

世界经典文学名著原版库

THE PECKWICK PAPERS

《匹克威克外传》

北京师联教育科学研究所 编



学苑音像出版社

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

世界经典文学名著原版库/北京师联教育科学研究所编. —北京 :学苑音像出版社, 2005. 3

ISBN 7 - 88050 - 270 - X

I. 世... II. 北... III. 世界文学—文学—名著 英文 IV. I299 - 3

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2005)第 187966 号

世界经典文学名著原版库
北京师联教育科学研究所 编

出 版 :学苑音像出版社

印 刷 :北京密云红光印刷厂

开 本 :850mmx1168mm 1/16

印 张 :2800

字 数 :43 000 千字

版 次 :2005 年 4 月第 1 版

印 数 :1 - 5 000

书 号 :ISBN 7 - 88050 - 270 - X

定 价 :5800.00 元(全 290 册)

CHAPTER I

THE PICKWICKIANS

THE first ray of light which illumines the gloom, and converts into a dazzling brilliancy that obscurity in which the earlier history of the public career of the immortal Pickwick would appear to be involved, is derived from the perusal of the following entry in the Transactions of the Pickwick Club, which the editor of these papers feels the highest pleasure in laying before his readers, as a proof of the careful attention, indefatigable assiduity, and nice discrimination, with which his search among the multifarious documents confided to him has been conducted.

"May 12, 1827. Joseph Smiggers, Esq., P.V.P.M.P.C.,¹ presiding. The following resolutions unanimously agreed to:--

"That this Association has heard read, with feelings of unmingled satisfaction, and unqualified approval, the paper communicated by Samuel Pickwick, Esq., G.C.M.P.C.,² entitled 'Speculations on the Source of the Hampstead Ponds, with some Observations on the Theory of Tittlebats;' and that this Association does hereby return its warmest thanks to the said Samuel Pickwick, Esq., G.C.M.P.C., for the same.

"That while this Association is deeply sensible of the advantages which must accrue to the cause of science from the production to which they have just adverted,--no less than from the unwearied researches of Samuel Pickwick, Esq., G.C.M.P.C., in Hornsey, Highgate, Brixton, and Camberwell,--they cannot but entertain a lively sense of the inestimable benefits which must inevitably result from carrying the speculations of that learned man into a wider field, from extending his travels, and consequently enlarging his sphere of observation, to the advancement of knowledge, and the diffusion of learning.

"That, with the view just mentioned, this Association has taken into its serious consideration a proposal, emanating from the aforesaid Samuel Pickwick, Esq., G.C.M.P.C., and three other Pickwickians, hereinafter named, for forming a new branch of United Pickwickians, under the title of The Corresponding Society of the Pickwick Club.

"That the said proposal has received the sanction and approval of this Association.

"That the Corresponding Society of the Pickwick Club is therefore hereby constituted; and that Samuel Pickwick, Esq., G.C.M.P.C., Tracy Tupman, Esq., M.P.C., Augustus Snodgrass, Esq., M.P.C., and Nathaniel Winkle, Esq., M.P.C., are hereby nominated and appointed members of the same; and 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.

"That this Association cordially recognises the principle of every member of the Corresponding Society defraying his own travelling expenses; and that it sees no objection whatever to the members of the said society pursuing their inquiries for any length of time they please, upon the same terms.

"That the members of the aforesaid Corresponding Society be, and are, hereby informed, that their proposal to pay the postage of their letters, and the carriage of their parcels, has been deliberated upon by this Association: that this Association considers such proposal worthy of the great minds from which it emanated, and that it hereby signifies its perfect acquiescence therein."

"A casual observer, adds the secretary, to whose notes we are indebted for the following account--a casual observer might possibly have remarked nothing extraordinary in the bald head, and circular spectacles, which were intently turned towards his (the 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 was 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 the other 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 founded. What a study for an artist did that exciting scene present! The eloquent Pickwick, with one hand gracefully concealed behind his coat tails, and the other waving in 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 clothed them--if we may use the expression--inspired voluntary awe and respect; surrounded by the men who had volunteered to share the perils of his travels, and who were destined to participate in the glories of his discoveries. On his right hand sat Mr. Tracy Tupman--the too susceptible Tupman, who to the wisdom and experience of maturer years superadded the enthusiasm and ardour of a boy, in the most interesting and pardonable

of human weaknesses--love. Time and feeding had expanded that once romantic form; the black silk waistcoat had become more and more developed; inch by inch had the gold watch-chain beneath it disappeared from within the range of Tupman's vision; and gradually had the capacious chin encroached upon the borders of the white cravat: but the soul of Tupman had known no change--admiration of the fair sex was still its ruling passion. On the left of his great leader sat the poetic Snodgrass, and near him again the sporting Winkle, the former poetically enveloped in a mysterious blue coat with a canine-skin collar, and the latter communicating additional lustre to a new green shooting coat, plaid neckerchief, and closely-fitted drabs.

"Mr. Pickwick's oration upon this occasion, together with the debt thereon, is entered on the Transactions of the Club. Both bear a strong affinity to the discussions of other celebrated bodies; and, as it is always interesting to trace a resemblance between the proceedings of great men, we transfer the entry to these pages.

"Mr. Pickwick observed (says the Secretary) that fame was dear to the heart of every man. Poetic fame was dear to the heart of his friend Snodgrass; the fame of conquest was equally dear to his friend Tupman; and the desire of earning fame in the sports of the field, the air, and the water, was uppermost in the breast of his friend Winkle. He (Mr. Pickwick) would not deny that he was influenced by human passions, and human feelings (cheers)--possibly by human weaknesses--(loud cries of 'No'); but this he would say, that if ever 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. (Vehement cheering.) He had felt some pride--he acknowledged it freely, and let his enemies make the most of it--he had felt some pride when he presented his Tittlebatian Theory to the world; it might be celebrated or it might not. (A cry of 'It is,' and great cheering.) He would take the assertion of that honourable Pickwickian whose voice he had just heard--it was celebrated; but if the fame of that treatise were to extend to the furthest confines of the known world, the pride with which he should reflect on the authorship of that production would be as nothing compared with the pride with which he looked around him, on this, the proudest moment of his existence. (Cheers.) He was a humble individual. (No, no.) Still he could not but feel that they had selected him for a service of great honour, and of some danger. Travelling was in a troubled state, and the minds of coachmen were unsettled. Let them look abroad and contemplate the scenes which were enacting around them. Stage coaches were upsetting in all directions, horses were bolting, boats were overturning, and boilers were bursting. (Cheers--a voice 'No.') No! (Cheers.) Let the honourable Pickwickian who cried 'No' so loudly come forward and deny it, if he could. (Cheers.) Who was it that cried 'No'? (Enthusiastic cheering.) Was it some vain and disappointed man--he would not say haberdasher--(loud cheers)--who, jealous of the praise which had been--perhaps undeservedly--bestowed on his (Mr. Pickwick's) researches, and smarting under the censure which had been heaped upon his own feeble attempts at rivalry, now took this vile and

calumnious mode of--

"Mr. BLOTTON (of Aldgate) rose to order. Did the honourable Pickwickian allude to him? (Cries of `Order,' `Chair,' `Yes,' `No,' `Go on,' `Leave off,' etc.)

"Mr. PICKWICK would not put up to be put down by clamour. He *had* alluded to the honourable gentleman. (Great excitement.)

"Mr. BLOTTON would only say then, that he repelled the hon. gent.'s false and scurrilous accusation, with profound contempt. (Great cheering.) The hon. gent. was a humbug. (Immense confusion, and loud cries of `Chair,' and `Order.')

"Mr. A. SNODGRASS rose to order. He threw himself upon the chair. (Hear.) He wished to know whether this disgraceful contest between two members of that club should be allowed to continue. (Hear, hear.)

"The CHAIRMAN was quite sure the hon. Pickwickian would withdraw the expression he had just made use of.

"Mr. BLOTTON, with all possible respect for the chair, was quite sure he would not.

"The CHAIRMAN felt it his imperative duty to demand of the honourable gentleman, whether he had used the expression which had just escaped him in a common sense.

"Mr. BLOTTON had no hesitation in saying that he had not--he had used the word in its Pickwickian sense. (Hear, hear.) He was bound to acknowledge that, personally, he entertained the highest regard and esteem for the honourable gentleman; he had merely considered him a humbug in a Pickwickian point of view. (Hear, hear.)

"Mr. PICKWICK felt much gratified by the fair, candid, and full explanation of his honourable friend. He begged it to be at once understood, that his own observations had been merely intended to bear a Pickwickian construction. (Cheers.)"

Here the entry terminates, as we have no doubt the debate did also, after arriving at such a highly satisfactory and intelligible point. We have no official statement of the facts which the reader will find recorded in the next chapter, but they have been carefully collated from letters and other MS. authorities, so unquestionably genuine as to justify their narration in a connected form.

¹Perpetual Vice-President--Member Pickwick Club.

²General Chairman--Member Pickwick Club.

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CHAPTER II

THE FIRST DAY'S JOURNEY, AND THE FIRST EVENING'S ADVENTURES; WITH THEIR
CONSEQUENCES

THAT punctual servant of all work, the sun, had just risen, and begun to strike a light on the morning of the thirteenth of May, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-seven, when Mr. Samuel Pickwick burst like another sun from his slumbers, threw open his chamber window, and looked out upon the world beneath. Goswell Street was at his feet, Goswell Street was on his right hand--as far as the eye could reach, Goswell Street extended on his left; and the opposite side of Goswell Street was over the way. "Such," thought Mr. Pickwick, "are the narrow views of those philosophers who, content with examining the things that lie before them, look not to the truths which are hidden beyond. As well might I be content to gaze on Goswell Street for ever, without one effort to penetrate to the hidden countries which on every side surround it." And having given vent to this beautiful reflection, Mr. Pickwick proceeded to put himself into his clothes, and his clothes into his portmanteau. Great men are seldom over scrupulous in the arrangement of their attire; the operation of shaving, dressing, and coffee-imbibing was soon performed: and in another hour, Mr. Pickwick, with his portmanteau in his hand, his telescope in his great-coat pocket, and his note-book in his waistcoat, ready for the reception of any discoveries worthy of being noted down, had arrived at the coach stand in St. Martin's-le-Grand.

"Cab!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Here you are, sir," shouted a strange specimen of the human race, in a sackcloth coat, and apron of the same, who with a brass label and number round his neck, looked as if he were catalogued in some collection of rarities. This was the waterman. "Here you are, sir. Now, then, fust cab!" And the first cab having been fetched from the public-house, where he had been smoking his first pipe, Mr. Pickwick and his portmanteau were thrown into the vehicle.

"Golden Cross," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Only a bob's worth, Tommy," cried the driver, sulkily, for the information of his

friend the waterman, as the cab drove off.

"How old is that horse, my friend?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, rubbing his nose with the shilling he had reserved for the fare.

"Forty-two," replied the driver, eyeing him askant.

"What!" ejaculated Mr. Pickwick, laying his hand upon his note-book. The driver reiterated his former statement. Mr. Pickwick looked very hard at the man's face, but his features were immovable, so he noted down the fact forth-with.

"And how long do you keep him out at a time?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, searching for further information.

"Two or three weeks," replied the man.

"Weeks!" said Mr. Pickwick in astonishment--and out came the note-book again.

"He lives at Pentonwil when he's at home," observed the driver, coolly, "but we seldom takes him home, on account of his weakness."

"On account of his weakness!" reiterated the perplexed Mr. Pickwick.

"He always falls down when he's took out o' the cab," continued the driver, "but when he's in it, we bears him up werry tight, and takes him in werry short, so as he can't werry well fall down; and we've got a pair o' precious large wheels on, so ven he *does* move, they run after him, and he must go on--he can't help it."

Mr. Pickwick entered every word of this statement in his note-book, with the view of communicating it to the club, as a singular instance of the tenacity of life in horses, under trying circumstances. The entry was scarcely completed when they reached the Golden Cross. Down jumped the driver, and out got Mr. Pickwick. Mr. Tupman, Mr. Snodgrass, and Mr. Winkle, who had been anxiously waiting the arrival of their illustrious leader, crowded to welcome him.

"Here's your fare," said Mr. Pickwick, holding out the shilling to the driver.

What was the learned man's astonishment, when that unaccountable person flung the money on the pavement, and requested in figurative terms to be allowed the pleasure of fighting him (Mr. Pickwick) for the amount!

"You are mad," said Mr. Snodgrass.

"Or drunk," said Mr. Winkle.

"Or both," said Mr. Tupman.

"Come on!" said the cab-driver, sparring away like clockwork. "Come on--all four on you."

"Here's a lark!" shouted half-a-dozen hackney coachmen. "Go to vork, Sam,"--and they crowded with great glee round the party.

"What's the row, Sam?" inquired one gentleman in black calico sleeves.

"Row!" replied the cabman, "what did he want my number for?"

"I didn't want your number," said the astonished Mr. Pickwick.

"What did you take it for, then?" inquired the cabman.

"I didn't take it," said Mr. Pickwick, indignantly.

"Would any body believe," continued the cab-driver, appealing to the crowd, "would any body believe as an informer 'ud go about in a man's cab, not only takin' down his number, but ev'ry word he says into the bargain" (a light flashed upon Mr. Pickwick--it was the note-book).

"Did he though?" inquired another cabman.

"Yes, did he," replied the first; "and then arter aggerawatin' me to assault him, gets three witnesses here to prove it. But I'll give it him, if I've six months for it. Come on!" and the cabman dashed his hat upon the ground, with a reckless disregard of his own private property, and knocked Mr. Pickwick's spectacles off, and followed up the attack with a blow on Mr. Pickwick's nose, and another on Mr. Pickwick's chest, and a third in Mr. Snodgrass's eye, and a fourth, by way of variety, in Mr. Tupman's waistcoat, and then danced into the road, and then back again to the pavement, and finally dashed the whole temporary supply of breath out of Mr. Winkle's body; and all in half-a-dozen seconds.

"Where's an officer?" said Mr. Snodgrass.

"Put 'em under the pump," suggested a hot-pieman.

"You shall smart for this," gasped Mr. Pickwick.

"Informers!" shouted the crowd.

"Come on," cried the cabman, who had been sparring without cessation the whole time.

The mob had hitherto been passive spectators of the scene, but as the intelligence of the Pickwickians being informers was spread among them, they began to canvass with considerable vivacity the propriety of enforcing the heated pastry-vendor's proposition; and there is no saying what acts of personal aggression they might have committed had not the affray been unexpectedly terminated by the interposition of a new-comer.

"What's the fun?" said a rather tall thin young man, in a green coat, emerging suddenly from the coach-yard.

"Informers!" shouted the crowd again.

"We are not," roared Mr. Pickwick, in a tone which, to any dispassionate listener, carried conviction with it.

"Ain't you, though,--ain't you?" said the young man, appealing to Mr. Pickwick, and making his way through the crowd by the infallible process of elbowing the countenances of its component members.

That learned man in a few hurried words explained the real state of the case.

"Come along, then," said he of the green coat, lugging Mr. Pickwick after him by main force, and talking the whole way. "Here, No. 924, take your fare, and take yourself off--respectable gentleman,--know him well--none of your nonsense--this way, sir,--where's your friends?--all a mistake, I see--never mind--accidents will happen--best regulated families--never say die--down upon your luck--pull him up--put that in his pipe--like the flavour--damned rascals." And with a lengthened string of similar broken sentences, delivered with extraordinary volubility, the stranger led the way to the travellers' waiting-room, whither he was closely followed by Mr. Pickwick and his disciples.

"Here, waiter!" shouted the stranger, ringing the bell with tremendous violence, "glasses round,--brandy and water, hot and strong, and sweet, and plenty,--eye damaged, sir? Waiter! raw beef-steak for the gentleman's eye,--nothing like raw beef-steak for a bruise, sir; cold lamp-post very good, but lamp-post inconvenient--damned

odd standing in the open street half-an-hour, with your eye against a lamp-post--eh,--very good--ha!ha!" And the stranger, without stopping to take breath, swallowed at a draught full half-a-pint of the reeking brandy and water, and flung himself into a chair with as much ease as if nothing uncommon had occurred.

While his three companions were busily engaged in proffering their thanks to their new acquaintance, Mr. Pickwick had leisure to examine his costume and appearance.

He was about the middle height, but the thinness of his body, and the length of his legs, gave him the appearance of being much taller. The green coat had been a smart dress garment in the days of swallow-tails, but had evidently in those times adorned a much shorter man than the stranger, for the soiled and faded sleeves scarcely reached to his wrists. It was buttoned closely up to his chin, at the imminent hazard of splitting the back; and an old stock, without a vestige of shirt collar, ornamented his neck. His scanty black trousers displayed here and there those shiny patches which bespeak long service, and were strapped very tightly over a pair of patched and mended shoes, as if to conceal the dirty white stockings, which were nevertheless distinctly visible. His long black hair escaped in negligent waves from beneath each side of his old pinched-up hat; and glimpses of his bare wrists might be observed between the tops of his gloves, and the cuffs of his coat sleeves. His face was thin and haggard; but an indescribable air of jaunty impudence and perfect self-possession pervaded the whole man.

Such was the individual on whom Mr. Pickwick gazed through his spectacles (which he had fortunately recovered), and to whom he proceeded, when his friends had exhausted themselves, to return in chosen terms his warmest thanks for his recent assistance.

"Never mind," said the stranger, cutting the address very short, "said enough,--no more; smart chap that cabman--handled his fives well; but if I'd been your friend in the green jemmy--damn me--punch his head,--'cod I would,--pig's whisper--pieman too,--no gammon."

This coherent speech was interrupted by the entrance of the Rochester coachman, to announce that "The Commodore" was on the point of starting.

"Commodore!" said the stranger, starting up, "my coach,--place booked,--one outside--leave you to pay for the brandy and water,--want change for a five,--bad silver--Brummagem buttons--won't do--no go--eh?" and he shook his head most knowingly.

Now it so happened that Mr. Pickwick and his three companions had resolved to make Rochester their first halting-place too; and having intimated to their new-found

acquaintance that they were journeying to the same city, they agreed to occupy the seat at the back of the coach, where they could all sit together.

"Up with you," said the stranger, assisting Mr. Pickwick on to the roof with so much precipitation as to impair the gravity of that gentleman's deportment very materially.

"Any luggage, sir?" inquired the coachman.

"Who--I? Brown paper parcel here, that's all,--other luggage gone by water,--packing cases, nailed up--big as houses--heavy, heavy, damned heavy," replied the stranger, as he forced into his pocket as much as he could of the brown paper parcel, which presented most suspicious indications of containing one shirt and a handkerchief.

"Heads, heads--take care of your heads!" cried the loquacious stranger, as they came out under the low archway, which in those days formed the entrance to the coach-yard. "Terrible place--dangerous work--other day--five children--mother--tall lady, eating sandwiches--forgot the arch--crash--knock--children look round--mother's head off--sandwich in her hand--no mouth to put it in--head of a family off--shocking, shocking! Looking at Whitehall, sir?--fine place--little window--somebody else's head off there, eh, sir?--he didn't keep a sharp look-out enough either--eh, sir, eh?"

"I am ruminating," said Mr. Pickwick, "on the strange mutability of human affairs."

"Ah! I see--in at the palace door one day, out at the window the next. Philosopher, sir?"

"An observer of human nature, sir," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Ah, so am I. Most people are when they've little to do and less to get. Poet, sir?"

"My friend Mr. Snodgrass has a strong poetic turn," said Mr. Pickwick.

"So have I," said the stranger. "Epic poem,--ten thousand lines--revolution of July--composed it on the spot--Mars by day, Apollo by night,--bang the field-piece, twang the lyre."

"You were present at that glorious scene, sir?" said Mr. Snodgrass.

"Present! think I was;¹ fired a musket,--fired with an idea,--rushed into wine shop--wrote it down--back again--whiz, bang--another idea--wine shop again--pen and ink--back again--cut and slash--noble time, sir. Sportsman, sir?" abruptly turning to Mr. Winkle.

"A little, sir," replied that gentleman.

"Fine pursuit, sir,--fine pursuit.--Dogs, sir?"

"Not just now," said Mr. Winkle.

"Ah! you should keep dogs--fine animals--sagacious creatures--dog of my own once--Pointer--surprising instinct--out shooting one day--entering enclosure--whistled--dog stopped--whistled again--Ponto--no go; stock still--called him--Ponto, Ponto--wouldn't move--dog transfixed--staring at a board--looked up, saw an inscription--`Game-keeper has orders to shoot all dogs found in this enclosure'--wouldn't pass it--wonderful dog--valuable dog that--very."

"Singular circumstance that," said Mr. Pickwick. "Will you allow me to make a note of it?"

"Certainly, sir, certainly--hundred more anecdotes of the same animal.--Fine girl, sir" (to Mr. Tracy Tupman, who had been bestowing sundry anti-Pickwickian glances on a young lady by the roadside).

"Very!" said Mr. Tupman.

"English girls not so fine as Spanish--noble creatures--jet hair--black eyes--lovely forms--sweet creatures--beautiful."

"You have been in Spain, sir?" said Mr. Tracy Tupman.

"Lived there--ages."

"Many conquests, sir?" inquired Mr. Tupman.

"Conquests! Thousands. Don Bolaro Fizzgig--Grandee--only daughter--Donna Christina--splendid creature--loved me to distraction--jealous father--high-souled daughter--handsome Englishman--Donna Christina in despair--prussic acid--stomach pump in my portmanteau--operation performed--old Bolaro in ecstasies--consent to our union--join hands and floods of tears--romantic story--very."

"Is the lady in England now, sir?" inquired Mr. Tupman, on whom the description of her charms had produced a powerful impression.

"Dead, sir--dead," said the stranger, applying to his right eye the brief remnant of a

very old cambric handker-chief "Never recovered the stomach pump--undermined constitution--fell a victim."

"And her father?" inquired the poetic Snodgrass.

"Remorse and misery," replied the stranger. "Sudden disappearance--talk of the whole city--search made everywhere--without success--public fountain in the great square suddenly ceased playing--weeks elapsed--still a stoppage--workmen employed to clean it--water drawn off--father-in-law discovered sticking head first in the main pipe, with a full confession in his right boot--took him out, and the fountain played away again, as well as ever."

"Will you allow me to note that little romance down, sir?" said Mr. Snodgrass, deeply affected.

"Certainly, sir, certainly,--fifty more if you like to hear 'em--strange life mine--rather curious history--not extraordinary, but singular."

In this strain, with an occasional glass of ale, by way of parenthesis, when the coach changed horses, did the stranger proceed, until they reached Rochester bridge, by which time the note-books, both of Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Snodgrass, were completely filled with selections from his adventures.

"Magnificent ruin!" said Mr. Augustus Snodgrass, with all the poetic fervour that distinguished him, when they came in sight of the fine old castle.

"What a study for an antiquarian!" were the very words which fell from Mr. Pickwick's mouth, as he applied his telescope to his eye.

"Ah! fine place," said the stranger, "glorious pile--frowning walls--tottering arches--dark nooks--crumbling staircases--Old cathedral too--earthy smell--pilgrims' feet worn away the old steps--little Saxon doors--confessionals like money-takers' boxes at theatres--queer customers those monks--Popes, and Lord Treasurers, and all sorts of old fellows, with great red faces, and broken noses, turning up every day--buff jerkins too--match-locks--Sarcophagus--fine place--old legends too--strange stories: capital;" and the stranger continued to soliloquise until they reached the Bull Inn, in the High Street, where the coach stopped.

"Do you remain here, sir?" inquired Mr. Nathaniel Winkle.

"Here--not I--but you'd better--good house--nice beds--Wright's next house, dear--very dear--half-a-crown in the bill if you look at the waiter--charge you more if you

dine at a friend's than they would if you dined in the coffee-room--rum fellows--very."

Mr. Winkle turned to Mr. Pickwick, and murmured a few words; a whisper passed from Mr. Pickwick to Mr. Snodgrass, from Mr. Snodgrass to Mr. Tupman, and nods of assent were exchanged. Mr. Pickwick addressed the stranger.

"You rendered us a very important service this morning, sir," said he, "will you allow us to offer a slight mark of our gratitude by begging the favour of your company at dinner?"

"Great pleasure--not presume to dictate, but broiled fowl and mushrooms--capital thing! what time?"

"Let me see," replied Mr. Pickwick, referring to his watch, "it is now nearly three. Shall we say five?"

"Suit me excellently," said the stranger, "five precisely--till then--care of yourselves;" and lifting the pinched-up hat a few inches from his head, and carelessly replacing it very much on one side, the stranger, with half the brown paper parcel sticking out of his pocket, walked briskly up the yard, and turned into the High Street.

"Evidently a traveller in many countries, and a close observer of men and things," said Mr. Pickwick.

"I should like to see his poem," said Mr. Snodgrass.

"I should like to have seen that dog," said Mr. Winkle.

Mr. Tupman said nothing; but he thought of Donna Christina, the stomach pump, and the fountain; and his eyes filled with tears.

A private sitting-room having been engaged, bed-rooms inspected, and dinner ordered, the party walked out to view the city and adjoining neighbourhood.

We do not find, from a careful perusal of Mr. Pickwick's notes on the four towns, Stroud, Rochester, Chatham, and Brompton, that his impressions of their appearance differ in any material point from those of other travellers who have gone over the same ground. His general description is easily abridged.

"The principal productions of these towns," says Mr. Pickwick, "appear to be soldiers, sailors, Jews, chalk, shrimps, officers, and dockyard men. The commodities chiefly exposed for sale in the public streets are marine stores, hardbake, apples, flat-fish, and

oysters. The streets present a lively and animated appearance, occasioned chiefly by the conviviality of the military. It is truly delightful to a philanthropic mind, to see these gallant men staggering along under the influence of an overflow, both of animal and ardent spirits; more especially when we remember that the following them about, and jesting with them, affords a cheap and innocent amusement for the boy population. Nothing (adds Mr. Pickwick) can exceed their good humour. It was but the day before my arrival that one of them had been most grossly insulted in the house of a publican. The barmaid had positively refused to draw him any more liquor; in return for which he had (merely in playfulness) drawn his bayonet, and wounded the girl in the shoulder. And yet this fine fellow was the very first to go down to the house next morning, and express his readiness to overlook the matter, and forget what had occurred.

"The consumption of tobacco in these towns (continues Mr. Pickwick) must be very great: and the smell which pervades the streets must be exceedingly delicious to those who are extremely fond of smoking. A superficial traveller might object to the dirt which is their leading characteristic; but to those who view it as an indication of traffic and commercial prosperity, it is truly gratifying."

Punctual to five o'clock came the stranger, and shortly afterwards the dinner. He had divested himself of his brown paper parcel, but had made no alteration in his attire; and was, if possible, more loquacious than ever.

"What's that?" he inquired, as the waiter removed one of the covers.

"Soles, sir."

"Soles--ah!--capital fish--all come from London--stagecoach proprietors get up political dinners--carriage of soles--dozens of baskets--cunning fellows. Glass of wine, sir."

"With pleasure," said Mr. Pickwick; and the stranger took wine, first with him, and then with Mr. Snodgrass, and then with Mr. Tupman, and then with Mr. Winkle, and then with the whole party together, almost as rapidly as he talked.

"Devil of a mess on the staircase, waiter," said the stranger. "Forms going up--carpenters coming down--lamps, glasses, harps. What's going forward?"

"Ball, sir," said the waiter.

"Assembly, eh?"

"No, sir, not Assembly, sir. Ball for the benefit of a charity, sir."

"Many fine women in this town, do you know, sir?" inquired Mr. Tupman, with great interest.

"Splendid--capital. Kent, sir--everybody knows Kent--applies, cherries, hops, and women. Glass of wine, sir?"

"With great pleasure," replied Mr. Tupman. The stranger filled, and emptied.

"I should very much like to go," said Mr. Tupman, resuming the subject of the ball, "very much."

"Tickets at the bar, sir," interposed the waiter; "half-a-guinea each, sir."

Mr. Tupman again expressed an earnest wish to be present at the festivity; but meeting with no response in the darkened eye of Mr. Snodgrass, or the abstracted gaze of Mr. Pickwick, he applied himself with great interest to the port wine and dessert, which had just been placed on the table. The waiter withdrew, and the party were left to enjoy the cosy couple of hours succeeding dinner.

"Beg your pardon, sir," said the stranger, "bottle stands--pass it round--way of the sun--through the button-hole--no heeltaps," and he emptied his glass, which he had filled about two minutes before, and poured out another, with the air of a man who was used to it.

The wine was passed, and a fresh supply ordered. The visitor talked, the Pickwickians listened. Mr. Tupman felt every moment more disposed for the ball. Mr. Pickwick's countenance glowed with an expression of universal philanthropy; and Mr. Winkle and Mr. Snodgrass fell fast asleep.

"They're beginning up-stairs," said the stranger--"hear the company--fiddles tuning--now the harp--there they go." The various sounds which found their way down-stairs announced the commencement of the first quadrille.

"How I should like to go," said Mr. Tupman, again.

"So should I," said the stranger,--"confounded luggage--heavy smacks--nothing to go in--odd, ain't it?"

Now general benevolence was one of the leading features of the Pickwickian theory, and no one was more remarkable for the zealous manner in which he observed so