom is blighted, the leaf is withered, the god of day goes down upon the dreary scene, and--and, in short you are forever floored. As I am."[87]

In this passage we may note the characteristics of Mr. Micawber's speech. Here as well as in his appearance, he tries to maintain the impression of dignity and gentility. However, he is infrequently handicapped by a scarcity of words as well as of money. He invariably interrupts his high-sounding discourse with the words "in short" and then finishes his sentence in a contrastingly prosaic manner. His words are uttered with pomposity and a great show of wisdom. He never fails to take himself seriously.

At times his gushing optimism is suppressed by the seriousness of his thoughts and circumstances. Much of his drollery arises from his astonishingly rapid changes from the depths of despair to the heights of gaiety. The elasticity of his temperament, as well as his propensity for letter-writing, is illustrated by the following quotation:

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[87] David Copperfield, Vol. I, pp. 211-212.

. . . I never saw anybody so thoroughly jovial as Mr. Micawber was down to the very last moment of the evening, when I took a hearty farewell of himself and his amiable wife. Consequently I was not prepared at seven o'clock next morning to receive the following communication, dated half-past nine in the evening,--a quarter of an hour after I had left him:--

"My Dear Young Friend,--

"The die is cast; all is over. Hiding the ravages of care with a sickly mask of mirth, I have not informed you, this evening, that there is no hope of the remittance. Under the circumstances, alike humiliating to relate. I have discharged the pecuniary liability contracted at this establishment, by giving a note of hand, made payable fourteen days after date at my residence, Pentonville, London. When it becomes due, it will not be taken up. The result is destruction. The bolt is impending, and the tree must fall.

Let the wretched man who now addresses you, my dear Copperfield, be a beacon to you through life. He writes with that intention and with that hope. If he could think himself of so much use, one gleam of day might, by possibility, penetrate into the cheerless dungeon of his remaining existence; though his longevity is, at present (to say the least of it), extremely problematical.

This is the last communication, my dear Copperfield, you will ever receive

From
The
Beggared Outcast
Wilkins Micawber.

I was so shocked by the contents of this heart-rending letter, that I ran off directly towards the little hotel with the intention of taking it on my way to Dr. Strong's and trying to soothe Mr. Micawber with a word of comfort. But half-way there I met the London coach with Mr. and Mrs. Micawber up behind; Mr. Micawber, the very picture oftranquil enjoyment, smiling at Mrs. Micawber's conversation, eating walnuts out of a paper bag, with a bottle sticking out of his breast-pocket.[68]

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[68] Ibid., pp. 314-315.

Mr. Micawber was always very frank on the subject of his difficulties and was always ready to give his attention to any thing that might turn up. He received as much satisfaction from giving an I. O. U. to his creditor as an ordinary man does from paying his bill. Although he could never pay, he felt that he had discharged all obligation in the matter. He seemed quite happy as long as the silver and other valuables could be taken to the pawnbroker for money with which to buy food and drink. Whenever his friends wished to cheer him, they invited him to make punch since this to him was always an especially enjoyable occupation.

The humour in this character is due to his simplicity, his innocence in regard to the ways of the world, and his untiring faith in his future success. It is because he lives so far from the world of reality in a universe all his own that he appeals to us so much. Though he is always confident of success in each new venture, everyone except Mrs. Micawber expects him to fail. Each time that he is unsuccessful, she explains the circumstances by saying that the occupation was not worthy of her husband's talents, in which she has as much faith as Mr. Micawber has in future prosperity. While we are delightfully surprised at his success in exposing Uriah Heep and at his prospects in Australia, she undoubtedly thought he had accomplished only what was to be expected and

what she had always known he would as soon as his talents were appreciated by others. In these words she expresses her devoted attachment to him:

> "I never will desert Mr. Micawber! Mr. Micawber may have concealed his difficulties from me in the first instance; but his sanguine temper may have led him to expect that he would overcome them. The pearl necklace and bracelets which I inherited from mamma have been disposed of for less than half of their value; and the set of coral which was the wedding gift of my papa has been actually thrown away for nothing. But I will never desert Mr. Micawber. No!" cried Mrs. Micawber, more affected than before, "I never will do it! It's no use asking me."
>
> I felt quite uncomfortable,--as if Mrs. Micawber supposed I had asked her to do anything of the sort,--and sat looking at her in alarm.
>
> "Mr. Micawber has his faults. I do not deny that he is improvident. I do not deny that he has kept me in the dark as to his resources and his liabilities both," she went on, looking at the wall; "but I will never desert Mr. Micawber!"[89]

And so we have this delightful woman to supplement the character of her husband, Mr. Micawber, the incurable optimist, the great speechifier and letter-writer, and the projector of schemes sure to lead to success but usually ending unsuccessfully.

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[89]Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 207-208.

MR. PICKWICK

Mr. Samuel Pickwick is the very impersonation of bland simplicity. The humour of his character lies in the fact that he and his entire world are unconscious of the fact that he is such a simpleton. Everybody thinks he is a man of remarkable talents, and even after his most foolish escapades, they treat him as if he has accomplished something worth while. However, the most worth-while thing he ever accomplishes is to conceal his very evident stupidity from himself and his associates.

He is first introduced at a meeting of the famous Pickwick Club, which he had organized and to which he has proposed the formation of a new branch of the United Pickwickians, under the title of The Corresponding Society of the Pickwick Club. The Secretary reports the "said proposal has received the sanction and approval of this Association" with the stipulation that

> . . . they be requested to forward, from time to time, authenticated accounts of their journeys and investigations; of their observations of character and manners; and of the whole of their adventures, together with all tales and papers, to which local scenery or associations may give rise, to the Pickwick Club, stationed in London. [90]

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[90] Pickwick Papers, I, p. 13.

> . . . a casual observer might possibly have remarked nothing extraordinary in the bald head, and circular spectacles, which were intently turned toward his (Secretary's) face, during the reading of the above resolutions. To those who knew that the gigantic brain of Pickwick was working beneath that forehead, and that the beaming eyes of Pickwick were twinkling behind those glasses, the sight indeed an interesting one. There sat the man who had traced to their source the mighty ponds of Hampstead, and agitated the scientific world with his Theory of Tittlebats, as calm and unmoved as the deep waters of the one on a frosty day, or as a solitary specimen of theogther in the inmost recesses of an earthen jar. And how much more interesting did the spectacle become when, starting into full life and animation, as a simultaneous call for "Pickwick" burst from his followers, that illustrious man slowly mounted into the Windsor chair, on which he had been previously seated, and addressed the club himself had formed. What a study for an artist did that exciting scene present! The eloquent Pickwick, with one hand graciously concealed behind his coattails, and the other waving in the air, to assist his glowing declamation; his elevated position revealing those tights and gaiters which, had they clothed an ordinary man, might have passed without observation, but which, when Pickwick clother them--if we may use the expression--inspired involuntary awe and reppect; surrounded by the men who had volunteered to share the periods of his travels, and who were destined to participate in the glories of his discoveries.[91]

Complimentary adjectives such as these used in this description are applied to Mr. Pickwick throughout the entire account of his adventures. Mr. Pickwick, too, realized his great importance although he did acknowledge that he had some limitations.

> He (Mr. Pickwick) would not deny that he was influenced by human passions, and human feelings . . . possibly by human weakness . . .; but this he would say, that if ever

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[91] Ibid., p. 15.

> the fire of self-importance broke out in his bosom, the desire to benefit the human race in preference, effectually quenched it. The praise of mankind was his Swing; philanthropy was his insurance office. . . . He was a humble individual.[92]

It is arranged then that Mr. Pickwick, with Mr. Snodgrass, Mr. Tupman, and Mr. Winkle, should start on his journey "to the advancement of knowledge, and the diffusion of learning," and "Mr. Pickwick, with his portmanteau in his hand, his telescope in his greatcoat pocket, and his note-book in his waistcoat, ready for the reception of any discoveries worthy of being noted down" arrived at the coach stand where his difficulties begin.

As Sam later says to Mr. Pickwick, "You raythar want somebody to look arter you, sir, w'en your judgment goes out a visitin'." Many of Mr. Pickwick's expeditions for the sake of knowledge might have ended disastrously had it not been for his faithful valet. Although we are often told that he is a very learned man, he often trusts others too much. His eagerness to help in the advancement of science leads him to purchase for a great price a stone which Bill Stumps says is a real antique. It develops, however, that the inscription thereon was only the signature of the said Mr. Stumps. Mr. Jingle and Mr. Job Trotter are easily successful

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92Ibid., pp. 16-17.

in borrowing money from Mr. Pickwick and later in causing him much embarrassment and several days' illness as a result of his midnight visit to a girls' school. Sam later helps this too-trusting soul even the score with these two villains.

Everywhere he went, his amiable countenance and his benevolence acquired him many friends. It is remarkable that these new acquaintances have either heard of this illustrious man or at once recognize his greatness. Perhaps the gravity of his deportment and the evident deference of his fellow-travellers mark him as an extraordinary person.

The plans for the Pickwickians' journey are left to Mr. Pickwick. Because of his foresight and sagacity he takes them to places where they will have the best opportunity to observe human nature. People of every sort and people with every folly (except those possessed by the Pickwickians themselves) are the subjects of their study. In all their travels they never find anybody as important, yet so simple, as their affable leader.

Though Mr. Pickwick is usually a man of mild tpmperament and bland appearance, he often loses his temper and becomes extremely angry. On these occasions Sam saves him from engaging in fistic combats which could hardly end favorably for one of Mr. Pickwick's portly dimensions. Mr. Jingle quite successfully arouses his righteous indignation by his impertinence when he has got the better of the bargain by

accepting money from Mr. Wardle instead of continuing his plan to elope with the old maid sister whose fortune was not as large as Jingle had been led by her to suppose.

> If any dispassionate spectator could have beheld the countenance of the illustrious man . . . he would have been almost induced to wonder that the indignant fire which flashed from his eyes did not melt the glasses of his spectacles--so majestic was his wrath. His nostrils dilated and his fists clinched voluntarily, as he heard himself addressed by the villain. But he restrained himself again--he did not pulverize him. . . .
>
> Mr. Pickwick was a philosopher, but philosophers are only men in armor, after all. The shaft had reached him, penetrated through his philosophical harness to his very heart. In a frenzy of his rage, he hurled the inkstand madly forward, and followed it up himself. But Mr. Jingle had disappeared, and he found himself caught in the arms of Sam. . . .
>
> Mr. Pickwick's mind, like those of all truly great men, was open to conviction. He was a quick and powerful reasoner; and a moment's reflection sufficed to remind him of the impotency of his rage. It subsided as quickly as it had been roused. He panted for breath, and looked benignantly round upon his friends.[93]

"Mr. Pickwick's apartments in Goswell Street. . . were peculiarly adapted for the residence of a man of his genius and observation." His sitting room being on the first floor front and his bedroom on the second floor front, he was able to watch the passers-by at all times. With his landlady, Mrs. Bardell, he once had this most interesting conservation:

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[93] Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 168-169.

"Do you think it's a much greater expense to keep two people than to keep one?"

"La, Mr. Pickwick," said Mrs. Bardell, coloring up to the very border of her cap, as she fancied she observed a species of matrimonial twinkle in the eyes of her lodger; "la, Mr. Pickwick, what a question!"

"Well, but do you?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"That depends--" said Mrs. Bardell, approaching the duster very near to Mr. Pickwick's elbow, which was planted on the table-- "That depends a good deal upon the person, you know, Mr. Pickwick; and whether it's a saving and careful person, sir."

"That's very true," said Mr. Pickwick, "but the person I have in my eye (here he looked very hard at Mrs. Bardell) I think possesses these qualities; and has, moreover, a considerable knowledge of the world, and a great deal of sharpness, Mrs. Bardell; which may be of material use to me."

"La, Mr. Pickwick," said Mrs. Bardell; the crimson rising to her cap-border again.

"I do," said Mr. Pickwick, growing energetic, as was his wont in speaking of a subject which interested him, "I do indeed; and to tell you the truth, Mrs. Bardell, I have made up my mind."

"Dear me, sir," exclaimed Mrs. Bardell.

"You'll think it very strange now," said the amiable Mr. Pickwick, with a good-humored glance at his companion, "that I never consulted you about this matter, and never even mentioned it, till I sent your little boy out this morning--eh?"

Mrs. Bardell could only reply by a look. She had long worshiped Mr. Pickwick at a distance, but here she was, all at once, raised to a pinnacle to which her wildest and most extravagant hopes had never dared to aspire. Mr. Pickwick was going to propose--a deliberate plan, too--sent her little boy to the borough, to get him out of the way--how thoughtful--how considerate!

"Well," said Mr. Pickwick, "what do you think?"

"Oh, Mr. Pickwick," said Mrs. Bardell, trembling with agitation, "you're very kind, sir."

"It'll save you a good deal of trouble, won't it?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Oh, I never thought anything of the trouble, sir," replied Mrs. Bardell; and of course I should take more trouble to please you then, than ever; but it is so kind of you Mr. Pickwick, to have so much consideration for my loneliness."

"Ah to be sure," said Mr. Pickwick; "I never thought of that. When I am in town you'll always have somebody

to sit with you. To be sure, so you will."

"I'm sure I ought to be a very happy woman," said Mrs. Bardell.

"And your little boy--" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Bless his heart," interposed Mrs. Bardell with a maternal sob.

"He, too, will have a companion," resumed Mr. Pickwick, "a lively one, who'll teach him, I'll be bound, more tricks in a week than he would ever learn in a year." And Mr. Pickwick smiled placidly.

"Oh, you kind, good, cheerful playful dear," said Mrs. Bardell; and without more ado she arose from her chair, and flung her arms around Mr. Pickwick's neck, with a cataract of tears and a chorus of sobs.

"Bless my soul," said the astonished Mr. Pickwick. Mrs Bardell, my good woman--dear me, what a situation-- may consider.--Mrs. Bardell, don't--if anybody should come--"

"Oh, let them come," exclaimed Mrs. Bardell, frantically; "I'll never leave you--dear, kind, good soul;" and with these words, Mrs. Bardell clung the tighter. 94

And somebody in the person of Mr. Pickwick's friends, Mr. Tupman, Mr. Winkle, and Mr. Snodgrass, did come and did find Mr. Pickwick holding Mrs. Bardell, who had fainted from joy. This scene illustrates Mr. Pickwick's simpleness. An ordinary man probably would have noticed in what direction Mrs. Bardell's mind was wandering before he had talked half as long as had Mr. Pickwick. It develops that, after raising Mrs. Bardell's hopes to this extent, Mr. Pickwick merely means to announce that he is going to hire a servant. Mr. Pickwick is such an unsuspecting person that he is very much astonished when he receives notice that Mr. Bardell is suing him for breach of promise. Just as he is lecturing his friends on their "indiscretion,or worse than that, the blackness of heart" shown by the fact that "beneath whatever roof

94 Ibid., II, pp. 192-194.

they locate, they disturb the peace of mind and happiness of some confiding female," he receives the letter from Mrs. Bardell's attorneys. Probably much punch or hot brandy and water was necessary to relieve Mr. Pickwick's feelings after such an announcement for when greatly aroused, he found drinks of this sort very soothing and necessary. We find him often resorting to them, sometimes to too great an extent as on the day he, being wheeled along in a barrow, attended a hunting party, went to sleep, and much later awoke to find himself in the pound whither he had been taken by the owner of the land on which he had been trespassing.

The "hero" of this novel, Pickwick Papers, is a man of such determination as we see from the fact that he spent several weeks in debtor's prison rather than pay the costs in the case of Bardell vs. Pickwick. His kindness got the better of his determination, however, when his refusal to pay caused the arrest of Mrs. Bardell.

As the story progresses, kindness becomes a more predominate trait in his character and he seems to outgrow his simpleness to a certain extent. He becomes capable of more conscious planning and proves of great service to his friends in arranging for their futures. Perhaps it was through association with Sam that he acquired some of the wisdom displayed in the later part of the book. At any rate by the

end of the book we feel that Mr. Pickwick is not such a fool after all. His search for knowledge has been successful at least so far as he himself is concerned. He now deserves the love and respect of his friends.

> Mr. Pickwick is somewhat infirm now; but he retains all his former juvenility of spirit and may still be frequently seen, contemplating the pictures in the Dulwich Gallery, or enjoying a walk about the pleasant neighborhood on a fine day. He is known by all the poor people about, who never fail to take their hats off, as he passes, with great respect; the children idolise him; and so indeed does the whole neighborhood. . . . he is invariably attended by the faithful Sam, between whom and his master there exists a steady and reciprocal attachment, which nothing but death will terminate. 95

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95 Ibid., II, p. 461.

SAM WELLER

Next to Mr. Pickwick himself, Sam Weller is perhaps the most widely known and appreciated of Dickens' humorous characters. He is first introduced as "Boots" at White Hart Inn where he receives that attention and approval of Mr. Pickwick, who later decided to hire him as his servant. When first seen,

> He was habited in a coarse striped waistcoat, with black calico sleeves, and blue glass buttons; drab breeches and leggins. A bright red handkerchief was wound in a very loose and unstudied style thrown round his neck, and an old white hat was carelessly thrown on one side of his head.[96]

"Careless" and "unstudied" describe well not only his manner of dressing but also his actions and his thoughts in most instances. Everything about him gives the impression of having been arranged without forethought. Even the words of wisdom and the advice he offers Mr. Pickwick and his friends seem to occur to him on the spur of the moment--not as the result of premeditation. When Mr. Pickwick offers him the position, he does not need to consider the proposition, merely asking for the details:

> "Wages?" inquired Sam.
> "Twelve pounds a year," replied Mr. Pickwick.
> "Clothes?"
> "Two suits."
> "Work?"
> "To attend upon me; and travel about with me and these

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[96] Ibid., I, p. 154.

gentlemen here."

"Take the bill down," said Sam, emphatically. I'm let to a single gentleman, and the terms is agreed upon."

"You accept the situation?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Certn'ly," replied Sam. "If the clothes fits me half as well as the place, they'll do."

. . . . before night closed in, Mr. Weller was furnished with a gray coat with the 'P. C.' button, a black hat with a cockade to it, a pink striped waistcoat, light breeches and gaiters, and a variety of other necessaries, too numerous to recapitulate.

. . . ."Well," said that suddenly transformed individual, "I wonder whether I'm meant to be a footman, or a groom, or a gamekeeper, or a seedman. I looks like a sort of compo of every one of 'em. Never mind; there's a change of air, plenty to see, and little to do; and all this suits my complaint uncommon; so long life to the Pickwicks, says I!"[97]

Considering their positions, a very unusual relationship exists between Sam and his employer. Sam fails to show due respect and offers his advice and entertaining bits of gossip unsolicited. Mr. Pickwick seems to expect nothing else. If it were not for this easy companionship between the two, much of the humour of Sam Weller would be lacking for it is this which causes many of the amusing scenes of the book. Sam is a saucy fellow, whom most men would not have tolerated in their service for a single day. Nevertheless, Sam is the most faithful servant one could wish for. No matter what need arose or where he must go, Weller is determined to be at hand. When Mr. Pickwick is placed in debtors' prison for failure to pay the costs in the trial of Bardell vs. Pickwick, Sam con-

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[97] Ibid., p. 197.

trives to be arrested for debt so that he might be with his master. To the last Sam remains devotedly attached to Mr. Pickwick; and when his master gives up his rambles, retires from active life and settles down a Dulwich, he goes with him, determined to remain single and to stick to him and make him comfortable, "vages or no vages, notice or no notice, board or no board, lodgin' or no lodgin'."

Sam is extremely light-hearted but certainly not light-headed. He is the very impersonation of easy conscious skill and cleverness. A great deal of the humor of his character lies in the fact that he is always certain that he is right and never hesitates to offer his advice whenever a problem arises. He has a great deal more worldly wisdom and far less laziness than Richard Swiveller of Old Curiosity Shop. Indeed, he seems to direct all the other characters; when they fail in making their plans, Sam is sure to see a way out. Perhaps this is due to the method in which he was educated. This is described by his father;

> . . . I took a good deal o' pains with his eddication, sir; let him run in the streets when he was very young, and shift for himself. It's the only way to make a boy sharp, sir.[98]

Sam throws further light upon his up-bringing:

> . . . if ever I wanted anythin' o' my father, I always asked for it in a wery 'spectful and obligin' manner. If he didn't give it to me, I took it, for fear I should be led to do anythin' wrong, through not havin' it. I saved him a world o' trouble this way, sir.[99]

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[98] Ibid., I, p. 333.
[99] Ibid., I, 441.

Because his education was secured in this manner, Sam was not a good penman and his method of expressing his thoughts hardly does justice to his native sagacity. In his travels with Mr. Pickwick, he falls in love with a comely servant-girl by the name of Mary. The letter he writes to her and which he reads to his father might be quoted to illustrate his manner of composition:

> * * * Sam * * * commenced, and read as follows:
>
> "'Lovely creetur I feel myself a dammed'"—
>
> "That ain't proper," said Mr. Weller, taking his pipe from his mouth.
>
> "No, it ain't 'Dammed,'" observed Sam, holding the letter up to the light; "it's 'shamed:' there's a blot there. 'I feel myself ashamed.'"
>
> "Very good," said Mr. Weller. "Go on."
>
> "'Feel myself ashamed, and completely eir'—I forget wot this here word is,'" said Sam, scratching his head with the pen, in vain attempts to remember.
>
> "Why don't you look at it, then?" inquired Mr. Weller.
>
> "So I am a lookin' at it," replied Sam; "but there's another blot. Here's a 'c', and a 'i', and a 'd'."
>
> "Circumwented, p'rhaps," suggested Mr. Weller.
>
> "No, it ain't that," said Sam,—"circumscribed; that's it!"
>
> "That ain't as good a word as circumwented, Sammy," said Mr. Weller gravely.
>
> "Think not?" said Sam.
>
> "Nothin' like it!" replied his father.
>
> "But don't you think it means more?" inquired Sam.
>
> "Well, p'rhaps it is a more tenderer word," said Mr. Weller a ter a few moments' reflection. Go on, Sammy."
>
> "'Feel myself ashamed and completely circumscribed in a dressin' of you, for you <u>are</u> a nice gal, and nothin' but it.'"
>
> "That's a very pretty sentiment," said the elder Mr. Weller, removing his pipe to make way for the remark.
>
> "Yes, I think it is raythor good," observed Sam, highly flattered.
>
> * * * *
>
> "Drive on, Sammy," said Mr. Weller.
>
> * * * *

"'Afore I see you, I thought all women was alike.'"

"So they are," observed the elder Mr. Weller parenthetically.

"'But now,'" continued Sam,--'" now I find what a reg'lar soft-headed, inkred'lous turnip I must ha' been; for there ain't nobody like you, though I like you better than nothin' at all.' I thought it best to make that raythor strong," said Sam, looking up.

* * * *

"So I take the privilege of the day, Mary, my dear,--as the gen'lem'n in difficulties did, ven he walked out of a Sunday,--to tell you that the first and only time I see you your likeness was took on my heart in much quicker time and brighter colors than ever a likeness was taken by the prodfeel machean (wich p'r'aps you may have heard on Mary my dear) although it does finish a portrait and put the frames and glass on complete with a hook at the end to hang it up by and all in two minutes and a quarter.'"

"I'm afraid that verges on the poetical, Sammy," said Mr. Weller dubiously.

"No, it don't," replied Sam, reading on very quickly to avoid contesting the point.

"'Except of me Mary my dear as your valentine and think over what I've said. My dear Mary I will now conclude.' That's all," said Sam.

"That's raythor a sudden pull up; ain't it, Sammy?" inquired Mr. Weller.

"Not a bit on it," said Sam. "She'll wish there was more, and that's the great art o' letter-writin'."

. . . . "I don't know what to sign it."

"Sign it 'Veller,'" said the oldest surviving proprietor of that name.

"Won't do," said Sam. "Never sign a valentine with your own name."

"Sign it 'Pickvick,' then," said Weller; "it's a wery good name, and a easy one to spell."

"The wery thing!" said Sam. "I could end with a verse; what do you think?"

"I don't like it, Sam," rejoined Mr. Weller. "I never know'd a respectable coachman as wrote poetry--."

But Sam was not to be dissuaded from the poetical idea that had occurred to him, so he signed the letter,--

"Your love-sick
Pickwick." [100]

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[100] Ibid., II, pp. 49-51.

The letter illustrates a very often repeated characteristic of Sam's speech--that of using similes. Practically every thought is to him like something else, and these similitudes are very often expressed by him.

> ". . . . Set down, sir, ve make no extra charge for the settin down, as the king remarked wen he blow'd up his ministers.[101]

> . . . ."if I do see your drift, it's my 'pinion that you're a comin' it a great deal too strong, as the mail-coachman said to the snow-storm ven it overtook him.[102]

> . . . ."away with melincholly, as the little boy said ven his schoolmis-is died. . . .[103]

Mr. Pickwick once observed to Job Trotter than Sam's "mode of expressing his opinion is somewhat homely, and occassionally incomprehensible." Sam's speech is the pure Cockney of the servant class. His exchange of the letters 'v' and 'w' causes him a great deal of trouble when he tries to tell the magistrate how to spell his name. He has passed most of his time in London and has become the best representative we have of the real Cockney spirit.

He is also a philosopher because he governs his thoughts and conduct according to principles of practical wisdom. He is prone to make general statements such as the one already

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[101] Ibid., II, p. 261.

[102] Ibid., II, p. 250

[103] Ibid., II, p. 223.

quoted concerning the signature on valentines. His remarks concerning people are often quite shrewd. Of the officers of justice he says, "There ain't a magistrate going as don' commit himself twice as often as he commits other people."[104]

> Sam's experience, like that of most genuine philosophers, has taught him to be cynical about the little, unimportant things of this life, such as the conduct of lawyers or the business of voting, but it has left him optimistic about the important things, eating and drinking, travel and adventure, service and love. Like the good Cockney he is, he can see the greater part of life for what it is, a colossal show at which the wise man can stare and laugh, and over which he can nod and wink to other merry philosophers.[105]

This philosophical turn of mind has been inherited from his father, Tony Weller.

> "You are quite a philosopher, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.
>
> "It runs in the family, I b'lieve, sir," replied Mr. Weller. "My father's wery much in that line now. If my mother-in-law blows him up, he whistles. She flies in a passion and breaks his pipe; he steps out and gets another. Then she screams very loud, and falls into 'sterics; and he smokes very comfortable 'til she comes to agin. That's philosophy, sir, ain't it?"[106]

Because of their outlook on life is much the same and because they are so different from most of the other characters in Pickwick, the father and son seem to have much in common.

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[104] Ibid., I, p. 413.

[105] J. B. Priestly, op. cit., p. 209.

[106] Pickwick Papers.

Between the two there is an unusual degree of understanding. Old Weller, the typical coachman, is "fat, rubicund, hoarse and horsey." He shows his fatherly affection by offering Sam advice, most of which has to do with "widders" and marriage. Having married a widow, Mr. Weller considers himself quite the authority on these two subjects.

> "Widders, Sammy," replied Mr. Weller, slightly changing color. "Widders are 'ceptions to ev'ry rule. I have heard how many ord'nary women one widder's equal to, in pint i' comin' over you. I think it's five-and-twanty, but I don't rightly know vether it an't more.[107]
>
> . . . If ever you gets to up'ard o' fifty, and feels disposed to go a marryin' anybody--no matter who--just you shut yourself up in your own room, if you've got one, and pison yourself off-hand. Hangin's vulgar, so don't you have nothin' to say to that. Pison yourself, Samivel, my boy, pison yourself, and you'll be glad on it arterwards.[108]

Perhaps the only consolation Mr. Weller had when his son was finally married to Mary was that she was not a "widder." This wedding did not take place, however, until after Mary became Mr. Pickwick's housekeeper because Sam had promised to "stick by" his master "come what come may; and let ev'rythin' and everybody do their wery fiercest, nothin' shall ever perwent it!"[109]

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[107] Pickwick Papers, I, p. 260.

[108] Ibid., I, p. 384.

[109] Ibid., II, 447.

Sam Weller is a figure in which the art of the auther is shown in full strength. He is the center of a wealth of comical situations and experiences, all full of the love of life. Indeed Sam seems to typify the carefree, humorous experiences by which all the Pickwickians are surrounded.

RICHARD SWIVELLER

In Old Curiosity Shop we find a character whom Dickens has very lovingly depicted. This is the vain, kind, dissipated, bombastic young man Richard Swiveller. In a slightly inebriated condition, he meets little Nell's grandfather:

> "There. It's Dick Swiveller," said the young fellow pushing him in. "Sit down, Swiveller."
> "But is the old man agreeable?" said Mr. Swiveller in an undertone.
> "Sit down," repeated his companion.
> Mr. Swiveller complied, and looking about him with a propitiatory smile, observed that last week was a fine week for ducks, and this week as a fine week for the dust; he also observed that while standing by the post at the street corner, he had observed that a pig with a straw in his mouth issuing out of the tobacco-shop, from which appearance he augured that another fine week for the ducks was approaching, and that rain would certainly ensue. He furthermore took occasion to apologize for any negligence that might be perceptible in his dress, on the ground that last night he had had "the sun very strong in his eyes"; by which expression he was understood to convey to his hearers, in the most delicate manner possible, the information that he had been extremely drunk.
>
> "But what," said Mr. Swiveller with a sigh, "what is the odds so long as the fire of soul is kindled at the taper of convivality, and the wing of friendship never moults a feather! What is the odds so long as the spirit is expanded by means of rosy wine, and the present moment the least happiest of our existence!" . . . .
> It was perhaps not unreasonable to suspect, from what had already passed, that Mr. Swiveller was not quite recovered from the effects of the powerful sunlight to which he had made allusion; but if no such suspicion had been awakened by his speech, his wiry hair, dull eyes, and sallow face would still have been strong witnesses against him. His attire was not, as he himself had hinted, remarkable for the nicest arrangement, but was in a state of disorder which strongly induced the idea that he had gone to bed in it. It consisted of a brown body-coat with a great many brass buttons up the front and only one behind, a bright check neckerchief, a plaid waistcoat, soil-

> ed white trousers, and a very limp hat, worn with the wrong side foremost, to hide a hole in the brim. The breast of his coat was ornamented with an outside pocket from which there peeped forth the cleanest end of a very large and very ill-favored handkerchief; his dirty wristbands were pulled down as far as possible, and ostentatiously folded back over his cuffs; he displayed no gloves and carried a yellow cane having on the top a bone hand with the semblance of a ring on its little finger and a black ball in its grasp. With all these personal advantages (to which may be added a strong savor of tobacco-smoke, and a prevailing greasiness of appearance) Mr. Swiveller leaned back in his chair with his eyes fixed on the ceiling and occasionally pitching his voice to the needful key, obliged the company with a few bars of an intensely dismal air, and then, in the middle of a note, relapsed into his former silence.[110]

In this minute description of Dick Swiveller we can see the effects of that everlasting struggle between his laziness and his vanity. He attempts to look as well-dressed as possible with as little exertion as he can expend on any one matter. Though a little too flashy for a well-dressed young man, his clothes may, when new, have made a very presentable appearance; but now, through his laziness, they have deteriorated somewhat. Still he appears nonchalant to the greatest degree. From his actions one might imagine him dressed in clothing fit for a king. He worries no more about clothes than about anything else.

It is from this characteristic that a great deal of the charm of this comic figure arises. When others are bothered

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[110] *Old Curiosity Shop*, I, pp. 26-28.

and troubled about some situation, he remains his own calm self, entirely unruffled. All his work (of which there is very little) and all his pastimes are pursued in a leisurely fashion. Perhaps his motto was "haste makes waste." And he never had any energy to waste.

Richard had a most ingratiating way about him. He always tried to establish a friendly relationship between himself and each new acquaintance. The class and character of his new friend made no difference to him; he was equally amicable toward little Nell's grandfather, whom every one supposed to be wealthy, and later toward the poor little servant girl to whom he gave the name, "The Marchioness." On his first meeting the old man, he wished to know if he were "agreeable." Often he remarks that "The wing of friendship should never moult a feather." These words indicate his chief interest in life.

He was as generous with his flowery vocabulary as with his friendship. Concerning this Priestly says:

> He contrives to enjoy himself by indulging, without stint, his literary sense. If he cannot have the romantic trappings, the poetical action, he can, and does, have the language. He feasts sumptuously on rich quotations. Gorgeous phrases clothe him in silks and velvet. He is wafted where he will, far above dull reality, far beyond the clutch of circumstance, on the wings of metaphor. Noble adjectives wait upon him, the lord of the language.[111]

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[111] J. B. Priestly, English Comic Characters (London: Land; Dodd, 1925, p. 228.

At one time Swiveller thus exhorts his desponding friend, Fred Trent:

> "Fred, . . remember the once popular melody of "Begone dull care'; fan the sinking flame of hilarity with the wing of friendship; and pass the rosy wine!"[112]

For financial reasons Dick has just promised to marry Fred's sister, Nell (if she can be persuaded) when he receives a letter from a certain Miss Wackles, of whom he says:

> "Why, sir," returned Dick, "between Miss Sophia Wackles and the humble individual who has now the honor to address you, warm and tender sentiments have been engendered--sentiments of the most honorable and inspiring kind. The Goddess Diana, sir, that calls aloud for the chase, is not more particular in her behavior than Sophia Wackles; I can tell you that."
>
> "Am I to believe there's anything real in what you say?" demanded his friend; "you don't mean to say that any love-making has been going on?"
>
> "Lovemaking, yes. Promising, no," said Dick. There can be no action for breach, that's one comfort. I've never committed myself in writing, Fred."
>
> "And what's in the letter, pray?"
>
> "A reminder, Fred, for to-night--a small party of twenty--making two hundred light fantastic toes in all, supposing every lady and gentleman to have the proper complement. I must go, if it's only to begin the breaking off the affair--I'll do it, don't you be afraid. . ."[113]

When left alone, he further describes his feelings toward this Miss Wackles:

> "It's rather sudden," said Dick, shaking his head with a look of infinite wisdom, and running on (as he was accustomed to do) with scraps of verse as if they were

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[112] Old Curiosity Shop, p. 74.

[113] Ibid., I, p. 74.

only prose in a hurry; "when the heart of a man is depressed with fears, the mist is dispelled when Miss Wackles appears; she's a very nice girl. She's like the red rose that's newly sprung in June--there's no denying it--she's also like a melody that's sweetly played in tune. . ."[114]

As he himself later says, "These fortunes in perspective look such a long way off", and his fortunes were always of this sort. However, he does not allow himself to be overcome by worry but has devised a simple scheme whereby he can avoid his creditors.

. . . Richard Swiveller took a greasy memorandum-book from his pocket and made an entry therein.

"Is that a reminder, in case you should forget (to call to pay his bill)?" said Trent with a sneer.

"Not exactly, Fred," replied the impeturbable Richard, continuing to write with a business-like air, "I enter in this little book the names of the streets that I can't go down while the shops are open. This dinner today closes Long Acre. I bought a pair of boots in Great Queen Street last week, and made that no thoroughfare too. There's only one avenue to the Strand left open now, and I shall have to stop up that tonight with a pair of gloves. The roads are closing so fast in every direction that in about a month's time, unless my aunt sends me a remittance, I shall have to go three or four miles out of town to get over the way."

"There's no fear of her failing, in the end?" said Trent.

"Why, I hope not," returned Mr. Swiveller, "but the average number of letters it takes to soften her is six, and this time we have got as far as eight without any effect at all. I'll write another tomorrow morning. I mean to blot it a good deal and shake some water over it out of the pepper-castor, to make it look penitent.

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[114] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 77.

> I'm in such a state of mind that I hardly know what to write'--blot--'if you could see me at this minute shedding tears for my past misconduct'--pepper-castor--'my hand trembles when I think'--blot again--if that don't produce the effect, it's all over."[115]

Since he had been left an orphan by his parents at an early age and had been cast upon the world in his tenderest period,[116] he for some time has been living on an irregular income from his aunt. To one whose vocabulary contains words so well suited to every need, writing letters--even nine or ten of them--is much to be preferred to working--not that Richard had ever considered working for a living. Quilp, a malicious dwarf, secures for Dick a position in the office of his friends and lawyers, Mr. Brass and Miss Sally Brass, or the Dragon, as Dick comes to call her.

> "This (said Mr. Quilp) is Mr. Swiveller, my intimate friend--a gentleman of good family and great expectations, but who, having rather involved himself by youthful indiscretions, is content for a time to fill the humble station of a clerk. . . Mr. Swiveller. . . being pretty well accustomed to the agricultural pursuits of sowing wild oats, Miss Sally, prudently considers that half a loaf is better than no bread. To be out of harm's way he prudently thinks is something too, and therefore he accepts your brother's offer. Brass, Mr. Swiveller is yours.[117]

Soon left to himself when the two lawyers leave on business, Dick reviews his circumstances:

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[115] Ibid., I, pp. 76-77.

[116] Ibid., p. 203.

[117] Ibid., pp. 295-296.

> "Quilp offers me this place, which he says he can insure me, . . . Fred, who, I could have taken my affidavit, would not have heard of such a thing, backs Quilp to my astonishment, and urges me to take it also--staggerer number one! My aunt in the country stops the supplies, and writes an affectionate note to say that she has made a new will, and left me out of it--staggerer number two! No money; no credit; no support from Fred, who seems to turn steady all at once; notice to quit the old lodgings--staggerers three, four, five, and six! Under an accumulation of staggerers, no man can be considered a free agent. No man knocks himself down; is his destiny knocks him down, his destiny must pick him up again. Then I'm very glad that mine has brought all this upon itself, and I shall be as careless as I can and make myself quite at home to spite it."[118]

Here, as he does by his actions throughout the book, Mr. Swiveller expresses his philosophy of life--a philosophy to which he is entirely true. He is almost like Mr. Micawber in that he is always waiting for something to turn up, but, as a rule, that "something" is not a position as it was in Mr. Micawber's case. Having secured a position (that he did not want), he does his best to seem diligent without really being so.

> Richard Swiveller, therefore sticking a pen behind each ear, and carrying another in his mouth as a token of his great importance and devotion to business, hurried out to meet and treat with the single gentleman.[119]

However, he does not become as good an assistant as the lawyers might wish. He lacks the guile and deceit expected of him so that he may help them carry out their dis-

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[118] Ibid., I, p. 301.

[119] Ibid., p. 304.

honest schemes. Because he refuses to swear to a falsehood, Brass assures him that he has mistaken his calling and will never make a lawyer.

During his clerkship Mr. Swiveller is visited by Mr. Chuckster, a fellow member of the grand organization, the Glorious "Apollers", of which Dick is Grand Master. Their conversation may give us an insight into the character of this group of young men:

> "You're devilish early at this pestiferous old slaughter house," said that gentleman, poising himself on one leg, and shaking the other in an easy manner.
> "Rather," returned Dick.
> "Rather!" retorted Mr. Chuckster, with that air of graceful trifling which so well became him. "I should think so. Why, my good fellow, do you know that o'clock it is--half past nine A.M. in the morning."
> "Won't you come in?" said Dick. "All alone. Swiveller solus. 'Tis the hour of witching--'"
> "Hour of night!"
> "'When churchyards yawn,'"
> "'And graves give up their dead,'"
> At the end of this quotation in dialogue, each gentleman struck an attitude, and immediately subsiding into prose, walked into the office. Such morsels of enthusiasm were common among the Glorious Apollos, and were indeed the links that bound them together, and raised them above the cold dull earth.[120]

When Mr. Brass tells Richard that a man of his abilities is lost in the mouldy line of the lawyer and that he could call out his genius on the stage or in the army, Richard returns to his apartments--his vanity always let him to speak

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[120] Ibid., I, pp. 486-487.

of his living quarters in the plural. When he is very ill for three weeks, he is cared for by the Marchioness, the small servant to whom he had shown much kindness and consideration. His appreciative nature led him to repay her well when he received an annuity from his aunt, now deceased. Throughout the story he shows his sympathy for those whose destiny has not been kind to them. However, he is never downcast for long about their misfortunes any more than about his own. Destiny must take care of events. At times certain problems do call for serious thought, which in Richard's case can not last long. The "rosy" is often called upon to raise his spirits. His lost love for Sophy Wackles, however, leads him to such despondency that he must drown his sorrow in the melancholy notes of the flute--especially melancholy when played by Richard.

In spite of destiny he contrives to be happy. Leaving everything to fate certainly made him an unmethodical and disorderly sort of fellow; but "what's the odds so long as the fire of the soul is kindled at a taper of convivality, and the wing of friendship never moults a feather!"[121].

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[121] Ibid., I, p. 27.

SAIREY GAMP

Mrs. Gamp is the famous but disreputable nurse in Martin Chuzzlewit, whose continued references to her hypothetical friend Mrs. Harris, and equally frequent resorts to the bottle, when "so disposed", have obtained for her a world-wide celebrity.

The following description will show what may be expected of her in the story:

> She was a fat old woman, this Mrs. Gamp, with a husky voice and moist eye, which she had a remarkable power of turning up, and only showing the white of it. Having very little neck, it cost her some trouble too look over herself, if one may say so, at those to whom she talked. She wore a very rusty black gown, rather the worse for snuff, and a shawl and bonnet to correspond. In these dilapidated articles of dress she had, on principle, arrayed herself, time out of mind, on such occasions as the present; for this at once expressed a decent amount of veneration for the deceased, and invited the next of kin to present her with a fresher suit of weeds,--an appeal so frequently successful, that the very fetch and ghost of Mrs. Gamp, bonnet and all, might be seen hanging up, any hour in the day, in at least a dozen of the second-hand-clother shops about Holborn. The face of Mrs. Gamp--the nose in particular--was somewhat red and swollen; and it was difficult to enjoy her society without becoming conscious of a smell of spirits. Like most persons who have attained to great eminence in their profession, she took here very kindly; insomuch, that, setting aside her natural predilections as a woman, she went to a lying-in or a laying-out with equal zest and relish.[122]

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[122] Martin Chuzzlewit, I, p. 384.

She constantly quotes and refers to a certain Mrs. Harris because that woman's ideas coincide so perfectly with her own. This Mrs. Harris, whom Sairey has known for "five and thirty year"[123] and whose character "behind her back, afore her face, or anywheres, is not to be impeached,"[124] also appreciates the worth of her more substantial friend, Mrs. Gamp.

> "'Mrs. Gamp'--'if ever there was a sober creature to be got at eighteen-pence for working-people, and three and six for gentlefolks ('night watching,'" said Mrs. Gamp with emphasis,"' being extra charge'), 'you are that inwallable person.'--'Mrs. Harris', I says to her, don't name the charge; for, if I could afford to lay all my feller creeturs out for nothink, I would gladly do it; sich is the love I bears 'em. But what I always says to them as has the management of matters, Mr. Harris--be they gents or be they ladies, is don't ask me whether I won't take none, or whether I will, but leave the bottle on the chimley piece, and let me put my lips to it when I am disposed.'"[125]

Though she says she loves her "feller-creeture," her greatest love is for herself. When caring for a patient her main purpose is to make herself comfortable. In her work with Mrs. Prig, a bosom friend, with whom she often nursed "turn and turn about, one off, one on," she shows how coarse, inhuman, greedy, yet jovial she can be:

> "Anythin' to tell afore you goes, my dear?" asked Mrs. Gamp, setting her bundle down inside the door, and looking affectionately at her partner.
> "The pickled salmon," Mrs. Prig replied, "it is quite delicious. I can partick'ler recommend it. Don't have nothink to say to the cold meat, for it tastes of the stable. The drinks is all good."

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[123] Ibid., II, p. 401.
[124] Ibid., II, p. 398.
[125] Ibid., I, p. 385.

Mrs. Gamp expressed herself much gratified.

"The physic and them things is on the drawers and mankle shelf," said Mrs. Prig, cursorily. "He took his last slime draught at seven. The easy chair an't soft enough. You'll want his piller."

. . . Mrs. Gamp solaced herself with a pinch of snuff, and stood looking at him (the patient) with her head inclined a little sidewise, as a connoisseur might gaze upon a doubtful work of art. By degrees, a horrible remembrance of one branch of her calling took possession of the woman; and stooping down, she pinned his wandering arms against his sides, to see how he would look if laid out as a dead man. Her fingers itched to compose his limbs in that last marble attitude.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Gamp, walking away from the bed, "he'd make a lovely corpse!"

. . . (She) administered the patient's medicine by the simple process of clutching his windpipe to make him gasp, and immediately pouring it down his throat.

"I a'most forgot the piller, I declare!" said Mrs. Gamp, drawing it away. "There! Now he's comfortable as he can be, I'm sure. I must try to make myself as much so as I can."

With this in view, she went about the construction of an extemporaneous bed in the easy-chair, with the addition of the next easy one for her feet. Having formed the best couch that the circumstances admitted of, she took out of her bundle a yellow night-cap, of prodigious size, in shape resembling a cabbage; which article of dress she fixed and tied on with the utmost care, previously divesting herself of a row of bald old curls that could scarcely be called false, they were so very innocent of anything approaching to deception. From the same repository she brought forth a night-jacket, in which she also attired herself. Finally, she produced a watchman's coat, which she tied around her neck by the sleeves, so that she became two people; and looked, behind, as if she were in the act of being embraced by one of the old patrol.[126]

A later conversation would also seem to indicate that she did not take the best care of her patients.

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[126] Ibid., I, pp. 502-503.

"And don't go a dropping none of your snuff in it [the salad]," said Mrs. Prig. "In gruel, barley-water, apple-tea, mutton-broth, and that, it don't signify. It stimulates a patient. But I don't relish it myself."

"Why Betsey Prig!" cried Mrs. Gamp, "how can you talk so!"

"Why, ain't your patients, wotever their diseases is, always a sneezin' their very heads off, along your snuff?"[127]

Through most of the story Mrs. Prig and Mrs. Gamp remain staunch friends, but finally Mrs. Prig commits the unpardonable sin of doubting the existence of Mrs. Harris:

"Mrs. Harris, Betsey--"

"Bother Mrs. Harris!" said Betsey Prig.

Mrs. Gamp looked at her with amazement, incredulity, and indignation; when Mrs. Prig, shutting her eyes still closer, and folding her arms still tighter, uttered these memorable and tremendous words:

"I don't believe there's no sich a person!"[128]

A later conversation with Ruth Pinch shows that Mrs. Gamp's imagination was not all spent on her friend Mrs. Harris. Lack of knowledge never makes her hesitant about expressing her thoughts.

"And which of all them smoking monsters is the Ankworks boat I wonder? Goodness me!" cried Mrs. Gamp.

"What boat did you want?" asked Ruth.

The Ankworks package," Mrs. Gamp replied. "I will not deceive you, my sweet. Why should I?"

"That is the Antwerp Packet in the middle," saidRuth.

"And I wish it was in Jondage's belly, I do!" cried Mrs. Gamp, appearing to confound the prophet with the whole in this miraculous aspiration."[129]

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[127] Ibid., II, pp. 396-397.

[128] Ibid., II, pp. 400-401.

[129] Ibid., II, p. 247.

The peculiarities of her dictation may be noted in the following quotation:

> "I says to Mrs. Harris," Mrs. Gamp continued, "only t'other day, the last Monday fortnight as ever dawned upon this Piljian's Projiss of a mortal wale; I says to Mrs. Harris, when she says to me, 'years and our trials, Mrs. Gamp, sets marks upon us all'--'say not the words, Mrs. Harris, if you and me is to be continued friends, for sech is not the case.'"[130]

Ward says that the oddities of her speech are "but the glorious type of all the utterances heard to this day from charwomen, laundresses and single gentlemen's housekeepers."[131]

Mrs. Gamp is another type figure. She represents a class of so-called nurses prevalent in London at the time of the story. Dickens tries to make her appear as an obnoxious character by revealing her philosophy of life and her practices in caring for her patient after she has very carefully looked out for her own comfort. He makes her a person whose services no one could desire. Yet she has evidently some qualities which arouse our sympathy and affections. She does not seem to be exactly honest, but she has her own code of morals. Nothing except her own welfare stands in the way of her duty to her patient. If she has charge of a laying-out, she wants everything about the funeral to be a credit to herself and the family concerned.

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[130] Ibid, I, p. 491.

[131] Ward, Adolphus William, Dickens, New York: Harper and Brothers, n. d., p57.

She is selfish but affable to the same degree. Nobody is a stranger to her--least of all Mrs. Harris who is, as Mrs. Gamp once told Mrs. Prig, too select a personage for Mrs. Prig's acquaintance. This novel way of expressing her own ideas without her friend's realizing it has made Mrs. Gamp world-famous. Since Mrs. Harris is always, of course, very complimentary in her remarks concerning Mrs. Gamp, Mrs. Gamp prizes this friend above all others, though she has many. Among them is Mrs. Mould, the undertaker, who always recommends Sairey for his assistant. Although her methods are not of the very best, she loses no friends because of them. Her cheerfulness and friendliness cause her addiction to snuff and liquor to be overlooked.

And so this woman of spirit and spirits moves gaily through the story, securing comfort for herself and furnishing amusement for every reader. Her good humor and amiability make her the outstanding humorous character in this novel, Martin Chuzzlewit.

THE PEGGOTTYS

In David Copperfield we find Clara Peggotty and her family, a group rich in humour. These simple people are drawn true to life, have the love of their author and readers, and cause much amusement.

Clara Peggotty, Mrs. Copperfield's servant and David's nurse, is the most important of the group. She is the girl with no shape at all and eyes so dark that they seem to darken their whole neighborhood in her face, and with cheeks and arms so hard and red, that the birds might peck them in preference to apples.[132] Her complexion reminds David of the red velvet footstool in the best parlor except that Peggotty is rough and the stool is smooth.[133] Her loving care for him makes her seem so.

She is a cheerful person, ready to make the best of circumstances as they are, but always expecting conditions to grow better. It is part of her philosophy that "we must take things as we find them." Because of her optimism she laughs a great deal. This or any other slight exertion, such as showing her affection for little David, always causes the buttons on the back of her dress to fly off.

Besides being a servant in the Copperfield family,

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[132] David Copperfield, I, p. 20.

[133] Ibid., p. 25.

she is a friend and companion to Mrs. Copperfield until she is no longer wanted. Then because David assured Barkis, a carrier, that she did all the cooking for the family, he declares through David that "Barkis is willin'" and later does marry Peggotty. Barkis too, agrees that "She's the usefullest and best of women, C. P. Barkis. All the praise that any one can give to C. P. Barkis, she deserves, and more." She describes her husband as being "a little near," her good-will toward everyone keeping her from saying that he is very close. Barkis is a very quiet man as can be seen from a description of his courtship:

> On the very first evening after our arrival, Mr. Barkis appeared in an exceedingly vacant and awkward condition, with a bundle of oranges tied up in a handkerchief. As he made no allusion of any kind to this property, he was supposed to have left it behind him by accident when he went away; until Ham, running after him to restore it, came away with the information that it was intended for Peggotty. After that occasion he appeared every evening at exactly the same hour, and always with a little bundle to which he never alluded, and which he regularly put behind the door and left there. These offerings of affection were of a most various and eccentric description. Among them I remember a double set of pig's trotters, a huge pincushion, half a bushel or so of apples, a pair of jet-earrings, some Spanish onions, a box of dominoes, a canary-bird cage, and a leg of pickled pork.
>
> Mr. Barkis's wooing, as I remember it, was altogether of a peculiar kind. He very seldom said anything; but would sit by the fire in much the same attitude as he sat in his cart, and stare heavily at Peggotty, whowas opposite. One night, being, as I suppose, inspired by love, for he made a dart at the bit of wax-candle she kept for her thread, and put it in his waistcoat pocket and carried it off. After that his great delight was to

> produce it when it was wanted, sticking to the lining of his pocket, in a partially-melted state, and pocket it again when it was done with. He seemed to enjoy himself very much and not to feel at all called upon to talk. Even when he took Peggotty out for a walk on the flats, he had no uneasiness on that head, I believe; contenting himself with now and then asking her if she was pretty comfortable, and I remember that sometimes, after he was gone, Peggotty would throw her apron over her face and laugh for half an hour. Indeed, we were all more or less amused. . . [134]

We find that actions of this sort are typical of the whole Peggotty group. The sense of humor displayed by Peggotty here is the quality in her character which makes her able to enjoy life and make it more enjoyable for those about her.

Mr. Peggotty, Clara's brother, and his nephew, Ham, are typical sea-men. They are as simple as they are kind. Both are very quiet, Ham often expressing himself only by grinning very broadly. Little Emily, Mr. Peggotty's niece, also is only a type figure, a beautiful and innocent country girl. Though these characters are not well-drawn, they provide much humour of a quiet sort. Ham seems more real than do Mr. Peggotty and Emily. He proves his real worth by rescuing the man who had wronged him deeply. After Ham has borne his grief in a quiet, stolid way, he loses his life trying to save a worthless reprobate. While we are amused at his simple thoughts and actions, we sympathize with him very much.

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[134] Ibid., I, 175.

Mrs. Gummidge, whose husband had been Mr. Peggotty's partner and who now lives with the Peggotty's, does not always make herself so agreeable as she might be expected to do. Often she repeats, "I'm a lorn creetur', and not only everythink goes contrairy with me, but I go contrairy with everybody." Whimpering and weeping we are common with her in spite of the consideration and comfort given her by Mr. Peggotty, who explains her frequent complaints with "She's been thinking of the old 'un," meaning her husband. Though she never sees the bright side of life, she does amuse the reader of David Copperfield.

MRS. NICKLEBY

"No other novelist ever drew so many fools and half-witted people, and drew them so humanely," says Mr. Wipple. Among the fools of greatest mental ability he places Mrs. Nickleby.[135]

"She is the type of a class, very numerous in actual life, whose minds are carried away by the accidental association of ideas,--who have thoughts, but no power of directing their thoughts."[136] Mrs. Nickleby is one of the most loquacious of characters. The fact that her thoughts have no bearing on the subject at hand makes no difference to her. Any slight association--very slight indeed--is enough to start her off on some long story of a reminiscent nature. Her conversation is of little importance, and seldom does anybody listen attentively. Still Mrs. Nickleby talks on and on. She often begins her account with the statement that she remembers, but she too often finds that she really does not remember minor details as well as she thought she did. A conversation between her and her berther-in-law may be cited as an example of her discursive reminiscences and easy associations. Mr. Nickleby has just proposed that

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[135] Whipple, Edwin Percy, Outlooks on Society, Literature, and Politics, Boston, Ticknor and Co., 1888. p. 320.

[136] Ibid., p. 327.

his niece, Kate, take a situation with a milliner and dressmaker.

> "Dressmakers in London, as I need not remind you, ma'am, who are so well acquainted with all matters in the ordinary routine of life, make large fortunes, keep equipages, and become persons of great wealth and fortune."
>
> Now the first ideas called up in Mrs. Nickleby's mind by the words of milliner and dressmaker were connected with certain wicker baskets lined with black oilskin, which she remembered to have seen carried to and fro in the streets; but as Ralph proceeded, these disappeared and were replaced by visions of large houses at the west end, neat private carriages, and a banker's book; all of which images succeeded each other with such rapidity that he had no sooner finished speaking than she nodded her head and said "Very true," with great appearance of satisfaction.
>
> "What your uncle says is very true, Kate my dear," said Mrs. Nickleby. "I recollect when your papa and I came to town after we were married, that a young lady brought me home a chip cottage-bonnet, with white and green trimming, and green Persian lining, in her own carriage, which drove up to the door full gallop--at least, I am not quite certain whether it was her own carriage or a hackney chariot, but I remember very well that the horse dropped down dead as he was turning round, and that your poor dear papa said he hadn't had any corn for a fortnight."
>
> This anecdote, so strikingly illustrative of the opulence of milliners, was not received with any great demonstration of feeling, inasmuch as Kate hung her head while it was relating, and Ralph manifested very intelligible symptoms of extreme patience.[137]

Mrs. Nickleby was very susceptible to flattery. Because he complimented her, she is ready to believe Nickleby and to concur with his plans. He recognizes the fact that she is easily swayed by others' opinions. He compliments

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[137] Nicholas Nickleby, I, pp. 151-152.

her on one occasion because she knows the world so well.

> "Ah! and I only too dearly wish I didn't," sobbed Mrs. Nickleby.
>
> There really was no necessity for the good lady to be much distressed upon this particular head; the extent of her worldly knowledge being, to say the least, very questionable; and so Ralph seemed to think, for he smiled as he spoke.[138]

Mrs. Nickleby was very susceptible to flattery. Because he complimented her, she is ready to believe Ralph Nickleby and to concur with his plans. She is also very much flattered by the attention paid her by her neighbor, whom everyone else knows to be insane. After throwing all sorts of vegetables over the garden wall to Mrs. Nickleby, he himself, standing on the wall, begs her to "be mine, be mine." She however, has made up her mind to remain a widow and devote herself to her children. On another occasion he visits her, entering the house by coming down the chimney. When he transfers his attentions to another lady present, Mrs. Nickleby suddenly becomes satisfied that he really is insane and that her rejecting his addresses has been the cause of his madness.

Mrs. Nickleby never allows anybody to forget that she was not always in such reduced circumstances:

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[138] Ibid., I, p. 308.

> "I assure you. . .," said Mrs. Nickleby, "that I very little thought, at any time, that it would be necessary for my daughter to go out into the world at all, for her poor dear papa was an independent gentleman. . ."[139]

Being very fond and proud of her children, she is always planning for their advancement in the world. Immediately after Kate has taken the position as companion to Mrs. Wititterly, Mrs. Nickleby began:

> . . . a calculation of the probable duration of Mrs. Wititterly's life, and the chances of the disconsolate widower bestowing his hand on her daughter. Before reaching home, she had freed Mrs. Wititterly's soul from all bodily restraint; married Kate with great splendor at St. George's, Hanover Square; and only left undecided the minor question, whether a splendid French-polished mahogany bedstead should be erected for herself in the two-pair back of the house in Cadogan Place, or in the three-pair front; between which apartments she could not quite balance the advantages, and therefore, adjusted the question at last by determining to leave it to the decision of her son-in-law.[140]

During her many long speeches when she is always recalling something of no importance; she makes many references to the money and personal property she has been used to and often laments her present condition. Yet she is a well-meaning individual even though she is filled with her own importance and the ill-use she has had. And in spite of the fact that she does seem extremely foolish, the reader is moved to sympathy and laughter at the continuous flow of

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[139] Ibid., I. p. 325.

[140] Ibid., I, p. 329.

her thoughts and conversation.

MISS MIGGS

Old maids, of whom Miss Miggs is a good representative, are the subject of a great deal of humorous ridicule. Some of those mentioned are Rose, Dartle, Miss Havisham, Miss Jane Murdstone, Mis Anastasia Rugg, and Miss Witherfield. Most of them have, to a certain extent, the same general characteristics as Miss Miggs but are not as individualized as she.

Miss Miggs, a domestic servant of Mrs. Vardon,

> . . . was a tall young lady, very much addicted to pattens in private life; slender and shrewish, of a rather uncomfortable figure, and, though not absolutely ill-looking, of a sharp and acid visage. As a general principle and abstract proposition, Miggs held the male sex to be utterly contemptible, and unworthy of notice; to be fickle, false, base, sottish, inclined to perjury, and wholly undeserving. When particularly exasperated against them(which, scandal said, was when Sim Tapperit slighted her most), she was accustomed to wish, with great emphasis, that the whole race of women could but die off in order that the might be brought to know the real value of the blessings by which they set so little store : nay, her feeling for her order ran so high, that she sometimes declared, if she could only have good security for a fair round number--say ten thousand--of young virgins following her example, she would to spite mankind, hang, drown, stab, or poison herself with a joy past all expression.[141]

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[141] Barnaby Rudge, Vol. I, p. 76.

Miss Higgs holds her position in the Varden household by flattering Mrs. Varden and making her believe that everybody else slights her. When the Gordon riots break out, she forsakes her old master and mistress to follow and watch over Mr. Sim Tappertit, of whom she is excessively fond. After the dispersion of the rioters, Miss Higgs returns to be reinstated in her old situation. But Mrs. Varden, who is at first amazed at her audacity, orders her to leave the house immediately; whereupon the young lady relieves her mind after this manner:

> "I'm quite delighted, I'm sure, to find sich independency; feeling sorry, though, at the same time, mim, that you should have been forced into subjections when you couldn't help yourself. He, he,he! It must be great vexations, specially considering how ill you always spoke of Mr. Joe, to have him for a son-in-law at last; and I wonder Miss Dolly can put up with him, either, after being off and on for so many years with a coachmaker. But I have heard say that the coachmaker thought twice about it--he, he, he!--and that he told a young man as was a friend of his, that he hoped he knowed better than to be drawed into that, though she and all the family did pull uncommon stront." . . .
>
> Again Miss Higgs paused for a reply; and none being offered, was so oppressed with teeming spite and spleen, that she seemed like to burst.[142]

And indeed it was not long before her vexation and chagrin became so bitter thatshe did burst into tears. Her "tears were always ready, for large or small parties, on the shortest notice and the most reasonable terms."[143]

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[142] Ibid, II, pp. 863-837.

[143] Ibid., I, p. 78.

Of her charms, her virtue, and her religion Miss Miggs is very proud. When Dennis, the hangman, is soliciting her aid, he addresses her as "my lamb" and Lovey, my dear" and looks at her so soothingly, not to say amorously that "she sat, as she afterward remarked, on pins and needles of the sharpest White-chapel ink, not knowing what intentions might be suggesting that expression to his features."[144] Sim, realizing that her jealousy is by no means inactive, reasons thus:

> . . . when the locksmith's child is mine, Miggs must be got rid of somehow, or she'll poison the tea-kettle one evening when I'm out. He [Hugh, a half-witted person] might marry Miggs, if he was drunk enough. It shall be done.[145]

She wishes she had been born old and ugly so that she would not have to worry so much about her virtue. Often she must hold her side to quiet her heart or to keep it from breaking since she is usually in a flutter about some young man who, she is sure, cannot resist her charms.

> Miss Miggs, baffled in all schemes, matrimonial and otherwise, and cast upon a thankless, undeserving world, turned very sharp and sour; and did at length become so acid, and did so pinch and slap and tweak the hair and noses of the youth of Golden Lion Court, that she was by one consent expelled that sanctuary, and desired to bless

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[144] Ibid., II, p. 141.

[145] Ibid., p. 69.

> some other spot on earth in preference. It chanced . . . that the justices of the peace for Middlesex proclaimed by public placard that they stood in need of a female turnkey . . . Miss Higgs. . . was instantly chosen and selected from one hundred and twenty-four competitors, and at once promoted to the office; which she held until her decease, more than thirty years afterward, remaining single all that time. It was observed of this lady that while she was inflexible and grim to all her female flock, she was particularly so to those who could establish any claim to beauty; and it was often remarked, as a proof of her indomitable virtue and severe chastity, that to such as had been frail she showed no mercy; always falling upon them on the slightest occasion, or on no occasion at all, with the fullest measure of her wrath.[146]

To the end Higgs remains jealous, cruel, and malignant, but evidently still believes in the potency of her charms. It is the fact that she is so certain of her beauty and charm and yet is so successful in making others realize their existence that makes her a humorous character.

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[146] Ibid., II, pp. 253-54.

FLORA CASBY

A character similar to Mrs. Nickleby is Flora Casby in Little Dorrit. She too talks until every one is tired of listening to her. Since she talks with unpunctuated velocity, she is not always easily understood. After an absence of many years, Arthur Clennam, to whom she had once been engaged, returns to find her diffuse and silly. He wonders is she could have been such a chatterer in the days to which she so often refers. "Flora, who had been spoiled and artless long ago, was determined to be spoiled and artless now."[147] She tries to act as she had when she was quite young a fact which makes her seem extremely foolish. We cannot but sympathize with her, however, and admire her for the way she has borne her many dis appointments. One quotation will illustrate her manner of speech--the most characteristic thing about her.

> ". . . you could never be so unkind as to think of going, Arthur--I mean Mr. Arthur--or I suppose Mr. Clennam would be far more proper--but I am sure I don't know what I'm saying--without a word about the dear old days gone forever, however when I come to think of it I daresay it would be much better not to speak of them and it's highly probable that you have some much more agreeable engagement and pray let me be the last person in the world to interfere with it though there was a time, but I'm running into nonsense again."[148]

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[147] Little Dorrit, I, 184.

[148] Ibid., p. 185.

And thus she did often run into nonsense, much to the amusement of the reader and to the annoyance of her companions.

MR. PANCKS

With a great deal of sympathy Dickens has drawn for us the portrait or caricature of Mr. Pancks, Mrs. Casby's collector of rents. Though he is completely overshadowed in the first of the story by his employer, he manages to assert himself before the end of the story.

> He was (a short, dark man) dressed in black and rusty iron gray; had jet-black beads of eyes, a scrubby little black chin, wiry black hair sticking out from his head in prongs, like forks or hair-pins, and a complexion that was very dingy by nature, or very dirty by art, or a compound of nature and art. He had dirty hands and dirty broken nails, and looked as if he had been in the coals; he was in a perspiration, and snorted and sniffed and puffed and blew like a little laboring steam-engine.[149]

Whenever Mr. Pancks appears in the story, his actions are described as being like the movements of a little steam boat. Even at dinner

> Mr. Pancks, who was always in a hurry, and who referred at intervals to a little dirty note-book which he kept beside him (perhaps containing the names of the defaulters he meant to look up by way of dessert) took in his victuals much as if he were coaling; with a good deal of noise, a good deal of dropping about, and a puff

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[149] Little Dorrit, I, p. 188.

and a snort occasionally, as if he were nearly ready to steam away.[150]

Though Mr. Panoks is a humorous character he is indeed not what is generally considered comic. He is the subject of quiet and appreciative pleasure but not of boisterous laughter. We are amused by his movements and his first rather pathetic attempts to assert himself. For Mr. Casby he squeezes the tenants of Bleeding Heart Yard, who are quite sure that if only Mr. Casby knew, he would disapprove. But when Panoks returns from collecting rents, the Patriarch grumbles because he has not squeezed enough. Before leaving Casby's employment, he shows the Patriarch in his true colors to the people of the Yard.

In spite of his peculiar appearance and disposition, Mr. Panoks seems very clever and able to think clearly. Mr. Casby depends upon him to carry on his business for him. He often proves his resourcefulness in quieting Mr. F's Aunt, who, being rather deficient mentally, was often rather hard to manage. Later Panoks assists materially in the discovery of the criminal, Rigaud.

Mr. Clennam and Little Dorrit are both befriended by Mr. Panoks, who shows his willingness and eagerness to serve them. Though at first he seems to be merely a mechanical

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[150] Ibid., p. 193.

and very methodical figure, before the story closes we find that he is a friendly man of personality. He is one of the Dickens characters toward whom our attitude changes as we know him better. He becomes a humorous character instead of a rather foolish one as our sympathy for him grows.

CHAPTER SIX

HUMOR OF INCIDENT

Like the humor of expression, the humor of incidents found in Dickens' novels is dependent to a great extent upon the reader's knowledge of the characters involved. Mr. Pickwick's bland self-satisfaction makes him the center of many amusing situations which would seem utterly ridiculous without him. Sam Weller's originality of thought and action help to enrich the novel, Pickwick Papers, with a continuous round of merriment. The story stands far above our author's other novels in richness and quantity of humor since it contains a larger number of comic characters and very few tragic moments. However, every novel by Charles Dickens has such an amount of amusing complications that he justly deserves to be named among the better writers of comedy.

As Dickens' humorous characters are drawn from all walks and conditions, so his humorous incidents are centered around almost every phase of human existence. One of the most popular subjects for provoking comedy is that of love and marriage. Among his lovers we find those of high estate and those of low. There are some whose degree of mentality has not been improved in consequence of their experiences. This may be illustrated by the case of a certain young man who vainly loved little Dorrit.

> In this yard, a wash of sheets and table-cloths tried to get itself dried on a line or two; and among those flapping articles was sitting in a chair, like the last mariner left alive on deck of a damp ship without the power of furling the sails, a little woebegone young man.
>
> "Our John," said Mrs. Chivery.
>
> Not to be deficient in interest, Clennam asked what he might be doing there?
>
> "It's the only change he takes," said Mrs. Chivery . . . "He won't go out, even in the backyard, where there's no linen; but where there's linen to keep the neighbor's eyes off, he'll sit there, hours. . . Says he feels as if it was groves!"[151]

Miss Miggs in Barnaby Rudge, because she cannot attract the attention of Simon Tappertit, upon whom she has bestowed her affection, must be satisfied with the tender words of Dennis, the hangman. Indeed, Miggs has reached the stage when affectionate words from anybody seem pleasant. After being imprisoned,

> . . . Miss Miggs, who was particularly tender of her reputation, immediately fell upon her knees and began to scream very loud, crying, "What will become of me! --Where is my Simmuns!"
>
> "Have mercy, good gentleman, on my sex's weaknesses!"--withother doleful lamentations of that nature, which she delivered with great propriety and decorum.
>
> "Miss, Miss," whispered Dennis, beckoning to her with his forefinger, "come here--I won't hurt you. Come here, my lamb, will you?" On hearing this tender epithet, Miss Miggs, who had left off screaming when he opened his lips, and has listened to him attentively, began again: crying "Oh, I'm his lamb! He says I'm his lamb! Oh gracious, why wasn't I born old and ugly! Why was I ever made to be the youngest of six--!" Don't say I an't a-going to hurt you?" said Dennis.
>
> "Ah!" he said, looking so soothingly, not to say amorously on Miggs, that she sat, as she afterwards

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[151] Little Dorrit, I, p. 312.

> remarked, on pins and needles of the sharpest Whitechapel kind, not knowing what intentions might be suggesting that expression to his features. . .
>
> "I wouldn't ," cried Miggs, folding her hands and looking upwards with a kind of devout blankness, "I. . . wouldn't seem to say to all male creeturs 'Come and kiss me'"--and here a shudder quite convulsed her frame--"for any earthly crowns as might be offered. Worlds," Miggs added solemnly, "should not reduce me. No. Not if I were Wenis."
>
> "Well, but you <u>are</u> Wenus you know," said Mr. Dennis, confidentially.
>
> "No, I am not, good gentleman," answered Miggs, shaking her head with an air of self-denial which seemed to imply that she might be if she chose, but she hoped she knew better. "No I am not, good gentleman. Don't charge me with it."[152]

However, Sam Weller, another of the servant class, finds that love runs much more smoothly than it did for Miss Miggs. When first Sam and Mary, Mr. Numpkins' housemaid, meet, they like each other immensely. It is this Mary whom Sam later marries and who then becomes Mr. Pickwick's housekeeper. The following scene will illustrate Dickens' understanding of and sympathy for the feelings of the younger servant class:

> "Get your hat, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.
>
> "It's below stairs, sir," said Sam, and he ran down after it.
>
> Now there was nobody in the kitchen, but the pretty housemaid; and as Sam's hat was mislaid, he had to look for it; and the pretty housemaid lighted him. They had to look all over the place for the hat. The pretty housemaid in her anxiety to find it, went down on her knees, and turned over all the things that were heaped together in a little corner by the door. It was an awkard corner. You couldn't get at it without shutting the door first.
>
> "Here it is," said the pretty house-maid. "This is it, ain't it?"
>
> "Let me look," said Sam.
>
> The pretty house-maid had stood the candle on the floor;as it gave a very dim light, Sam was obliged to go

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[152] <u>Barnaby Rudge</u>, III, pp. 139-140.

down on his knees before he could see whether it really was his own hat or not. It was a remarkably small corner, and so--it was nobody's fault but the man's who built the house--Sam and the pretty house-maid were necessarily very close together.

"Yes, this is it," said Sam. "Good bye!"

"Good bye!" said the pretty house-maid.

"Good bye!" said Sam, and as he said it, he dropped the hat that had cost so much trouble in looking for.

"How awkward, you are," said the pretty house-maid. You'll loose it again, if you don't take care."

So, just to prevent his losing it again, she put it on for him.

Whether it was that the pretty house-maid's face looked prettier still, when it was raised towards Sam's or whether it was the accidental consequence of their being so near to each other, is matter of uncertainty to this day; but Sam kissed her.

"You don't mean to say you did that on purpose," said the pretty house-maid, blushing.

"No, I didn't then," said Sam; "but I will now."

So he kissed her again.

"Sam" said Mr. Pickwick, calling over the banisters.

"Coming, sir," replied Sam, running up stairs.

"How long you have been!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"There was something behind the door, sir, which per wented our getting it open, for ever so long, sir," replied Sam. And this was the first passage of Mr. Weller's first love.[153]

Mr. Pickwick later has a very amusing experience when he arranges for his friend, Mr. Winkle, to meet Miss Arabella Allen. Though doing so might bring difficulties and might tax Mr. Pickwick's strength, he does not count the cost of serving his friends. This incident shows his novel idea for making possible a meeting of the lovers.

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[153] Pickwick Papers, I, p. 431 ff.

Down the lane they went, and dark enough it was. Mr. Pickwick brought out the lantern, once or twice, as they groped their way along, and threw a very brilliant little tunnel of light before them about a foot in diameter. It was very pretty to look at, but seemed to have the effect of rendering surrounding objects rather darker than before.

At length they arrived at the large stone. Here Sam recommended his master and Mr. Winkle to seat themselves, while he reconnoitred, and ascertained whether Mary was yet in waiting.

After an absence of five or ten minutes, Sam returned, to say that the gate was opened, and all quiet. Following him with stealthy tread, Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Winkle soon found themselves in the garden. Here everybody said "Hush!" a good many times; and that being done, no one seemed to have an very distinct apprehension of what was to be done next.

"Is Miss Allen in the garden yet, Mary?" inquired Mr. Winkle, much agitated.

"I don't know, sir," replied the pretty housemaid, "The best thing to be done, sir, will be for Mr. Weller to give you a hoist up into the tree, and perhaps Mr. Pickwick will have the goodness to see that nobody comes up the lane, while I watch at the other end of the garden. Goodness gracious, what's that!"

"That 'ere blessed lantern 'ull be the death on us all," exclaimed Sam, peevishly. "Take care wot you're a doin' on, sir; you're a sendin' a blaze o' light, right into the back parlor winder."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Pickwick, turning hastily aside, "I didn't mean to do that."

"Now, it's in the next house, sir," remonstrated Sam.

"Bless my heart!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, turning round again.

"Now, it's in the stable, and they'll think the place is a ' fire, " said Sam. "Shut it up, sir, can't you?"

"It's the most extraordinary lantern I ever met with, in all my life!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, greatly bewildered by the effects he had so unintentionally produced. "I never saw such a powerful reflector."

"It'll be vun too powerful for us, if you keep blazin' away in that manner, sir," replied Sam, as Mr. Pickwick, aftervarious unsuccessful efforts, managed to close the slide. "There's the young lady's footsteps. Now Mr. Vinkle, sir, up with you."

"Stop, stop!" said Mr. Pickwick, "I must speak to her first. Help me up, Sam."

"Gently, sir," said Sam, planting his head against the wall, and making a platform of his back. "Step a top o' that 'ere plower-pot, sir. Now then, up with you."

"I'm afraid I shall hurt you, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Never mind me, sir," replied Sam. Lend him a hand, Mr. Winkle, sir. Steady, sir, steady! That's the time of day!"

As Sam spoke, Mr. Pickwick, by exertions almost supernatural in a gentleman of his years and weight, contrived to get upon Sam's back; and Sam gently raising himself up, and Mr. Pickwick holding on fast by the top of the wall, while Mr. Winkle clasped him tight by the legs, they contrived by these means to bring his spectacles just above the level of the coping.

"My dear," said Mr. Pickwick, looking over the wall, and catching sight of Arabella, on the other side, "Don't be frightened, my dear, it's only me."

"Oh pray go away, Mr. Pickwick," said Arabella. "tell them all to go away. I am so dreadfully frightened. Dear, dear Mr. Pickwick, don't stop there. You'll fall down and kill yourself, I know you will."

"Now, pray don't alarm yourself, my dear," said Mr. Pickwick, soothingly. There is not the least cause for fear, I assure you. Stand firm Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, looking down.

"All right, sir," replied Mr. Weller. "Don't be longer than you can conveniently help, sir. You're rayther heavy."

"Only another moment, Sam," replied Mr. Pickwick. "I merely wished you to know my dear, that I should not have allowed my young friend to see you in this clandestine way, if the situation in which you are placed, had left him any alternative; and lest the impropriety of this step should cause you any uneasiness, my love, it may be a satisfaction to you, to know that I am present. That's all my dear."

"Indeed, Mr. Pickwick, I am very much obliged to you for your kindness and consideration," replied Arabella, drying her tears with her handkerchief. She would probably have said much more, had not Mr. Pickwick's head disappeared with great swiftness, in consequence of a false step on Sam's shoulder, which brought him suddenly to the ground. He was up again in an instant, however, and bidding Mr. Winkle make haste and get the interview over, ran out into the lane to keep watch, with all the courage and ardor of youth. Mr. Winkle himself, inspired by the occasion, was on the wall in a moment, merely pausing to request Sam to be careful of his master.

"I'll take care on him, sir," replied Sam. "Leave him to me."

"Where is he? What's he doing, Sam?" inquired Mr. Winkle.

"Bless his old gaiters," rejoined Sam, looking out at the garden-door. "He's a keepin' guard in the lane with that 'ere dark lanter, like a amiable Guy Fawkes! I never see such a fine creetur in my days. Blessed if I don't think his heart must ha' been born five-and-twenty year arter his body, at least!"

Mr. Winkle stayed not to hear the encomium upon his friend. He had dropped from the wall; thrown himself at Arabella's feet; and by this time was pleading the sincerity of his passion with an eloquence worthy even of Mr. Pickwick himself. . .

Now shortly before the scientific gentleman [who lived near-by and who had been startled by the strange lights caused by Mr. Pickwick's lantern] walked out into the garden, Mr. Pickwick had run down the lane as fast as he could, to convey a false alarm that somebody was coming that way; occasionally drawing back the slide of the dark lantern to keep himself from the ditch. The alarm was no sooner given, than Mr. Winkle scrambled back over the wall, and Arabella ran into the house; the garden-gate was shut, and the three adventurers were making the best of their way down the lane, when they were startled by the scientific gentleman, unlocking his garden-gate.

"Hold hard," whispered Sam, who was, of course, the first of the party. "Show a light for just vun second, sir."

Mr. Pickwick did as he was desired, and Sam, seeing a man's head peeping out very cautiously within half-a-yard of his own, gave it a gentle tap with his clenched fist, which knocked it, with a hollow sound against the gate. Having performed this feat with great suddenness and dexterity, Mr. Weller caught Mr. Pickwick up on his back, and followed Mr. Winkle down the lane at a pace which, considering the burden he carried, was perfectly astonishing.

"Have you got wind back again, sir," inquired Sam, when they had reached the end.

"Quite, quite, now," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Then come along, sir," said Sam, setting his master on his feet again. "Come between us, sir. Not half a mile to run. Think you're vinnin a cup, sir. Now for it."

Thus encouraged, Mr. Pickwick made the very best use of his legs. It may be confidently stated that a pair of black gaiters never got over the ground in better style than did those of Mr. Pickwick on this memorable

occasion.

The coach was waiting, the horses were fresh, the roads were good, and the driver was willing. The whole party arrived in safety at the Bush before Mr. Pickwick had recovered his breath.

"In with you at once, sir," said Sam, as he helped his master out. "Don' stop a second in the street, arter that 'ere exercise. Beg your pardon, sir," continued Sam, touching his hat as Mr. Winkle descended. "Hope there warn't a priory 'tachment, sir?"

Mr. Winkle grasped his humble friend by the hand, whispered in his ear, "It's all right, Sam; quite right." Upon which Mr. Weller struck three distinct blows upon his nose in token of intelligence, smiled, winked, and proceeded to put the steps up, with a countenance expressive of lively satisfaction.[154]

Though Mr. Pickwick had no experience in the matter of proposing marriage, he shows almost incredible knowledge on the subject when he gives directions to Mr. Peter Magnus.

. . ."Mr. Pickwick, sir, I have sent up my card."

"Have you?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"And the waiter brought back word, that she would see me at eleven--at eleven, sir; it only wants a quarter now."

"Very near the time," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes, it is rather near," replied Mr. Magnus, "rather too near to be pleasant--eh! Mr. Pickwick, sir?"

"Confidence is a great thing in these cases," observed Mr. Pickwick.

"I believe it is, sir," said Mr. Peter Magnus. "I am very confident, sir. Really, Mr. Pickwick, I do not see why a man should feel any fear in such a case as this, sir. What is it, sir? There's nothing to be ashamed of; it's a matter of mutual accommodation, nothing more. Husband on one side, wife on the other. That's my view of the matter, Mr. Pickwick."

"It is a very philosophical one," replied Mr. Pickwick. But breakfast is waiting, Mr. Magnus. Come."

Down they sat to breakfast, but it was evident, notwithstanding the boasting of Mr. Peter Magnus, that he labored under a very considerable degree of nervousness,

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154 Pickwick Papers, II, p. 167 ff.

of which loss of appetite, a propensity to upset the tea-things, a spectral attempt at frollery, and an irresistible inclination to look at the clock, every other second, were among the principal symptoms.

"He--he--he," tittered Mr. Magnus, affecting cheerfulness, and gasping with agitation. "It only wants two minutes, Mr. Pickwick. Am I pale, sir?"

"Not very," replied Mr. Pickwick.

There was a brief pause.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Pickwick; but have you ever done this sort of thing in your time?" said Mr. Magnus.

"You mean proposing?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes."

"Never," said Mr. Pickwick, with great energy, "never."

"You have no idea, then, how it's best to begin?" said Mr. Magnus.

"Why," said Mr. Pickwick, with great energy, "never."

"You have no idea, then, how it's best to begin?" said Mr. Magnus.

"Why," said Mr. Pickwick, "I may have formed some ideas upon the subject, but, as I have never submitted them to the test of experience, I should be sorry if you were induced to regulate your proceedings by them."

"I should feel very much obliged to you for any advice, sir," said Mr. Magnus, taking another look at the clock: the hand of which was verging on the five minutes past.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, with the profound solemnity with which that great man could, when he pleased render his remarks so deeply impressive: "I should commence, sir, with a tribute to the lady's beauty and excellent qualities; from them, sir, I should diverge to my own unworthiness."

"Very good," said Mr. Magnus.

"Unworthiness for her only, mind, sir," resumed Mr. Pickwick; "for to shew that I was not wholly unworthy, sir, I should take a brief review of my past life, and present condition. I should argue, by analogy, that to anybody else, I must be a very desirable object. I should then expatiate on the warmth of my love, and the depth of my devotion. Perhaps I might then be tempted to seize her hand."

"Yes, I see," said Mr. Magnus: that would be a very great point."

"I should then, sir," continued Mr. Pickwick, growing warmer as the subject presented itself in more glowing colors before him; "I should then, sir, come to the plain and simple question, 'will you have me?' I think I am justified in assuming that upon this, she would turn away her head."

"You think that may be taken for granted?" said Mr. Magnus; "because if she did not do that at the right place, it would be embarrassing."

"I think she would," said Mr. Pickwick. "Upon this, sir, I should squeeze her hand, and I think--I think, Mr. Magnus--that after I had done that, supposing there was no refusal, I should gently draw away the handkerchief, which my slight knowledge of human nature leads me to suppose the lady would be applying to her eyes at the moment, and steal a respectful kiss. I think I should kiss her, Mr. Magnus; and at this particular point, I am decidedly of the opinion that if the lady were going to take me at all, she would murmur into my ears a bashful acceptance."

Mr. Magnus started; gazed on Mr. Pickwick's intelligent face, for a short time in silence; and then (the dial pointing to the ten minutes past) shook him warmly by the hand, and rushed desperately from the room.

Mr. Pickwick had taken a few strides to and fro; and the small hand of the clock following the latter part of his example, had arrived at the figure which indicates the half hour, when the door suddenly opened. . . Mr. Peter Magnus tripped into the room.

. . .

"Congratulate me, Mr. Pickwick; I followed your advice to the very letter."

"And it was all correct, was it?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"It was, sir. Could not possibly have been better," replied Mr. Magnus. "Mr. Pickwick, she is mine."

A Dickens proposal for which the man needs some assurance that the marriage is desirable is that of Mr. Bumble to Mrs. Corney. This is one of the comparatively few humorous incidents in the novel, Oliver Twist.

(Mrs. Corney invited Mr. Bumble to stay for tea.) As he slowly seated himself, he looked at the lady. She fixed her eyes upon the little tea-pot. Mr. Bumble coughed . . . and slightly smiled.

. . . as she sat down, her eyes. . . encountered those of the gallant beadle; she colored, and applied herself to the task of making his tea. Again Mr. Bumble coughed,--louder this time than he had coughed yet.

"Sweet? Mr. Bumble?" inquired, the matron, taking up the sugar-basin.

"Very sweet, indeed, ma'am," replied Mr. Bumble. He fixed his eyes on Mrs. Corney as he said this; and if ever a beadly looked tender, Mr. Bumble was that Beadle at that moment.

The tea was made, and handed in silence. Mr. Bumble having spread a handkerchief over his knees to prevent the crumbs from sullying the splendor of his shorts, began to eat and drink; varying these amusements, occasionally, by fetching a deep sigh; which, however had no injurious effects upon his appetite, but on the contrary rather seemed to facilitate his operations in the tea and toast department.

"You have a cat, ma'am, I see," said Mr. Bumble, glancing at one who, in the centre of her family, was basking before the fire; "and kittens too, I declare!"

"I am fond of them, Mr. Bumble, you can't think," replied the matron. "They're so happy, so frolicsome, and so cheerful, that they are quite companions for me."

"Very nice animals, ma'am," replied Mr. Bumble, approvingly; "so very domestic."

"Oh, yes!" rejoined the matron with enthusiasm; "so fond of their home too, that it's quite a pleasure, I'm sure."

"Mrs. Corney, ma'am," said Mr. Bumble, slowly, and marking the time with his teaspoon, "I mean to say this ma'am, that any cat, or kitten, that could live with you, ma'am, and not be fond of its home, must be an ass, ma'am."

"Oh, Mr. Bumble!" remonstrated Mrs. Corney.

"It's no use disguising facts, ma'am," said Mr. Bumble slowly flourishing the teaspoon with a kind of amorous dignity which made him double impressive; "I would drown it myself, with pleasure."

"Then you're a cruel man," said the matron vivaciously, as she held out her hand for the beadle's cup; "and a very hard hearted man besides."

"Hard-hearted, ma'am?" said Mr. Bumble. "Hard?" Mr. Bumble resigned his cup without another word; squeezed Mrs. Corney's little finger as she took it; and inflicting two open handed slaps upon his laced waistcoat, gave a mighty sigh, and hitched his chair a very little morsel farther from the fire. It was a round table; and as Mrs. Corney and Mr. Bumble had been sitting opposite each other, with no great space between them and fronting the fire, it will be seen that space between them, Mr. Bumble increased the distance between himself and Mrs. Corney; which proceeding, some prudent readers will doubtless be disposed to admire, and to consider an act of great heroism on Mr. Bumble's part; he being in some

sort tempted by time, place, and opportunity, to give utterance to certain soft nothings, which however well they may become the lips of the light and thoughtless, do seem immeasurably beneath the dignity of judges of the land, members of parliament, ministers of state, of judges of the land, mayors, and other great public functionaries, but more particularly beneath the statelieness and gravity of a beadle: who (as is well known) should be the sternest and most inflexible among them all

Whatever were Mr. Bumble's instentions, however,(and no doubt they were of the best), it unfortunately happened, as has been twice before remarked, that the table was a round one; consequently Mr. Bumble; moving his chair by little and little, soon began to diminish the distance between himself and the matron; and, continuing to travel round the outer edge of the circle, brought his chair, in time, close to that in which the matron was seated. Indeed, the two chairs touched; and when they did so, Mr. Bumble stopped.

Now if the matron had moved her chair to the right, she would have been scorched by the fire; and if to the left, she must have fallen into Mr. Bumble's arms; so (being a discreet matron, and no doubt forseeing these consequences at a glance) she remained where she was, and handed Mr. Bumble another cup of tea.

"Hard-hearte, Mrs. Corney?" said Mr. Bumble, stirring his tea, and looking up into the matron's face! "are you hard-hearted, Mrs. Corney?"

"Dear me!" exclaimed the matron, "what a very curious question from a single man. What can you want to know for, Mr. Bumble?"

The beadle drank his tea to the last drop; finished a piece of toast; whished the crumbs off his knees; wiped his lips; and deliberately kissed the matron.

"Mr. Bumble!" cried the discreet lady in a whisper; for the fright was so great, that she had quite lost her voice. "Mr. Bumble, I shall scream!" Mr. Bumble made no reply; but in a slow and dignified manner, put his arm round the matron's waist.

As the lady had stated her intention of screaming, of course she would have screamed at this additional balance, but that the exertion was rendered unnecessary by a hasty knocking at the door; which was no sooner heard, than Mr. Bumble darted, with much agility, to the wine bottles, and began dusting them with great violence. While the matron sharply demanded who was there. . .

Mrs. Corney was called from the room to one of her charges, an old woman, who was dying.

Mr. Bumble's conduct on being left to himself, was rather inexplicable. He opened the closet, counted the teaspoons, weighed the sugar-tongs, closely inspected a silver milk-pot to ascertain that it was of the genuine metal, and, having satisfied his curiosity on these points, put on his cocked hat corner-wise, and danced with much gravity four distinct times round the table. Having gone through this very extraordinary performance, he took off the cocked-hat again, and spreading himself before the fire with his back towards it, seemed to be mentally engaged in taking an exact inventory of the furniture.[155]

A most amusing and novel wedding is that of Wemmick's:

When we had forfeited ourselves with the rum-and-milk and biscuits, and were going out for the walk with that training preparation on us, I was considerably surprised to see Wemmick take a fishing-rod and put it over his shoulder. "Why, we are not going fishing!" said I. "No," returned Wemmick, "but I like to walk with one."

I thought this odd; however, I said nothing, and we set off. We went towards Camberwell Green, and when we were thereabouts, Wemmick said suddenly:

"Halloa! Here's a church!"

There was nothing very surprising in that, but again, I was rather surprised, when he said, as if he were animated by a brilliant idea:

"Let's go in!"

We went in, Wemmick leaving his fishing-rod in the porch, and looked all round. In the meantime, Wemmich was diving into his coat-pockets, and getting something out of paper there.

"Halloa!" said he. "Here's a couple of pair of gloves! Let's put 'em on!"

As the gloves were white kid gloves, and as the post-office was widened to its utmost extent, I now began to have my strong suspicions. They were strengthened into certainty when I beheld the Aged enter at a side door, escorting a lady.

"Halloa!" said Wemmick. "Here's Miss Skiffins! Let's have a wedding.

That discreet damsel was attired as usual, except that she was now engaged in substituting for her green kid gloves a pair of white. The Aged was likewise occupied

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[155] Oliver Twist, p. 239 ff.

in preparing a similar sacrifice for the altar of Hymen. The old gentleman, however, experienced so much difficulty in getting his gloves on, that Wemmick found it necessary to put him with his back against a pillar, and then to get behind the pillar himself and pull away at them, while I for my part held the old gentleman round the waist, that he might present an equal and sage resistance. By dint of this ingenious scheme his gloves were got on to perfection.

The clerk and clergyman then appearing, were ranged in order at those fatal rails. True to his notion of seeming to do it all without preparation, I heard Wemmick say to himself as he took something out of his waist-coat pocket before the service began, "Halloa! Here's a ring!"

I acted in the capacity of backer, or best-man, of the bride-groom; while a little limp pew-opener in a soft bonnet like a baby's made a feint of being the bosom friend of Miss Skiffins. The responsibility of giving the lady away, devolved upon the Aged, which led to the clergyman's being unintentionally scandalized, and it happened thus. When he said "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" the old gentleman, not in the least knowing what point of the ceremony we had arrived at, stood most amiably beaming at the ten commandments; Upon which, the clergyman said again, "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" The old gentelman being still in a state of most estimable unconsciousness, the bridegroom cried out in his accustomed Stentorian voice, "Now Aged P. you know; who giveth?" To which the Aged replied with great briskness, before saying that he gave, "All right John, all right, my boy!" And the clergyman came to so a gloomy a pause upon it, that I had doubts for the moment whether we should get completely married that day.

It was completely done, however, and when we were going out to church, Wemmick took the cover off the font, and put his white gloves in it, and put the cover on again. Mrs. Wemmick, more heedful of the future, put her white gloves in her pocket and assumed her green. "Now, Mr. Pip, said Wemmick, triumphantly shouldering the fishing-rod as we came out, let me ask you whether anybody would suppose this to be a wedding party!"[156]

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[156] Great Expectations, p. 501 ff.

In Great Expectations we find some pictures of home life which are made amusing by being told from the child's viewpoint. Many of these incidents are of the sort that would not be mentioned, or at least not commented upon by most writers. Dickens produced humor by discussing the unusual and the unexpected.

> "My sister had a trenchant way of cutting our bread-and-butter for us that never varied. First, with her left hand she jammed the loaf hard and fast against her bib--where it sometimes got a pin into it, and sometimes a needle, which we afterwards got into our mouths. Then she took some butter (not too much) on a knife and spread it on the loaf, in an apothecary kind of way, as if she were making a plaster--using both sides of the knife with a slapping dexterity, and trimming and molding the butter off round the crust. Then she gave the knife a final smart wipe on the edge of the plaster, and then sawed a very thick round off the loaf: which she finally before separating from the loaf, hewed into two halves, of which Joe got one and I the other."[157]

> When I got home at night and delivered the message for Joe, my sister went on the Rampage." in a more alarming degree than at any previous period. She asked me and Joe whether we supposed she was door-mats under our feet, and how we dared to use her so, and what company we graciously thought she was fit for? When she had exhausted a torrent of such inquiries, she threw a candlestick at Joe, burst into a loud sobbing got out the dust-pan--which was always a bad sign--put on her coarse apron and began cleaning up to a terrible extent. Not satisfied with a dry cleaning, she took a pail and scrubbing brush, and cleaned us out of house and home, so that we stood shivering in the back yard. It was 10 o'clock at night before we ventured to creep in again, and then she asked Joe why he hadn't married a Negress Slave at once? Joe offered no answer, poor fellow, but stood feeling his whisker and looking dejectedly at me, as if he thought it really might have been a better speculation.[158]

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[157] Ibid., p. 13.

[158] Ibid., p. 111.

> . . . Joe went all the way home with his mouth wide open, to rinse the rum out with as much air as possible.[159]

In Nicholas Nickleby, David Copperfield, and Oliver Twist we find descriptions of a type of school which Dickens criticized very severely. In spite of these criticisms we fail to be amused at some of the happenings and customs there. Several quotations from Nicholas Nickleby will serve to point out the educational methods of these so-called schools:

> "I remember very well, sir," rejoined Squeers. "Ah! Mrs. Squeers, sir, was a s partial to that as if he had been her own; the attention, sir, that was bestowed upon that boy in his illness! Dry toast and warm tea offered hime every night and morning when he couldn't swallow anything--a candle in hhs bedroom on the very night he died--the best dictionary sent up for him to lay his head upon--I don't regret it, though. It is a pleasant thing to reflect that one did one's duty by him.[160]

> "Just over," said Mrs. Squeers, choking the last boy in her hurry, and tapping the crown of his head with the wooden spoon to restore him. "Here, you Smike; take away now. Look sharp!"
>
> Smike shuffled out with the basin, and Mrs. Squeers having called up a little boy with a curly head, and wiped her hands upon it. . .[161]

> "We go upon the practical mode of teaching, Nickleby; the regular education system. C-l-e-a-n, clean, verb active, to make bright, to scour. W-i-n, win, d-e-r, der, winder a casement. When the boy knows this out of book, he goes and does it. It's just the same principle as the use of the globes. Where's the second boy?"
>
> "Please, sir, he's weeding the garden," replied a small voice.
>
> "To be sure," said Squeers, by no means disconcerted. "So he is. B-o-t, bot, t-i-n, n-e-y, ney, bottiney, noun substantive, a knowledge of plants, he goes and knows 'em. That's our system, Nickleby."[162]

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[159] Ibid., p. 88.

[160] Nicholas Nickleby, I, p. 53.

[161] Ibid., p. 115.

[162] Ibid., pp. 116-117.

"A horse is a quadruped, and quadruped's Latin for beast, as everybody that's gone through the grammar knows or else where's the use of having grammars at all?"
"Where, indeed?" said Nicholas abstractedly.[163]

"Some bothering law business," replied Squeers, scratching his head, "connected with an action for what they call neglect of a boy. I don't know what they would have. He had as good grazing, that boy had, as there is about us."

Ralph looked as if he did not quite understand the observation.

"Grazing," said Squeers, raising his voice, under the impression that, as Ralph failed to comprehend him, he must be deaf. "When a boy gets weak and ill and don't relish his meals, we give him a change of diet--turn him out, for an hour or so every day, into a neighbor's turnip field, or sometimes, if it's a delicate case, a turnip field and a piece of carrots alternately, and let him eat as many as he likes. There an't better land in the county than this perverse lad grazed on, and yet he goes and catches cold and indigestion and what not, and then his friends brings a lawsuit against me![164]

In Pickwick Papers the sports, hunting, ice skating, and shooting, furnish entertainment not only for the participants, but also for the reader.

"It was the most intensely interesting thing, to observe the manner in which Mr. Pickwick performed his share in the ceremony; to watch the torture of anxiety with which he viewed the person behind, gaining upon him at the imminent hazard of tripping him up; to see him gradually expend the painful force he had put on at first, and turn slowly round on the slide, with his face towards the point from which he had started; to contemplate the playful smile which mantled on his face when he had accomplished the distance, and the eagerness with which he turned round when he had done so, and after his predecessor; his black gaiters tripping pleasantly through the

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[163] Ibid., I, p. 118.

[164] Ibid., I, p. 19.

and his eyes beaming cheerfulness and gladness through his spectacles. And when he was knocked down (which happened upon the average every third round), it was the most invigorating sight that can possibly be imagined, to behold him gather up his hat, gloves, and handkerchief, with a glowing countenance, and resume his station in the rank, with an ardor and enthusiasm that nothing could abate.

The sport was at its height, the sliding was at the quickest, the laughter was at the loudest, when a sharp crack was heard. There was a quick rush towards the bank, a wild scream from the ladies, and a shout from Mr. Tupman. A large mass of ice disappeared; the water bubbled up over it; Mr. Pickwick's hat, gloves, and handkerchief were floating on the surface; and this was all of Mr. Pickwick that anybody could see.

Dismay and anguish were depicted on every countenance, the males turned pale, and the females fainted, Mr. Snodgrass and Mr. Winkle grasped each other by the hand, and gazed at the spot where their leader had gone down, with frenzied eagerness; while Mr. Tupman, by way of rendering the promptest assistance, and at the same time conveying to any person who might be within hearing, the clearest possible notion of the catastrophe, ran off across the country at his utmost speed, screaming "Fire!" with all his might.

. . . at this very moment. . . a face, head, and shoulders, emerged from beneath the water, and disclosed the features and spectacles of Mr. Pickwick.

"Keep yourself up for an instant--for only one instant!" bawled Mr. Snodgrass.

"Yes do; let me implore you--for my sake?" roared Mr. Winkle, deeply affected. The adjuration was rather unnecessary; the probability being, that if Mr. Pickwick had declined to keep himself up for anybody's else sake, it would have occurred to him that he might as well do so for his own.

"Do you feel the bottom there, old fellow?" said Wardle.

"Yes, certainly," replied Mr. Pickwick, wringing the water from his head and face, and grasping for breath. "I fell upon my back. I couldn't get on my feet at first."

The clay upon so much of Mr. Pickwick's coat as was yet visible, bore testimony to the accuracy of this statement; and as the fears of the spectators were still further relieved by the fat boy's suddenly recollecting that the water was nowhere more than five feet deep, prodigies of valor were performed to get him out. After a vast quantity of splashing, and cracking and struggling,

Mr. Pickwick was at length fairly extricated from his unpleasant position, and once more stood on dry land.

"Oh, he'll catch his death of cold," said Emily.

"Dear old thing! " said Arabella. Let me wrap this shawl around you, Mr. Pickwick.

"Ah, that's the best thing you can do," said Wardle; "and when you've got it on, run home as fast as your legs can carry you, and jump directly into bed."

A dozen shawls were offered on the instant. Three or four of the thickest having been selected, Mr. Pickwick was wrapped up, and started off, under the guidance of Mr. Weller; presenting the singular phenomenon of an elderly gentleman, dripping wet, and without a hat, with his arms bound down to his sides, skimming over the ground, without any clearly defined purpose, at the rate of six good English miles an hour.

But Mr. Pickwick cared not for appearances in such an extreme case, and urged on by Sam Weller, he kept at the very top of his speed until he reached the door of Manor Farm, . . .

Mr. Pickwick paused not an instant until he was snug in bed. Sam Weller lighted a blazing fire in the room, and took up his dinner; a bowl of punch was carried up afterwards, and a grand carouse held in honor of his safety.[165]

Even this incident did not prevent Mr. Pickwick's participating in the amusements of his friends. We find him next joining a hunting party.

"An't the gentleman a shot, sir?" inquired the long fame keeper.

"No," replied Wardle; "and he's lame besides."

"I should like very much to go," said Mr. Pickwick, "very much."

There was a short pause of sommiseration.

"There's a barrow t'other side the hedge," said the by. "If the gentleman's servant would wheel along the paths, he could keep nigh us, and we could lift it over the stiles, and that."

"The wery thing," said Mr. Weller, who was a party interested, inasmuch as he ardently longed to see the sport. "The wery thing, Well," said Smallcheek; I'll have it out in--

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[165] Pickwick Papers, I, p. 501 ff.

But here a difficulty arose. The long gamekeeper resolutely protested against the introduction into a shooting party of a gentleman in a barrow, as a gross violation of all established rules and precedents.

It was a great objection, but not an insurmountable one. The gamekeeper having been coaxed and fee'd, and having, moreover, eased his mind by "pumhing" the dead of the inventive youth who had first suggested the use of the machine, Mr. Pickwick was placed in ti, and off the party set; Wardle and the long gamekeeper leading the way, and Mr. Pickwick in the barrow, propeeled by Sam bringing up the rear.

"Stop, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, when they had got half across the first field.

"What's the matter now?" said Wardle.

"I won't suffer this barrow to be moved another step," said Mr. Pickwick, resolutely, "unless Winkle carries that gun of his, in a different manner."

"How am I to carry it?" said the wretched Winkle.

"Carry it with the muzzle to the ground," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"It's so unsportsman like," reasoned Winkle.

"I don't care whether it's unsportsman like or not," replied Mr. Pickwick; "I am not going to be shot in a wheelbarrow, for the sake of appearances, to please anybody."

. . .The dogs suddenly came to a dead stop, and the party advancing stealthily a single pace, stopped too.

"What's the matter with the dogs' legs?" whispered Mr. Winkle. "How queer they're standing."

"Hush, can't you?" replied Wardle, softly. "Don't you see they're making a point?"

"Making a point!" said Mr. Winkle, staring about him, as if he expected to discover some particular beauty in the landscape, which the sagacious animals were calling special attention to. "Making a point! What are they apointing at?"

. . . There was a sharp whirring noise, that made Mr. Winkle start back as if he had been shot himself. Bang, bang, went a couple of gund;--the smoke swept quickly away over the field, and curled into the air.

"Where are they?" said Mr. Winkle, in a state of the highest excitement, turning round and round in all directions. "Where are they?" Tell me when to fire. Where are they--where are they?"

"Where are they?" said Wardle, taking up a brace of birds which his dogs had deposited at his feet. "Why here they are."

"No, no; I mean the others," said the bewildered Winkle.

"Far enough off by this time," replied Wardle, coolly reloading his gun.

"We shall very lokely be up with another covey in five minutes," said the long gamekeeper. "If the gentleman begins to fire now, perhaps he'll just get the shot out of the barrel by the time they rise."[166]

At noon the hunting party stopped for lunch, with which they had plenty of cold punch. Mr. Pickwick himself enjoyed the punch so much that

> . . . his countenance beamed with the most sunny smiles, laughter played around his lips, and good-humored merriment twinkled in his eye. Yielding by degrees to the influence of the exciting liquid, rendered more so by the heat, Mr. Pickwick expressed a stong desire to recollect a song which he had heard in his infancy, and the attempt proving abortive, sought to stimulate his memory with more glasses of punch, which appeared to have quite a contrary effect; for, from forgetting the words of the song, he began to forget how to articulate any words at all; and finally, after rising to his legs to address the company in an eloquent speech, he fell into the barrow, and fast asleep, simultaneously.
>
> . . . it being found perfectly impossible to awaken Mr. Pickwick from his torpor, . . . as the further expedition was not to exceed an hour's duration, and as Mr. Weller begged very hard to be one of the party, it was determined to leave Mr. Pickwick asleep in the barrow, and to call for him on their return. So away they went, leaving Mr. Pickwick snoring most comfortably in the shade.
>
> . . . Mr. Pickwick had not been asleep half an hour when little Captain Boldwig, . . . came striding along.
>
> "Who are you, you rascal?" said the Captain, administering several plies to Mr. Pickwick's body with the thick stick. "What's your name?"
>
> "Cold Punch," murmured Mr. Pickwick, as he sunk to sleep again.
>
> "What?" demanded Captain Boldwig.
>
> No reply
>
> "What did he say his name was?" asked the Captain.
>
> "Punch, I think, sir," replied Wilkins.
>
> "That's his impudence, that's his confounded impudence,"

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[166] Ibid, I, pp. 307 ff.

said Captain Boldwig. "He's only feigning to be sleeping now," said the Captain, in a high passion. "He's drunk; . . . wheel him away directly."

"Where shall I wheel him to, sir?" inquired Wilkins . . .

"Wheel him to the Devil," replied Captain Boldwig.

"Very will, sir" said Wilking.

"Stay," said the Captain.

"Wheel him," said the Captain, "Wheel him to the pound; and let us see whether he calls himself Punch when he comes to himself.[167]

Thus ended Mr. Pickwick's hunting party.

Since the Pickwickians spend their time traveling about in search of knowledge, necessarily humorous incidents are introduced as they journey from place to place. All of the ways of the world, they sometimes had difficulty with their hired conveyances.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Pickwick, as they stood upon the pavement while the coats were being put in. "Bless my soul!who's to drive? I never thought of that."

"Oh!you, of course," said Mr. Tupman.

"Of course," said Mr. Snodgrass.

"I" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"Not the slightest fear, dir," interposed the hostler. "Warrant him quiet, sir; a hinfant in arms might drive him."

"He don't shy, does he?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Shy, sir?--He wouldn't shy if he was to meet a vaggin-load of monkeys with their tails burnt off."

The last recommendation was indisputable, Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass got into the bin; Mr. Pickwick ascended to his perch, and deposited his feet on a floor-clothed shelf, erected beneath it for that purpose.

"Wo--O! cried Mr. Pickwick, as the tall quadruped evidenced a decided inclination to back into the coffee-room window.

"o--O!" echoed Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass from the bin.

"Only his playfulness, gen'lm'n," said the head hostler encouragingly; "jist kitch hold on him, Villain." The deputy restrained the animal's impetuosity, and the

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[167]Ibid., I, p. 310.

principal ran to assist Mr. Winkle in mounting.

"T'other side, sir, if you please."

"Blowed if the gen'lm'n wren't a gettin' up on the wrong side," whispered a grinning post-boy to the inexpressible gratified waiter.

Mr. Winkle, thus instructed, climbed into his saddle, with about as much difficulty as he would have experienced in getting up the side a first-rate man-of-war.

. . ."Let 'em go," cried the hostler,--"Hold him in, sir," and away went the chaise, and the saddle-horse, with Mr. Pickwick on the box of the one, and Mr. Winkle on the back of the other, to the delight and gratification of the whole inn yard.

"What makes him go sideways?" said Mr. Snodgrass in the bin, to Mr. Winkle in the saddle.

"I can't imagine," replied Mr. Winkle. His horse was drifting up the street in the most mysterious manner--side first, with his head towards the one side of the way, and his tail towards the other.

Mr. Pickwick had no leisure to observe either this or any other particular, the whole of his faculties being concentrated in the management of the animal attached to the chaise, who displayed various peculiarities, highly interesting to a by-stander, but by no means equally amusing to any one seated behind him. Besides constantly jerking his head up, in a very unpleasant and uncomfortable manner, and tugging at the reins to an extent which rendered it a matter of great difficulty for Mr. Pickwick to hold them, he had a singular propensity for darting suddenly every now and then to the side of the road, then stopping short, and then rushing forward for some minutes, at a speed which it was wholly impossible to control.

"What can he mean by this?" said Mr. Snodgrass, when the horse had executed this maneuver for the twentieth time.

"I don't know," replied Mr. Tupman; "it looks very like shying, don't it?" Mr. Snodgrass was about to reply, when he was interrupted by a shout from Mr. Pickwick.

"Woo!" said that gentleman; "I have dropped my whip."

"Winkle," said Mr. Snodgrass, as the equestrian came trotting up on the tall horse, with his hat over his ears, and shaking all over, as if he would shake to pieces, with the violence of the exercise, "pick up the whip, there's a good fellow." Mr. Winkle pulled at the bridle of the tall horse till he was black in the face; and having at length succeeded in stopping him, dismounted, handed the whip to Mr. Pickwick, and grasping the reins, prepared to remount.

. . . Mr. Winkle has no sooner touched the reins, than he slipped them over his head, and darted backwards to their full length.

"Poor fellow," said Mr. Winkle, soothingly,--"poor fellow--good old horse." The "poor fellow" was proof against flattery;; the more Mr. Winkle tried to get nearer him, the more he sidled away; and, notwithstanding all kinds of coaxing and wheedling, there were Mr. Winkle and the horse going round and round each other for ten minutes, at the end of which time each was at precisely the same distance from the other as when they first commenced--an unsatisfactory sort of thing under any circumstances, but particularly so in a lonely road, where no assistance can be procured.

"What am I to do?" shouted Mr. Winkle, after the dodging had been prolonged for a considerable time. "What am I to do?" I can't get on him."

"You had better lead him tell we come to a turnpike," replied Mr. Pickwick from the chaise.

"But he won't come!" roared Mr. Winke. "Do come, and hold him."

. . . the faster Mr. Pickwick ran forward, the faster the horse ran backward. There was a great scraping of feet, and kicking of dust; and at last Mr. Winkle, his arms being nearly pulled out of their sockets, fairly let go his hold. The horse paused, stared, shook his head, turned round, and quietly trotted home to Rochester, leaving Mr. Winkle and Mr. Pickwick gazing on each other with countenances of blank dismay. A rattling noise at a little distance attracted their attention. They looked up.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the agonized Mr. Pickwick, "there's the other horse running away!"

It was but too true. The animal was started by the noise, and the reins were on his back. The result may be guessed. He tore off with the four-wheeled chaise behind him, and Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass in the four-wheeled chaise. The heat was a short one. Mr. Tupman threw himself into the hedge, Mr. Snodgrass followed his example, the horse dashed the four-wheeled chaise against a wooden bridge, separated the wheels from the body, and the bin from the perch; and finally stood stock still to gaze upon the ruin he had made.

The first of the two unspilt friends was to extricate their unfortunate companions from their bed of quickset--a process which gave them the unspeakable satisfaction of discovering that they had sustained no injury, beyond sundry rents in their garments, and various lacerations from the brambles. The next thing to be done was to un-

harness the horse. This complicated process having been effected, the party walked slowly forward, leading the horse among them, and abandoning the chaise to its fate.

* * *

It was late in the afternoon when the four friends and their four-footed companions turned into the lane leading to Manor Farm; and even when they were so near their place of destination, the pleasure they would have otherwise experienced was materially damped as they reflected on the singularity of their appearance, and the absurdity of their situation. Torn clothers, lacerated faces, dusty shoes, exhausted looks, and, above all, the horse. Oh, how Mr. Pickwick cursed that horse: he had eyed the noble animal from time to time with looks expressive of hatred and revenge; more than once he had calculated the probable amount of the expense he would incur by cutting his throat; and now the temptation to destroy him, or to cast him loose upon the world rushed upon his mind with ten-fold force. He was roused from a mediation of these dire imaginings, by the sudden appearance of two figures at a turn of the lane. It was Mr. Wardle, and his faithfulaattendant, the fat boy.

"Why, where <u>have</u> you been?" said the hospitable old gentleman; "Ive been waiting for you all day. Well, you <u>do</u> look tired. What! Scratches! Not hurt, I hope--en? Well, I <u>am</u> glad to hear that--very. So you've been spilt, eh? Never mind. Common accident in these parts.[168]

Somewhat later the dignified Mr. Pickwick is embarrassed by the actions of an unwelcome traveling companion.

So long as their progress was confined to the streets of Bristol, the facetious Bob kept his professional green spectacles on, and conducted himself with becoming steadiness and gravity of demeanor; merely giving utterance to divers verbal witticisms for the exclusive behoof and entertainment of Mr. Samuel Weller. But when they emerged on the open road, he threw off his green spectacles and his gravity together, and performed a great variety of practical jokes, which were calculated to attract the attention of the passers-by, and to render the carriage and those it contained, objects of more than ordinary curiosity; the least conspicuous among the feats, being, a most vociferous imitation of a key-bugle, and the ostentatious display of a crimson silk pocket-handkerchief attached to a walking-stick, which was occasionally waved in the air with various gestures indicative of supremacy and defiance.

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[168] <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 80 ff.

"I wonder," said Mr. Pickwick, stopping in the midst of a most sedate conversation with Ben Allen, . . . "I wonder what all the people we pass can see in us to make them stare so."

"It's a neat turn-out," replied Ben Allen, with something of pride in his tone. "They're not used to see this sort of thing, every day, I dare say."

"Possible," replied Mr. Pickwick. "It may be so. Perhaps it is."

Mr. Pickwick might very probably have reasoned himself into the belief that it was really, had he not just then happenening to look out of the coach window, observed that the looks of the passengers betokened anything but respectful astonishment, and that various telegraphic communications appeared to be passing between them and some persons outside the vehicle; whereupon it occurred to him that these demonstrations might be, in some remote degree, referable to the humorous department of Mr. Robert Sawyer.

"I hope," said Mr. Pickwick, "that our volatile friend is committing no absurdities in the dickey behind."

"Oh dear, no," replied Ben Allen, "Except when he's elevated, Bob's the quietest creature breathing."

Here a prolonged imitation of a key-bugle broke upon the ear, succeeded by cheers and screams, all of which evidently proceeded from the throat and lungs of the person outside the vehicle, and by cheers and screams of the quietest creature breathing, or in plainer designation, of Mr. Bob Sawyer himself.

Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Ben Allen looked expressively at each other, and the former gentleman taking off his hat, and leaning out of the coach window until nearly the whole of his waistcoat was outside it, was at length enabled to catch a glimpse of his facetious friend.

Mr. Bob Sawyer was seated, not in the dickey, but on the roof of the chaise, with his legs as far asunder as they would conveniently go, wearing Mr. Samuel Weller's hat on one side of his head, and bearing in one hand, a most enormous sandwich, while, in the other, he supported a goodly sized case bottle, to both of which he applied himself with intense relish, varying the monotony of the occupation by an occasional howl, or the interchange of some lively badinage with any passing stranger. The crimson flag was carefully tied in an erect position to the rail of the dickey;and Mr. Samuel Weller, decorated with Bob Sawyer's hat, was seated in the centre thereof, discussing a twin sandwich whth an animated countenance, the expression of which betokened his attire and perfect approval of the whole arrangement. . .

"Mr. Sawyer!" cried Mr. Pickwick, in a state of great excitement. "Mr. Sawyer, sir!"

"Hallo!" responded that gentleman looking over the side of the chaise with all the coolness in life.

"Are you mad, sir?" demanded Mr. Pickwick.

"Not a bit of it," replied Bob; "only cheerful."

"Cheerful, sir!" ejaculated Mr. Pickwick. "Take down that scandalous red handkerchief, I beg. I insist, sir. Sam, take it down."

Before Sam could interpose, Mr. Bob Sawyer gracefully struck his colors, and having put them in his pocket, nodded in a courteous manner to Mr. Pickwick, wiped the mouth of the case-bottle, and applied it to his own; thereby informing him, without any unnecessary waster of words, that he devoted that draught to wishing him all manner of happiness and prosperity. Having done this, Bob replaced the cork with great care, and looking benignantly down on Mr. Pickwick, took a large bite out of the sandwich, and smiled.

"Come," said Mr. Pickwick, whose momentary anger was not quite proof against Bob's immovable self-possession, "pray let us have no more of this absurdity."

"No, no," replied Bob, once more exchanging hats with Mr. Weller; "I didn't mean to do it, only I got so enlivened with the ride that I couldn't help it."

"Think of the look of the thing," expostulated Mr. Pickwick. . .

"Oh, certainly," said Bob, "it's not the sort of thing at all. All over governor."

Satisfied with this assurance, Mr. Pickwick once more drew his head into the chaise and pulled up the glass; but he had scarcely resumed the conversation which Mr. Bob Sawyer had interrupted, when he was somewhat startled by the apparition of a small dark body, of an oblong form, on the outside of the window, which gave sundry taps against it, as if impatient of admission.

"What's this?" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"It looks like a case-bottle;" remarked Ben Allen, eyeing the object in question through his spectacles with some interest; "I rather think it belongs to Bob."

The impression was perfectly accurate; for Mr. Bob Sawyer having attached the case-bottle to the end of the walking-stick, was battering the window with it, in token of his wish that his friends inside would partake of its contents, in all good fellow-ship and harmony. . .

"I think it would be best to take it in," said Mr. Ben Allen; "it would serve him right to take it in and keept it, wouldn't it?

This advice quite coinciding with his own opinion,

Mr. Pickwick gently let down the window and disengaged the bottle from the stick, upon which the latter was drawn up, and Mr. Bob Sawyer was heard to laugh heartily.

"What is it?" inquired Ben Allen, carelessly. "I don't know," replied Mr. Pickwick, with equal carelessness. "It smells, I think, like milk-punch.

"Oh, indeed?" said Ben.

"I think so," added Mr. Pickwick, very properly guarding himself against the possibility of stating an untruth; "mind, I could not undertake to say certainly, without tasting it."

"You had better do so," said Ben; "we may as well know what it is."

"Do you think so?" replied Mr. Pickwick. "Well, if you are curious to know, of course I have no objection."

Ever willing to sacrifice his own feelings to the wishes of his friend, Mr. Pickwick at once took a pretty long taste.

"What is it?" inquired Ben Allen, interrupting him with some impatience.

"Curious," said Mr. Pickwick, smacking his lips. "I hardly know now. Oh, yes," said Mr. Pickwick, after a second taste, "it is punch."

Mr. Ben Allen looked at Mr. Pickwick Mr. Pickwick, looked at Mr. Ben Allen; Mr. Ben Allen smiled, Mr. Pickwick did not.

"It would serve him right," said the last named gentleman, with some severity, "it would serve him right to drink it every drop."

"The very thing that occurred to me," said Ben Allen.

"It is indeed!" rejoined Mr. Pickwick. "Then here's his health." With these words, that excellent person took almost energetic pull at the bottle, and handed it to Ben Allen, who was not slow to imitate his example. The smiles became mutual, and the milk punch was gradually and cheerfully disposed of.

"After all," said Mr. Pickwick, as he drained the last drop, "his pranks are really very amusing--very entertaining indeed."

"You may say that," rejoined Mr. Ben Allen. In proof of Bob Sawyer's being one of the funniest fellows alive, he proceeded to entertain Mr. Piewick with a long and circumstantial account how that gentleman once drank himself into a fever and got his head shaved; the relation of which pleasant and agreeable history was only stopped by the stoppage of the chaise at the Bell at Berkeley Heath, to change horses. . . and when (the horses once more put to) they resumed their seats, with the case-bottle full of the best substitute for milk punch that could be pro-

cured on so short a notice, the key-bugle sounded, and the red flag waved, without the slightest opposition on Mr. Pickwick's part.

At the Hop Pole at Tewkesbury, they stopped to dine; upon which occasion there was more bottled ale, with some more Madeira, and some Port besides; and here the case-bottle was replenished for the fourth time. Under the influence of these combined stimulants, Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Ben Allen fell fast asleep for thirty miles, while Bob and Mr. Weller sang duets in the dickey.[169]

Mr. Pecksniff in Martin Chuzzlewit also has his troubles when he makes preparations for travel:

> . . . Mr. Pecksniff called Tom down to stand upon the top of his portmanteau and represent ancient statues there, until such time as it would consent to be locked. . .[170]

Here it is not the main incident which causes amusement but the detail of the statues. These unusual additions for the sake of humor do much toward mding the most insignificant action interesting. Illustrative of this point, Sam Weller's experience with the police may be quoted:

> "Stand back!" said the outraged Mr. Grummer. By way of adding force to the command, he thrust the brass emblem of royalty into Sam's neckcloth with one hand, and seized Sam's collar with the other--a compliment which Mr. Weller returned by knocking him down out of hand--having previously, with the utmost consideration, knocked down a chairman for him to lie upon.[171]

Dickens, in the following travels and experiences of Mr. Pickwick, describes for us the military tactics of the day:

> At length that low roar of many voices ran through the crowd which usually announces the arrival of whatever they have been waiting for. All eyes were turned in the direction of the sally-port. A few moments of eager expectation, and colors were seen fluttering gayly in the air, arms glistened brightly in the sun; column after column poured on to the plain. The troops halted and

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169 Ibid., II, pp. 341 ff.

170 Martin Chuzzlewit, I, p. 118.

171 Pickwick Papers, I, p408.

formed; the word of command rang through the line, there was a general clash of muskets as arms were presented; and the commander-in-chief, attended by Colonel Bulder and numerous officers, cantered to the front. The military bands struck up all together; the horses stood upon two legs each, cantered backward and whisked their tails about in all directions; the dogs barked, the mob screamed, the troops recovered, and nothing was to be seen on either side, as far as the eye could reach but a long perspective of red coats and white trousers, fixed and motionless.

Mr. Pickwick had been so fully occupied in falling about, and disentangling himself, miraculously, from between the legs of horses, that he had not enjoyed sufficient leisure to observe the scene before him until it assumed the appearance we have just described. When he was at last enabled to stand firmly on his legs, his gratification and delight were unbounded. . .

"It is indeed a noble and a brilliant sight," said Mr. Snodgrass, in whose bosom a blaze of poetry was rapidly bursting forth, "to see the gallant defenders of their country drawn up in brilliant array before its peaceful citizens; their faces beaming--not with warlike ferocity, but with civilized gentleness; their eyes flashing--not with the rude fire of rapine or revenge, but with the soft light of humanity and intelligence."

Mr. Pickwick fully entered into the spirit of this eulogium, but he could not exactly re-echo its terms; for the soft light of intelligence burned rather feebly in the eyes of the warriors, inasmuch as the command "eyes front" had been given; and all the spectator saw before him was several thousand pair of optics, staring straight forward, wholly divested of any expression whatever. . .

"What are they doing now?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, adjusting his spectacles.

"I--I--rather think," said Mr. Winkle, changing color--"I rather think they're going to fire."

"Nonsense," said Mr. Pickwick hastily.

"I--I--really think they are," urged Mr. Snodgrass, somewhat alarmed.

"Impossible," replied Mr. Pickwick. He hardly uttered the word when the whole half-dozen regiments leveled their muskets as if they had but one common object, and that object the Pickwickians; and burst forth with the most awful and tremendous discharge that ever shook the earth to its center, or an elderly gentleman off his.

It was in this trying situation, exposed to a galling fire of blank cartridges, and harassed by the operation of the military, a fresh body of whom had begun to fall

in on the opposite side, that Mr. Pickwick displayed that perfect coolness and self-possession which are the indispensable accompaniments of a great mind. He seized Mr. Winkle by the arm, and placing himself between that gentleman and Mr. Snodgrass, earnestly besought them to remember that beyond the possibility of being rendered deaf by the noise, there was no immediate danger to be apprehended from the firing. . .

"We had better throw ourselves on our faces, hadn't we?" said Mr. Snodgrass.

"No,no--it's over now," said Mr. Pickwick. His lip might quiver, and his cheek might blanch, but no expression of fear or concern escaped the lips of that immortal man.

Mr. Pickwick was right; the firing ceased; but he had scarcely time to congratulate himself on the accuracy of his opinion, when a quick movement was visible in the line; the hoarse shout of the word of command ran along it, and before either of the party could form a guess at the meaning of this new maneuver, the whole of the half-dozen regiments, with fixed bayonets, charged at double-quick time down upon the very spot on which Mr. Pickwick and his friends were stationed. . .

The opposite troops, whose falling-in had perplexed Mr. Pickwick a few seconds before, were drawn up to repel the mimic attack of the sham besiegers of the citade; and the consequence was that Mr. Pickwick and his two companions found themselves suddenly inclosed between two lines of great length; the one advancing at a rapid pace, and the other firmly waiting the collision in hostile array.

"Hoi!" shouted the officers of the advancing line--

"Get out of the way!" cried the officers of the stationary one.

"Where are we to go to?" screamed the agitated Pickwickians.

"Hoi--hoi--hoi!" was the only reply. There was a moment of intense bewilderment, a heavy tramp of footsteps, a violent concussion; a smothered laugh--the half dozen regiments were half a thousand yards off, and the soles of Mr. Pickwick's boots were elevated in the air. . . (When the Pickwickians had found safety in the carriage of friends, their host) put on his spectacles, and Mr. Pickwick pulled out his glass, and everybody stood up in the carriage, and looked over somebody else's shoulder at the evolutions of the military.

Astounding evolutions they were, one rank firing over the heads of another rank, and then running away; and

> running away in their turn; and then forming squares, with officers in the center; and then descending the trench on one side with scaling ladders, and ascending it on the other side again by the same means; and knocking down barricades of baskets, and behaving in the most gallant manner possible. Then there was such a ramming down of the contents of enormous guns on the battery, with instruments like magnified mops; such a preparation before they were let off, and such an awful noise when they did go that the air resounded with the screams of ladies. The young Miss Wardles were so frightened that Mr. Trundle was actually obliged to hold one of them up in the carriage, while Mr. Snodgrass supported the other, and Mr. Wardle's sister suggered under such a dreadful state of nervous alarm that Mr. Tupman found it indispensably necessary to put his arm round her waist to keep her up at all. Everybody was excited, except the fat boy, and he slept as soundly as if the roaring of cannon were his ordinary lullaby.[172]

Another phase of life held up to ridicule is politics. We find that some of the same practices were prevalent then as are still in use by some small politicians today. The election held at Eatanswill proved interesting to Mr. Pickwick although he knew neither of the candidates nor the issued at stake.

> It was late in the evening when Mr. Pickwick and his companions, assisted by Sam, dismounted from the roof of the Eatanswill coach. Large blue silk flags were flying from the windows of Town Arms Inn, and bills were posted in every sash, intimating, in gigantic letters, that the honorable Samuel Slumkey's committee sat there daily. A crowd of idlers were assembled in the road, looking at a hoarse man in the balcony, who was apparently talking himself very red in the face in Mr. Slumkey's behalf; but the force and point of whose arguments were somewhat impaired by the perpetual beating of four large drums which Mr. Fizkin's committee had stationed at the street corner. There was a busy little man beside him, though, who took off his hat at intervals and motioned to the people to

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[172] Ibid., I, pp. 68-74.

cheer, which they regularly did, most enthusiastically; and as the redfaced gentleman went on talking till he was redder in the face than ever, it seemed to answer his purpose quite as well as if anybody had heard him.

The Pickwickians had no sooner dismounted than they were surrounded by a branch mob of the honest and independent, who forthwith set up three deafening cheers, which, being responded to by the main body (for it's not at all necessary for a crowd to know what they are cheering about), swelled into a tremendous roar of triumph, which stopped even the red-faced man in the balcony.

"Hurrah!" shouted the mob in conclusion.

"One cheer more," screamed the little bugleman in the balcony, and out shouted the mob again, as if lungs were cast iron, with steel works.

"Slumkey forever!" roared the honest and independent.

"Slumkey forever!" echoed Mr. Pickwick, taking off his hat.

"No Fizkin!" roared the crowd.

"Certainly not!" shouted Mr. Pickwick.

"Hurrah!" And then there was another roaring, like that of a whole menagerie when the elephant has rung the bell for the cold meat.

"Who is Slumkey?" whispered Mr. Tupman

"I don't know," replied Mr. Pickwick inthe same tone. "Hush. Don't ask any questions. It's always best on these occasions to do what the mob do."

"But suppose there are two mobs?" suggested Mr. Snodgrass.

"Shout with the largest," replied Mr. Pickwick.

Volumes could not have said more . . .

"Spirited contest, my dear sir," said the little man.

"I am delighted to hear it," said Mr. Pickwick, rubbing his hands. "I like to see sturdy patriotism, on whatever side it is called forth--and so it's a spirited contest?"

"Oh, yes," said the little man, "very much so indeed. We have opened all the public houses in the place, and left our adversary nothing but the beer-shops--masterly stroke of policy that, my dear sir, eh?". . .

"And what are the probabilities as to the result of the contest?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Why doubtful, my dear sir; rather doubtful as yet," replied the little man. "Fizkin's people have got three-and-thirty voters in the lockup coach house at the White Hart."

"In the coach house!" said Mr. Pickwick, considerably astonished by this second stroke of policy.

"They keep 'em locked up there, till they want 'em," resumed the little man. "The effect of that is, you see, to prevent our getting at them; and even if we could, it would be of no use for they keep them very drunk on purpose. Smart Fizkin's agent--very smart fellow indeed."

. . .

"We are pretty confident, though," said Mr. Perker, sinking his voice almost to a whisper. "We had alittle tea-party here, last night--five-and-forty women, my dear sir--and gave every one of 'em a green parasol when she went away."

"A parasol!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Fact, my dear sir, fact. Five-and-forty green parasols, at seven and sixpence apiece. All women like finery--extraordinary the effect of those parasols. Secured all their husbands, and half their brothers--beats stockings, and flannel, and all that sort of thing, hollow. My idea, my dear sir, entirely. Hail, rain, or sunshine, you can't walk half a dozen yards up the street without encountering half a dozen green parasols."[173]

Sam further enlightens his master concerning the methods used by politicians at Eatanswill:

"Ah," said Mr. Pickwick, "do they seem devoted to their party, Sam?"

"Never see such devotion in my life, sir."

"Energetic, eh?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Uncommon," replied Same; "'never see men eat and drink so much afore. I wonder they an't afeerd o' bustin."

"That's the mistaken kindness of the gentry here," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Werry likely," replied Sam, briefly.

"Fine, fresh, hearty fellows they seem," said Mr. Pickwich, glancing from the window.

"Werry fresh," replied Sam; "me and the two waiters at the Peacock has been a pumpin' over the independent voters as supped there last night."

"Pumping over independent voters!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes," said his attendant, "every man slept vere he fell down; we dragged 'em out, one by one, this mornin' and put 'em under the pump, and they're in reg'lar fine order now. Shillin' a head the committee paid for that

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[173] Ibid., I, pp. 201 ff.

'ere job."

"Can such things be!" exclaimed the astonished Mr. Pickwick.

"Lord bless your heart, sir," said Sam, "why, where was you half baptized?--that's nothin', that an't."

"Nothing?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Nothin' at all, sir," replied his attendant. "The night afore the last day o' the last election here, the opposite party bribed the bar-maid at the Town Arms to hocus the brandy and water of fourteen unpolled electors as was a stoppin' in the house."

"What do you mean by 'hocussing' brandy and water?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Puttin' laud'num in it," replied Sam. "Blessed if she didn't send 'em all to sleep till twelve hours arter the election was over. They took one man up to the booth, in a truck, fast asleep, by way of experiment, but it was no go--they wouldn't poll him; so they brought him back, and put him to bed again."

"Strange practices, these," said Mr. Pickwick; half speaking to himself, and half addressing Sam.

"Not half so strange as a miraculous circumstance as happened to my own father, at an election-time, in this werry place, sir," replied Sam. . .

"Why he drove a coach down here once," said Sam. "'Lection-time came on, and he was engaged by vun party to bring down voters from London. Night afore he was going to drive up, committee on t'other side sends for him quietly. . . . So then they pours him out a glass of wine, and gammons him about his driving, and gets him into a reg'lar good humor, and at last shoves a twenty pound note in his hand. 'It's a werry bad road between this and London,' says the gen'l'm'n.--'Here and there it <u>is</u> a heavy road,' says my father.--' 'Specially near the canal, I think' says the gen'l'm'n.--Nasty bit, that 'ere,' says myfather--'Well, Mr. Weller,' says the gen'l-m'n, 'you're a werry good whip, and can do what you like with your horses, we know. We're all werry fond o' you, Mr. Weller,so in case you <u>should</u> have an accident when you're a bringing these here voters down, and <u>should</u> tip 'em over into the canal without hurtin' of 'em, this is for yourself,' says he.--Gen'l'm'n, you're wery kind,' says my father, 'and I'll drink your health in another glass of wine,' says he; which he did, and then buttons up the money, and bows himself out. You wouldn't believe sir," continued Sam, with a look of inexpressible impudence at his master Sam, "that on the very day as he came down with them voters, his coach <u>was</u> upset on that 'ere very spot, and ev'ry man on 'em was turned into the canal."

"And got out again?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, hastily.

"Why," replied Sam, very slowly, "I rather think one old gen'l'm'n was missin'; I know his hat was found, but I an't quite certain whether his head was in it or not. But what I look at, is the hex-traordinary and wonderful coincidence that, arter what that gen'l'm'n said, my father's coach should be upset in that very place, and on that very day."[174]

Many of the young men in Dickens' novels have financial difficulties. Like Richard Swiveller each of them finds some ingenious method of settling his business accounts. Pip, the chief character in Great Expectations, explains his method of settling his debts:

> At certain times--meaning at uncertain times, for they depended on our humor--I would say to Herbert, as if it were a remarkable discovery:
>
> "My dear Herbert, we are getting on badly."
>
> "My dear Handel," Herbert would say to me, in all sincerity, "if you will believe me, those very words were on my lips, by a strange coincidence."
>
> "Then, Herbert," I would respond, "let us look into our affairs."
>
> We always derived profound satisfaction from making an appointment for this purpose. I always thought this was business, this was a way to confront the thing, this was the way to take the foe by the throat. And I know Herbert thought so too.
>
> We ordered something rather special for dinner, with a bottle of something similarly out of the common way, in order that our minds might be fortified for the occasion, and we might come well up to the mark. Dinner over, we produced a bundle of pens, a copious supply of ink, and a goodly show of writing and blotting paper. For, there was something very comfortable in having plenty of stationery.
>
> I would then take a sheet of paper, and write across the top of it, in a neat hand, the heading, "Memorandum of Pip's debts:" with Barnard's Inn and the date very

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[174] Ibid., I, 210 ff.

carefully added. Herbert would also take a sheet of paper and write across it, with similar formalities, "Memorandum of Herbert's debts."

Each of us would then refer to a confused heap of papers at his side, which had been thrown into drawers, worn into holes in pockets, half-burned in lighting candles, stuck for weeks into the looking-glass, and otherwise damaged. The sound of our pens refreshed us exceedingly, inasmuch that I sometimes found it difficult to distinguish between this edifying business proceeding and actually paying the money. In point of meritorious character, the two things seemed about equal.

When we had written a little while, I would ask Herbert how he got on? Herbert probably would have been scratching his head in a most rueful manner at the sight of his accumulating figures.

"They're mounting up, Handel, " Herbert would say; "upon my life, they are mounting up."

"Be firm, Herbert," I would retort, plying my own pen with great assuidity. "Look the thing in the face. Look into your affairs. Stare them out of countenance."

"So would I, Handel, only they are staring me out of countenance."

However, my determined manner would have its effect, and Herbert would fall to work again. After a time he would give up once more, on the plea that he had not got Cobb's bill, or Lobb's or Nobb's, as the case might be.

"Then, Herbert, estimate; estimate it in round numbers, and put it down."

"What a fellow of resource you are!" my friend would reply, with admiration. "Really your business powers are very reasonable."

I thought so too. I established with myself, on these occasions, the reputation of a first-rate man of business--prompt, decisive, energetic, clear, coolheaded. When I had got all my responsibilities down upon my list, I compared each with the bill, and ticked it off. My self approval when I ticked an entry was quite a luxurious sensation. When I had no more ticks to make I folded all my bills up uniformly, docketed each on the back, and tied the whole into a symmetrical bundle. Then I did the same for Herbert (who modestly said he had not my administrative genius), and felt that I had brought his affairs into a focus for him. My business habits had one other bright feature, which I called "leaving a margin." For example: supposing Herbert's debts to be one hundred and sixty-four pounds four-and-two pence, I would say, "Leave a margin, and put them down at two hundred." Or, supposing my own

to be four times as much, I would leave a margin and put them down at seven hundred. I had the highest opinion of the wisdom of this same Margin; but I am bound to acknowledge that on looking back, I deem it to have been an expensive device. For we always ran into new debt immediately, to the full extent of the margin, and sometimes, inthe sense of freedom and solvency it imparted, got pretty far on into another margin.

But there was a calm, a rest, a virtuous hush, consequent on these examinations of our affairs, that gave me, for the time, an admirable opinion of myself. Soothed by my exertions, my method, and Herbert's compliments, I would sit with his symmetrical bundle, and my own on the table before me among the stationery, and feel like a Bank of some sort, rather than a private individual.[175]

Mr. Chester plans an especially simple way of settling his debts:

"If time were money," he said, handling a snuff-box, "I would compound with my creditors, and give them--let me see-how much a day? There's my nap after dinner--an hour--they're extremely welcome to that, and to make the most of it. In the morning, between my breakfast and the paper, I could spare them another hour; in the evening before dinner, say another. Three hours a day. They might pay themselves in calls, with interest, in twelve months. I think I shall propse it to them. . .[176]

Bob Sawyer, a young doctor, explains his method of advertising and managing his business, which is anything but a prosperous practice.

"And a very snug little business you have, no doubt?" said Mr. Winkle. . .

"Very," replied Bob Sawyer. "So snug, that at the end of a few years you might put all the profits in a wine glass, and cover 'em with a gooseberry leaf."

"You cannot surely mean that?" said Mr. Winkle. "The stock itself--

"Dummies, my dear boy," said Bob Sawyer; "half the drawers have got nothing in 'em, and the other half don't open."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Winkle.

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[175] Great Expectations, p. 305 ff.

[176] Barnaby Rudge, I, p. 217.

"Fact--honor! returned Bob Sawyer, stepping out into the shop, and demonstrating the veracity of the assertion by divers hard pulls at the little gold knob on the counterfeit drawers. "Hardly anything real in the shop but the leeches, and they are second-hand."

"I shouldn't have thought it!" exclaimed Mr. Winkle, much surprised.

"I hope not," replied Bob Sawyer, "else where's the use of appearances, eh?. . . Ben, my fine fellow, put your hand into the cupboard, and bring out the patent digester."

Mr. Benjamin Allen smiled his readiness, and produced from the closet at his elbow a black bottle half full of brandy.

"You don't take water, of course?" said Bob Sawyer.

"Thank you," replied Mr. Winkle. "It's rather early; I should like to qualify it, if you have no objection."

"None in the least, if you can reconcile it to your conscience," replied Bob Sawyer; tossing off, as he spoke, a glass of the liquor with great relish. "Ben, the pipkin!"

Mr. Benjamin Allen drew forth, from the same hiding place, a small brass pipkin, which Bob Sawyer observed he prided himself upon, particularly because it looked so business-like. The water in the professional pipkin having been made to boil, in course of time, by various shovelfuls of coal, which Mr. Bob Sawyer took out of a practicable window seat, labeled "Soda Water," Mr. Winkle adulterated his brandy; and the conversation was becoming general, when it was interrupted by the entrance into the shop of a boy, in a sober gray livery and a gold-laced hat, with a small covered basket under his arm; whom Mr. Bob Sawyer immediately hailed with, "Tom, you vagabond, come here.". . .

"You've been stopping to over all the posts in Bristol, you idle young scamp!" said Mr. Sawyer.

"No, sir, I haven't," replied the boy.

"You had better not!" said Mr. Bob Sawyer, with a threatening aspect. "Who do you suppose will ever employ a professional man, when they see his boy playing at marbles in the gutter, or flying the garter in the horse road? Have you no feeling for your profession, you groveler? Did you leave all the medicine?"

"Yes, sir."

"The powders for the child, at the large house with the new family, and the pills to be taken four times a day at the ill-tempered old gentleman's with the gouty leg?

"Yes, sir."

"Then shut the door, and mind the shop."

"Come," said Mr. Winkle, as the boy retired, "things are not quite so bad as you would have me believe, either. There is some medicine to be sent out."

Mr. Bob Sawyer peeped into the shop to see that no stranger was within hearing, and leaning forward to Mr. Winkle, said, in a low tone: "He leaves it all at the wrong houses."

Mr. Winkle looked perplexed, and Bob Sawyer and his friend laughed.

"Don't you see?" said Bob; "he goes up to a house, rings the area bell, pokes a packet of medicine without a direction into the servant's hand, and walks off. Servant takes it into the dining-parlor; master opens it, and reads the label, 'Draught to be taken at bedtime--pills as before--lotion as usual--the powder. From Sawyer's late Nockemorf's. Physicians' prescriptions carefully prepared;' and all the rest of it. Shows it to his wife--she reads the label; it goes down to the servants--they read the label. Next day the boy calls: 'Very sorry--his mistake--immense business--great many parcels to deliver--Mr. Sawyer's compliments--late Nockemorf's.' The name gets known; and that's the thing, my boy, in the medical way; bless your heart, old fellow, it's better than all the advertising in the world. We have got one four-ounce bottle that's been to half the houses in Bristol, and hasn't done yet."

"Dear me, I see," observed Mr. Winkle, "what an excellent plan!"

"Oh, Benand I have hit upon a dozen such," replied Bob Sawyer, with great glee. "The lamplighter has eighteen pence a week to pull the night-bell for ten minutes, every time he comes round; and my boy always rushes into church just before the psalms, when the people have got nothing to do but look about 'em, and calls me out, with horror and dismay depicted on his countenance. 'Bless my soul,' everybody says, 'somebody taken suddenly ill! Sawyer, late Nockemorf, sent for. What a business that young man has!'"[177]

"Bless me, you are surely not mad enough to think of leaving your patients without any body to attend them!" remonstrated Mr. Pickwick in a very serious tone.

"Why not?" asked Bob in reply. "I shall save by it,

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[177] Pickwick Papers, II, p. 145.

you know. None of them ever pay. Besides," said Bob, lowering his voice to a confidential whisper, "they will be all the better for it; for, being nearly out of drugs, and not able to increase my account just now, I should have been obliged to give them calomel all round, and it would have been certain to have disagreed with some of them--so it's all for the best."[178]

Several times Dickens uses the business of the theatre as a subject for humor.

In the same way, everybody who was on the stage beheld no audience but one individual; everybody played to the London manager. When Mr. Lenville, in a sudden burst of passion, called the emperor a miscreant, and then, biting his glove, said, But I must dissemble," instead of looking gloomily at the boards and so waiting for his cue, as is proper in such cases, he kept his eye fixed upon the London manager. When Miss Bravass sang her song at her lover, who according to custom stood rea y to shake hands with her between the verses, they looked, not at each other, but at the London manager. Mr. Crummles died pointblank at him; and when the two guards came in to take the body off after a very hard death, it was seen to open its eyes and glance at the London manager. At length the London manager was discovered to be asleep, and shortly after that he woke up and went away, whereupon all the company fell foul of the unhappy comic countryman, declaring that his buffoonery was the sole cause; and Mr. Crummles said that he had put up with it a long time, but that he really couldn't stand it any longer, and therefore would feel obliged by his looking out for another engagement.[179]

"Let me see. This is Wednesday night We'll have poster out the first thing in the morning, announcing positively your last appearance for tomorrow."

"But perhaps it may not be my last appearance, you know," said Nicholas. "Unless I am summoned away, I should be sorry to inconvenience you by leaving before the end of the week."

"So much the better," returned Mr. Crummles. "We can have positively your last appearance on Thursday--re-engagement for one night more on Friday--and, yielding

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[178] Ibid., II, p. 339.

[179] Nicholas Nickleby, I, p. 476.

to the wishes of numerous influential patrons, who were disappointed in obtaining seats, on Saturday. That ought to bring three very decent houses."

"Then I am to make three last appearances, am I?"inquired Nicholas, smiling.[180]

Pip describes Hamlet as it was presented by his friend Mr. Wopsle.

> On our arrival in Denmark, we found the king and queen of that country elevated in two armchairs on a kitchen-table, holding a Court. The whole of the Danish nobility were in attendance; consisting of a noble boy in the wash-leather boots of a gigantic ancestor, a venerable Peer with a dirty face who seemed to have risen from the people late in life, and the Danish chivalry with a comb in its hair and a pair of white silk legs, and presenting on the whole a feminine appearance. My gifted townsman stood gloomily apart, with folded arms, and I could have wished that his curls and forehead had been more probable.
>
> Several curious little circumstances transpired as the action proceeded. The late king of the country not only appeared to have been troubled with a cough at the time of his decease, but to have taken it with him to the tomb, and to have brought it back. The royal phantom also carried a ghostly manuscript round its truncheon, to which it had the appearance of occasionally referring, and that, too, with an air of anxiety and a tendency to lost the place of reference which were suggestive of a state of mortality. It was this, I conceive, which led to the Shade's being advised by the gallery to "turn over" -- a recommendation which it took extremely ill. It was likewise to be noted of this majestic spirit that whereas it always appeared with an air of having been cut a long time and walked an immense distance, it perceptibly came from a long contiguous wall. This occasioned its terrors to be received derisively. The Queen of Denmark, a very buxom lady, though no doubt historically brazen; was considered by the public to have too much brass about her; her chin being attached to her diadem by a broad band of that metal (as if she had a gorgeous toothache), her waist being encircled by another and each of her arms

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[180] Ibid., I, p. 462.

by another, so that she was openly mentioned as "the kettledrum." The noble boy in the ancestral boots was inconsistent; representing himself, as it were in one breath, as an able seaman, a strolling actor, a grave-digger, a clergyman, and a person of the utmost importance at a Court fencing-match, on the authority of whose practiced eye and nice discrimination the finest strokes were judged. This gradually led to a want of toleration for him, and even--on his being detected in holy order, and declining to perform the funeral service--to the general indignation taking the form of nuts. Lastly, Ophelia was a prey to such slow musical madness, that when, in course of time, she had taken off her white muslin scarf, folded it up, and buried it, a sulky man who had been long cooling his impatient nose against an iron bar in the front row of the gallery, growled, "Now the baby's put to bed let's have supper!" Which, to say the least of it, was out of keeping.

Upon my unfortunate townsman all these incidents accumulated with playful effect. Whenever that undecided Prince had to ask a question or state a doubt, the public helped him out with it. As for example: on the question whether 'twas nobler in the mind to suffer, some roared Yes, and some No, and some, inclining to both opinions, said "Toss up for it;" and quite a Debating Society arose. When he asked what should such fellows as he do crawling between earth and heaven, he was encouraged with loud cries of "Hear, hear." When he appeared with his stocking disordered (its disorder expressed according to usage, by one very neat fold in the top, which I suppose to be always got up with a flat iron), a conversation took place in the gallery respecting the paleness of his leg, and whether it was occasioned by the turn the ghost had given him. On his taking the recorders--very like a little black flute that had just been played in the orchestra and handed out at the door--he was called upon unanimously for Rule Britannia. When he recommended the player not to saw the air thus, the sulky man said, "And don't <u>you</u> do it, neither; you're a deal worse than <u>him</u>!" And I grieve to add that peals of laughter greeted Mr. Wopsle on every one of these occasions.

But his greatest trials were in the churchyard; which had the appearance of a primeval forest, with a kind of small ecclesiastical washhouse on one side and a turnpike gate on the other. Mr. Wopsle, in a comprehensive black cloak, being descried entering at the turnpike, the Grave-digger was admonished in a friendly way, "Look

> out! Here's the undertaker a coming to see how you're a getting on with your work!" I believe it is well known in a constitutional country that Mr. Wopsle could not possibly have returned the skull, after moralizing over it, without dusting his fingers on a white napkin taken from his breast; but even that innocent and indispensable action did not pass without the comment "Wai-ter!" The arrival of the body for interment (in an empty black box with the lid tumbling open), was the signal for a general joy which was much enhanced by the discovery, among the bearers, of an individual obnoxious to identification. The joy attended Mr. Wopsle through his struggle with Laertes on the brink of the orchestra and the grave, and slackened no more until he had tumbled the king off the kitchen-table, and had died by inches from the ankles upward.[181]

Dickens did not omit social functions from the list of subjects for producing humorous situations. Perhaps the best of these is the description of the dinner given by David Copperfield for Steerforth and his two friends Grainger and Markham.

> Being a little embarrassed at first, and feeling much too young to preside, I made Steerforth take the head of the table when dinner was announced, and seated myself opposite to him.. Everything was very good; we did not spare the wine, and he exerted himself so brilliantly to make the thing pass off well that there was no pause in our festivity. I was not quite such good company during the dinner as I could have wished to be, for my chair was opposite the door, and my attention was distracted by observing that the handy young man went out of the room very often, and that his shadow always presented itself, immediately afterward, on the wall of the entry, with a bottle at his mouth. The "young gal" likewise occasioned me some uneasiness; not so much by neglecting to wash the plates, as by breaking them. For being of an inquisitive disposition, and unable to confine herself (as her positive instructions were) to the pantry, she was constantly peering in at us, and constantly imagining herself detected; in which belief she several times retired upon the plates (with which she had carefully paved the floor), and did a great deal of destruction.
>
> These however, were small drawbacks, and easily for-

[181] Great Expectations, pp. 291-293.

gotten when the cloth was cleared and the dessert put on the table; at which period of the entertainment the handy young man was discovered to be speechless. Giving him private directions to seek the society of Mr. Crupp, and to remove the "young gal" to the basement also, I abandoned myself to enjoyment.

I began by being singularly cheerful and light-hearted; all sorts of half-forgotten things to talk about, came rushing into my mind, and made me hold forth in a most unwonted manner. I laughed heartily at my own jokes, and everybody else's; called Steerforth to order for not passing the wine; made several engagements to go to Oxford; announced that I meant to have a dinner party exactly like that once a week until further notice; and madly took so much snuff out of Grainger's box that I was obliged to go into the pantry and have a private fit of sneezing for minutes long.

I went on, by passing the wine faster and faster yet, and continually starting up with a corkscrew to open more wine long before any was needed. I proposed Steerforth's health. I said he was my dearest friend, the protector of my boyhood, and the companion of my dearest friend. I said I was delighted to propose his health I said I owed him more obligations than I could ever repay, and held him in a higher admiration than I could ever express. I finished by saying, "I'll give you Steerforth! God bless him! Hurrah!" We gave him three times three, and another, and a good one to finish with.I broke my glass in going round the table to shake hands with him, and I said (in two words) "Steerforth,you'retheguidingstarof myexistence."

I went on, by finding suddenly that somebody was in the middle of a song. Markham was the singer, and he sang "When the heart of a man is depressed with care." He said, when he had sung it, he would give us "Woman!" I took objection to that, and I couldn'tallow it. I said it was not a respectful way of proposing a toast, and I would never permit that toast to be drunk in my house otherwise than as "The ladies!" I was very high with him, mainly, I think, because I saw Steerforth and Grainger laughing at me--or at him--or at both of us. He said a man was not to be insulted, then. I said he was right there--never under my roof, where the Lares were sacred and the laws of hospitality paramount. He said it was no derogation from a man's dignity to confess that I was a devilish good fellow. I instantly proposed his health.

Somebody was smoking. We were all smoking. I was smoking, and trying to suppress a rising tendency to

shudder. Steerforth had made a speech about me, in the course of which I had been affected almost to tears. I returned thanks, and hoped the present company would dine with me to-morrow, and the day after--each day at five o'clock, that we might enjoy the pleasures of conversation and society through a long evening. I felt called upon to propose an individual. I would give them my aunt. Miss Betsey Trotwood, the best of her sex.

Somebody was leaning out of my bedroom window, refreshing his forehead against the cool stone of the parapet, and feeling the air upon his face. It was myself. I was addressing myself as "Copperfield," and saying, "Why did you try to smoke? You might have known you couldn't do it." Now, somebody was unsteadily contemplating his features in the looking-glass. That was I, too. I was very pale in the looking-glass; my eyes had a vacant appearance; and my hair--only my hair, nothing else--looked drunk.

Somebody said to me, "Let us go to the theater, Copperfield!" There was no bedroom before me, but again the jingling table covered with glasses; the lamp; Grainger on my right hand, Markham on my left, and Steerforth opposite--all sitting in a mist, and a long way off. The Theater? To be sure. The very thing. Come along. But they must excuse me if I saw everybody out first, and turned the lamp off--in case of fire.

Owing to some confusion in the dark, the door was gone. I was feeling for it in the window curtains, when Steerforth, laughing, took me by the arm and led me out. We went downstairs, one behind another. Near the bottom somebody fell, and rolled down. Somebody else said it was Copperfield. I was angry at that false report, until, finding myself on my back in the passage, I began to think there might be some foundation to it.

A very foggy night, with great rings round the lamps in the streets! There was an indistinct talk of its being wet. I considered it frosty. Steerforth dusted me under a lamp-post, and put my hat into shape, which somebody produced from somewhere in a most extraordinary manner; for I hadn't had it on before. Steerforth then said: "You are all right, Copperfield, are you not?" and I told him, "Never better."

A man sitting in a pigeon-hole-place looked out of the box, and took money from somebody enquiring if I was one of the gentlemen paid for, and appearing rather doubtful . . . whether to take the money for me or not. . .

On somebody's motion, we were resolved to go downstairs

to the dress-boxes, where the ladies were. . . . Then I was being ushered into one of these boxes, and found myself saying something as I sat down, and people about me crying "Silence!" to somebody, and ladies casting indignant glances at me, and--what! yes!--Agnes sitting on the seat before me, in the same box.

"Agnes!" I said thickly, "Lorblessmer! Agnes!"

"I know you will do as I ask you, if I tell you I am very earnest in it. Go away now, Trotwood, for my sake, and ask your friends to take you home."

She had so far improved me, for the time, that though I was angry with her, I felt ashamed, and with a short, "Goori!" (which I intended for "Good-night!") got up and went away. They followed, and I stopped at once out of the box-door into my bedroom, where only Steerforth was with me, helping me to undress, and where I was by turns telling him that Agnes was my sister, and adjuring him to bring the corkscrew, that I might open another bottle of wine.

How somebody, lying in my bed, lay saying and doing all this over again, at cross-purposes, in a feverish dream all night--the bed a rocking sea, that was never still! How, as that somebody slowly settled down into myself, did I begin to parch, and feel as if my outer covering of skin were a hard board; my tongue the bottom of an empty kettle, furred with long service, and burning up over a slow fire; the palms of my hands hot plates of metal which no ice could cool![182]

Mr. Micawber and David attend another dinner:

We should not have been much discomposed, I daresay, by the appearance of Steerworth himself, but we became in a moment the meekest of the meek before his respectable servingman. Mr. Micawber, humming a tune to show that he was quite at ease, subsided into his chair, with the handle of a hastily concealed fork sticking out of the bosom of his coat, as if he had stabbed himself. Mrs. Micawber put on her brown gloves, and assumed a genteel languor. Traddles ran his greasy hands through his hair and stood it bolt upright, and stared in confusion on the tablecloth. As for me I was a mere infant at the head of my own table; and hardly ventured to glance at the respectable phenomenon

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[182] David Copperfield, I, pp. 424 ff.

who had come from heaven knows where to put my establishment to rights.[183]

John Pinch is also rather awkward at entertaining:

> . . . John was constantly running backward and forward to and from the closet, bringing out all sorts of things in pots, scooping extra-ordinary 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.[184]

The music presented at the breakfast given by Mrs Leo Hunter and attended by the Pickwickians is described thus:

> . . . The four somethin-ean singers had not ranged themselves in front of a small apple-tree, to look picturesque, and commenced singing their national songs, which appeared by no means difficult of execution, inasmuch as the grand secret seemed to be, that three of the something-ean singers should grunt, while the fourth howled. . . After which, the voice of Mrs. Pott was heard to chirp faintly forth something which courtest interpreted into a song, which was all very classical, and strictly in character, because Apollo was himself a composer, and composers can very seldom sing their own music or anybody else's either.[185]

Thus we find that as Dickens has used characters of diversified traits, so he uses many types of experience to fit his characters. As few of his characters are of the upper class, so the incidents are those of ordinary life, home life, love and courtship, society, finance, and sports. Being of the middle class himself, he sees their foibles yet

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[183] Ibid., II, p. 489

[184] Martin Chuzzlewit, II, p. 178.

[185] Pickwick Papers, I, p. 235.

is able to overshadow them by good traits. For example Mr. Pickwick's folly and stupidity are surpassed by his geniality and kindness. He seems to rise above his class because of the nobility of his character and actions. The insolence of Sam Weller is forgotten because of his loyalty and practical knowledge. It is hard to criticize Dick Swiveller in spite of his laziness and irresponsibleness. These facts are true because the incidents centered around Dickens' humorous characters call forth the complete understanding of the reader.

The action in Dickens' novels fits perfectly the characters involved. Though the events are anything but commonplace, still the reader has the feeling that they are what might be expected, considering the character of those who are the center of the incident. As the characters are unusual, so their deeds, too, must be of extraordinary sort.

The action does, to a certain extent, emphasize and also depend upon the trait or weakness of its central character. Many of the more humorous incidents dealing with Mr. Pickwick are those which show his difficulties where women are concerned. Among those who make embarrassing situations for Mr. Pickwick are Mrs. Bardell, his landlady, who sues him for breach of promise; Miss Witherfield, the lady with yellow curlpapers into whose room he intrudes late one night; Miss Tomkins, the principal of a boarding school for young ladies

where Mr. Pickwick makes an unwelcome visit; and Arabella Allen whose love affairs are of utmost concern to Mr. Pickwick. The events centered around Sairey Gamp show her selfishness, her fondness for drink, and her methods as a nurse. Our conception of Dick Swiveller's carefree nature is formed from the shiftless way in which he provides his living. Mr. Tupman, a Pickwickian, encounters most of his difficulties in the fields of love and sport. Thus it may be seen how important the incidents are in delineating the outstanding humorous characters.

The incidents are of various lengths and usually amusing throughout. Dickens does not concentrate the humor in the close of the bit of action. Many of these incidents are complete in themselves and have little or no bearing upon what precedes or follows. This is especially true of Pickwick Papers, which lacks a well developed plot. The action is quick and not encumbered with long descriptive passages. Usually the recounting of events is made as humorous as the conversation, a fact which is often not true with other authors where amusement depends only on what the characters say. Perhaps the humor of these incidents lies as much in Dickens' method of presenting the action as in the actual events themselves. The fact that Dickens' emphasizes the details of the incident also accounts for a great deal of the humor of incident. The same attention to detail which distinguishes his delineation of character is also found in his narration of incidents.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this discussion has been to analyze the style of Dickens' humor and to illustrate the methods used by Dickens in producing humor in his novels. Since humor has always been considered an important part of Dickens' style, a study of its extent, quality, and methods have been made.

In Chapter II the elements of humor have been considered. According to L'Estrange, humor must be based upon a truth but depends also upon a breach of association. Our amusement is increased when associations are violated. Thackeray says that humor is a mixture of love and wit. This element of sympathy often makes a humorist a tragi-comic painter of human absurdity. Although humor is an expression of the incongruous and ludicrous, it need not evoke laughter. Summarizing these statements, we have the following definition: Humor is a sympathetic expression or appreciation of the incongruous and inconsistent; it is based on an exaggeration of the truth, and arises from contrast or conflict between the real and the ideal.

The third Chapter discusses the general characteristics of Dickens as a humorist. It was found that many parts of

most of his novels do conform to the restrictions set by the definition formulated in Chapter I. The humor of Dickens has been shown to be kindly, genial, and gentle, especially when directed at the poor. His style is essentially original and quaint, and in it humor is closely associated with pathos. His humor is almost entirely without animus. Other humorists, such as Chaucer and Thackeray, have made despicable characters and institutions the subject of humor, but Dickens directs his humor only at those for whom he has some degree of sympathy. In spite of all their weaknesses, Dickens seems to show a great deal of love for his characters. Since Dickens wrote to please the commonality, his style is neither intellectual nor witty.

The following devices of expression have been noted in Chapter IV as characteristic of Dickens' humorous style: unusual choice of words, minute description of inanimate objects and of characters, use of suggestive names, parenthetical expressions and comments, peculiar similes and personifications, and the stately and round-about way in which he tells a trivial incident. The humor of all these devices lies in their unexpectedness and their breach of association. Dickens rarely says what the reader expects him to say, nor does he express his thoughts in a prosaic manner. This is the result of his detailed observations, which point out the amusement Dickens must have felt as he wrote.

The most humorous characters to be found in Dickens' novels were discussed at length in Chapter V. Chief among these are Mr. Pickwick, the most innocent, genial, and kindly man in Dickens; Sam Weller, a loyal but impudent servant; Richard Swiveller, the careless, feather-brained, and kind-hearted young man in Old Curiosity Shop; Mr. Micawber, noted for his alternate elevation and depression of spirits, his bombastic language, and his always waiting for something to turn up; and Mrs. Gamp, the disreputable nurse. These are among the most carefully depicted characters in all Dickens' novels. Mrs. Nickleby and Flora Casby are humorous because of their inane chattering. Migge is a representative of the type of spinster so often held up to ridicule. The humor of Mr. Panck's character is of a much quieter sort. All of the more humorous characters are of the middle or lower classes of society, Mr. Pickwick being of the highest social rank. The intimacy of the reader's acquaintance with Dickens' characters makes them especially appreciated. The appearance, habits, and attitudes of each individual are pictured with great care and sympathy. One feels that each is a particular friend of the novelist, who has wished to share his friends with the reader.

Incidents of many sorts are centered about these inimitable characters. In Chapter VI passages have been

quoted to show the variety of subjects and the manner in which Dickens emphasizes the comic weaknesses of his characters. Incidents of home life, love, marriage, travel, sports, entertainments, and business have been quoted. In recounting these, the novelist has made humorous the smallest points of the action. His careful observation is evident. Certain characteristic actions and speeches, though often repeated, do not become monotonous. Repetition is an important element in Dickens' humor. Expression and characters join in making the incidents highly entertaining.

From this study it is evident that Dickens' humor is of great variety and extent. In all his novels we find many examples of humor of expression, humor of character, and humor of incident.

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