

Dickens Charles, Rives Hallie Erminie

Tales from Dickens



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Tales from Dickens

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CHARLES DICKENS

Charles John Huffham Dickens, the master story-teller, was born in Landport, England, February 7, 1812. His father was a clerk in one of the offices of the Navy, and he was one of eight children.

When he was four years old, his father moved to the town of Chatham, near the old city of Rochester. Round about are chalk hills, green lanes, forests and marshes, and amid such scenes the little Charles's genius first began to show itself.

He did not like the rougher sports of his school-fellows and preferred to amuse himself in his own way, or to wander about with his older sister, Fanny, whom he especially loved. They loved to watch the stars together, and there was one particular star which they used to pretend was their own. People called him a "very queer small boy" because he was always thinking or reading instead of playing. The children of the neighborhood would gather around him to listen while he told them stories or sang comic songs to them, and when he was only eight years old he taught them to act in plays which he invented. He was fond of reading books of travel, and most of all he loved *The Arabian Nights* and *Robinson Crusoe*.

He had a great affection for Chatham and Rochester, and after he began to write stories that were printed, he often used to put these places into them. It was at Chatham that poor little David in the story, *David Copperfield*, lay down to sleep when he was running away from London to find his aunt, Miss Betsy Trotwood. It was to Rochester that Mr. Pickwick in *Pickwick Papers*, rode with Jingle. Rochester was really the "Cloisterham" where the wicked choir master, John Jasper, killed his nephew, in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. And it was in those very marshes near by, that Magwitch, the escaped convict in *Great Expectations*, so frightened little Pip. It is easy to see that the young Charles Dickens noted carefully and remembered everything he saw, and this habit was of great use to him all his life.

These happy years were not to last long. When he was nine years old, his father became poor and the family was obliged to move to London, where it lived in a shabby house in a poor suburb. Before another year had passed, his father was put into prison for debt – the same prison in which Little Dorrit, in the story of that name, grew up. A very bitter period followed for the solitary ten-year-old boy – a time in which, he long afterward wrote, "but for the mercy of God, he might easily have become, for any care that was taken of him, a little robber or a little vagabond." The earlier history of David in *David Copperfield* is really and truly a history of the real Charles Dickens in London. He was left to the city streets, or to earn a hard and scanty living in a dirty warehouse, by pasting labels on pots of blacking. All of this wretched experience he has written in *David Copperfield*, and the sad scenes of the debtors' prison he has put into *Pickwick Papers* and into *Little Dorrit*. Even Mrs. Pipchin, of whom he told in *Dombey and Son*, and Mr. Micawber in *David Copperfield*, were real people whom he knew in these years of poverty and despair. Dickens's life at this time was so miserable that always afterward he dreaded to speak of it, and never could bear even to walk in the street where the blacking warehouse of his boyhood had stood.

Better days, however, came at last. He was able to begin school again, and though the head-master was ignorant and brutal (just such a one as Mr. Creakle in *David Copperfield*) yet Dickens profited by such teaching as he received.

After two or three years of school, he found employment as clerk in a lawyer's office. This did not content him and he made up his mind to learn to write shorthand so as to become a reporter,

in the Houses of Parliament, for a newspaper. This was by no means an easy task. But Dickens had great strength of will and a determination to do well whatever he did at all, and he succeeded, just as David Copperfield did in the story.

And like the latter, too, about this time Dickens fell in love. He did not marry on this occasion, as did David, but how much he was in love one may see by the story of David's Dora.

The theater had always a great attraction for Dickens. Throughout his life he loved to act in plays got up and often written, too, by himself and his friends. Some of his early experiences of this kind he has told in the adventures of Nicholas Nickleby at Mr. Crummles's theater. But his acting was for his own amusement, and it is doubtful if he ever thought seriously of adopting the stage as a profession. If he did, his success as a reporter soon determined him otherwise.

When he was twenty-one he saw his first printed sketch in a monthly magazine. He had dropped it into a letter-box with mingled hope and fear, and read it now through tears of joy and pride. He followed this with others as successful, signed "Boz" – the child nickname of one of his younger brothers. This was his beginning. He was soon on the road to a comfortable fortune, and when at length *Pickwick Papers* appeared, Dickens's fame was assured. This was his first long story. It became, almost at once, the most popular book of its day, perhaps, indeed, the most popular book ever published in England. Soon after the appearance of its first chapters, Dickens married Miss Catherine Hogarth, daughter of the editor of one of the London newspapers, who had helped him in his career.

Many have tried to explain the marvelous popularity of *Pickwick Papers*. Certainly its honest fun, its merriment, its quaintness, good humor and charity appealed to every reader. More than all, it made people acquainted with a new company of characters, none of whom had ever existed, or could ever exist, and yet whose manners and appearance were pictured so really that they seemed to be actual persons whom one might meet and laugh with anywhere.

With such a success, and the money it brought him, Dickens had leisure to begin the wonderful series of stories which endeared him to the whole English-speaking world, and made him the most famous author of his day. *Oliver Twist* came first, and it was followed by *Nicholas Nickleby* and *The Old Curiosity Shop*.

In the first two of these stories one may see most clearly the principle that underlay almost all of Dickens's work. He was never content merely to tell an interesting story. He wrote with a purpose. In *Oliver Twist* that purpose was, first, to better the poorhouse system, and second, to show that even in the lowest and wickedest paths of life (the life wherein lived Fagin with his pupils in crime and Bill Sikes the brutal burglar) there could yet be found, as in the case of poor Nancy, real kindness and sacrifice. In *Nicholas Nickleby* the purpose was to show what terrible wrongs were done to children in country schools, numbers of which at that time were managed by men almost as cruel and inhuman as was Squeers in the story. It is good to learn that, as a result of this novel, an end was made of many such boys' schools. True artist as he was, Dickens seldom wrote without having in his mind the thought of showing some defect in the law, or some wrong condition of affairs which might be righted. No one could read *Pickwick Papers* or *Little Dorrit* without realizing how much wrong and misery was caused by the law which made it possible to throw a man into prison for debt. Nor can one read *Bleak House* without seeing that the legal system which robbed quaint Miss Flite of her mind and kept poor Richard Carstone from his fortune till the fortune itself had disappeared, was a very wrong legal system indeed. Often, too, Dickens's stories are, in a sense, sermons against very human sins. In *The Old Curiosity Shop* it is the sin of gambling which brings about the death of Little Nell. In *Great Expectations* it is the sin of pride which Pip has to fight. In *Martin Chuzzlewit* the evil and folly of selfishness is what Dickens had in mind.

With his increasing wealth, Dickens had, of course, changed his manner of life. He lived part of the time in the country near London, in Brighton, in Dover, and in France and Italy. He liked best, however, a little English watering place called Broadstairs – a tiny fishing village, built on a cliff, with

the sea rolling and dashing beneath it. In such a place he felt that he could write best, but he greatly missed his London friends. He used to say that being without them was "like losing his arms and legs."

The first great grief of his life came to him at this time, in the death of his wife's sister, Mary Hogarth, a gentle, lovable girl of seventeen. No sorrow ever touched him as this did. "After she died," he wrote years afterward, "I dreamed of her every night for many weeks, and always with a kind of quiet happiness, so that I never lay down at night without a hope of the vision coming back." Hers was the character he drew in Little Nell in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. When he came to the part of the story which tells of Little Nell's death, he could scarcely write the chapter. When he ended it he said, "It seems as though dear Mary died but yesterday."

When he was less than thirty, Dickens was invited to visit Scotland, and there he received his first great national tribute. A public banquet was given him in Edinburgh, and he was much sought after and entertained. Up to this time he had never seen the United States; he decided now to visit this country and meet his American readers face to face.

He landed at Boston accompanied by his wife, in 1842, and visited many of the greater cities of the Eastern states. Everywhere he was counted the guest of the nation, and the four months of his stay were one continual welcome. Unfortunately, however, Dickens had taken a dislike to American ways, and this dislike appeared in many things he wrote after his return to England. The pictures he drew of American life in *Martin Chuzzlewit* were both unjust and untrue, and made him for a time lose a large part of the good opinion which American readers had had for him. Dickens soon came to regret the writing of these chapters, and when, twenty-five years later, he visited the United States a second time, he did all in his power to show his kindly feeling, and America admired and loved him so much that it gradually forgot the incident in the great pleasure with which it read his stories.

Dickens was a very active man, and his life was simple and full of work and exercise. He rose early and almost every day might have been seen tramping for miles along the country roads, or riding horseback with his dogs racing after him. He liked best to wander along the cliffs or across the downs by the sea. When he was in London he often walked the streets half the night, thinking out his stories, or searching for the odd characters which he put in them. This natural activity and restlessness even led him sometimes to make political speeches, and finally to the establishment of a new London newspaper – the *Daily News* – of which he was the first editor. Before this, he had started a weekly journal, in which several of his stories had appeared, but it had not been very successful. It was not long before he withdrew also from this second venture.

In the meantime he had met with both joy and sorrow. Several children had been born to him. His much loved sister, his father, and his own little daughter, the youngest of his family, had died. These sorrows made him throw himself into his work with greater earnestness. He even found leisure to organize a theatrical company (in which he himself acted with a number of other famous writers of the time), which gave several plays for the benefit of charity. One of these was performed before Queen Victoria.

People have often wondered how Dickens found time to accomplish so many different things. One of the secrets of this, no doubt, was his love of order. He was the most systematic of men. Everything he did "went like clockwork," and he prided himself on his punctuality. He could not work in a room unless everything in it was in its proper place. As a consequence of this habit of regularity, he never wasted time.

The work of editorship was very pleasant to Dickens, and scarcely three years after his leaving the *Daily News* he began the publication of a new magazine which he called *Household Words*. His aim was to make it cheerful, useful and at the same time cheap, so that the poor could afford to buy it as well as the rich. His own story, *Hard Times*, first appeared in this, with the earliest work of more than one writer who later became celebrated. Dickens loved to encourage young writers, and would just as quickly accept a good story or poem from an unknown author as from the most famous.

It was while engaged in this work that Dickens wrote the best one of all his tales —*David Copperfield*, the one which is in so large a part the history of his own early life.

This book brought Dickens to the height of his career. He was now both famous and rich. He bought a house on Gad's Hill – a place near Chatham, where he had spent the happiest part of his childhood – and settled down to a life of comfort and labor. When he was a little boy his father had pointed out this fine house to him, and told him he might even come to live there some day, if he were very persevering and worked hard. And so, indeed, it had proved.

Perhaps it is in connection with this house on Gad's Hill that the world oftenest remembers Dickens now. Everyone, old and young throughout the neighborhood, liked him. Children, dogs and horses were his friends. His hand was open for charity, and he was always the champion of the poor, the helpless and the outcast. Everyone, he thought, had some good in him, and in all he met he was on the lookout to find it. The great purpose underneath all his writings was after all to teach that every man and woman, however degraded, has his or her better side. So earnest was he in this that he was not pleased at all when a person praised one of his stories, unless the other showed that he had grasped the lesson that lay beneath it. The text of Dickens's whole life and work is best expressed in his own words: "I hope to do some solid good, and I mean to be as cheery and pleasant as I can." The wrongs and sufferings of the young especially appealed to him, and perhaps the most beautiful speech he ever made was one asking for money for the support of the London Hospital for Sick Children. He spoke often in behalf of workingmen, and once he spoke for the benefit of a company of poor actors, when, unknown to him, a little child of his own was lying dead at home.

With such a tender heart for all the world, he was more than an affectionate father to his own children, and gave much thought to their happiness and education. In order that they should properly learn of their own country, he went to the labor of preparing a *Child's History of England* for them, and at another time he wrote out the story of the Gospels, to help them in their study of the New Testament. As the years went by, his letters to his oldest son told of his own work and plans. When his youngest son sailed away to live in Australia, he wrote: "Poor Plorn is gone. It was a hard parting at the last. He seemed to me to become once more my youngest and favorite child as the day drew near, and I did not think I could have been so shaken."

When he moved to Gad's Hill it seemed as though Dickens had gained almost all of the things men strive most for. But he was not to be happy there – nor, perhaps, was he ever again to be really happy anywhere. He and his wife were very different in all their tastes and habits, and had never loved each other as well as people should when they marry. Perhaps, after all, it would have been better if in his youth he had married his Dora – the one whom he had pictured in the love-story of *David Copperfield* and his child-wife. But, however this may be, Dickens and his wife had not lived happily together, and now decided to part, and from that time, though they wrote to each other, he never saw her again. It is sad to reflect that he who has painted so beautifully for others the joys and sorrows of perfect love and home, was himself destined to know neither.

The years that followed this separation were years of constant labor for Dickens. His restlessness, perhaps also his lack of happiness, drove him to work without rest. He wrote to a friend: "I am quite confident I should rust, break and die if I spared myself. Much better to die doing." The idea of giving public readings from his stories suggested itself to him, and he was soon engaged in preparation. "I must do *something*," he wrote, "or I shall wear my heart away." That heart his physician had declared out of order, and this effort was destined to wear it away in quite another sense, though for some time Dickens felt no ill effects.

He gave readings, not only in England, but also in Scotland and Ireland, and everywhere he met with enormous success. The first series was hardly over, when he was at work on a new story, and this was scarcely completed when he was planning more readings. The strain of several seasons of such work told on his health. A serious illness followed, and afterward he was troubled with an increasing lameness – the first real warning of the end.

In spite of his weakness, he decided on another trip to America, and here, in 1867, he began a series of readings which left him in a far worse condition. Often at the close of an evening he would become so faint that he would have to lie down. He was unable to sleep and his appetite entirely failed him. Yet his wonderful determination and energy made him able to complete the task. A great banquet of farewell was given to him in New York and he returned to England bearing the admiration and love of the whole American people.

Before leaving England he had promised to give one other course of readings there, and this promise, after a summer's quiet at home, he attempted to fulfil. But he was too ill. He found himself for the first time in his life feeling, as he said, "giddy, jarred, shaken, faint, uncertain of voice and sight, and tread and touch, and dull of spirit." He was obliged to discontinue the course and to rest.

This summer of 1869 – the last summer of his life – was a contented and even a happy one. At home, at first in London, and later in the house on Gad's Hill, surrounded by his children and by the friends he loved best, Dickens lived quietly, working at his last story which his death was to leave for ever unfinished – *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. He attempted one more series of readings, and with their close bade farewell for ever to his English audience.

He was seen in public but a few times more – once at the last dinner party he ever attended, to meet the Prince of Wales and the King of the Belgians, and once when the Queen invited him to Buckingham Palace. Soon after, the end came.

One day as he entered the house at Gad's Hill, he seemed tired and silent. As he sat down to dinner all present noticed that he looked very ill. They begged him to lie down. "Yes, on the ground," he said – these were the last words he ever uttered – and as he spoke he slipped down upon the floor.

He never fully recovered consciousness, and next day, June 9, 1870, Charles Dickens breathed his last. Five days later he was laid to rest in Westminster Abbey, where are buried so many of the greatest of England's dead. For days, thousands came to visit the spot, and rich and poor alike looked upon his grave with tears.

Hallie Erminie Rives.

THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP

Published 1840

<i>Scene:</i>	London and Neighboring Towns
<i>Time:</i>	1840

CHARACTERS

'Little Nell'	An orphan girl
Mr. Trent	Her aged grandfather
Proprietor of "The Old Curiosity Shop"	
"The Stranger"	Mr. Trent's brother
Christopher Nubbles	Little Nell's friend and protector
Known as "Kit"	
Quilp	A dwarf
Mrs. Quilp	His wife
Mrs. Jarley	Proprietress of "Jarley's Waxwork"
Brass	A dishonest lawyer
Sally Brass	His sister
Dick Swiveller	Brass's clerk

THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP

I LITTLE NELL

In a narrow side street in London there once stood a shabby building called The Old Curiosity Shop, because all sorts of curious things were kept for sale there – such as rusty swords, china figures, quaint carvings and old-fashioned furniture.

A little old man named Trent owned the shop, and he looked as old as anything in it. He was thin and bent, with long gray hair and bright blue eyes, and his face was wrinkled and full of care. He had an orphan grandchild who lived with him – a pretty little golden-haired girl whom every one called Little Nell, who kept the shop clean and neat and cooked the meals just as a grown woman would have done. She slept in a back room in a bed so small it might almost have been a fairy's. She lived a very lonely life, but she kept a cheerful face and did not complain.

She had only one protector besides her grandfather, and that was a big, awkward boy named Christopher Nubbles, called Kit for short. He had a very large mouth and a turned-up nose, and when he spoke he had a habit of standing sidewise and twisting his head back over his shoulder. Everything he did seemed funny, and little Nell laughed at him all the while, though she loved him almost as much as she did her grandfather. He ran errands for them, and in the long winter evenings she used to teach him to read and write.

Kit liked to be taught and even liked to be laughed at, and always ended by laughing himself, with his mouth wide open and his eyes shut. He was the best-natured lad in the world, and would have given his life to make little Nell happy.

She was not as happy as she seemed to her grandfather's eyes. There was some mystery about the old man that she could not understand. Almost every night he left her to go to bed all alone in the shop, and went away and did not come back till sunrise, when the door-bell woke her and she let him in.

And, too, he always talked of the great fortune she was to have sometime – if only some mysterious plan he was working on turned out right – the carriages and fine frocks and jewels. But the plan seemed always to go wrong, and the poor old man grew sadder and sadder as he grew more feeble.

Often at night little Nell sat at the upper window, watching for him, crying, and fearing that he might die or lose his mind; she never knew that Kit used to stand in the shadow of an archway opposite and watch to see that no harm came to her, till she vanished and he knew she had gone to bed.

What troubled little Nell most of all was a strange visitor her grandfather used to have. This was a hideous man named Quilp, with the body of a dwarf and the head of a giant. His black eyes were sharp and cunning, his face was always covered with a stubby beard and he had a cruel smile that made him look like a panting dog. He had grizzled, tangled hair, crooked finger nails, and wore a dirty handkerchief tied around his neck, instead of a collar. He used to bring money to her grandfather, and little Nell more than once saw him look at her and at the contents of the shop in a gloating way that made her shiver.

Indeed, everybody who ever met Quilp was afraid of him, and most afraid of all was his wife. He had a habit of drinking scalding tea and of eating boiled eggs, shell and all, that quite terrified her. Besides, he treated the poor woman cruelly. Sometimes, for instance, when she displeased him, he made her sit bolt upright in a chair all night, without moving or going to bed, while he sat smoking and making faces at her.

Little Nell often had to carry messages from her grandfather to the dwarf, and came to know that he had somehow fallen into Quilp's power.

The fact was that the old man had been borrowing money from the dwarf for a long time, and had spent it on the great plan, which he had thought sure to succeed, and he now owed the other much more than all the shop and everything in it was worth.

Quilp had loaned the money because he thought when the wonderful plan succeeded he would make the grandfather give him back very much more than he had loaned him. But when the old man continually wanted to borrow more money and yet paid none back, the dwarf grew suspicious and tried hard to find out what the great plan was. To do this he used to question little Nell and try to persuade her to tell how her grandfather passed the time.

She would never tell him anything, but one day, when she had brought a message to his house, the dwarf hid in a closet and listened while the child told his wife how her grandfather, every night after Quilp had brought him money, went out and did not come home till daybreak, and always sadly then. You see, little Nell was in such trouble that she had to tell somebody about it and ask advice, and the dwarf's wife had always been very kind to her.

When Quilp heard the story he guessed the secret – that her grandfather, hoping to win more for little Nell, had gambled away all the money. He was full of rage and sent word that he would loan no more.

The old man was in great grief at this. His mind had not been strong for a long time, or this foolish and wrong plan would never have misled him, and now, at the thought that he would have no more chance to win the fortune for his grandchild, he fell ill. The child did her best to comfort him, but he told her that if Quilp deserted them they would be no better than beggars.

"Let us be beggars then, and be happy," said little Nell, putting her arms around his neck. "I would rather beg than live as we do now. If you are sorrowful now, let me know it. If you are weaker, let me be your nurse. It breaks my heart to see you so and not to know why. Let us leave this place and sleep in the fields in the country and never think of money again, and I will beg for us both."

Neither had heard the dwarf, who had stolen into the shop behind them. Little Nell shrieked when she saw him, and her grandfather sent her into her own room.

"So that is the way all the money I have loaned you has gone!" sneered Quilp. "Your precious scheme to make a fortune was the gaming-table!"

The old man cried out at this, trembling, that he had done it all for little Nell; that he had never staked a single penny for himself, or without praying that it might win for her good. He told how he had begun gambling months before, knowing he must soon die, hoping thus to leave her enough to live on; how, after losing all his own savings, he had borrowed and lost all that, too. And he begged the dwarf to loan him a little more so that he might tempt luck again.

Any one but Quilp would have pitied the poor old man, but not he. He refused, and thinking of a lie which would make the other yet more miserable, he told him as he left that it was Kit who had told him where the money was going.

The first Kit knew of this was that night when little Nell came to tell him her grandfather was very ill, and that he raved continually against Kit so that he must never come to the shop again. Kit was stupefied at this, but there was no help for it, so little Nell went sorrowfully back alone.

The Old Curiosity Shop belonged to the dwarf now and he at once moved into the parlor. He took little Nell's own bed for himself and she had to sleep on a pallet on the floor up stairs. She was busy nursing her grandfather, for he was very ill for some time, and she scarcely ever came down because she was so afraid of the dwarf.

Quilp was waiting for the old man to die, thinking that then he would have the shop for his own, and meantime he did a hundred disagreeable things, such as filling the house with strong tobacco smoke from a big pipe he used all the time and driving every one away who came to ask how the sick

man was. He even drove off Kit when he came below the window to beg little Nell to come and bring her grandfather to live at his own mother's house.

The old man would certainly have died if little Nell had not nursed him so faithfully, all alone, till he grew better and at length was able to sit up.

But it was a bitter thing to live as they did, and one day little Nell begged her grandfather to come away with her – to wander anywhere in the world, only so it was under God's sky and away from every one that pursued them – and he agreed.

So that night they dressed and stole down stairs very quietly in order not to waken the dwarf who was snoring frightfully in the back room, and went through the shop to the front door. The bolts were rusty and creaked loudly, and, worst of all, they found the key was not in the lock. Little Nell had to take off her shoes and creep into the back room to get it out of the dwarf's pocket.

She was terribly frightened at the sight of Quilp, for he was having a bad dream, and was hanging so far out of bed that he was almost standing on his head; his ugly mouth was wide open, and his breath came in a sort of growl. But she found the key at last, and they unlocked the door and came safely into the dark street.

The old man did not know where to go, but little Nell took his hand and led him gently away.

II THE WANDERERS

It was a bright June morning. They walked through many city streets, then through more scattered suburbs, and at last came to the open country. That night they slept at a cottage where the people were kind to them, and all the next day they walked on and on.

At sunset they stopped to rest in a churchyard, where two men were sitting patching a Punch-and-Judy show booth, while the figures of Punch, the doctor, the executioner and the devil were lying on the grass waiting to be mended.

The men were mending the dolls very badly, so little Nell took a needle and sewed them all neatly. They were delighted at this, and took the pair to the inn where they were to show the Punch-and-Judy, and there they found them a place to sleep in an empty loft.

The next day the wanderers went on with the showmen. Whenever they came to a village, the booth was pitched and the show took place, and they never left a town without a pack of ragged children at their heels. The Punch-and-Judy show grew tiresome, but the company seemed better than none. Little Nell was weary with walking, but she tried to hide it from her grandfather.

The inn at which they lodged the next night was full of showmen with trained dogs, conjurers and others, hurrying to a town where there was to be a fair with horse-races, to which the Punch-and-Judy partners were bound, and little Nell began to distrust their company.

To tell the truth, the others believed the child and the old man were running away from their friends, and that a reward might be obtained for giving them up. The way in which the men watched them frightened little Nell, and when they reached the scene of the fair she had determined to escape.

It was the second day of the races before a chance came, and then, while the showmen's backs were turned, they slipped away in the crowd to the open fields again.

These alarms and the exposure had begun to affect the old man. He seemed to understand that he was not wholly in his right mind. He was full of the fear that he would be taken from her and chained in a dungeon, and little Nell had great trouble in cheering him.

At evening when they were both worn out, they came to a village where stood a cottage with the sign SCHOOL in big letters in its window. The pale old schoolmaster sat smoking in the garden. He was a sad, solitary man, and loved little Nell when he first saw her, because she was like a favorite pupil he once had. He made them sleep in the school-room that night, and he begged them to stay longer

next day, but little Nell was anxious to get as far as possible from London and from the dwarf, who she was all the time in fear might find them. So they bade the schoolmaster good-by and walked on.

Another day's journey left them so exhausted they could scarcely keep moving. They had almost reached another village when they came to a tiny painted house on wheels with horses to draw it. At its door sat a stout lady wearing a large bonnet, taking tea with a big drum for a table.

The lady, as it happened, had seen them at the fair, and had wondered then to see them in company with a Punch-and-Judy show. Noticing how tired they were, she gave them tea and then took them into the wagon with her to help them on their way.

The inside of the wagon was like a cozy room. It had a little bed in one end, and a kitchen in the other, and had two curtained windows. As the wheels rattled on the old man fell asleep, and the stout lady made little Nell sit by her and talk. In the wagon was a big canvas sign that read:

JARLEY'S WAXWORK

ONE HUNDRED FIGURES

THE FULL SIZE OF LIFE

NOW EXHIBITED WITHIN

"I am Mrs. Jarley," the woman said, "and my waxwork is gone to the next town, where it is to be exhibited." She thought little Nell and her grandfather were in the show business, too, and when she found they were not, that they had no home, and did not even know where they were going, she held up her hands in astonishment.

But it was easy to see that they were not ordinary beggars, and she was kind-hearted and wanted to help them. So, after much thought, she asked little Nell if they would take a situation with her. She explained that the child's duty would be to point out the wax figures to the visitors and tell their names, while her grandfather could help dust them.

They accepted this offer very thankfully (for almost all the money they had brought was now spent), and when the wagon arrived at the place of exhibition and the waxwork had been set up, Mrs. Jarley put a long wand in little Nell's hand and taught her to point out each figure and describe it:

"This, ladies and gentlemen," little Nell learned to say, "is Jasper Packlemerton, who murdered fourteen wives by tickling the soles of their feet," or, "this is Queen Elizabeth's maid of honor, who died from pricking her finger while sewing on Sunday."

She was quick to learn and soon became a great favorite with the visitors. Mrs. Jarley was kind, and but for the fact that her grandfather's mind failed more and more every day little Nell would have been quite happy.

One evening the two walked into the country beyond the town and a sudden thunder-storm arose. They took shelter at an inn on the highroad, and while they waited there some rough men began a noisy game of cards behind a screen.

The talk and the chink of the money roused the old man's failing senses. He imagined himself still gambling to win the old fortune for little Nell. He made her give him the money she had earned from the waxwork, joined the gamblers and in a few hours had lost it all. His insanity had made him forget the presence of the child he so loved, and when the game was done it was too late to leave the inn that night.

Little Nell had now only one piece of money left, a gold piece sewed in her dress. This she had to change into silver and to pay a part for their lodging. When she was abed she could not sleep for fear of the wicked men she had seen gambling.

When at last she fell asleep she waked suddenly to see a figure in the room. She was too frightened to scream, and lay very still and trembled. The robber searched her clothing, took the rest of the money and went out. She was dreadfully afraid he might return to harm her. If she could get to her grandfather, she thought, she would be safe.

She opened the door softly, and in the moonlight saw the figure entering the old man's room. She caught a view of his face and then she knew that the figure was her own grandfather, and that, crazed by the gambling scene, he himself had robbed her!

All that night little Nell lay and cried. She knew, to be sure, that her grandfather was not a thief and that he did not know what he was doing when he stole her money; but she knew, too, that if people found out he was crazy they would take him away from her and shut him up where she could not be with him, and of this she could not bear to think.

The next day, when they had gone back to the waxwork, she was in even greater terror for fear he should rob Mrs. Jarley, their benefactress. So, to lessen the chance of this, each day she gave him every penny she earned. This, she soon knew, he gambled away, for often he was out all night, and even seemed to shun her; so she was sad and took many long walks alone through the fields.

One evening it happened that she passed a meadow where, beside a hedge, a fire was burning, with three men sitting and lying around it. She was in the shadow and they did not see her. One, she saw, was her grandfather, and the others were the gamblers with whom he had played at the inn on the night of the storm.

Little Nell crept close. They were tempting the poor daft old man to steal the money from Mrs. Jarley's strong box, and while she listened he consented.

She ran home in terrible grief. She tried to sleep, but could not. At last she could bear it no longer. She went to the old man's room and wakened him.

"I have had a dreadful dream," she told him, "a dream of an old gray-haired man like you robbing people of their gold. I can not stay! I can not leave you here. We must go."

To the crazy old man she seemed an angel. He dressed himself in fear, and with her little basket on her arm she led him out of the house, on, away from the town, into the country, far away from Mrs. Jarley, who had been so kind to them, and from the new home they had found.

They climbed a high hill just as the sun was rising, and far behind them little Nell caught a last view of the village. As she looked back and thought how contented they had been there at first, and of the further wandering that lay before them now, poor little Nell burst into tears.

But at length she bravely dried her tears lest they sadden her grandfather, and they went on. When the sun grew warm they fell asleep on the bank of the canal, and when they awoke in the afternoon some rough canal men took them aboard their dirty craft as far as the next town.

The men were well-meaning enough and meant the travelers no harm, but after a while they began to drink and quarreled and fought among themselves, and little Nell sat all night, wet with the rain, and sang to them to quiet them.

The place to which they finally came was a town of wretched workmen who toiled all day in iron furnaces for little wages, and were almost as miserable and hungry as the wanderers themselves. No one gave them anything, and they lived for three days with only two penny loaves to eat (for all their money was now gone), and slept at night in the ashes of some poor laborer's hut.

The fourth day they dragged themselves into the country again. Little Nell's shoes were worn through to the bare ground, her feet were bleeding, her limbs ached and she was deadly faint. They begged, but no one would help them.

The child's strength was almost gone, when they met a traveler who was reading in a book as he walked along. He looked up as they came near. It was the kind old schoolmaster in whose school they

had slept before they met Mrs. Jarley in her house on wheels. When she saw him little Nell shrieked and fell unconscious at his feet.

The schoolmaster carried her to an inn near by, where she was put to bed and doctored under his care, for she was very weak. She told him all the story of their wanderings, and he heard it with astonishment and wonder to find such a great heart and heroism in a child.

He had been appointed schoolmaster, he told her, in another town, to which he was then on his way, and he declared they should go with him and he would care for them. He hired a farm wagon to carry little Nell, and he and the old man walked beside it, and so they came to their new place.

Next door to the school-house was the church. A very old woman, nearly a hundred years old, had lived in a tenement near by to keep the keys and open the church for services. The old woman was now dead, and the schoolmaster went to the clergyman and asked that her place be given to the grandfather, so that he and little Nell could live in the house next to his own dwelling.

The child sewed the tattered curtains and mended the worn carpet and the schoolmaster trimmed the long grass and trained the ivy before the door. In the evening a bright fire was kindled and they all three took their supper together, and then the schoolmaster said a prayer before they went gladly to bed.

They were very happy in this new home. The old man lost the insane thirst for gaming and the mad look faded from his eyes, but poor little Nell grew paler and more fragile every day. The long days of hunger and nights of exposure had sowed the seeds of illness.

The whole village soon grew to love her. Many came to visit her and the schoolmaster read to her each day, so that she was content even when she could no longer walk abroad as she had always done.

As she lay looking out at the peaceful churchyard, where so many whose lives were over lay sleeping, it seemed to her that the painful past was only an ugly vision. And at night she often dreamed of the roof opening and a column of bright faces, rising far into the sky, looking down on her asleep. The quiet spot outside remained the same, save that the air was full of music and a sound of angels' wings.

So the weeks passed into winter, and though she came soon to know that she was not long for earth, she thought of death without regret and of heaven with joy.

III THE SEARCH

It is not to be supposed, of course, that the flight of little Nell and her grandfather from the Old Curiosity Shop was not noticed. All the time, while they were wandering about homeless and wretched, more than one went searching everywhere for them without success.

One of these was Quilp, the ugly dwarf. He had loaned the grandfather more money than the shop would bring, and he made up his mind now that the old man had a secret hoard somewhere, which might be his if he could find it. He soon learned that if Kit knew anything about it he would not tell, so he and his lawyer (a sleek, oily rascal named Brass) made many plans for finding them. But for a long time Quilp could get no trace.

Another who tried to find them was a curious lodger who roomed in Brass's house. He seemed to have plenty of money but was very eccentric. Nobody knew even his name and so they called him The Stranger.

He kept in his room a big box-like trunk, in which was a silver stove that he used to cook his meals. The stove had a lot of little openings. In one he would put an egg, in another some coffee, in another a piece of meat and in the fourth some water. Then he would light a lamp that stood under it, and in five minutes the egg would be cooked, the coffee boiled and the meat done – all ready to eat.

He was the queerest sort of boarder! The strangest habit he had was this: He seemed to be very fond of Punch-and-Judy shows, and whenever he heard one on the street he would run out without his hat, make the showmen perform in front of the house and then invite them to his rooms, where he would question them for a long time. This habit used to puzzle both Brass and Quilp, the dwarf, and they never could guess why he did it.

The truth was, the mysterious Stranger was a long-missing brother of little Nell's grandfather. A misunderstanding had come between them many years before when both were young men. The younger had become a traveler in many countries and had never seen his brother since. But he dreamed often of the days when they had been children and at last he forgot the thing that had driven them apart. He had come back now to England, a rich man, to find the other had vanished with little Nell, his grandchild. He had soon learned the story of their misfortune and how the fear of Quilp had driven them away. After much inquiry he had discovered they had been seen with a Punch-and-Judy show and now he was trying to find the showmen. And finally, in this way, he did find the very same pair the wanderers had met!

He learned from them all they could tell him – that the child and the old man had disappeared at the fair, and that since then (so they had heard) a pair resembling them had been seen with the Jarley waxwork exhibition. The Stranger easily discovered where Mrs. Jarley was, and determined to set out to her at once. But he remembered that his brother, little Nell's grandfather, could not be expected to know him after all the years he had been gone, and as for little Nell herself, she had never seen him, and he was afraid if they heard a strange man had come for them they would take fright and run away again. So he tried to find some one they had loved to go with him to show that he intended only kindness.

He was not long in hearing of Kit, who had found a situation as footman, and he gained his employer's leave to take the lad with him. When Kit learned that The Stranger had discovered where little Nell was he was overjoyed; but he knew he himself was not the one to go, because before they disappeared she had told him he must never come to the Old Curiosity Shop again and that her grandfather blamed him as the cause of their misfortune. But Kit promised the Stranger that his mother should go in his place, and went to tell her at once.

Kit found his mother was at church, but the matter was so urgent that he went straight to the pew and brought her out, which caused even the minister to pause in his sermon and made all the congregation look surprised. Kit took her home, packed her box and bundled her into the coach which the Stranger brought, and away they went to find the wanderers.

Now Quilp had all along suspected that Kit and his mother knew something of their whereabouts, and he had made it his business to watch either one or the other. The dwarf, in fact, was in the church when Kit came for his mother, and he followed. When she left with the Stranger he took another coach and pursued, feeling certain he was on the right track.

But they were all too late. When the Stranger found Mrs. Jarley next day she could only tell him that little Nell and her grandfather had disappeared again, and he had to return with Kit's mother, much discouraged, to London.

The part Kit had played in this made the dwarf hate him, if possible, more than ever, and he agreed to pay Brass, his rascally lawyer, to ruin the lad by making a false charge of theft against him.

One day, when Kit came to Brass's house to see the Stranger, who lodged up stairs, the lawyer cunningly hid a five-pound note in the lad's hat and as soon as he left ran after him, seized him in the street and accused him of taking it from his office desk.

Kit was arrested, and the note, of course, was found on his person. The evidence seemed so strong that the poor fellow was quickly tried, found guilty and sentenced to prison for a long time.

All might have gone wrong but for a little maid-servant of Brass's, whom the lawyer had starved and mistreated for years. He used to keep her locked in the moldy cellar and gave her so little to eat

that she would creep into the office at night (she had found a key that fitted the door) to pick up the bits of bread that Dick Swiveller, Brass's clerk, had left when he ate his luncheon.

One night, while this little drudge was prowling about above stairs, she overheard Brass telling his sister, Sally (who was his partner and colder and crueller and more wicked even than he was), the trick he was going to play. After Kit was arrested she ran away from Brass's house and told her story to Kit's employer, who had all along believed in his innocence.

Brass in the meantime had gone to Quilp to get his reward for this evil deed, but the terrible dwarf now only laughed at him and pretended to remember nothing at all about the bargain.

This so enraged the lawyer that, when he was brought face to face with the little maid's evidence and found that he himself was caught, he made full confession of the part Quilp had played, and told the whole story to revenge himself on the dwarf.

Officers were sent at once to arrest Quilp at a dingy dwelling on a wharf in the river where he often slept with the object of terrifying his wife by his long absences. Here he had set up the battered figurehead of a wrecked ship and, imagining that its face resembled that of Kit whom he so fiendishly hated, he used to amuse himself by screwing gimlets into its breast, sticking forks into its eyes and beating it with a poker.

A few minutes before the officers arrived the dwarf received warning from Sally Brass, but he had no time to get away. When he heard the knocking on the gates and knew that the law he had so long defied was at last upon him, he fell into a panic and did not know which way to turn. He tried to cover the light of the fire, but only succeeded in upsetting the stove. Then he ran out of the house on to the dock in the darkness.

It was a black, foggy night, and he could not see a foot before him. He thought he could climb over the wall to the next wharf and so escape, but in his fright he missed his way and fell over the edge of the platform into the swift-flowing river.

He screamed in terror, but the water filled his throat and the knocking on the gates was so loud that no one heard him. The water swept him close to a ship, but its keel was smooth and slippery and there was nothing to cling to. He had been so wicked that he was afraid to die and he fought desperately, but the rapid tide smothered his cries and dragged him down – to death.

The waves threw his drowned body finally on the edge of a dismal swamp, in the red glare of the blazing ruin which the overturned stove that night made of the building in which he had framed his evil plots. And this was the end of Quilp, the dwarf.

As for Kit, he found himself all at once not only free, but a hero. His employer came to the jail to tell him that he was free and that everyone knew now of his innocence, and they made him eat and drink, and everybody shook hands with him. Then he was put into a coach and they drove straight home, where his mother was waiting to kiss him and cry over him with joy.

And last, but by no means least of all his new good fortune, he learned then that the Stranger who had been searching so long for little Nell and her grandfather had found certainly where they were and that Kit was to go with him and his employer at once and bring them back again to London.

They started the next day, and on the long road they talked much of little Nell and the strange chance by which the lost had been found. A gentleman who lived in the village to which they were now bound, who had himself been kind to the child and to the old man whom the new schoolmaster had brought with him, had written of the pair to Kit's employer, and the letter had been the lost clue, so long sought, to their hiding-place.

Snow began falling as the daylight wore away, and the coach wheels made no noise. All night and all the next day, they rode, and it was midnight before they came to the town where the two wanderers had taken refuge.

The village was very still, and the air was frosty and cold. Only a single light was to be seen, coming from a window beside a church. This was the house which the Stranger knew sheltered those

they sought, but both he and Kit felt a strange fear as they saw that light – the only one in the whole village.

They left the driver to take the horses to the inn and approached the building afoot. They went quite close and looked through the window. In the room an old man bent low over a fire crooning to himself, and Kit, seeing that it was his old master, opened the door, ran in, knelt by him and caught his hand.

The old grandfather did not recognize Kit. He believed him a spirit, as he thought many spirits had talked to him that day. He was much changed, and it seemed as if some great blow or grief had crazed him. He had a dress of little Nell's in his hand and smoothed and patted it as he muttered that she had been asleep – asleep a long time now, and was marble cold and would not wake.

"Her little homely dress!" he said. "And see here – these shoes – how worn they are! You see where her feet went bare upon the ground. They told me afterward that the stones had cut and bruised them. She never told me that. No, no, God bless her! And I have remembered since how she walked behind me, that I might not see how lame she was, but yet she had my hand in hers and seemed to lead me still."

So he muttered on, and the cheeks of the others were wet with tears, for they had begun to understand the sad truth.

Kit could not speak, but the Stranger did: "You speak of little Nell," he said. "Do you remember, long ago, another child, too, who loved you when you were a child yourself? Say that you had a brother, long forgotten, who now at last came back to you to be what you were then to him. Give me but one word, dear brother, to say you know me, and life will still be precious to us again."

The old man shook his head, for grief had killed all memory. Pushing them aside, he went into the next room, calling little Nell's name softly as he went.

They followed. Kit sobbed as they entered, for there on her bed little Nell lay dead.

Dear, gentle, patient, noble Nell! The schoolmaster told them of her last hours. They had read and talked to her a while, and then she had sunk peacefully to sleep. They knew by what she said in her dreams that they were of her wanderings, and of the people who had helped them, for often she whispered, "God bless you." And she spoke once of beautiful music that was in the air.

Opening her eyes at last, she begged that they would kiss her once again. That done, she turned to the old man with a lovely smile on her face – such, he said, as he had never seen – and threw both arms about his neck. They did not know at first that she was dead.

They laid little Nell to rest the next day in the churchyard where she had so often sat. The old man never realized quite what had happened. He thought she would come back to him some day, and that then they would go away together. He used to sit beside her grave and watch for her each afternoon.

One day he did not return at the usual hour and they went to look for him. He was lying dead upon the stone.

They buried him beside the child he had loved, and there in the churchyard where they had often talked together they both lie side by side.

None of those who had known little Nell ever forgot her story. After the death of the old man, his brother, the Stranger who had sought them so long, traveled in the footsteps of the two wanderers to search out and reward all who had been kind to them – Mrs. Jarley of the waxwork, the Punch-and-Judy showmen, he found them all. Even the rough canal boatmen were not forgotten.

Kit's story got abroad and he found himself with hosts of friends, who gave him a good position and secured his mother from want. So that his greatest misfortune turned out, after all, to be his greatest good.

The little maid whose evidence cleared Kit of the terrible charge against him lived to marry Dick Swiveller, the clerk of Brass, the lawyer, while meek Mrs. Quilp, after her husband's drowning, married a clever young man and lived a pleasant life on the dead dwarf's money.

The fate of the others, whose wickedness has been a part of this story, was not so pleasant. The two gamblers who tempted the old man to steal Mrs. Jarley's strong box were detected in another crime and sent to jail. Brass became a convict, condemned to walk on a treadmill, chained to a long line of other evil men, and dragging wherever he went a heavy iron ball. After he was released he joined his wicked sister, Sally, and the two sank lower and lower till they might even be seen on dark nights on narrow London streets searching in refuse boxes for bits of food, like twin spirits of wickedness and crime.

When Kit had grown to be a man and had children of his own, he often took them to the spot where stood what had been The Old Curiosity Shop and told them over and over the story of little Nell. And he always ended by saying that if they were good like her they might go some time where they could see and know her as he had done when he was a boy.

THE ADVENTURES OF OLIVER TWIST

Published 1837

<i>Scene:</i>	London and Neighboring Towns
<i>Time:</i>	1825 to 1837

CHARACTERS

Oliver Twist	A foundling
Mr. Bumble	The master of the poorhouse
Mrs. Bumble	The mistress of the poorhouse
Monks	Oliver's half-brother and his enemy
Mr. Brownlow	Oliver's benefactor
Mrs. Maylie	Oliver's benefactress
Miss Rose	Mrs. Maylie's adopted niece
In reality Oliver's aunt	
Fagin	A Jew
Leader of a gang of thieves in London	
Bill Sikes	A burglar
Nancy	Sikes's partner in crime
"The Artful Dodger"	A youthful pickpocket

OLIVER TWIST

I

HOW OLIVER CAME TO LONDON AND WHAT HE FOUND THERE

Oliver Twist was the son of a poor lady who was found lying in the street one day in an English village, almost starved and very ill. She had walked a long way, for her shoes were worn to pieces, but where she came from or where she was going nobody knew. As she had no money, she was taken to the poorhouse, where she died the next day without even telling her name, leaving behind her only a gold locket, which was around her neck, and a baby.

The locket fell into the hands of the mistress of the poorhouse, who was named Mrs. Bumble. It contained the dead mother's wedding-ring, and, as Mrs. Bumble was a dishonest woman, she hid both locket and ring, intending sometime to sell them.

The baby was left, with no one to care for it, to grow up at the poorhouse with the other wretched orphan children, who wore calico dresses all alike and had little to eat and many whippings.

Mr. Bumble, the master of the poorhouse, was a pompous, self-important bully who browbeat every one weaker than himself and scolded and cuffed the paupers to his heart's content. It was he who named the baby "Oliver Twist." He used to name all the babies as they came along, by the letters of the alphabet. The one before Oliver was named Swubble; then came Oliver with a T; the next would be Unwin, the next Vilkins, and so on down to Z. Then he would begin the alphabet all over again.

Little Oliver, the baby, grew without any idea of who he was. When he was a year old he was sent to the poor-farm where an old woman took care of orphan children for a very small sum apiece each week. This money, which was paid by the town, was hardly enough to buy them food, but nevertheless the old woman took good care to save the bigger share for herself.

He lived there till he was a pale, handsome boy of nine years, and then he was taken to the workhouse, where, with many other boys of his own age or older, he had to work hard all day picking oakum.

The boys had nothing but thin gruel for their meals, with an onion twice a week and half a roll on Sundays. They ate in a great stone hall, in one end of which stood the big copper of gruel which Mr. Bumble ladled out. Each boy got only one helping, and the bowls never needed washing, because, when the meal was through, there was not a drop of gruel left in them. After each meal they all sat staring at the copper and sucking their fingers, but nobody dared ask for more.

One day they felt so terribly hungry that one of the biggest boys said unless he got another helping of gruel he was afraid he would have to eat the boy who slept next him. The little boys all believed this and cast lots to see who should ask for more. It fell to Oliver Twist.

So that night after supper, though he was dreadfully frightened, Oliver rose and went up to the end of the room and said to Mr. Bumble, "Please, sir, I want some more."

Mr. Bumble was so surprised he turned pale. "What!" he gasped.

"Please, sir," said Oliver again, "I want some more."

Mr. Bumble picked up the ladle and struck Oliver on the head with it; then he pounced on him and shook him. When he was tired shaking him, he dragged him away and shut him up in a dark room, where he stayed a whole week, and was only taken out once a day to be whipped. Then, to make an example of him, a notice was pasted on the gate of the workhouse offering a reward to anybody who would take poor Oliver away and do what he liked with him.

The first one who came by was a middle-aged chimney-sweep, who wanted a boy to climb up the insides of chimneys and clean out the soot. This was a dangerous thing to do, for sometimes the boys who did it got burned or choked with the smoke, and when Oliver found what they were going to do with him and looked at the man's cruel face, he burst out crying, so that a kind-hearted magistrate interfered and would not let the chimney-sweep have him.

Mr. Bumble finally gave him to the village undertaker, and there he had to mind the shop and do all the chores. He slept under the counter among piles of empty coffins. The undertaker's wife beat him often, and whenever he was not at work he had to attend funerals, which was by no means amusing, so that he found life no better than it had been at the workhouse. The undertaker had an apprentice, too, who kicked him whenever he came near.

All this wretchedness Oliver bore as well as he could, without complaining. But one day the cowardly apprentice began to say unkind things of Oliver's dead mother, and this he could not stand. His anger made him stronger even than his tormentor, though the latter was more than a head taller and much older, and he sprang upon him, caught him by the throat and, after shaking him till his teeth rattled, knocked him flat on the floor.

The big bully screamed for help and cried that he was being murdered, so that the undertaker and his wife came running in. Oliver told them what the apprentice had said, but that made no difference. The undertaker sent for Mr. Bumble, and between them they flogged him till he could hardly stand and sent him to bed without anything to eat.

Till then Oliver had not shed a tear, but now, alone in the dark, he felt so miserable that he cried for a long time.

There was nothing to do, he thought at last, but to run away. So he tied up his few belongings in a handkerchief and, waiting till the first beam of sunrise, he unbarred the door and ran away as fast as he could, through the town into the country.

He hid behind hedges whenever he saw anybody, for fear the undertaker or Mr. Bumble were after him, and before long he found a road that he knew led to London. Oliver had never seen a city, but he thought where there were so many people there would certainly be something for a boy to do to earn his living, so he trudged stoutly on and before nightfall had walked twenty miles. He begged a crust of bread at a cottage and slept under a hayrick. The next day and night he was so very hungry and cold that when morning came again he could scarcely walk at all.

He sat down finally at the edge of a village, wondering whether he was going to die, when he saw coming along the queerest-looking boy. He was about Oliver's age, with a snub nose, bow legs and little sharp eyes. His face was very dirty and he wore a man's coat, whose ragged tails came to his heels.

The boy saw Oliver's plight and asked him what the matter was, mixing his words with such a lot of strange slang that Oliver could hardly understand him. When Oliver explained that he had been walking a number of days and was very hungry, the other took him to a shop near by, bought him some bread and ham, and watched him eat it with great attention, asking him many questions – whether he had any money or knew any place in London where he could stay. Oliver answered no.

"Don't fret about that," said the other. "I know a 'spectable old genelman as lives there wot'll give you lodgings for nothing if I interduce you."

Oliver did not think his new host looked very respectable himself, but he thought it might be as well for him to know the old gentleman, particularly as he had nowhere else to go. So they set off.

It was night when they reached London, and it was so big and crowded that Oliver kept close to his guide. He noticed, however, that the streets they passed through were narrow and dirty and the houses old and hideously filthy. The people, too, seemed low and wretched.

He was just wondering if he had not better run away when the boy pushed open a door, drew Oliver inside, up a broken stairway and into a back room.

Here, frying some sausages over a stove, was a shriveled old Jew in a greasy flannel gown. He was very ugly and his matted red hair hung down over his villainous face. In a corner stood a clothes-horse on which hung hundreds of silk handkerchiefs, and four or five boys, as dirty and oddly dressed as the one who had brought Oliver, sat about a table smoking pipes like rough, grown men.

Oliver's guide introduced him to the Jew, whose name was Fagin, and the boys crowded around him, putting their hands into his pockets, which he thought a queer joke. Fagin grinned horribly as he shook hands with him and told him he was very welcome, which did not tend to reassure him, and then the sausages were passed around. The Jew gave Oliver a glass of something to drink, and as soon as he drank it he became very sleepy and knew nothing more till the following morning.

The next few days Oliver saw much to wonder at. When he woke up, Fagin was sorting over a great box full of watches, which he hid away when he saw Oliver was looking. Every day the boy who had brought him there, whom they called "the Artful Dodger," came in and gave the Jew some pocketbooks and handkerchiefs. Oliver thought he must have made the pocketbooks, only they did not look new, and some seemed to have money in them. He noticed, too, that whenever the Artful Dodger came home empty-handed Fagin seemed angry and cuffed and kicked him and sent him to bed supperless; but when he brought home a good number everything was very jolly.

Whenever there was nothing else to do, the old Jew played a very curious game with the boys. This was the way they played it:

Fagin would put a snuff-box in one pocket, a watch in another and a handkerchief in a third; then he would walk about the room just as any old gentleman would walk about the street, stopping now and then, as if he were looking into shop-windows. All the time the boys followed him closely, sometimes treading on his toes or stumbling against him, and when this happened one of them would slip a hand into his pocket and take out either the watch or the snuff-box or the handkerchief. If the Jew felt a hand in his pocket he cried out which it was, and then the game began all over again. At last Fagin made Oliver try if he could take something out of his pocket without his knowing it, and when Oliver succeeded he patted his head and seemed well pleased.

But Oliver grew very tired of the dirty room and the same game. He longed for the open air and begged to be allowed to go out; so one day the Jew put him in charge of the Artful Dodger and they went upon the streets, Oliver wondering where in the world he was going to be taught to make pocketbooks.

He was on the point of asking, when the Artful Dodger signed to him to be silent, and slunk behind an old gentleman who was reading a book in front of a book-stall. You can imagine Oliver's horror when he saw him thrust his hand into the old gentleman's pocket, draw out a silk handkerchief and run off at full speed.

In an instant Oliver understood the mystery of the handkerchiefs, the watches, the purses and the curious game he had learned at Fagin's. He knew then that the Artful Dodger was a pickpocket. He was so frightened that for a minute he lost his wits and ran off as fast as he could go.

Just then the old gentleman found his handkerchief was gone and, seeing Oliver running away, shouted "Stop thief!" which frightened the poor boy even more and made him run all the faster. Everybody joined the chase, and before he had gone far a burly fellow overtook Oliver and knocked him down.

A policeman was at hand and he was dragged, more dead than alive, to the police court, followed by the angry old gentleman.

The moment the latter saw the boy's face, however, he could not believe it was the face of a thief, and refused to appear against him, but the magistrate was in a bad humor and was about to sentence Oliver to prison, anyway, when the owner of the book-stall came hurrying in. He had seen the theft and knew Oliver was not guilty, so the magistrate was obliged to let him go.

But the terror and the blow he had received had been too much for Oliver. He fell down in a faint, and the old gentleman, whose name was Mr. Brownlow, overcome with pity, put him into a

coach and drove him to his own home, determined, if the boy had no parents, to adopt him as his own son.

II OLIVER'S ADVENTURES

While Oliver was resting in such good hands, very strange things were occurring in the house of Fagin. When the Artful Dodger told him of the arrest the Jew was full of anger. He had intended to make a clever thief of Oliver and compel him to bring him many stolen things; now he had not only failed in this and lost the boy's help, but he was also afraid that Oliver would tell all about the wicked practices he had seen and show the officers where he had lived. This he thought was likely to happen at any time, unless he could get the boy into his power again.

Something had occurred, too, meantime, that made Fagin almost crazy with rage at losing him. It was this: A wicked man – so wicked that he was afraid of thunder – who went by the name of Monks, had come to him and told him he would pay a large sum of money if he could succeed in making Oliver a thief and so ruin his reputation and his good name.

It was plain enough that for some reason the man hated Oliver, but, cunning as Fagin was, he would never have guessed why. For Monks was really Oliver's older half-brother!

A little while before this story began, Oliver's father had been obliged to go on a trip to a foreign country, where he died very suddenly. But before he died he made a will, in which he left all his fortune to be divided between the baby Oliver and his mother. He left only a small sum to his older son, because he knew that he was wicked, and did not deserve any. The will declared Oliver should have the money only on condition that he never stain his name with any act of meanness, dishonor, cowardice or wrong. If he did do this, then half the money was to go to the older son. The dying man also wrote a letter to Oliver's mother, telling her that he had made the will and that he was dying; but the older son, who was with him when he died, found the letter and destroyed it.

So Oliver's poor mother, knowing nothing of all this, when his father did not come back, thought at last that he had deserted her, and in her shame stole away from her home, poor and ill-clad, to die finally in the poorhouse.

The older brother, who had taken the name of Monks, hunted and hunted for them, because he hated Oliver on account of their father's will, and wanted to do him all the harm he could. He discovered that they had been taken into the poorhouse, and went there, but this was after Oliver had run away. He found, however, to his satisfaction, that the boy knew nothing about his parentage or his real name, and Monks made up his mind to prevent his ever learning.

There was only one person who could have told Oliver, and that one was Mrs. Bumble. She knew through the locket she had kept, which had belonged to Oliver's mother and which contained the dead woman's wedding-ring with her name engraved inside it. When Mrs. Bumble heard that a man named Monks was searching for news of Oliver, she thought it a capital chance to make some money. She went, therefore, to Monks's house and sold the locket and ring to him. These, Monks thought, were the only proofs in the world that could ever show Oliver who he was, and to make it impossible for him ever to see them, he dropped them through a trap-door in his house down into the river, where they could never be found.

But Monks did not give up searching for Oliver, and at last, on the very day that Oliver was arrested, he saw him coming from Fagin's house with the Artful Dodger.

From his wonderful resemblance to their dead father, he guessed at once that Oliver was the half-brother whose very name he hated. Knowing the other now to be in London, Monks was afraid that by some accident he might yet find out what a fortune had been willed him. If he could only make Oliver dishonest, Monks reflected, half their father's fortune would become his own. With this thought in mind he had gone to Fagin and had made him his offer of money to make the boy a thief.

Fagin, of course, had agreed, and now, to find his victim was out of his power made the Jew grind his teeth with rage.

All these things made Fagin determined to gain possession of Oliver again, and to do this he got the help of two others – a young woman named Nancy and her lover, a brutal robber named Bill Sikes. These two discovered that Oliver was at Mr. Brownlow's house, and lay in wait to kidnap him if he ever came out.

The chance they waited for occurred before many days. Mr. Brownlow sent Oliver to take some money to the very book-stall in front of which the Artful Dodger had stolen the handkerchief, and Oliver went without dreaming of any danger.

Suddenly a young woman in a cap and apron screamed out behind him very loudly: "Oh, my dear little brother!" and threw her arms tight around him. "Oh, my gracious, I've found him!" she cried. "Come home directly, you naughty boy! For shame, to treat your poor mother so!"

Oliver struggled, but to no purpose. Nancy (for it was she) told the people that crowded about them that it was her little brother, who had run away from home and nearly broken his mother's heart, and that she wanted to take him back.

Oliver insisted that he didn't know her at all and hadn't any sister, but just then Bill Sikes appeared (as he had planned) and said the young woman was telling the truth and that Oliver was a little rascal and a liar. The people were all convinced at this, and when Sikes struck Oliver and seized him by the collar they said, "Serves him right!" And so Oliver found himself dragged away from Mr. Brownlow to the filthy house where lived Fagin.

The wily old Jew was overjoyed to see them. He smiled such a fiendish smile that Oliver screamed for help as loud as he could, and at this Fagin picked up a great jagged club to beat him with.

Now, Nancy had been very wicked all her life, but in spite of this there was a little good in her. She had already begun to repent having helped steal the boy, and now his plight touched her heart. She seized the club and threw it into the fire, and so saved him the beating for that time.

For many days Oliver was kept a prisoner. He was free to wander about the mildewed old house, but every outer door was locked and every window had closed iron shutters. All the light came in through small round holes at the top, which made the rooms gloomy and full of shadows. Spiderwebs were over all the walls, and often the mice would go scampering across the floor. There was only one window to look out of, and that was in a back garret, but it had iron bars and looked out only on to the housetops.

He found only one book to read: this was a history of the lives of great criminals and was full of stories of secret thefts and murders. For the old Jew, having tortured his mind by loneliness and gloom, had left the volume in his way, hoping it would instil into his soul the poison that would blacken it for ever.

But Oliver's blood ran cold as he read, and he pushed the book away in horror, and, falling on his knees, prayed that he might be spared from such deeds and rescued from that terrible place.

He was still on his knees when Nancy came in and told him he must get ready at once to go on a journey with Bill Sikes. She had been crying and her face was bruised as though she had been beaten. Oliver saw she was very sorry for him, and, indeed, she told him she would help him if she could, but that there was no use trying to escape now, because they were watched all the time, and if he got away Sikes would certainly kill her.

Nancy took him to the house where Sikes lived, and the next morning the latter started out, making Oliver go with him. Sikes had a loaded pistol in his overcoat pocket, and he showed this to Oliver and told him if he spoke to anybody on the road or tried to get away he would shoot him with it.

They walked a long way out of London, once or twice riding in carts which were going in their direction. Whenever this happened Sikes kept his hand in the pocket where the pistol was, so that Oliver was afraid to appeal for help. Late at night they came to an old deserted mansion in the country,

and in the basement of this, where a fire had been kindled, they joined two other men whom Oliver had seen more than once in Fagin's house in London.

The journey had been cold and long and Oliver was very hungry, but he could scarcely eat the supper that was given him for fear of what they intended to do with him in that lonely spot. He was so tired, however, that he finally went fast asleep and knew nothing more till two o'clock in the morning, when Sikes woke him roughly and bade him come with them.

It was foggy and cold and dark outside. Sikes and one of the others each took one of Oliver's hands, and so they walked a quarter of a mile to where was a fine house with a high wall around it. They made him climb over the wall with them, and, pulling him along, crept toward the house.

It was not till now that Oliver knew what they intended – that they were going to rob the house and make him help them, so that he, too, would be a burglar. His limbs began to tremble and he sank to his knees, begging them to have mercy and to let him run away and die in the fields rather than to make him steal. But Sikes drew his pistol with a frightful oath and dragged him on.

In the back of the house was a window, which was not fastened, because it was much too small for a man to get through. But Oliver was so little that he could do it easily. With the pistol in his hand, Sikes put Oliver through the window, gave him a lantern and bade him go and unlock the front door for them.

Oliver had made up his mind that as soon as he got beyond the range of Sikes's pistol he would scream and wake everybody in the house, but just then there was a sound from inside, and Sikes called to him to come back.

Suddenly there was a loud shout from the top of the stairs – a flash – a report – and Oliver staggered back with a terrible pain in his arm and with everything swimming before his eyes.

He heard cries and the loud ringing of a bell and felt Sikes drag him backward through the window. He felt himself being carried along rapidly, and then a cold sensation crept over his heart and he knew no more.

III

HOW EVERYTHING TURNED OUT RIGHT FOR OLIVER IN THE END

After a long, long time Oliver came to himself. The morning was breaking. He tried to rise and found that his arm was wounded and his clothes wet with blood.

He was so dizzy he could hardly stand, but it was freezing cold, and he knew if he stayed there he must die. So he staggered on till he came to a road where, a little way off, he saw a house. There, he thought, he might get help. But when he came closer he saw that it was the very house the men had tried to rob that night. Fear came over him then, and he would have run away, but he was too weak.

He had just strength left to push open the gate, totter across the lawn and knock at the door; then he sank in a faint on the steps.

In the house lived a lady named Mrs. Maylie, just as kind-hearted as was Mr. Brownlow who had rescued Oliver at the police station, and with her lived a beautiful girl whom she had adopted, named Rose. The servants, when they came to the door, made sure Oliver was one of the robbers, and sent at once for policemen to take him in charge; but Miss Rose, the moment she saw what a good face the boy had and how little he looked like a thief, made them put him to bed and send at once for the doctor.

When the good doctor arrived and saw Oliver, who was still unconscious, he thought Miss Rose was right, and when the boy had come to himself and told them how he had suffered, he was certain of it. They were both sorry the policemen had been sent for, because the doctor was sure they would not believe Oliver's story, especially as he had been arrested once before. He would have taken him away, but he was too sick to be moved.

So when the officers came the doctor told them that the boy had been accidentally shot and had come to the house for assistance, when the servants had mistaken him for one of the burglars. This was not exactly the truth, but it seemed necessary to deceive the policemen if Oliver was to be saved. Of course, the servant that had fired the pistol was not able to swear that he had hit anybody at all, so the officers had to go away without arresting anybody.

After this Oliver was ill for a long time, but he was carefully nursed, especially by Miss Rose, who grew as fond of him as if she had been his sister. As soon as he grew better she wrote a letter for him to Mr. Brownlow, the old gentleman who had rescued him from the police station, but to Oliver's grief she found that he had gone to the West Indies.

Thus the time passed till Oliver was quite well, and then Miss Rose (first carefully instructing the servant who went with them not to lose sight of him for a moment for fear of his old enemies) took him with her for a visit to London.

Meantime there had been a dreadful scene in Fagin's house when Bill Sikes got back to London and told the old Jew that the robbery had failed and that Oliver was lost again. They were more afraid than ever that they would be caught and sent to prison. Fagin swore at Sikes, and Monks cursed Fagin, and between them all they determined that Oliver must either be captured or killed.

While they were plotting afresh Nancy, who had been feeling sorrier and sorrier for what she had done, overheard them, and so found out that Monks was Oliver's half-brother and why he so hated him; and she made up her mind to save the boy from his last and greatest danger.

So one evening, when she was alone with him, she gave Sikes some laudanum in a glass of liquor, and when he was asleep she slipped away, found Miss Rose and told her all about it. Bad as Nancy was, however, she was not willing to betray Fagin or Bill Sikes, so she only told her of Monks.

Miss Rose was greatly astonished, for she had never heard of him before, but she pitied Nancy because she had tried to help Oliver, and, of course, she herself wanted very much to help him discover who he was and who his parents had been. She thanked Nancy and begged her to come to see her again. Nancy was afraid to do this, because Bill Sikes watched her so closely, but she promised that on the next Sunday at midnight she would be on a certain bridge where Miss Rose might see her. Then Nancy hurried back before Sikes should wake up.

Miss Rose was in trouble now, for there was no one in London with her then who could help her. But the same afternoon, whom should Oliver see at a distance, walking into his house, but Mr. Brownlow. He came back in great joy to tell Miss Rose, and she concluded that the old gentleman would be the very one to aid her. She took Oliver to the house, and, sure enough, there was the boy's old benefactor.

Very glad, indeed, he was to hear what she told him. For the old gentleman, when Oliver had disappeared with the money he had given him to take to the bookseller, had been reluctant to think the boy he had befriended was, after all, a liar and a thief. He had advertised for him, but the only result had been a call from Mr. Bumble, who told him terrible tales of Oliver's wickedness. To find now, after all this time, that Oliver had not run away, and that Mr. Bumble's tales were lying ones, was a joyful surprise to Mr. Brownlow.

After he had heard the whole, and when Oliver had gone into the garden, Miss Rose told him of Nancy's visit and of the man Monks who still pursued the boy to do him harm.

It was fortunate that she had come to Mr. Brownlow, for, as it happened, he knew a great deal about Monks and his evil life. Years before the old gentleman himself had been a friend of Oliver's father. He knew all about his death in a foreign country, and had watched his older son's career of shame with sorrow. The very trip he had made to the West Indies had acquainted him with a crime Monks had committed there, from which he had fled to England. But, while Mr. Brownlow knew of the curious will Oliver's father had made, what had become of the baby to which the latter referred he had never known. Now, from the story Miss Rose told him, he was assured that Oliver was, indeed, this baby half-brother of Monks.

But it was one thing to know this and quite another to enable Oliver to prove it. The old gentleman was quick to see that they must get possession of Monks and frighten him into confessing the fact – whose only proofs had been lost when he threw the locket and ring into the river. Mr. Brownlow, for this reason, agreed with Miss Rose that they should both meet Nancy on the bridge on the coming Sunday to hear all she had been able to find out.

They said not a word of this to Oliver, and when Sunday night came they drove to the spot where Nancy had promised to meet them. She had kept her word. She was there before them, and Mr. Brownlow heard her story over again from her own lips.

But some one else was there, too, hidden behind a pillar, where he could hear every word she said, and this listener was a spy of Fagin's.

Nancy had cried so much and acted so strangely that the old Jew had grown suspicious and had set some one to watch her. And who do you suppose this spy was? No other than the cowardly apprentice who had bullied Oliver until he ran away from the undertaker's house. The apprentice had finally run away, too, had come to London and begun a wicked life. He was too big a coward to rob any one but little children who had been sent to the shop to buy something, so Fagin had given him spying work to do, and in this, being by nature a sneak, he proved very successful.

The spy lay hid till he had heard all Nancy said; then he slipped out and ran as fast as his legs would carry him back to Fagin. The latter sent for Bill Sikes, knowing him to be the most brutal and bloodthirsty ruffian of all, and told him what Nancy had done.

The knowledge, as the Jew expected, turned Sikes into a demon. He rushed to where Nancy lived. She had returned and was asleep on her couch, but she woke as he entered, and saw by his face that he meant to murder her. Through all her evil career Nancy had been true to Sikes and would not have betrayed him. But he would not listen now, though she pleaded with him pitifully to come with her to some foreign country (as Miss Rose had begged her to do), where they might both lead better lives. Fury had made him mad. As she clung to his knees, he seized a heavy club and struck her down.

So poor Nancy died, with only time for a feeble prayer to God for mercy.

Of all bad deeds that Sikes had ever done, that was the worst. The sun shone through the window and lit the room where Nancy lay. He tried to shut it out, but he could not. He grew suddenly afraid. Horror came upon him. He crept out of the room, locked the door behind him, and plunged into the crowded street.

He walked for miles and miles, here and there, without purpose. Whichever way he went he could not rid himself of that horror. When night came he crawled into a disused shed, but he could not sleep. Whenever he closed his eyes he seemed to see Nancy's eyes looking at him. He got up and wandered on again, desperately lonely for some one to talk to.

He heard a man telling another about the murder as he read the account in a newspaper, and knew that he must hide. He hastened then to a den he knew in a house beside the river, dirty and dismal and the haunt of thieves. Some of his old companions were there, but even they shrank from him.

He had been seen to enter the place, however, and in a few minutes the street was full of people, all yelling for his capture. He barred the doors and windows, but they began to break down the shutters with sledge-hammers.

He ran to the roof with a rope, thinking to let himself down on the side next the river and so escape. Here he fastened one end of the rope to the chimney, and, making a loop in the other end, put it over his head.

Just at that instant he imagined he saw Nancy's eyes again looking at him. He staggered back in terror, missed his footing, and fell over the edge of the roof. He had not had time to draw the noose down under his arms, so that it slipped up around his neck, and there he hung, dead, with a broken neck.

Meanwhile Mr. Brownlow had acted very quickly, so that Monks had got no warning. He had had men watching for the latter and now, having found out all he wanted to know, he had him seized in the street, put into a coach and driven to his office, where he brought him face to face with Oliver.

The old gentleman told Monks he could do one of two things: either he could confess before witnesses the whole infamous plot he had framed against Oliver, and so restore to him his rights and name, or else he could refuse, in which case he would at once be arrested and sent to prison. Seeing that Mr. Brownlow knew all about the part he had played, Monks, to save himself, made a full confession – how he had planned to keep his half-brother from his inheritance. And he also confessed what no one there had guessed: that Miss Rose, who had been adopted in her infancy, was really the sister of Oliver's dead mother – his aunt, indeed. This was the happiest of all Oliver's surprises that day, for he had learned to love Miss Rose very dearly.

Monks thus bought his own freedom, and cheap enough he probably thought it, for before he had finished his story, word came that Fagin the Jew had been captured by the police and was to be tried without delay for his life.

Oliver no longer had anything to fear, and came into possession of his true name and his fortune. Mr. Brownlow adopted him as his own son, and moved to the village where Oliver had been cared for in the family of Miss Rose, and where they all lived happily ever afterward.

The company of thieves was broken up with Fagin's arrest. Fagin himself was found guilty, and died on the gallows shrieking with fear. Monks sailed for America, where he was soon detected in crime and died in prison.

The wicked apprentice, who had been the real cause of poor Nancy's murder, was so frightened at the fate of Fagin that he reformed and became a spy for the police, and by his aid the Artful Dodger, who continued to pick pockets, soon found himself in jail.

As for Mr. and Mrs. Bumble, they, of course, lost their positions, and sank from bad to worse till they finally became paupers and were sent to the very same poorhouse where they had tortured little Oliver Twist.

BARNABY RUDGE

Published 1841

<i>Scene:</i>	London and the Country
<i>Time:</i>	1775 to 1780

CHARACTERS

Barnaby Rudge	A half-witted boy
Rudge	His father
A murderer	
Mrs. Rudge	His mother
Geoffrey Haredale	A country gentleman
Emma Haredale	His niece
Sir John Chester	An enemy of Haredale's
Edward Chester	His son
In love with Emma Haredale	
Varden	A locksmith
Dolly Varden	His daughter
A friend of Emma Haredale's	
Simon Tappertit	Varden's apprentice
Joe Willet	The son of an innkeeper
In love with Dolly Varden	
"Maypole Hugh"	A giant hostler
In reality, the son of Sir John Chester	
Lord George Gordon	A dehded nobleman
Gashford	His secretary
Dennis	A hangman
"Grip"	Barnaby's tame raven

BARNABY RUDGE

I

BARNABY'S BOYHOOD

Many years ago a gentleman named Haredale lived at a house called The Warren, near London. His wife was dead and he had one baby daughter, Emma.

One morning he was found murdered in his house, which had been robbed. Both the gardener and the steward, Rudge, were missing, and some people thought one had done it and some thought the other. But some days later a disfigured body was found in a pond on the grounds which, by its clothes and a watch and ring, was recognized as that of Rudge, the missing steward. Then, of course, every one believed the gardener had murdered both, and the police searched for him a long time, but he was never found.

On the same day this cruel murder was discovered, a baby was born to Mrs. Rudge, the wife of the steward – a pretty boy, though with a birth-mark on the wrist as red as blood, and a strange look of terror on the baby face. He was named Barnaby, and his mother loved him all the more because it was soon seen he was weak-minded, and could never be in his right senses. She herself, poor woman! seemed never able to forget the horror of that day.

Geoffrey Haredale, the brother and heir of the murdered man, took up his abode at The Warren and adopted the little Emma, his niece, as his own daughter. He was kind to Mrs. Rudge also. Not only did he let her live rent-free in a house he owned, but he did many a kind deed secretly for her half-witted son as he grew older.

Barnaby Rudge grew up a strange, weird creature. His hair was long and red and hung in disorder about his shoulders. His skin was pale, his eyes bright and his clothes he trimmed most curiously with bits of gaudy lace and bright ribbons and glass toys. He wore a cluster of broken peacock feathers in his hat and girded at his side was the broken hilt of an old sword without a blade. But strangest of all was a little wicker basket he always carried on his back. When he set this down and opened it, there hopped out a tame raven who would cock its head on one side and say hoarsely and very knowingly:

"Hello! Hello! Hello! What's the matter here? Keep up your spirits. Never say die. I'm a devil, I'm a devil, I'm a devil! Hurrah!"

Then it would whistle or make a noise like the drawing of a cork out of a bottle, repeated a great many times, and flap its wings against its sides as if it were bursting with laughter. This raven was named Grip and was Barnaby's constant companion. The neighbors used to say it was one hundred and twenty years old (for ravens live a very long time), and some said it knew altogether too much to be only a bird. But Barnaby would hear nothing said against it, and, next to his mother, loved it better than anything in the world.

Barnaby knew that folks called him half-witted, but he cared little for that. Sometimes he would laugh at what they said.

"Why," he would say, "how much better to be silly than as wise as you! *You* don't see shadowy people like those that live in sleep – not you. Nor eyes in the knotted panes of glass, nor swift ghosts when it blows hard, nor do you hear voices in the air, nor see men stalking in the sky – not you. I lead a merrier life than you with all your cleverness. *You're* the dull men. *We're* the bright ones. Ha, ha! I'll not change with you, not I!"

Haredale, who had been so kind to Barnaby's mother, was a burly, stern man who had few acquaintances and lived much alone. When first he came to live at The Warren an enemy of his,

Sir John Chester, had circulated suspicious rumors about him, so that some came half to believe he himself had had something to do with his brother's murder.

These whispers so affected Haredale that as time passed he grew gloomy and morose and lived in seclusion, thinking only how he could solve the mystery of the murder, and loving more and more the little Emma as she grew into a beautiful girl. He neglected The Warren so that the property looked quite desolate and ruined, and at length superstitious people in the neighborhood came to mutter that it was haunted by the ghost of Rudge, the steward, whose body had been found in the pond.

The old bell-ringer of the near-by church even said he had seen this ghost once, when he went, late one night, to wind the church clock. But of course others, who knew there were no such things as ghosts, only smiled at these stories.

Sir John Chester, who so hated Haredale, was just as smooth and smiling and elegant as the other was rough. Haredale had been Sir John's drudge and scapegoat at school and the latter had always despised him. And as the years went by Sir John came to hate him.

His own son Edward had fallen in love with Emma, Haredale's niece, and she loved him in return. Sir John had been all his life utterly selfish and without conscience. He had little money and was much in debt and wanted his son to marry an heiress, so that he himself could continue his life of pleasure. Edward, however, gave his father to understand that he would never give up his love for Emma. Sir John believed that if Haredale chose, he could make his niece dislike Edward, and because he did not, Sir John hated Haredale the more bitterly.

Emma had a close friend named Dolly Varden, the daughter of a locksmith. Dolly was a pretty, dimpled, roguish little flirt, as rosy and sparkling and fresh as an apple, and she had a great many lovers.

One of these was her father's apprentice, who lived in the same house. His name was Simon Tappertit – a conceited, bragging, empty-headed young man with a great opinion of his own good looks. When he looked at his thin legs, which he admired exceedingly, he could not see how it was that Dolly could help worshipping him.

Tappertit had ambitions of his own and thought himself a great man who was kept down by a tyrannical master, though the good-natured locksmith was the kindest man in London. He had formed a society of apprentices whose toast was, "Death to all masters, life to all apprentices, and love to all fair damsels!" He was their leader. He had made them all keys to fit their masters' doors, and at night, when they were supposed to be asleep in bed, they would steal out to meet in a dirty cellar owned by an old blind man, where they kept a skull and cross-bones and signed high-sounding oaths with a pen dipped in blood, and did other silly things. The object of the society was to hurt, annoy, wrong and pick quarrels with such of their masters as happened not to please them. With such cheap fooleries Tappertit had convinced himself that he was fit to be a great general.

But with all his smirking, Dolly Varden only laughed at him. To tell the truth, she was very fond of young Joe Willet, whose father kept the Maypole Inn, very near The Warren where her friend Emma Haredale lived. Joe was a good, brave fellow, and was head over ears in love with Dolly, but Dolly was a coquette, and never let him know how much she cared for him. Joe was not contented at home, for his father seemed to think him a child and did not treat him according to his years, so that but for leaving Dolly Varden he would long ago have run away to seek his fortune.

Both Joe and Dolly knew how Edward Chester loved Emma Haredale, and they used sometimes to carry notes from one to the other, since the hatred of Sir John for Emma's uncle often prevented the lovers from meeting.

Sir John found this out, and bribed a hostler at the Maypole Inn to spy for him and prevent, if he could, these letters passing. The hostler was an uncouth, drunken giant that people called Maypole Hugh, as strong as an ox, and cruel and cunning. Hugh watched carefully, and from time to time would go to Sir John's house in London and report what he had seen.

II

THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER AND WHO HE WAS

About this time residents in the neighborhood of The Warren and the Maypole Inn began to tell tales of a mysterious man who roamed about the country-side.

He was seen often and by many persons, always at night, skulking in the shadow or riding furiously on a horse. He was fierce and haggard and discourteous to travelers, wore a slouch hat which he never took off, and generally kept the lower part of his face muffled in a handkerchief. He always went alone. Some said he slept in church-yards, others that he never slept at all, and still others that he was a wicked man who had sold his soul to the Evil One.

One night he rested at the Maypole Inn, and a little while after he had gone, Varden the locksmith, Dolly's father, as he drove home, found Edward Chester lying in the road, having been wounded and robbed of his money. Barnaby Rudge had seen the attack and was bending over him. He had been too frightened to give aid, but from his description Varden knew the robber was the stranger who had stopped at the inn.

The honest locksmith took Edward into his chaise, drove him to Barnaby's house, which was near by, and left him in care of Mrs. Rudge, where a doctor soon dressed the wound, which was not serious.

Next day Mr. Varden came to see how the wounded man was. As he sat talking with Mrs. Rudge a tapping came at the window. She went to the door. The locksmith heard her cry out, and sprang forward to find standing there, to his astonishment, the robber of the night before. He grasped at him, but the woman threw herself before him, clasped his arm and besought him, for her life's sake, not to pursue the man.

The locksmith had known Barnaby's mother all his life, but so strange was her action now (especially since she refused to answer any question, begging him to ask her nothing) that he almost wondered if she herself could be in league with a crime-doer. Her apparent agony touched him, however, and, raising no alarm, he went home in great puzzle of mind.

He would have been far more disturbed if he had known the whole truth. For the mysterious stranger he had seen, who by night had haunted the neighborhood, was none other than Mrs. Rudge's husband, Barnaby's father, the steward who everybody believed had been murdered with his master, and whose body had been found in the pond.

Rudge himself had committed that wicked deed. He had killed both master and gardener, and to cover the crime had put his own clothes, his watch and ring on the latter's body and sunk it in the pond. When, on the night of the murder, he told his wife what he had done, she had shrunk fearfully from him, declaring that, although being his wife she would not give him up to justice, yet she would never own him or shelter him. He had fled then with the money he had stolen, and that night, while she lay sick with horror, Barnaby had been born with his poor crazed brain, the look of terror in his baby face and the birth-mark of blood on his wrist.

For many years the guilty wretch had wandered the earth, but he could not escape the knowledge of his deed. And at last his conscience had driven him back to the scene of his crime, friendless, penniless, fearful of the sunlight, slinking by night like a ghost about the house in which he had murdered his master, and hounding his miserable wife for money with which to buy food and drink. The poor woman had kept her terrible secret, giving him every coin she could save, striving so that Barnaby, unhappily born as he was, should never know the shame of having his father suffer death on the gallows. When Rudge had come to her house that day he had thought her alone, and she had saved him from capture only by begging the locksmith to stay his hand.

After his hairbreadth escape from Varden, Rudge hid himself in a narrow street. When the next dawn came, as he searched for some dark den in which he might lie sheltered till another night,

he saw Simon Tappertit issuing with his noisy apprentice crew from the cellar in which they held their meetings. He entered its door, made friends with the villainous blind man who kept it and there established his headquarters.

Once more, one night after the wounded Edward had been taken to his own home, Rudge hunted out his trembling wife and demanded money, threatening to bring harm to Barnaby if she refused him, and she gave him all she had.

But this time dread of him made her desperate. When morning came she went to Haredale and told him that she and her son could no longer live on his bounty. The next day, with Barnaby, who carried on his back his beloved raven, Grip, she left the house afoot, telling no one where they were going lest her husband find her out, and pushed far into the country to find a home in some obscure village. And though Rudge, the murderer, and the blind man (who was much more crafty and cunning than many men with eyesight) searched for them everywhere, it was a long time before they found any trace.

Perhaps Joe and Dolly Varden missed poor cheery Barnaby more than did any one else. But several events occurred soon after this that gave them other things to think of.

Maypole Hugh, the savage hostler, had continued his spying work for Edward's father, and Sir John determined it was high time to break off his son's attachment for Emma Haredale.

One day Dolly was carrying a letter from Emma at The Warren to Edward, and as she passed through the fields, Hugh attacked her, throwing his arms around her and pretending to make coarse love to her. She was dreadfully frightened and screamed as loud as she could. Joe, as it happened, was walking within sound of her voice, and ran like the wind to her aid.

In another moment Hugh had leaped the hedge and disappeared and Dolly was sobbing in her rescuer's arms. She was afraid to tell Joe who had frightened her, for fear the hostler would take his revenge by harming him, so she only said she had been attacked by a man whom she had never seen.

In her scare she had forgotten all about the letter she had carried, and now she discovered it was gone. It was nowhere to be found.

This, of course, was because Hugh had stolen it. It was to get the letter that he had frightened her, and he was soon on his way to carry it to Sir John. Dolly did not guess this. She wrote to Emma telling her of the mishap, and this note Joe, to whom she intrusted it, knowing no reason to distrust the hostler, gave to Hugh to deliver. So Sir John got both missives in the end.

Emma Haredale, not understanding why Edward returned no answer to her letter, was hurt, and thought him cold. Sir John, seizing his opportunity, told her one day (pretending sorrow while he did so) that his son, naturally fickle, had fallen in love with some one else, to whom he was soon to be married.

Emma, not dreaming the father of the man she loved could be such a false liar, believed him, and when Edward wrote her, speaking of his poverty and telling her he was going to leave England to try to better his prospects, she thought his manly letter only an excuse to part from her.

Proud, though heartbroken, she did not answer it, and so, thanks to his father's selfish scheming, Edward sailed away to the West Indies, hopeless and despairing.

Another left England at the same time whose going meant far more to Dolly Varden. This was Joe. His father, the innkeeper, had been restraining him more and more, until his treatment had become the jest of the country-side, and Joe had chafed to the point of rebellion at the gibes that continually met him. One day, at the jeer of an old enemy of his, his wrath boiled over. He sprang upon him and thrashed him soundly in the inn before the assembled guests. Then, knowing his father would never forgive him, he went to his own room and barricaded the door. That night Joe let himself down from his window and before daylight was in London.

He went first to the locksmith's house to tell Dolly he had run away and that he loved her, but Dolly being a flirt, only laughed. To tell the truth, she was so very fond of Joe that she didn't like to show him how sorry she was. So the poor fellow went away thinking she cared very little (though as

soon as he was out of sight she nearly cried her eyes out), and enlisted as a soldier. That same night Joe started from London to fight in the war in America. And it was a long time before either he or Edward Chester was heard of again.

III BARNABY GETS INTO TROUBLE

Five years went by, and Edward Chester remained in the West Indies and prospered. For five years Joe Willet fought in the war in America. And for five years Barnaby Rudge with his mother and Grip, the raven, lived unmolested in their little village and were happy.

At the end of the five years three things happened at about the same time: Edward started back to England from the West Indies with a fair fortune in his pocket; Joe was sent back from America with one arm gone, and Barnaby and his mother left their village home again, secretly, and set out for London, hoping to lose themselves in its hugeness. The wily blind man, the companion now of Rudge, the murderer, had found them out!

He came one day and made Mrs. Rudge give him all the money she had been able to lay by in these five years except a single gold piece. He told her he would return in a week for more and that if she had not got it then, he would entice Barnaby away to join in the evil life of his father. So she left the village the very next morning, and she and Barnaby trudged afoot all the weary way to the great city.

Though they knew nothing of it, there was great excitement in London. Lord George Gordon, a well-meaning but crack-brained nobleman, led astray by flatterers till he believed he had a God-given mission to drive all Catholics out of England, had, sometime before this, begun to hold meetings and to stir up the people with the cry of "No Popery!"

He declared that the religion of the country was in danger of being overthrown and that the Pope of Rome was plotting to make his religion supreme. And this idea he talked wherever he went. He was a slender, sallow man who dressed in severe black and wore his hair smoothly combed, and his bright, restless eyes and his look of uncertainty made it clear that he was no man to lead, but was rather himself the misled dupe of others.

One of these schemers who ruled him was his secretary, Gashford, a man of ugly face, with beetling brows and great flapped ears. He had been a thief and a scoundrel all his life, and had wormed himself into Lord George's confidence by flattery. He easily fooled his master into believing that the rabble who flocked to hear him, and the idle loungers who yelled themselves hoarse at what he said, were crowds of honest citizens who believed as he did, and were ready to follow his leadership. Gashford had added to his followers even Dennis, the hangman of London, and the foolish nobleman not knowing the ruffian's true calling, thought him a man to trust.

For many weeks this banding together of all the lawless ragamuffins of London had gone on, till one had only to shout "No Popery!" on any street corner to draw together a crowd bent on mischief. Respectable people grew afraid and kept to their houses, and criminals and street vagabonds grew bolder and bolder.

As may be guessed, Simon Tappertit, the one-time apprentice of Varden the locksmith, rejoiced at this excitement as at a chance to show his talent for leadership. His apprentice society had now become the "United Bulldogs," and he himself, helping the schemes of Gashford, strutted about among the crowds with an air of vast importance.

Sir John Chester watched the trouble gathering with glee. His old enemy Haredale, he knew, was a Catholic, and as this movement, if it grew bold enough, meant harm to all of that religion, he hoped for its success. He was too cunning to aid it publicly, but he sent Maypole Hugh, who was still his spy, to Gashford; and the brawny hostler, who savagely longed for fighting and plunder, joined with the secretary and with Dennis the hangman to help increase the tumult.

A day had been set on which Lord George Gordon had vowed he would march to Parliament at the head of forty thousand men to demand the passing of a law to forbid all Catholics to enter the country. This vast rabble-army gathered in a great field, under the command of these sorry leaders – the misguided lord, Dennis the hangman, Tappertit, Hugh the hostler, Gashford the secretary, and other rowdies picked for their boldness and daring. The mob thus formed covered an immense space. All wore blue cockades in their hats or carried blue flags, and from them went up a hoarse roar of oaths, shouts and ribald songs.

Such was the scene on which Barnaby and his mother came as they walked into London. They knew nothing of its cause or its meaning. Mrs. Rudge saw its rough disorder with terror, but the confusion, the waving flags and the shouts had got into Barnaby's brain. To him this seemed a splendid host marching to some noble cause. He watched with sparkling eyes, longing to join it.

Suddenly Maypole Hugh rushed from the crowd with a shout of recognition, and, thrusting a flagstaff into Barnaby's hands, drew him into the ranks.

His mother shrieked and ran forward, but she was thrown to the ground; Barnaby was whirled away into the moving mass and she saw him no more.

Barnaby enjoyed that hour of march with all his soul, and the louder the howling the more he was thrilled. The crowd surrounded the houses of Parliament and fought the police. At length a regiment of mounted soldiers charged them. Barnaby thought this brave work and held his ground valiantly, even knocking one soldier off his horse with the flagstaff, until others dragged him to a place of safety.

That night the drunken mob, grown bolder, tore down, pillaged and burned all the Catholic chapels within their reach, and, with Hugh and Dennis the hangman, poor crazed Barnaby ran at its head, covered with dirt, his garments torn to rags, singing and leaping with delight. He thought he was the most courageous of all, that he was helping to destroy the country's enemies, and that when the fighting was over he and his mother would be rich and she would always be proud that he was so noble and so brave.

The golden cups, the candlesticks and the money they stole from the burned chapels Hugh and the hangman buried under a heap of straw in the tavern which they had made their headquarters, and left Barnaby to guard the place. He counted this a sacred trust, and when soldiers came to arrest all in the building he refused to fly in time. He even fought them single-handed and felled two before he was knocked down with the butt of a musket and handcuffed.

While he had been resisting, Grip had been busily plucking away the straw from the hidden plunder; now his hoarse croak showed them the hoard and they unearthed it all. At length, closing ranks around Barnaby, they marched him off to a barracks, from which he was taken to Newgate Prison, where a blacksmith put irons on his arms and legs, and he and the raven were locked in a cell.

While Barnaby was guarding the tavern room, Hugh, egged on by his master, Sir John Chester, had proposed the burning of The Warren, where Haredale still lived with Emma, his niece, and Dolly Varden, now her companion.

The crowd agreed gladly, since Haredale was a Catholic and that same day in London had given evidence to the police against the rioters who had burned the chapels. They rushed away, marched hastily across the fields, tied the old host of the Maypole Inn to his chair, drank all the liquor they could find and then rushed to The Warren. There they put the servants to flight, burst in the doors, staved the wine-casks in the cellar, split up the costly furniture with hammers and axes and set fire to the building, so that it soon burned to the ground.

Haredale, in London, saw the red glare in the sky and rode post-haste to the place, but found on his arrival only ruins and ashes. He believed that Emma and Dolly had had time to escape to safety; but while he was searching the grounds for some sign of them he saw in the starlight a man hiding in a broken turret.

He drew his sword and advanced. As the figure moved into the light he rushed forward, flung himself upon him and clutched his throat.

"Villain!" he cried in a terrible voice, "dead and buried as all men supposed, at last, at last I have you! You, Rudge, slayer of my brother and of his faithful servant! Double murderer and monster, I arrest you in the name of God!"

Bound and fettered in his carriage, Haredale took Rudge back to London and had him locked in Newgate Prison.

IV BARNABY PROSPERS AT LAST

Haredale searched vainly next day for Emma and Dolly Varden. He could not believe they had lost their lives in the burning building, yet he was filled with anxiety because of their disappearance. Could he have known what had happened he would have been even more fearful.

Simon Tappertit had seen his chance at last to win for himself the lovely Dolly, who had scorned him when he was an apprentice of the locksmith. He had bribed Hugh and the hangman to aid him. While the mob was occupied at the front of the house this precious pair had entered from the back, seized the two girls and put them into a coach.

This they guarded at a distance till the burning was done; then, with Tappertit on the box and surrounded by his ruffians, the coach was driven into the city.

Emma had spent the day in the fear that her uncle had been killed with other Catholics in London, and at this new and surpassing fright she had fainted. Dolly, though no less concerned, had fought her captors bravely, though vainly. Often in that long ride she wished that Joe, her vanished lover, were there to rescue her as he had rescued her once from Maypole Hugh.

She had determined when she reached the London streets to scream as loudly as she could for help; but before they came to the city Hugh climbed into the carriage and sat between them, threatening to choke either if she made a noise.

In this wise they were driven to a miserable cottage, and in the dirty apartment to which they were taken Dolly threw herself upon the unconscious Emma and wept pitifully, unmindful of the jeers of Hugh and of the hangman.

When Tappertit entered the room suddenly, Dolly, not knowing his part in the plot, screamed with joy and threw herself into his arms crying:

"I knew it! My dear father's at the door! Heaven bless you for rescuing us!"

But she saw in an instant her mistake, when the ridiculous braggart laid his hand on his breast and told her, now that he no longer was an apprentice but a famous leader of the people, he had chosen to be her husband. With this announcement he left them.

Meanwhile Mrs. Rudge, day and night, had searched everywhere for Barnaby. In one of the riots she was injured, and was taken to a hospital, and while she lay there she heard with agony that her son had been so active in the disturbances that a price had been put by the Government on his head.

But in his present trouble Barnaby had unexpectedly found an old friend. Joe Willet, just returned with one empty sleeve from his five years of soldiering in America, had been with the soldiers in the barracks when Barnaby had been brought there on his way to prison. He soon discovered who the boy's rioting companions had been and took them word of his plight, for he knew it meant death to Barnaby unless he escaped.

Maypole Hugh, Tappertit and the hangman were all itching for more disorder, and this news gave them an excuse. They went out at once and gathered the mob together to attack Newgate Prison and to release all the prisoners. They themselves led the procession. The house of Varden, Dolly's father, was on their way; they stopped there, and, in spite of the lusty fight he made, carried the locksmith with them to compel him to open the prison gates with his tools.

This he refused to do, and they would doubtless have killed him, but for two men who dragged him from their clutches in the nick of time. These two men were the one-armed Joe and Edward Chester, just returned from the West Indies, whom the former had met by accident that day. They took the locksmith to his home, while the raging crowd brought furniture from neighboring houses and built a bonfire of it to burn down the great prison gate.

From this same mob Haredale himself had a narrow escape. He was staying at a house near by, which, belonging to a Catholic, was attacked. He tried to escape across the roof, but was recognized from the street by the giant Hugh. The cellar luckily had a back door opening into a lane, and with the assistance of Joe and Edward, who had hastened to the rear to aid him, he escaped that way.

Maypole Hugh, during this terrible time while the mob was burning houses everywhere and the soldiers firing on the rioters in every quarter of London, seemed to bear a charmed life. He rode a great brewer's horse and carried an ax, and wherever the fight was thickest there he was to be found.

Never had such a sight been seen in London as when the prison gate fell and the crowd rushed from cell to cell, smashing the iron doors to release the prisoners, some of whom, being under sentence of death, had never expected to be free again. Rudge, the murderer, knowing nothing of what the uproar meant, suffered tortures, thinking in his guilty fear that the hordes were howling for his life. When he was finally released and in the open street he found Barnaby beside him.

They broke off their fetters, and that night took refuge in a shed in a field. Next day Rudge sent Barnaby to try to find the blind man, his cunning partner, in whose wits he trusted to help them get away. Barnaby brought the blind man, and brought also Hugh, whom he found wounded in the street, but in so doing he was seen by Dennis, the hangman.

This villainous sneak, knowing that the daring of the rioters had reached its limit, and that they must soon be scattered and captured, and thinking to buy pardon for himself by a piece of treachery, without delay brought soldiers, who surrounded the shed. The blind man, attempting to run away, was shot dead, and the others, Rudge, Hugh and poor, innocent Barnaby, were captured.

Then, well satisfied with his work, Dennis set out for the house where Simon Tappertit had confined Emma Haredale and Dolly Varden. The hangman wanted them well out of the way, so they could not testify that he had helped to burn The Warren and to kidnap them. He had thought of a plan to have them taken to a boat in the river and conveyed where their friends would never find them, and to carry them off he chose Gashford, Lord George Gordon's secretary, who was the more willing as he had fallen in love with Emma's beauty.

But this wicked plan was never to be carried out. The very hour that Gashford came on this pitiless errand, while he roughly bade Emma prepare to depart, the doors flew open. Men poured in, led by Edward Chester, who knocked Gashford down; and in another moment Emma was clasped in her uncle's embrace, and Dolly, laughing and crying at the same time, fell into the arms of her father. Their place of concealment had been discovered a few hours before, and the three men had lost no time in planning their capture.

Dennis the hangman, in spite of his previous treachery, caught in the trap, was taken straightway to jail, and Simon Tappertit, wounded and raging, watched Dolly's departure from the floor, where he lay with his wonderful legs, the pride and glory of his life, broken and crushed into shapeless ugliness. The famous riots were over. Lord George Gordon was a prisoner, hundreds were being arrested, and London was again growing quiet.

Mrs. Rudge, poor mother! at last found Barnaby where he lay chained in his cell and condemned to death. Day after day she never left him, while Varden, the locksmith, and Haredale worked hard for his release. They carried his case even to the King, and at the last moment, while he rode on his way to execution, his pardon was granted.

Of the rest who died on the scaffold, Rudge, the murderer, was hanged, cursing all men to the last; Maypole Hugh died glorying in his evil life and with a jest on his lips, and Dennis, the hangman, was dragged to the gallows cringing and shrieking for mercy.

A few weeks later Emma Haredale was married to Edward Chester and sailed with him back to the West Indies, where he had established a flourishing business.

Before this, however, his father, Sir John Chester, was well punished for his hard heart and bad deeds by the discovery that Maypole Hugh, the hostler, was really his own unacknowledged son, whose mother he had deserted many years before. But even this blow, and the marriage of his son Edward to the niece of his lifelong enemy, did not soften him. He still hated Haredale with his old venom and loved to go to the ruins of The Warren and gloat over its destruction.

On one of these visits he met and taunted Haredale beyond all endurance. The two men drew their swords and fought a duel, which ended by Haredale's running Sir John through the heart. Haredale left England at once, entered a convent in a foreign country and spent his few remaining years in penance and remorse.

Lord George Gordon, the poor deluded noble who had been the cause of all this disorder, finally died, harmless and quite crazy, in Newgate Prison. Simon Tappertit, in spite of his active part in the riots, was luckier, for he got off with two wooden legs and lived for many years, a corner boot-black.

Joe, of course, married Dolly Varden, and the locksmith gave her such a generous marriage portion that he was able to set up in business, succeeding his father as landlord of the old Maypole Inn, and there they lived long and happily.

Barnaby Rudge, after the death of his father, gradually became more rational and was everywhere a great favorite with old and young. He and his mother lived always on the Maypole farm, and there were never two more contented souls than they.

As for Grip, the raven, he soon forgot his jail experience and grew sleek and glossy again. For a whole year he never uttered a word till one sunny morning he suddenly broke out with, "I'm a devil, I'm a devil, I'm a devil!" in extraordinary rapture. From that time on he talked more and more, and as he was only one hundred and fifty years old when Barnaby was gray headed (a mere infant for a raven) he is very probably talking yet.

THE PERSONAL HISTORY OF DAVID COPPERFIELD

Published 1849–1850

<i>Scene:</i>	London, Yarmouth, Dover and the Country
<i>Time:</i>	1812 to 1842

CHARACTERS

David Copperfield	A fatherless boy
Miss Betsy Trotwood	His aunt
Peggotty	His nurse
Mr. Murdstone	His stepfather
Miss Murdstone	Mr. Murdstone's sister
Mr. Peggotty	A fisherman
Peggotty's brother	
Ham	Their nephew
Mrs. Gummidge	The widow of Mr. Peggotty's dead partner
"Little Emly"	Peggotty's orphan niece
Barkis	A cart driver
Later, Peggotty's husband	
Mr. Creakle	Proprietor of a boys' school
Tommy Traddles James Steerforth	Schoolmates and friends of David's
Mr. Micawber	A London friend of David's
Always "waiting for something to turn up"	
"Mr. Dick"	A simple-minded relative of Miss Betsy Trotwood's
Mr. Wickfield	Miss Betsy's lawyer
Agnes	His daughter
Uriah Heep	His clerk
Later, his partner	
Doctor Strong	David's schoolmaster in Dover
Dora Spenlow	The daughter of David's employer and his "child-wife"

DAVID COPPERFIELD

I

DAVID'S EARLY UPS AND DOWNS

There was once a little boy by the name of David Copperfield, whose father had died before he was born. The night he was born his great-aunt, Miss Betsy Trotwood – a grim lady with a black cap tied under her chin and a great gold watch chain – came to the house to ask his mother to name the baby, which she took for granted was a girl, after her; but as soon as she found it was a boy she flounced out in anger and never came back again.

The first thing David remembered was living in a big country house in England with his pretty, golden-haired mother and with Peggotty, his nurse, a red-faced, kindly woman, with a habit of wearing her dresses so tight that whenever she hugged him some buttons would fly off the back. He loved his mother dearly – so dearly that when a tall, handsome man named Murdstone began to come to see her in the evenings David was jealous and sad. Mr. Murdstone acted as if he liked him, and even took him riding on his horse; but there was something in his face that David could not like.

One summer day David was sent off with Peggotty for a two weeks' visit to her brother's house in Yarmouth. Yarmouth was a queer fishing town on the sea-coast, and the house they went to was the queerest thing in it. It was made of an old barge, drawn up high and dry on the beach. It had a chimney on one side and little windows, and there were sea-shells around the door. David's room was in the stern, and the window was the hole which the rudder had once passed through. Everything smelled of salt water and lobsters, and David thought it was the most wonderful house in the world.

He soon made friends with the family – Mr. Peggotty, a big fisherman with a laugh like a gale of wind; Ham, his nephew, a big, overgrown boy who carried David from the coach on his back, and Mrs. Gummidge, who was the widow of Mr. Peggotty's drowned partner.

And, last of all, there was a beautiful little girl with curly hair and a string of blue beads around her neck whom they called Little Em'ly. She was an orphan niece of Peggotty's. None of these people belonged to Mr. Peggotty, but, though he was only a poor fisherman himself, he was so kind that he gave them all a home. David played with little Em'ly, and went out in the boat with Mr. Peggotty, and enjoyed his visit greatly, though he grew anxious to see his mother again.

He had no idea what had happened to her till he got back home with Peggotty. Then he found why he had been sent off on his visit. While he was away his mother had married Mr. Murdstone.

David found things sadly altered after this. Mr. Murdstone was a hard, cruel master. He cared nothing for the little boy and was harsh to him in everything. He even took away David's own cozy bedroom and made him sleep in a gloomy chamber. When he was sad Mr. Murdstone called him obstinate and locked him up and forbade his mother to pet or comfort him.

David's mother loved him, but she loved her new husband, too, and it was a most unhappy state of things. To make it worse, Mr. Murdstone's sister came to live with them. She was an unlovely old maid with big black eyebrows, and liked David no better than her brother did.

After this there were no more pleasant hours of sitting with his mother or walking with her to church, for Mr. Murdstone and his sister kept them apart. The only happy moments David spent were in a little upper room where there was a collection of books left by his dead father. He got some comfort from reading these.

Mr. Murdstone made David's mother give him hard tasks and lessons to do, and when David recited them he and his sister both sat and listened. To feel their presence and disapproval confused the little fellow so much that even when he knew his lesson he failed.

One day when he came to recite he saw Mr. Murdstone finishing the handle of a whip he had been making. This frightened him so that he could scarcely remember a word. Mr. Murdstone grasped him then and led him to his room to whip him.

Poor little David was so terrified that he hardly knew what he was doing, and in his agony and terror, while the merciless blows were falling, he seized the hand that held him and bit it as hard as he could. Mr. Murdstone then beat him almost to death and locked him in the room.

He was kept there for five days with only bread and milk to eat. Every day he was taken down for family prayers and then taken back again, and during prayers he was made to sit in a corner where he could not even see his mother's face. He had to sit all day long with nothing to do but think of Mr. Peggotty's house-boat and of little Em'ly and wish he was there. The last night Peggotty, his nurse, crept up and whispered through the keyhole that Mr. Murdstone was going to send him away the next day to a school near London.

The next morning he started in a carrier's cart. His mother was so much in awe of Mr. Murdstone that she hardly dared kiss David good-by, and he saw nothing of Peggotty. But as he was crying, Peggotty came running from behind a hedge and jumped into the cart and hugged him so hard that all the buttons flew off the back of her dress.

The man who drove the cart was named Barkis. He seemed to be very much taken with Peggotty, and after she had gone back David told him all about her. Before they parted he made David promise to write her a message for him. It was a very short message – "Barkis is willin'." David didn't know in the least what the driver meant, but he promised, and he sent the message in his very first letter.

Probably Peggotty knew what he meant, though, for before David came back again Mr. Barkis and she were courting. However, that has not much to do with this part of the story.

The school to which Mr. Murdstone had sent him was a bare building with gratings on all the windows like a prison, and a high brick wall around it. It was owned by a man named Creakle, who had begun by raising hops, and had gone into the school business because he had lost all of his own and his wife's money and had no other way to live. He was fat and spoke always in a whisper, and he was so cruel and bad-tempered that not only the boys, but his wife, too, was terribly afraid of him.

He nearly twisted David's ear off the first day, and he made one of the teachers tie a placard to David's back (this, he said, was by Mr. Murdstone's order) which read:

TAKE CARE OF HIM

HE BITES

To have to wear this before everybody made David sorrowful and ashamed, but luckily a good-natured boy named Tommy Traddles, who liked David's looks, said it was a shame to make him wear it, and as Tommy Traddles was very popular, all the other boys said it was a shame, too. So, beyond calling him "Towser" for a few days, and saying "Lie down, sir!" as if he were a dog, they did not make much fun of him while he wore it.

Besides Tommy Traddles, David liked best the head boy, James Steerforth – the oldest boy in the school, and the only one Creakle did not dare beat or mistreat. Steerforth took David under his wing and helped him with his lessons, while in return David used to tell him stories from the books he had read.

What with the beatings and tasks, David was glad enough when vacation time came. But his home-coming was anything but pleasant. He found his mother with a little baby, and she looked careworn and ill.

Mr. Murdstone, he saw at once, hated him as much as ever, and Miss Murdstone would not let him even so much as touch his baby brother. He was forbidden to sit in the kitchen with Peggotty, and when he crept away to the upper room with the books Mr. Murdstone called him sullen and obstinate. David was so miserable every day that he was almost glad to bid his mother good-by, and as he rode away, to look back at her as she stood there at the gate holding up her baby for David to see.

That was the last picture David carried in his heart of his pretty mother. One day not long after, he was called from the school-room to the parlor, and there Mr. Creakle told him that his mother was dead and that the baby had died, too.

David reached home the next day. Peggotty took him into her arms at the door and called his mother her "dear, poor pretty," and comforted him, but he was very sad. It seemed to him that life could never be bright again.

After the funeral Miss Murdstone discharged Peggotty and, probably not knowing what else to do with him, let David go with the faithful old servant down to the old house-boat at Yarmouth, where he had been visiting when his mother was married to Mr. Murdstone.

The wonderful house on the beach was just the same. Mr. Peggotty and Ham and Mrs. Gummidge were still there, with everything smelling just as usual of salt water and lobsters; and little Em'ly was there, too, grown to be quite a big girl. It seemed, somehow, like coming back to a dear old quiet home, where nothing changed and where all was restful and good.

But this happiness was not to last. David had to go home again, and there it was worse than ever. He was utterly neglected. He was sent to no school, taught nothing, allowed to make no friends. And at last Mr. Murdstone, as if he could think of nothing worse, apprenticed him as a chore boy in a warehouse in London.

The building where David now was compelled to work was on a wharf on the river bank, and was dirty and dark and overrun with rats. Here he had to labor hard for bare living wages, among rough boys and rougher men, with no counselor, hearing their coarse oaths about him, and fearing that one day he would grow up to be no better than they. He was given a bedroom in the house of a Mr. Micawber, and this man was, in his way, a friend.

There was never a better-hearted man than Mr. Micawber, but he seemed to be always unlucky. He had a head as bald as an egg, wore a tall, pointed collar, and carried for ornament an eye-glass which he never used. He never had any money, was owing everybody who would lend him any, and was always, as he said, "waiting for something to turn up." With this exception David had not a friend in London, and finally Mr. Micawber himself was put in prison for debt, and his relatives, who paid his debts to release him, did so on condition that he leave London. So at length David had not even this one friend.

David bore this friendless and wretched life as long as he could, but at length he felt that he could stay at the warehouse no longer and made up his mind to run away.

The only one in the world he could think of who might help him was – whom do you think? His great-aunt, Miss Betsy Trotwood, who had left his mother's house the night he was born because he did not happen to be a girl. She was the only real relative he had in the world.

She lived, Peggotty had told him, in Dover, and that was seventy miles away; but the distance did not daunt him. So one day he put all his things into a box and hired a boy with a cart to take it to the coach office. But the boy robbed him of all the money he had (a gold piece Peggotty had sent him) and drove off with his box besides, and poor David, crying, set out afoot, without a penny, in the direction he thought Dover lay.

That evening he sold his waistcoat to a clothes-dealer for a few pennies, and when night came he slept on the ground, under the walls of Mr. Creakle's old school where he had known Steerforth and Tommy Traddles. The next day he offered his jacket for sale to a half-crazy old store-keeper, who took the coat but would not pay him at first, and David had to sit all day on the door-step before the other would give him the money.

The next four nights he slept under haystacks, greatly in fear of tramps, and at length, on the sixth day, ragged, sunburned, dusty and almost dead from weariness, he got to Dover.

He had to ask many people before he could find out where Miss Betsy Trotwood lived. It was outside the town, in a cottage with a little garden. Here she lived all alone, except for a simple-minded old man, whom she called Mr. Dick, who was a relative of hers, and who did nothing all day but fly big kites and write petitions to the king, which he began every morning and never finished. All the neighbors thought Miss Betsy Trotwood a most queer old woman, but those who knew her best knew that she had a very kind heart under her grim appearance.

When David reached the house Miss Betsy was digging at some flowers in the garden. All she saw was a ragged, dirty little boy, and she called out, without even turning her head: "Go away; no boys here!"

But David was so wretched that he went right in at the gate and went up behind her and said: "If you please, aunt, I'm your nephew."

His aunt was so startled at his looks and at what he said, that she sat down plump on the ground; and David, his misery getting all at once the better of him, sobbed out all the pitiful tale of his wrongs and sorrows since his mother had died.

Miss Betsy Trotwood's heart was touched. She seized David by the collar, led him into the house, made him drink something and then made him lie down on the sofa while she fed him hot broth. Then she had a warm bath prepared, and at last, very tired and comfortable, and wrapped up in a big shawl, David fell asleep on the sofa.

That night he was put to bed in a clean room, and before he slept he prayed that he might never be homeless and friendless again.

II LITTLE EM'LY

Good fortune was with David now. His aunt wrote to Mr. Murdstone, and he and his sister came, fully expecting to take the boy back with them, but, instead, Miss Betsy told Mr. Murdstone plainly that he was a stony-hearted hypocrite, who had broken his wife's heart and tortured her son, and she ordered him and his sister from the house. David was so delighted at this that he threw his arms around her neck and kissed her, and from that moment Miss Betsy Trotwood began to love him as if he had been her own son.

David loved her in return. He drove out with her and helped Mr. Dick fly his kites and was very grateful. And at length his aunt placed him in a school in Dover and found him pleasant lodgings there in the house of her lawyer, Mr. Wickfield.

It was a different sort of school from what his first had been. His teacher was a Doctor Strong, and the school-boys were not the frightened, ill-treated lot he had known at Mr. Creakle's house. He was happy there, but his happiest hours of all were those spent, after school was out, at Mr. Wickfield's. The lawyer had an only daughter, Agnes, just David's age, a sweet, gentle girl, who seemed to live for her father, and whom David came to consider before long almost as a sister.

One person connected with the lawyer's household whom he did not like so well was Uriah Heep. Heep was a high-shouldered, red-headed, bony young man, with no eyebrows or eyelashes, and with long skeleton fingers. He dressed all in black, and his hands were clammy and cold, like a fish, so that it chilled one to touch them. He never smiled – the nearest he could come to it was to make two creases down his cheeks. He was always cringing and pretending to be humble, but really he was a sneak and a scoundrel at heart. David detested him without knowing why, the more so when he came to see that Heep was gaining an influence over Agnes's father. All the while, too, Heep pretended to like David, though David knew very well he did not.

So time went on. David studied hard and was a favorite with both pupils and teachers. At length he was head boy himself, and at seventeen his school life was finished.

He parted regretfully from Doctor Strong and from Agnes, and after paying his aunt, Miss Betsy Trotwood, a visit, he started off to Yarmouth to see his old nurse, now the wife of Barkis, the driver, and just as fond of David as ever. On his way through London, as it happened, David met the old school-fellow whom he had so liked, James Steerforth, and, loath to part with him so quickly, he proposed that the latter accompany him to Yarmouth.

Steerforth agreed and they went together. They took dinner at Peggotty's and spent the first evening in the old house-boat, where Mr. Peggotty still lived with Ham and Mrs. Gummidge and little Em'ly, the latter now grown to be a lovely girl and engaged to marry Ham. They spent some weeks there, each amusing himself in his own way, and soon Steerforth was as popular as David had always been, for he sang beautifully and talked entertainingly, and all, from Mr. Peggotty to little Em'ly, thought they had never seen so brilliant and handsome a lad.

If David could have read the thoughts that were in Steerforth's mind he would have grieved that he had ever brought him to that peaceful, innocent spot. For Steerforth had changed since the old school-days when David had been so fond of him. He had learned wickedness, and now, while he was exerting himself in every way to make the Peggottys like and admire him, in his heart he was trying to fascinate little Em'ly and to steal her love that she had given to Ham, till she would leave her home and run away with him to a foreign country. This, however, David could not guess, nor could any of the others, who regretted when the two friends' visit was over.

Now that his school-days were finished David's aunt had planned for him to study law in an office in London, and accordingly David began his new life there, very near the street where he had once toiled, a wretched, friendless helper, in the dirty warehouse on the dock. He found Tommy Traddles, who had stood his friend at Mr. Creakle's school, studying now to be a lawyer also, and boarding, curiously enough, at the house of Mr. Micawber, who had drifted back to London, still as poor and as hopeful as ever and still "waiting for something to turn up."

In spite of these and all his new acquaintances, David was very lonely at first and missed Agnes, who all through his life at Doctor Strong's school had been his friend and adviser.

He saw her once when she was visiting in London, and then she had bad news to tell him; her father had been steadily failing in health and business, and little by little Uriah Heep, his red-headed clerk with the clammy hands, had got him and his affairs into his power and made himself a partner in the firm. David guessed that Heep had planned to entrap her father so as to compel Agnes herself to marry him, and this suspicion made David despise the clerk more and more. But he knew of no way to help.

All this time he often saw Steerforth, but never guessed how often the latter had been secretly to see little Em'ly or of the wicked part he was playing. But one day David heard that Barkis, Peggotty's husband (whose early courtship he himself had aided when he took her the message "Barkis is willin'") had died, and David went at once to Yarmouth to try to comfort his old nurse in her loss.

While he was there the blow came which caused such sorrow to all who lived in the old house-boat. Little Em'ly, the pride and joy of Mr. Peggotty's tender heart, ran away with Steerforth.

She left a letter, begging them to forgive her, especially her uncle, Mr. Peggotty – and bidding them all good-by. It broke Mr. Peggotty's heart, and Ham's, too. And David was scarcely less sorrowful. Because, for what he had done, Steerforth, whose friendship had been so much to him, could never be his friend again.

But nothing could change Mr. Peggotty's love for little Em'ly. He determined to start out and search throughout the world for her; and, meantime, Ham and Mrs. Gummidge were to stay there in the old home, to keep it looking just the same, with a lighted candle in the window every night, so that if little Em'ly by any chance came back it would be bright and warm to welcome her. Mr. Peggotty's parting words to David were:

"I'm a-going to seek her far and wide. If any hurt should come to me, remember that the last word I left for her was, 'My unchanged love is with my darling child, and I forgive her.'"

III

DAVID AND HIS CHILD-WIFE

Though Agnes always held a large place in his heart, David was very impressionable. In the next few years he thought himself in love a good many times, but when finally he met Dora Spenlow, the daughter of one of the members of the law firm with which he was studying, he knew that all his other love-affairs had been only fancies. Dora was blue-eyed, with cheeks like a pink sea-shell, and looked like a fairy. David fell head over ears in love with her the first time he ever saw her. He lost his appetite, and took to wearing tight gloves and shoes too small for him, and he used to put on his best clothes and walk around her house in the moonlight and do other extravagant things.

They found a good deal of trouble in their love-making, for Dora was under the care of none other than the terrible sister of Mr. Murdstone, who had made David so miserable in his childhood, but he and Dora used to meet sometimes, and they sent each other letters through one of Dora's girl friends. David, perhaps, would not have done this if he had thought he would have a fair chance to win Dora; but with his old enemy, Miss Murdstone, against him, he was afraid to tell her father of his love. But one day he told it to Dora, and she promised to marry him.

Good luck, however, never comes without a bit of bad luck. Soon after this David came home to his rooms one night to find his aunt, Miss Betsy Trotwood, there, with her trunk and Mr. Dick, kites and all. She told David she had no other place to go; that she had lost all of her money and was quite ruined.

This was misfortune indeed, for it seemed to put his hope of marrying Dora a great deal further away; but David faced the situation bravely and began at once to look for something to do outside of the law office to earn money enough to support them all.

In this trouble Agnes was his true friend. He had written her already of his love for Dora and she had advised him. Through her now he found employment as secretary to his old schoolmaster, Doctor Strong, who had given up the school at Dover and had moved to London. He told Dora, of course, all about his changed prospects, but Dora was like a little butterfly who knew only how to fly about among flowers; she hardly knew what poverty meant, and thought he was scolding when he told her.

David worked hard in the morning at Doctor Strong's, in the afternoons at the law office, and in the evenings he studied shorthand so he might come to be a newspaper reporter. And all this while he wrote to Dora every day.

It was one of these letters that at last betrayed their secret. Dora dropped it from her pocket and Miss Murdstone picked it up. She showed it to Dora's father and he sent at once for David and told him angrily that he could never marry his child and that he must not see Dora any more. And David went home disconsolate.

This might have ended their engagement for ever, but that same day Dora's father dropped dead of heart-disease. Instead of being rich he was found to have left no money at all, and Dora was taken to live with two aunts on the outskirts of London. David did not know what was best to do now, so he went to Dover to ask Agnes's advice.

He was shocked at the changes he found there. Her father looked ill and scarcely seemed himself. Uriah Heep, his new partner, with his ugly, fawning way and clammy hands, was living in their house and eating with them at their table. He had obtained more and more power over Mr. Wickfield and gloried in it. And the other seemed no longer to dare to oppose Uriah in anything.

But in spite of all this, Agnes talked bravely and cheerfully with David. Under her direction, he wrote a letter to Dora's aunts, declaring his love and asking permission to call, and they, pleased with his frankness, gave their permission. Before the year was out David began to earn money with

his shorthand, reporting speeches in Parliament for a newspaper. He had discovered besides that he could write stories that the magazines were glad to buy. So one day David married Dora and they went to housekeeping in a tiny house of their own.

Life seemed very sweet to them both, though Dora, while she was the most loving little wife in the world, knew no more about housekeeping than a bird. The servants stole the silver spoons, and the storekeepers overcharged them, and the house was never tidy or comfortable. For a while David tried to make Dora learn these things, but when he chid her the tears would come, and she would throw her arms around his neck and sob that she was only his child-wife after all, and he would end by kissing her and telling her not to mind. She was most like a beautiful toy; and like a toy, she seemed made only to play with, just as she played with her dog Jip, instead of helping and encouraging David in his work.

But at length Dora fell ill – so ill that they knew she was too frail and weak to get well and strong again. David carried her down stairs every day, and every day the burden grew lighter. She never complained, but called him her poor, dear boy, and one day she whispered that she was only his child-wife and could never have been more, so that it was better as it was!

Agnes came, and was there when Dora died. But for her comfort all the world would have been blank for poor David as he sat alone, longing for the child-wife who could never be his again!

IV DAVID FINDS ALL WELL AT LAST

More than once during this life of David's with his child-wife he had seen Mr. Peggotty. The brave old man had searched Europe for little Em'ly in vain; then he had come back to London, feeling somehow that some day she would stray there. He used to walk the streets by night, looking at every face he passed. In the room where he lived he kept a candle always lighted and one of her dresses hanging on a chair for her.

After Dora's death David joined in the search, and at length they did find poor little Em'ly. Steerforth had treated her cruelly and finally deserted her, and she had crept back to London heartbroken and repentant, hoping for nothing but to die within sight of those who had loved her so.

But nothing had dimmed Mr. Peggotty's love. Wretched as she was, he caught her in his arms, held her to his breast as he had done so often when she was a child, and told her she was still his own little Em'ly, just as she had always been.

She was ill, but he nursed her back to health. Then he went to Yarmouth to fetch Mrs. Gummidge, and they and the little Em'ly that had been found took passage for Australia, where they might forget the dark past and find happiness in a new life.

But before they sailed fate had brought to naught the villainous plot that had been woven by Uriah Heep about Agnes and her father. And the one whom they had most to thank for this was Mr. Micawber.

Heep had met Mr. Micawber once, when the latter, as usual, was in money difficulties, and, thinking to make a tool of him, had hired him for his clerk. Little by little Heep had then got the other into his debt, till Mr. Micawber saw no prospect before him but the debtors' prison.

Threatening him with this, Heep tried to compel him to do various bits of dirty and dishonest work, at which the other's soul revolted until at length he made up his mind to expose his employer. So, pretending obedience, Mr. Micawber wormed himself into all of the sneaking Heep's affairs, found out the evidence of his guilt, and finally taking all the books and papers from the office safe, sent for David and his friend Tommy Traddles and told them all he had discovered. They found it was by forgery that Heep had got Agnes's father into his power in the first place, and that among others whom he had robbed was David's aunt, Miss Betsy Trotwood, whose fortune he had stolen.

David and Tommy Traddles sent for Miss Betsy and for Agnes and her father, and they faced Uriah all together. He tried to brazen it out, but when he saw the empty safe he knew that all was known. They told him the only way he could save himself from prison was by giving back the business to Agnes's father, just as it had been years before, when David had lived there, and by restoring to Miss Betsy Trotwood every cent he had robbed her of. This he did with no very good grace and with an especial curse for David, whom he seemed to blame for it all.

In reward for Mr. Micawber's good services, Miss Betsy and Agnes's father paid off all his debts and gave him money enough to take him and his family to Australia. They sailed in the same vessel that carried Mr. Peggotty and little Em'ly.

Before it sailed little Em'ly had written a letter to Ham, whose promised wife she had been before she ran away with Steerforth, begging his forgiveness, and this letter she had asked David to give him after they had gone. Accordingly one day he went to Yarmouth to do this.

That night a terrible storm arose. The wind was so strong that it uprooted trees and threw down chimneys and rolled waves mountain high on the sand where stood the old deserted house-boat of the Peggottys. Next morning David was awakened with the news that a Spanish ship had gone ashore and was fast going to pieces, and he ran to the beach, where all the town was gathered.

He could see the doomed vessel plainly where the surf broke over her. Her masts had snapped short off and at every wave she rolled and beat the sand as if she would pound herself to fragments. Several figures were clinging to the broken masts, and one by one the waves beat them off, and they went down for ever.

At length but one was left, and he held on so long that a shout of encouragement went up from the throng. At this Ham, the bravest and strongest of all the hardy boatmen there, tied a rope about his waist and plunged into the sea to try to save him. But it was not to be. The same huge wave that dashed the vessel to pieces threw the rescuer back on the sand, dead. The body of the man he had tried to save was washed ashore, too, and it was that of James Steerforth, who had so wronged little Em'ly!

So poor, great-souled Ham died, honest and faithful to the last, giving his life for the man who had injured him. And so, too, James Steerforth met his fate on the very spot where he had done such evil, for his corpse was found among the fragments of the old Peggotty house-boat, which the tempest tore down that night.

After this David went abroad and stayed three years. He lived in Switzerland, and wrote novels that were printed in London and made him famous there.

And now, alone, he had time to think of all that made up his past. He thought of Dora, his child-wife, and sorrowed for her, and of the Peggottys and little Em'ly; but most of all he found himself thinking of Agnes, who, throughout his youth, had seemed like his guiding star.

So one day he went back to England and told her, and asked her if she would marry him. And with her sweet face on his breast she whispered that she had loved him all her life!

David and Agnes lived long and happily, and their children had three guardians who loved them all – Miss Betsy Trotwood, David's old nurse, Peggotty, and white-haired Mr. Dick, who taught them to fly kites and thought them the greatest children in the world. Tommy Traddles, when he had become a famous lawyer, often visited them, and once, too, Mr. Peggotty, older, but still hale and strong, came back from Australia to tell them how he had prospered and grown rich, and had always his little Em'ly beside him, and how Mr. Micawber had ceased to owe everybody money and had become a magistrate, and many other things.

David had one thing, however, to tell Mr. Peggotty, and that was of a certain prisoner he had seen in one of the country's greatest prisons, sentenced for life for an attempt to rob the Bank of England, and whose name was – Uriah Heep.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Published 1860–1861

<i>Scene:</i>	London, Neighboring Towns and the Country
<i>Time:</i>	1830 to 1860

CHARACTERS

Philip Pirrip	An orphan boy
Known as "Pip"	
Joe Gargery	A blacksmith
"Mrs. Joe"	His wife
Pip's sister	
Uncle Pumblechook	Joe's pompous uncle
Wopsle	Clerk of the village church
Later, an actor	
Orlick	A workman of Joe's
Biddy	A girl friend of Pip's and Mrs. Joe's nurse
Later, Joe's wife	
Abel Magwitch	A convict
Miss Havisham	An eccentric woman once disappointed in love
Estella	Her ward
In reality, Magwitch's daughter	
Compeyson	Miss Havisham's former suitor and deceiver
A convict	
Mr. Jaggers	Lawyer for Miss Havisham and for Magwitch
Wemmick	His clerk
Mr. Pocket	Pip's tutor
Mrs. Pocket	His wife
Herbert Pocket	His son. Pip's comrade in London

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

I

PIP AND THE CONVICT

In England, in a lonely village not far from London, there once lived a little orphan boy named Philip Pirrip, whom everybody called, for short, "Pip." His parents had died when he was a baby, and he had been brought up by his older sister, the wife of Joe Gargery, a blacksmith whose forge looked out across wide marshes and a river that flowed through them.

Joe, the blacksmith, was a fair-faced man with flaxen whiskers and very bright blue eyes. He was a mild, honest, good-natured, sweet-tempered, easy-going, foolish, dear fellow, tender-hearted and kind to little Pip and yet a Hercules for strength.

Very different, indeed, was "Mrs. Joe," as everybody spoke of her. She was tall and bony and had black hair, a red skin and a continual habit of scolding. She may have loved Pip in her way, but that way was a very cross-grained one. She treated Joe, the big blacksmith, and Pip, the little boy, just alike, and they were both equally in dread of her. This made them quite like partners. Whenever Pip came into the house he used to look at Joe's fingers; if Joe crossed them that was a sign Mrs. Joe was cross and that Pip was to look out for himself.

Joe had an uncle named Pumblechook, who was a corn seller in the next town and a pompous old hypocrite. He had a way of standing Pip before him, rumpling up his hair and asking him hard questions out of the multiplication table. And whenever he told a story of any one who was ungrateful or wicked he would glower at Pip in a way that made him feel very uncomfortable.

Another who came as often and was almost as dismal to see was Wopsle, the clerk, who read the lesson in church every Sunday. He had an idea he would make a great actor and used to recite whole pages from Shakespeare when he could find any one to listen to him.

Worst of all was a workman of Joe's named Orlick. He was a loose-limbed, swarthy, slouching giant with a hangdog look. He used to tell Pip that the devil lived in a certain corner of the forge, and once in every seven years the fire had to be rekindled with a live boy. Orlick at heart disliked everybody – especially harmless little Pip – and often quarreled with Mrs. Joe.

Beside the blacksmith, the only one who understood Pip was a little girl named Biddy, about his own age and an orphan, too. She liked him and used to help him with his lessons at school.

But in spite of Joe and Biddy, Pip was sometimes so lonely and miserable that he would steal off alone to the village churchyard, where his father and mother lay buried, to cry.

One afternoon – it was the day before Christmas – Pip was more wretched than usual, and was sitting crying among the graves when suddenly a rough voice spoke behind him. "Keep still, you little imp!" it said, "or I'll cut your throat!" With the words a man rose up from behind a tombstone and seized him.

He was a fearful-looking man, dressed all in gray clothes, with a great iron band riveted on his leg. His shoes were torn, he had no hat and wore a ragged, dirty handkerchief tied around his head. He was soaked with water, caked with mud and limped and shivered as he walked. He set Pip on a tombstone and tilted him so far back that the church steeple seemed to turn a somersault, growling at him in a terrible voice.

Pip had never been so frightened in his life. With a trembling voice he begged his captor to spare him. The man asked him his name and where he lived, and told him he would let him go on one condition. He had to promise to come next morning at daybreak to a certain spot in the marshes and to bring a file and something to eat. And the man said if Pip did not do so, or if he told any one what he was going to do, he would catch him again and cut out his heart and eat it.

This terrible threat frightened poor little Pip more than ever. His voice shook so that he could hardly promise, and when the man set him down he ran home as fast as his legs would carry him.

The evening was a miserable one. Pip thought he would save his own supper for the man in case he should not be able to get into his sister's pantry, so instead of eating his bread and butter he slipped it down his trouser-leg.

Before long a great gun began to boom, and he asked Joe what it was. The blacksmith told him that in the river across the marshes were anchored some big hulks of ships, like wicked Noah's arks, where convicts were kept prisoners, and that the gun was a signal that some of these convicts had escaped. Then Pip knew the man he had promised to help was a criminal – perhaps a murderer – who had got away and was hiding from the soldiers.

All night he did not sleep. He hated to steal the food, but he felt certain he would be killed if he did not. So at dawn he slipped down stairs, got a file from the forge, unlocked the pantry, took some bread and cheese and a pork pie that Uncle Pumblechook had sent for Christmas dinner, and ran out through the foggy morning to the marshes.

He had not got quite there when he came on a man in gray, sitting on the ground, with an iron fetter on his leg. Pip thought he was the one he was in search of, but as soon as the other turned his face he saw by a bruise on the cheek that he was not. This second man in gray, as soon as he saw him, sprang to his feet and ran away.

Greatly wondering, Pip went on, and at the right spot he found the man who had frightened him in the graveyard. He seemed now to be almost starved, for he snatched the food and ate it like a hungry dog. He asked Pip if he had seen any one else on his way there, and Pip told him of the other man in gray who also wore an iron on his leg.

He asked Pip to describe the other, and when Pip told of the bruised cheek, the man he was feeding flew into a rage. He began to curse, and, seizing the file, set to filing like mad at his fetter. Pip could see that he hated the other convict, and was sorry he had escaped; but he had fulfilled his promise now, so he turned and ran home again, and the last thing he heard was the rasp of the file as the man worked madly at the iron.

Very guilty Pip felt all that Christmas morning. He went to church with Joe, and after service Uncle Pumblechook, Wopsle, the clerk, and other company came to dinner. He could not enjoy the good things to eat, for he knew now his sister must discover that the pork pie was gone. Just as she went to get it he got up from the table to run away, but as he opened the door he ran plump into a file of soldiers.

He was sure at first they had come to arrest him for helping the convict, but he was soon relieved, when the officer at their head explained that they were on their way to search the marshes for the escaped men and wanted the blacksmith to mend a broken handcuff.

In the flurry of their arrival the pork pie was forgotten, while Joe mended the handcuff in the forge. When the soldiers left, the blacksmith set Pip on his broad shoulder, and he and Wopsle went striding with them to see the result of the hunt.

It was sunset as the party entered the marshes, and the searchers opened out into a wide line. On a sudden all stopped, for a confused shouting had come from the distance. They ran toward it, cocking their guns, and Wopsle and Joe, with Pip on his shoulder, followed. The shouts became plainer and plainer. All at once they came to a ditch and in it the convict Pip had fed and the one with the bruised cheek were struggling fiercely together.

The soldiers seized and handcuffed them both, the man with the bruised cheek pale and trembling, the other boasting that he had dragged the man he hated back to captivity, even though it cost him his own freedom.

While the soldiers were preparing to take their prisoners back, Pip's convict saw the boy standing there with Joe. Pip hoped he would not think he had had anything to do with bringing the soldiers. He was pretty sure the man did not, because he presently told the officer, in every one's

hearing, that the night before he had broken into a house where a blacksmith lived, near a church, and had stolen a pork pie. Joe heard this and so Pip knew that he himself would be clear of any blame.

The convicts were taken back to their cells and Joe and Pip went home to tell the company of their adventure. But neither then nor ever afterward did Pip find courage to tell Joe the part he had played; for Pip loved the honest blacksmith and did not want him to think him worse than he really was.

Time went on and Pip grew older and bigger, and though he never forgot the adventure of the churchyard, yet the memory of it grew dimmer. In the next few years only one thing happened to recall it to him.

One evening Mrs. Joe sent Pip to the village inn, The Three Jolly Bargemen, with a message. Pip found Joe there, sitting with a stranger – a secret-looking man, who held his head on one side and kept one eye perpetually shut as if he were taking aim with a gun. This man, when he heard Pip's name, looked at him with a curious wink, and when no one but Pip was looking he took out of his pocket, to stir his drink with, the very file Pip had stolen from Joe's forge.

Pip knew that minute that the man was a friend of the convict he had aided. When Pip left the inn the stranger called him back and gave him a shilling wrapped up in a piece of paper.

When he got home Mrs. Joe (who took the prize away from him) discovered that the piece of paper was in reality two bank-notes, and both Joe and she wondered at it. The blacksmith tried next day to find the stranger to restore the money, but he had left the inn.

So it always remained a mystery – to all but Pip of course, who knew in his heart that the convict had remembered his aid and had taken this means of repaying him.

II THE QUEER MISS HAVISHAM

One day, when Pip was considerably older, Uncle Pumblechook brought Mrs. Joe word that a Miss Havisham, a lady who lived in his own town, had heard of Pip, and wanted him to come to her house to see her.

Miss Havisham was a very queer lady, indeed; so queer that some said she was crazy. But she was rich, and for this reason Mrs. Joe scrubbed Pip and dressed him in his best clothes and sent him off in care of Uncle Pumblechook, who took him as far as Miss Havisham's gate.

Miss Havisham, when a beautiful young lady, had been engaged to marry a man named Compeyson, whom she loved very much. He was a wicked, heartless villain, however, and had made her love him only that he might persuade her to give him great sums of money.

The marriage day finally was fixed, her wedding-clothes were bought, the house was decorated for the ceremony, the bride-cake was put on the table in the dining-room and the guests arrived. But Compeyson, the bridegroom, did not come.

Miss Havisham was dressing for the wedding when she received a cruel note from him telling her he did not intend to marry her. She had put on her white wedding gown and her lace veil and one of her satin slippers – the other lay on the dressing-table. It was exactly twenty minutes to nine o'clock when she read the note.

She fainted and afterward lay for a long time ill. When she recovered she laid the whole place waste. She never afterward let the light of day into the old mansion. The shutters were closed, candles were kept always lighted, and all the clocks in the house were stopped at exactly twenty minutes to nine o'clock. Not a thing in any room was changed. The bride-cake rotted on the table, the decorations faded on the walls, and day after day Miss Havisham sat in the dressing-room clad in her wedding gown and veil, with one slipper on, the dead flowers on her table and the trunks for her wedding journey scattered about half-packed. In time she became shrunken and old and the white satin and lace became faded yellow, but she never varied this habit of life.

Soon after her love disappointment she had written to her lawyer in London, who was named Jaggers, asking him to find a baby girl for her to adopt as her own. Now Mr. Jaggers had just defended in court a man named Abel Magwitch, the tool of Compeyson, who had broken Miss Havisham's heart. Compeyson had tempted Magwitch into passing some stolen money and they had both been arrested. At the trial Compeyson (sneak and liar as he was!) threw all the blame on his comrade, who was duller and less sharp than he, and as a consequence, while Compeyson got a light sentence, Magwitch, though really the more innocent of the two, had been sent to the prison-ship for a term of many years. These two men, by the way, were the pair who escaped from the hulks into the marshes. Magwitch was Pip's convict of the churchyard, and Compeyson was the one he had dragged back to capture. This Magwitch, at the time of his arrest, had a baby daughter, who had fallen into Mr. Jaggers's care, and in answer to Miss Havisham's request the lawyer had sent the little girl to her, telling her nothing whatever of the child's parentage.

Miss Havisham had named the child Estella, and, seeing she would be a very beautiful woman, had determined to bring her up heartless and cold, to ruin as many men's lives as possible, so as to avenge her own wrongs and broken heart.

So Estella had grown up in the dismal house, Miss Havisham's only companion. Day by day she became more lovely, and even while she was still a little girl, the same age as Pip, Miss Havisham was impatient to begin teaching her her lesson.

This was the reason Pip had received his invitation to Miss Havisham's house. Though he had no idea of it, he was intended only as practice for little Estella, who under Miss Havisham's teaching was growing up very fond of admiration and very cold-hearted, too.

Pip thought Miss Havisham the strangest lady he had ever seen, and the yellow satin, the candle-lighted rooms, and the stopped clocks seemed to him very odd. But Estella was so pretty that from the first moment he saw her he had no eyes for anything else. Even though she called him clumsy and common, and seemed to delight in hurting his feelings, Pip fell in love with her and could not help himself. Miss Havisham made them play together and told him to come again the next week.

Pip went home in very bad humor on account of all the hurts which Estella had given his feelings. Uncle Pumblechook, being very curious to know all about his trip, bullied and questioned him so (beginning as usual with the multiplication table) that Pip, perfectly frantic, told him the most impossible tales. He said Miss Havisham was in a black coach inside the house, and had cake and wine handed to her through the coach window on a golden plate, and that he and she played with flags and swords, while four dogs fought for veal cutlets out of a silver basket.

But when Uncle Pumblechook told Joe these wonders, Pip was remorseful. He went to the forge and confessed to Joe that he had been telling a falsehood, and promised he would never do so again.

This visit was the first of many that Pip paid to the gloomy house whose shutters were always closed. Next time he went he was taken into the chamber where the decayed wedding-cake sat on the table. The room was full of relatives of Miss Havisham (for it was her birthday), who spent their lives flattering and cringing, hoping when she died she would leave them some money.

After a time Pip went into the garden and there he met another relative in the person of a pale young gentleman about his own age, but larger, who promptly lowered his head, butted Pip in the stomach and invited him to fight. Pip was so sure nobody else's head belonged in the pit of his stomach that he obliged him at once, and as practice at the forge had made him tough, it was not many minutes before the pale young gentleman was lying on his back, looking up at him out of an exceedingly black eye and with a bleeding countenance.

When Estella let Pip out of the gate that day he guessed that she had seen the encounter and that somehow it had pleased her, for she gave him her cheek to kiss. Yet he knew that at heart she thought him only a coarse, common boy, fit to be treated rudely and insolently. This thought rankled more and more in him. He made up his mind to study and learn, and he got faithful little Bidly to teach him all she knew.

Pip saw no more of the pale young gentleman, though for almost a year he went to Miss Havisham's every other day. Each time he saw Estella and found himself loving her more and more. But she was always unkind, and often, when she had been ruder than usual, he saw that Miss Havisham seemed to take delight in his mortification. Sometimes she would fondle Estella's hand, and he would hear her say:

"That's right! Break their hearts, my pride and hope! Break their hearts and have no mercy!"

One day Miss Havisham sent for Joe, the blacksmith, and gave him a bag of money, telling him that he was not to send Pip to her any more, but that he should put him to work and teach him the trade of blacksmithing. So Uncle Pumblechook took Pip to town that very day and had him bound to Joe as an apprentice.

This was just what Pip had once looked forward to with pleasure. But now it made him wretched. Through Estella's jeers he had come to feel that blacksmithing was common and low. As he helped Joe to blow the forge fire, he thought constantly of Estella's looks of disdain, yet in spite of all he longed to see her.

On his first half-holiday he went to call on Miss Havisham. But there was no Estella. Miss Havisham told him she had sent her abroad to be educated as a lady, and when the miserable tears sprang to Pip's eyes, she laughed.

When he got home he confided in Biddy. He told her how he loved Estella, and that he wanted more than anything else in the world to be a gentleman. Meanwhile he began to study hard in any spare time he had, and Biddy helped him all she could.

Pip might have fallen in love with Biddy if he had not had Estella always in his mind. Orlick, Joe's helper, indeed, thought he had done so, and it made him hate Pip more than ever, for he was in love with Biddy himself. He grew morose and quarrelsome and spoke so roughly to Mrs. Joe one day that she was not satisfied till the blacksmith took off his singed apron and knocked the surly Orlick flat in the coal dust.

This was a costly revenge for Mrs. Joe, however. Orlick never forgave it, and a few nights after, when no one was at home but herself he crept in behind her in the kitchen and struck her a terrible blow on the head with a piece of iron.

Hours afterward Joe found her lying senseless, and though she lived to recover a part of her senses, she never scolded or spoke again. She grew well enough at last to sit all day in her chair, but was so helpless that Biddy came to the house to be her nurse. It chanced that a prisoner had escaped from the prison-boats on the night Mrs. Joe was injured, and he was thought to be the one who attacked her. But Pip suspected Orlick all the while.

So time went on. Once a year, on his birthday, Pip went to see Miss Havisham, but he never saw Estella there. And nothing else of particular importance occurred till he had been for four years Joe's apprentice.

One night, as Pip sat with Joe before the fire in The Three Jolly Bargemen, they were called out by a gentleman whom Pip remembered to have seen once at Miss Havisham's. It was, as a matter of fact, Mr. Jaggers, her lawyer, who had sent Estella to her as a baby.

The lawyer walked home with them, for he had a wonderful piece of news to relate. It was that an unknown benefactor, whose name he was not permitted to tell, intended when he died to leave Pip a fortune. In the meantime he wished to have him educated to become a gentleman, and as a lad of Great Expectations, and, the better to accomplish this, he wished Pip to go without delay to London.

This great good fortune seemed so marvelous that Pip could hardly believe it. He had never imagined Miss Havisham intended to befriend him, but now he guessed at once that she was this unknown benefactor. And he jumped next to another conclusion even more splendid – that she intended him sometime to marry Estella and was even then educating her for him. Pip went home almost in a dream, too full of his own prospects to see how sad Biddy was beneath her gladness for him, or how sorrowful the good news made Joe.

That night Estella's face came before him, more full of disdain than ever. As he thought of her and of the fine gentleman he was to be, the humble kitchen and forge seemed to grow commoner and meaner by contrast. He began to become a little spoiled and disdainful himself.

The news soon spread about, and every one who had looked down upon Pip now gave him smiles and flattery. Uncle Pumblechook wept on his shoulder and (instead of telling him, as usual, that he was sure to come to a bad end) reminded him that he had always been his favorite.

Mr. Jaggers had given Pip a generous amount of money to buy new clothes with, and these tended to make him more spoiled than ever. He began to feel condescending toward Bidly, and found himself wondering whether, when he should be rich and educated, Joe's manners would not make him blush if they should meet.

And even when the day came for him to bid them good-by and he climbed aboard the coach for London, he thought more of these things and his own good luck than of the home he was parting from for ever, or of the true and loving hearts he was leaving behind him.

This was an ignoble beginning for Pip and one that he came afterward to remember with shame!

III

PIP DISCOVERS HIS BENEFACTOR

Mr. Jaggers, the lawyer in whose care Pip found himself in London, was sharp and secret, and was so feared by criminals that they would never go near his house, though he never locked his door, even at night.

He had a crusty clerk named Wemmick, as secret as he and a deal queerer. Wemmick lived in a little wooden cottage that he called The Castle, and which had its top cut out like a fort. It had a ditch all around it with a plank drawbridge. When he got home from the office in the evening he pulled up the drawbridge and ran up a flag on a flagstaff planted there. And exactly at nine every night he fired off a brass cannon that he kept in a latticework fortress beside it.

Wemmick was the first one Pip met in London, and the clerk took him to the rooms where Mr. Jaggers had arranged for Pip to live, with the son of a gentleman who was to be his teacher. This gentleman was a Mr. Pocket, a relative (as Pip discovered) of Miss Havisham, which fact made him all the more certain that she was his unknown friend. Mr. Pocket's son was named Herbert, and the minute he and Pip first saw each other they burst out laughing. For Herbert was none other than the pale young gentleman who, years before in Miss Havisham's garden, Pip had last seen looking up at him out of a very black eye.

They were excellent friends from that hour. They occupied the rooms together when they were in London, and Pip also had a room of his own at Mr. Pocket's house in the country.

Mr. Pocket was a helpless scholarly man who depended on Mrs. Pocket to manage everything, and she depended on the servants. There were seven little Pockets of various ages tumbling about the house, and Mrs. Pocket's only idea of management seemed to be to send them all to bed when any one of them was troublesome. At such times Mr. Pocket would groan, put his hands in his hair, lift himself several inches out of his chair and then let himself down again.

In spite of his oddities, however, Mr. Pocket was an excellent teacher, and Pip in some ways made progress. But his Great Expectations taught him bad habits. He found it so easy to spend money that he soon overstepped the allowance Mr. Jaggers had told him was his, and not only had got into debt himself, but had led Herbert, who was far poorer, into debt also.

Joe came to see him only once, and then Pip's spoiled eyes overlooked his true, rugged manliness and noted more clearly his awkward manners and halting speech. Joe was quick to see this difference in the Pip he had known and he did not stay long – only long enough to leave a message from Miss Havisham: that Estella had returned from abroad and would be glad to see him if he came.

Pip lost no time in making this visit, and started the very next day. The old house looked just the same, but a new servant opened the gate for him: it was Orlick, as low-browed and sullen and surly as ever, and Pip saw at the first glance that his old hatred was still smoldering.

Miss Havisham was in her room, dressed in the same worn wedding dress, and beside her, with diamonds on her neck and hair, sat Estella. Pip hardly knew her, she had grown so beautiful. But she was proud and wilful as of old, and though he felt the old love growing stronger every moment, he felt no nearer to her than in those past wretched days of his boyhood. Before he left, Miss Havisham asked him eagerly if Estella was not more lovely, and, as he sat by her alone, she drew his head close to her lips and whispered fiercely:

"Love her, love her, love her! If she favors you, love her! If she tears your heart to pieces, love her, love her, love her!"

Though this visit took him so near the old forge, Pip did not go to see Joe and Biddy. Indeed, only once in the months that followed did he see them – when he went to attend the funeral of Mrs. Joe.

After that he had no need to leave the city to see Estella, for Miss Havisham soon sent her to live in London. From there she required her to write letters weekly, telling how many men she had fascinated and made wretched. Pip saw her constantly and tortured himself with the growing belief that Miss Havisham's training (the purpose of which he had begun to guess) was really succeeding in crushing her heart, and was leaving her with no power to love any one.

Thus, between hope and despair, Pip became of age. Mr. Jaggers now told him that a certain large sum was his to spend each year. He was deeply in debt and a great part of his first year's portion went to pay his creditors. But with the remainder he did a good and unselfish deed: he bought secretly a share in a good business for Herbert, so that his comrade became a partner in it.

A great blow was now to fall upon Pip without warning – something that changed the whole course of his life. One rainy night, when Herbert was away from London, as he sat alone in their rooms, a heavy step stumbled up the stair and a man entered. He was coarse and rough-looking and tanned with exposure, with a furrowed bald head, tufted at the sides with gray hair.

There was something strangely familiar to Pip in his face, but at first he did not recognize him. Seeing this, the stranger threw down his hat, twisted a handkerchief around his head, took a file from his pocket and walked across the room with a curious shivering gait that brought back to Pip's mind, like a lightning flash, the scene in the churchyard so many years ago, when he had sat perched on a tombstone looking in terror at that same man's face. And he knew all at once that the man was the escaped convict of that day!

It was a strange tale the new-comer told then, one that Pip's heart sank to hear. Miss Havisham had not been his benefactor after all. The one whose money had educated him, had set him there in London to live the life of a gentleman, the one to whom he was indebted for every penny he owned, was Abel Magwitch, a criminal – the convict for whom he had once stolen food years before!

Pip sank into a chair trembling as Magwitch, in a hoarse voice, told his story. He told how the man Compeyson had led him into crime and then deserted him. How he had hated the other so fiercely that after they both had escaped from the prison-hulks he had dragged Compeyson back to imprisonment even at the loss of his own liberty. How for that attempt to escape he had been sentenced to transportation for life, and had been sent to Botany Bay in Australia, where in time he became in a measure free, though forbidden under penalty of death to return to England. How he had never forgotten the little Pip who had tried to aid him, and how he had sworn that he would repay him many times over. How he had taken to sheep-raising and prospered, and became a rich man. How he had written to Mr. Jaggers, the lawyer who had defended him, and paid him to find Pip and educate him. And how at last he had dared even the death penalty to come to England to see how he fared.

His voice shook as he told how he had slaved through all the years, looking forward only to this moment when he should come back to see the little Pip whom he had made into a gentleman.

Poor Pip! It was an end to all his dreams of Miss Havisham and of Estella. He shrank from Magwitch, horrified at the bare thought of what he owed to him. He forced himself to utter some trembling words and set food before the convict, watching him as he ate like a ravenous old dog. His heart was like lead, all his plans knocked askew. Even while he pitied the old man, he shrank from him as if from a wild beast, with all his childish dread increased a hundredfold.

At length Pip put Magwitch in Herbert's room to sleep, but all that night he himself lay tossing and sleepless, staring into the darkness and listening to the rain outside.

IV PIP COMES TO HIMSELF

The days that followed were one long agony to Pip. When Herbert returned he told him the whole story. Herbert was shocked and surprised, but he was true to his friendship and together they planned what to do.

It was clear to Pip that he could not spend any more of Magwitch's money; indeed, recoiling from him as he did, he would gladly have repaid every penny if it had been possible. To make the matter worse, it seemed that Magwitch had brought a great deal of money with him and was determined that Pip should move into a fashionable house, buy fast horses, keep servants and live most expensively.

Pip hesitated to tell Magwitch his decision, however, for what the convict now planned showed how much he had thought of him and loved him in his rough way during all his years in Australia.

Meanwhile he and Herbert kept Magwitch hidden as much as possible, and gave out that the old man was Pip's uncle, on a visit from the country.

Unluckily, however, Magwitch's presence in London had been seen. He had been recognized in the street and followed to Pip's rooms. And the man who saw him was his bitterest enemy – Compeyson, the breaker of Miss Havisham's heart, who had first made Magwitch a criminal, and whom the convict so hated. Compeyson had served out his term, and was now free. He saw his chance to pay the old grudge with Magwitch's life. In order, however, to make sure of his capture he decided to entice Pip away and bring the police upon Magwitch when he would have no one to warn him.

Meanwhile, unconscious of this plot, Pip made a last visit to Miss Havisham. He felt now that he was again poor and without prospects, and with small hope of winning Estella.

But finding her there, in Miss Havisham's presence, he told her how dearly he had always loved her since the first day they had met. She seemed moved by his distress, but her heart had not yet awakened. She told him that she was about to marry one whom he knew for a coarse, brutal man, in every way beneath her. And then Pip knew for certain that Miss Havisham's bitter teaching had borne its fruit at last, and that Estella was to marry this man, not because she loved him, but merely as a final stab to all the other worthier ones.

In spite of her years of self-torture and revengeful thoughts, Miss Havisham had still a spark of real pity. As Pip reminded her of the wreck she had made of him, through Estella, and through allowing him falsely to believe her his benefactor, his agony struck her with remorse. She put her hand to her heart as he ended, and as he left them he saw through his own tears her hand still pressed to her side and her faded face ghastly in the candlelight.

Sick with despair, Pip went back to London, to learn from Wemmick, Mr. Jaggers's friendly clerk, that the rooms were being watched, and that he and Herbert (who in the absence of Pip had confided in him) had removed Magwitch to another lodging – a room overlooking the river, from which it would be easier, if worst came to worst, to get him on a ship and so out of the country.

To do this it was necessary to wait for a favorable chance. So Pip, providing for Magwitch's comfort meantime, bought a boat, and he and Herbert rowed daily up and down the river, so that when the time came to row the convict to some sea-going ship they would know the turns of the stream.

Pip soon learned that Compeyson was their spy. Wopsle, who in Pip's boyhood had been the clerk in the village church, had turned actor (he made, to be sure, a very poor one!), and was now playing in London. In the theater one night he recognized in the audience the pale-faced convict whom he had once, with Joe, the blacksmith, and little Pip, seen dragged back to capture by his more powerful fellow. Pip had long ago learned from Magwitch that this man was Compeyson, and when Wopsle said he had seen him sitting directly back of Pip at the play, the latter realized that they had this bitter enemy to reckon with, and that Magwitch was in terrible danger.

Only once was this time of waiting interrupted, and that was by a letter from Miss Havisham begging Pip to come to see her. He went, and she told him she realized now too late how wicked her plans had been, and begged him with tears to try to forgive her. Pip, sore as his own heart was, forgave her freely, and he was glad ever afterward that he had done so, for that same evening, while he was standing near her, her yellowed wedding veil, sweeping too near the hearth, caught fire and in an instant her whole dress burst into flame. Pip worked desperately to put out the fire, but she was so frightfully burned that it was plain she could not live long. His own hands and arms were painfully injured, so that he returned to London with one arm, for the time being, almost useless.

Compeyson, meanwhile, made friends with Orlick, and between them they wrote Pip a letter, decoying him to a lonely hut in the marshes. When he came there Orlick threw a noose over his head, tied him to the wall and would have killed him with a great stone-hammer but for Herbert, who broke down the door and rushed in just in time to put Orlick to flight and to save Pip's life. Herbert had picked up the letter Pip had thrown down, read it, seen in it something suspicious, and had followed from London.

Pip saw now there was no time to lose if he would save Magwitch. They made haste to London, and when night fell, took the convict in the rowboat and rowing a few miles down the river, waited to board a steamer bound for Germany.

What happened next happened very speedily. They were about to board the steamer when a boat containing Compeyson and some police shot out from the bank, Compeyson calling on Magwitch to surrender. The two boats clashed together, and the steamer, unable to stop, ran them both down. At the same moment Magwitch seized Compeyson and they went into the water together.

When Pip came to himself the steamer had gone, his own boat had sunk and he and Herbert had been dragged aboard the other. A few minutes later Magwitch was picked up, badly injured in the chest, and was handcuffed. But they did not find Compeyson – the other had killed him in that fearful struggle under water.

That night Magwitch was lodged in jail. Before many days he was tried for returning to England and was sentenced to be hanged. But it was clear before the trial ended that his injury would never let him live to suffer this penalty.

And now, as he saw the convict lying day by day drawing nearer to death, calling him "dear boy" and watching for his face, all the loathing and repugnance Pip had felt for him vanished away. He had sat beside the sick man at his trial; now he sat beside his cot each day in his cell, holding his hand. He knew there could be no longer any possibility of his taking the fortune the convict would leave, for, being condemned to death, all Magwitch's property went to the Crown. But he did not tell this to Magwitch.

One thing he discovered, however, which he told the dying man. This concerned Estella. As the film of death came over the convict's face Pip said:

"Dear Magwitch, you had a child once, whom you loved and lost. She is living still. She is a lady and very beautiful. And I love her!" And hearing this last glad news, Magwitch died.

Before this happened Herbert had left England for Egypt where his business took him. Left alone, after the strain, Pip fell sick of a fever and in the midst of this found himself arrested for debt.

That was the last he knew for many weeks. When he came to himself he found Joe, the true-hearted blacksmith, nursing him. He had paid Pip's debts. Miss Havisham was dead and Orlick had been sent to jail for robbing Uncle Pumblechook's house.

Joe's faithfulness smote Pip with a sense of his own ingratitude. After a visit to the old forge with Joe and Biddy, now Joe's wife, Pip felt how true were the old friends. He buried for ever the past false pride and folly and knew himself for all his trials a nobler man.

He sailed to Egypt, where he became a clerk in Herbert's business house, and finally a partner, and it was eleven years before he was in England again.

Then, one day he went down to the old ruined house where Miss Havisham had lived.

He entered the weed-grown garden, and there on a bench, a sad, beautiful widow, sat Estella. Her husband had treated her brutally till he died, and she had learned through suffering to know that she had a heart and had thrown away the one thing that could have made her happy – Pip's love.

When Pip and she left the old house that day it was hand in hand, never to part again.

LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF NICHOLAS NICKLEBY

Published 1839

<i>Scene:</i>	London, Portsmouth and the Country
<i>Time:</i>	About 1830

CHARACTERS

Nicholas Nickleby	A young gentleman
Mrs. Nickleby	His mother
Kate	His sister
Ralph Nickleby	His uncle
A miserly money-lender	
Noggs	Ralph Nickleby's clerk
Squeers	The proprietor of Dotheboys Hall, a country school for boys
Mrs. Squeers	His wife
Fanny	Their daughter
Wackford	Their son
Smike	A poor drudge at Dotheboys Hall
Befriended by Nicholas. In reality Ralph Nickleby's son	
Madame Mantalini	A London dressmaker
Kate's first employer	
Mr. Mantalini	Her husband
Miss Knag	Her forewoman
Sir Mulberry Hawk	A dissolute man of the world
Lord Frederick Verisopit	A young nobleman
Hawk's friend	
Mr. Vincent Crummles	Manager of a theater in Portsmouth
Mrs. Crummles	His wife
Ninetta	Their daughter
Known as "The Infant Phenomenon"	
Mrs. Witterly	A would-be fashionable lady
Kate's second employer	
The Cheeryble Brothers	Twin merchants
Nicholas's benefactors	
Bray	A spendthrift and invalid
Madeline	His daughter
Gride	A miser

NICHOLAS NICKLEBY

I

NICHOLAS AT DOTHEBOYS HALL

Once on a time, in England, there were two brothers named Nickleby who had grown up to be very different men. Ralph was a rich and miserly money-lender who gained his wealth by persecuting the poor of London – a thin, cold-hearted, crafty man with a cruel smile. The other, who lived in the country, was generous but poor, so that when he died he left his wife and two children, Nicholas and Kate, with hardly a penny to keep them from starving.

In their trouble the mother decided to go and try to obtain help from her husband's brother, Ralph Nickleby.

Ralph was angry when he learned they had come to London, for he loved his gold better than anything else in the world. He lived in Golden Square, a very rich part of the city, in a great fine house, all alone save for one servant, and he kept only one clerk.

This clerk, who was named Noggs, had one glass eye and long, bony fingers which he had an uncomfortable habit of cracking together when he spoke to any one. He had once been rich, but he had given his money to Ralph Nickleby to invest for him, and the money-lender had ended by getting it all, so that the poor man at last had to become the other's clerk. When he first saw Nicholas and Kate, Noggs was sorry enough for them, because he knew it would be little help they would get from their stingy uncle.

Nicholas was proud-mettled, and his very bearing angered the money-lender. He called him a young puppy, and a pauper besides, to which Nicholas replied with heat and spirit. His mother succeeded in smoothing things over for the time, and though Ralph Nickleby from that moment hated the boy, he grudgingly promised her to get him a situation as a teacher.

The school the miser selected was one called Dotheboys Hall, a long, cold-looking, tumble-down building, one story high, in a dreary part of the country. It belonged to a man named Squeers, a burly, ruffianly hypocrite, who pretended to the world to be a kind, fatherly master, but in fact treated his pupils with such cruelty that almost the only ones ever sent there were poor little orphans, whose guardians were glad to get rid of them. Squeers had an oily, wrinkled face and flat shiny hair, brushed straight up from his forehead. His sleeves were too long and his trousers too short, and he carried a leather whip about in his pocket to punish the boys with.

Mrs. Squeers was a fat woman, who wore a soiled dressing-gown, kept her hair in curl papers all day, and always had a yellow handkerchief tied around her neck. She was as cruel as her husband. They had one daughter and a son named Wackford. The latter they kept as plump as could be, so he would serve as an advertisement of the school; the rest of the boys, however, were pale and thin.

No wonder, for they got almost nothing to eat. For dinner all they had was a bowl of thin porridge with a wedge of bread for a spoon. When they had eaten the porridge they ate the spoon. Once a week they were forced to swallow a dreadful mixture of brimstone and sulphur, because this dose took away their appetites so that they ate less for several days afterward. They were made to sleep five in a bed, and were poorly clothed, for whenever a new boy came Mrs. Squeers took his clothes away from him for Wackford, and made the new boy wear any old ones she could find. They were allowed to write only letters telling how happy they were there, and when letters came for any of them, Mrs. Squeers opened them first and took for herself any money that they contained.

There was no attempt at teaching at Dotheboys Hall. The books were dirty and torn and the classes were scarecrows. All the boys were made to work hard at chores about the place, and were

flogged almost every day, so that their lives were miserable. What Squeers wanted was the money their guardians paid him for keeping them.

This was the kind of school for which Nicholas found himself hired at very low wages as a teacher.

He knew nothing about it yet, however, and thought himself lucky and his uncle kind as he bade his mother and Kate good-by and took the coach for Dotheboys Hall. Noggs, Ralph Nickleby's one-eyed clerk, was there to see him off, and put a letter into his hand as he started. Nicholas was so sad at leaving the two he loved best in the world, that he put it into his pocket and for the time forgot all about it.

On his arrival next day Nicholas's heart sank into his boots. When he saw the boys gathered in the barn, which served for a school-room, he was ready to die with shame and disgust to think he was to be a teacher in such a place.

But he had no money to take him back to London, and because he did not want to make his mother and Kate unhappy, he wrote them as cheerfully as he could. The letter Noggs had given him he remembered at last to read. It told him the writer feared his uncle had deceived him in regard to the school, and said if Nicholas needed a friend at any time, he would find one in him, Noggs. These kind words from the old clerk brought tears to Nicholas's eyes.

Of all the wretched boys there Nicholas pitied most a poor fellow named Smike, whom Squeers had made a drudge. He was tall and lanky and wore a little boy's suit, too short in the arms and legs. He had been placed there when a child, and the man who had brought him had disappeared and left no money to pay for his keep. Squeers's cruelties had made the unfortunate lad simple-minded. Besides this he was lame. Nicholas helped Smike all he could, and the poor fellow was so grateful that he followed the other about like a slave.

Squeers's daughter was named Fanny. She had red hair, which she wore in five exact rows on the top of her head. She thought herself very beautiful and at once fell in love with Nicholas. As he could not help showing that he did not like her, Miss Fanny grew spiteful and in revenge began to persecute Smike, knowing Nicholas liked him.

Smike stood this as long as he could, but at last one day he ran away. Squeers was furious. He took one chaise and Mrs. Squeers another, and off they went in different directions to find him. Nicholas was miserable, for he knew Smike would be caught. Sure enough, on the second day Mrs. Squeers returned, dragging her victim. When Squeers arrived Smike was taken from the cellar, where he had been locked up, and brought before the assembled boys for a public thrashing.

At the rain of brutal blows which began Nicholas's blood boiled. He stepped forward, crying "Stop!"

For answer Squeers struck him savagely in the face with his heavy ruler. Then Nicholas threw away his self-control, and leaping on the bully, to the unmeasured delight of the boys, took the ruler from him and thrashed him until he cried for mercy. All the while Mrs. Squeers was trying to drag the victor away by his coat tails, while the spiteful Miss Fanny threw inkstands at his head.

When his arm was tired Nicholas gave Squeers a final blow, which knocked him senseless into a corner, coolly went to his room, packed his few belongings in a bundle and left Dotheboys Hall for ever.

He was two hundred and fifty miles from London and had very little money. Snow was falling and for that night he took refuge in an empty barn. In the morning he awoke, startled, to see a figure sitting by him. It was Smike, who had followed him.

The poor creature fell on his knees. "Let me go with you!" he cried. "I want no clothes and I can beg my food. I will be your faithful servant. Only let me go with you."

"And so you shall!" said Nicholas. "Come!" He rose, took up his bundle, gave his hand to Smike and so they set out toward London together.

II

NICHOLAS BECOMES AN ACTOR

Meanwhile Ralph Nickleby, the money-lender, had given Kate and her mother leave to live in a rickety, unoccupied house which he owned. It was a dingy building on an old wharf, but Noggs, the clerk, himself cleaned and furnished one of its rooms so that it was fairly comfortable. When they were settled Ralph took Kate to a dressmaker's, where he got her a situation, hoping thus they would not call on him for any money.

The dressmaker called herself Madame Mantalini. Her real name was Muntle, but she thought the other sounded better. Her husband was a plump, lazy man with huge side-whiskers, who spent most of the time curling them and betting on horse-races. He gambled away all the money Madame Mantalini made, but he pretended to be terribly fond of her, and was always calling her his "little fairy" and his "heart's delight," so that the silly woman always forgave him. He tried to kiss Kate the first day, which made her detest him.

At Madame Mantalini's Kate had to stand up all day trying on dresses for rich ladies, who were often rude to her. And because they preferred to be waited on by the pretty, rosy-cheeked girl, Miss Knag, the ugly forewoman, hated the child, and did all she could to make her unhappy.

Kate's mother used to wait each evening on the street corner outside, and they would walk home together. They had no idea what trouble Nicholas was having all this time, because he had written them such cheerful letters, and whenever they felt sadder than usual they would comfort themselves by thinking how well he was getting along and what a fine position he had.

If they could have seen him when he finally got to London after running away from Dotheboys Hall, they would hardly have known him. Both he and poor Smike were hungry and muddy and tired. Remembering Noggs's kind letter, Nicholas went first to the little garret where the clerk lived, and through him he found a cheap room on the roof of the building, which he rented for himself and Smike. Then he started out to find his mother and Kate.

He would have hastened if he had guessed what was happening or how badly Kate had been treated by Ralph Nickleby.

The evening before, as it happened, Kate had been invited to dinner at her uncle's fine house, and there she had met two dissipated young men – Lord Frederick Verisopht and Sir Mulberry Hawk, the latter of whom had looked at her and talked to her so rudely that she had indignantly left the table and gone home. She had not slept a wink that night, and the next morning, to make her and her mother more wretched still, Ralph Nickleby called with a letter he had just received from Fanny Squeers, declaring that Nicholas was a thief and a scoundrel; that he had tried to murder her father and all his family, and had run off with one of the pupils of Dotheboys Hall.

To be sure, neither of them believed it, but it made them very unhappy. And then, just as Ralph was reading them the last line of the letter, in came Nicholas! You may be sure he comforted them and told them it was a lie. He told Ralph what he thought of him also in stern language, which made his uncle angrier than ever.

Then, seeing that his presence was making things worse, and realizing in what poverty his dear ones were, and that they were so wholly dependent on Ralph for help, Nicholas came to a very brave determination. He told them that, as he could not help them himself, he would go away from them until his fortune bettered. So, bidding them good-by, and telling his uncle he should keep watch over them and that if any harm came to them he would hold him accountable, Nicholas went sadly back to his garret room and to Smike.

He tried hard for some days to find a situation, but failed, and he would not take money from Noggs, who was so poor himself. So at last, with Smike, he set out on foot for Portsmouth, which was a seaport, thinking there they might find a chance to go as sailors in some ship.

At an inn on the way, however, Nicholas met a man who caused him to change all his plans. This man was a Mr. Vincent Crummles. When Nicholas first saw him in the inn he was teaching his two sons to make-believe fight with swords. They were practising for a play, for Mr. Crummles was manager of a theater in Portsmouth, and he proposed that Nicholas join the company and become an actor.

There seemed nothing else to do, so Nicholas agreed, and next day they went to the Portsmouth theater, where he was introduced to all the company.

It was a very curious mixture. There was Mrs. Crummles, who took the tickets, and little Miss Crummles, whom the bills called "The Infant Phenomenon," and who was always said to be only ten years old. There was a slim young man with weak eyes who played the lover, and a fat man with a turned-up nose who played the funny countryman, and a shabby old man whose breath smelled of gin, who took the part of the good old banker with the gray side-whiskers. Then there was the lady who acted the rôle of the wicked adventuress, and all the others.

Nicholas had to begin by writing a play which had parts for all of them, and it proved a great success. Smike, whom he drilled himself, took the part of a hungry boy, and he looked so starved, naturally, from his life with Squeers, that he was tremendously applauded.

One of the other actors was so jealous at the play's success that he sent Nicholas a challenge to a duel, but Nicholas walked on to the stage before the whole company and knocked the actor down, and after that he had no trouble and was a great favorite.

He might have stayed a long time at Mr. Crummles's theater, for he had earned quite a good deal of money, but one day he got a letter from Noggs, the clerk, telling him that all was not well with his mother and Kate. And without waiting an hour, Nicholas resigned from the company and, with Smike, set out again for London.

III NICHOLAS COMES TO KATE'S RESCUE

Noggs was right. Ralph Nickleby had never ceased to persecute Kate and her mother. In fact, when he had invited Kate to the dinner at which she had been insulted, it was for his own evil purpose. He had done so, hoping she might impress the foolish young Lord Verisopht, whose money he was hoping to get, and whom he wished to attract to his house.

The young nobleman, as Ralph had intended, fell in love with Kate's sweet face at once, and found out from her uncle where she lived.

She had lost her first position at the dressmaker's (for Mr. Mantalini had thrown away his wife's money on race-horses until the sheriff had seized the business), and she was acting now as companion to a Mrs. Witterly, a pale, languid lady who considered herself a very fashionable person indeed, and was always suffering from imaginary ailments. Lord Frederick and Sir Mulberry Hawk came often to the house, pretending to flatter Mrs. Witterly, but really to see Kate, who heartily disliked them both.

Mrs. Witterly at last came to realize that the two men at whose attentions she had felt so flattered really cared only for her young companion, and, being vain and jealous, she tormented and scolded Kate till the poor girl's life was a burden.

At length, feeling that she could endure it no longer, Kate went to Ralph and begged him with tears to help her find another situation, but the money-lender refused to aid her. Noggs, the clerk, was sorry for her, but could do nothing except write to Nicholas, and this was the reason for the letter that had brought Nicholas post-haste back to London.

Just what kind of persecution Kate had had to bear he learned by accident almost as soon as he got there.

As he sat in a coffee-house he suddenly heard the words, "little Kate Nickleby," spoken by a man behind him. He turned and listened.

Four men whom he had never seen were drinking toasts to her, and Nicholas grew hot with rage at the coarse words they used. Sitting there, scarcely able to contain himself, he heard the whole story of his Uncle Ralph's plot, he heard his sister's sufferings derided, her goodness jeered at, her beauty made the subject of insolent jests. One of the four men, of course, was Lord Frederick Verisopht, and the coarsest and the most vulgar of them all, as may be guessed, was Sir Mulberry Hawk.

White with anger, Nicholas confronted the party and, throwing down his card on the table, declared that the lady in question was his sister, and demanded of Hawk his name. Hawk refused to answer. Nicholas called him a liar and a coward, and seating himself, swore the other should not leave his sight before he knew who he was.

When Hawk attempted to enter his carriage Nicholas sprang on to the step. The other, in a fury, struck him with the whip, and Nicholas, wrenching it from him, with one blow laid open Hawk's cheek. The horse, frightened at the struggle, started off at a terrific speed, and Nicholas felt himself hurled to the ground.

As he rose, he saw the runaway horse, whirling across the pavement, upset the carriage with a crash of breaking glass. Nicholas had no doubt that the man it held had been frightfully hurt if not killed. He felt faint from his own fall, and it was with difficulty that he reached Noggs's garret, whither, before the adventure in the coffee-room, he had sent Smike to announce his coming.

His first step now was to write a letter to Ralph, telling him he at last knew what a villain he was, and that he and his mother and sister cast him off for ever, with shame that they had ever asked his aid. The next day Nicholas took Kate from the Witterly house and his mother from her poor lodging, and rented them rooms in another part of the city. Then he started out to find some employment for himself.

For a long time he was unsuccessful, but one day (and a very lucky day Nicholas thought it ever afterward) he met on the street a round-faced, jolly-looking old gentleman, with whom he fell into conversation, and before long, almost without knowing it, he had told him all his troubles.

This old gentleman was named Cheeryble, and the firm to which he belonged was Cheeryble Brothers. He and his twin brother had come to London, barefoot, when they were boys, and though they had grown very rich, they had never forgotten what it was to be poor and wretched. The old gentleman asked Nicholas to come with him to his office and there they met the other Mr. Cheeryble.

Nicholas could scarcely tell the two brothers apart, for they were like as two peas. They were precisely the same size, wore clothes just alike and laughed in the same key. Each had even lost exactly the same number of teeth. They were loved by everybody, for they went through life doing good wherever they could. They both liked Nicholas at once, and the upshot was that they gave him a position in their counting-room and rented a pleasant cottage near by for his mother and Kate.

So there Nicholas took up work and they were all happy and comfortable – very different from Ralph Nickleby, the money-lender, in his fine house, with only the memory of his own wickedness for company.

IV WHAT HAPPENED TO EVERYBODY

Ralph Nickleby's hatred had been growing day by day. As he could not harm Nicholas now, he tried to hurt him through Smike. He sent for Squeers, and the latter, finding Smike alone one day on the street, seized him, put him in a coach and started to take him back to Dotheboys Hall. But luckily his victim escaped and got back to London.

Then Ralph formed a wicked plot to get Smike surely into their hands. He hired a man to claim that he was the boy's father, who had first taken him to Squeers's school. Squeers, too, swore to this

lying tale. But the Cheeryble brothers suspected the story, and when Ralph saw they were determined to help Nicholas protect Smike, he was afraid to go any further with the plan. So he smothered his rage for the time being, and meanwhile a most important thing happened to Nicholas – he fell in love!

It came about in this way: There was a man named Bray, who had been arrested for debt and was allowed to live only in a certain street under the guardianship of the jailer, for this was the law in England then. He was slowly dying of heart-disease, and all the money he had to live on was what his only daughter, a lovely girl named Madeline, earned by painting and selling pictures.

The Cheeryble brothers had learned of their poverty, (for it was hard for Madeline to find purchasers), and they sent Nicholas to buy some of the pictures. He was to pretend to be a dealer, so that Madeline would not suspect it was done for charity. Nicholas went more than once and soon had fallen very much in love with Madeline Bray.

He was not the only one who admired her, however. There was an old man named Gride, almost as stingy as Ralph Nickleby, who had discovered by accident that a large sum of money really belonged to Madeline, which she and her father knew nothing about, and he thought it would be a fine thing to marry her and thus get this fortune into his hands. Now, Ralph Nickleby was one of the men who was keeping Bray a prisoner, and so Gride went to him and asked him to help him marry Madeline. If Bray made his daughter marry the old miser he himself was to be set free. Ralph, for his share, was to get some of the money the old man Gride knew should be Madeline's.

It was a pretty plan and it pleased Ralph, for he cared little what lives he ruined so long as he got money by it. So he agreed, and soon convinced Bray (who, ill as he was, was utterly selfish) that it would be a fine thing for Madeline to marry the hideous old Gride and so free her father. At length, in despair, because she thought it her duty to her heartless father, Madeline consented to do so.

Nicholas might never have known of this till after the wedding, but luckily Noggs, the clerk, had overheard the old skinflint make the bargain with Ralph, and when one day Nicholas confessed that he was in love with Madeline, the good-hearted clerk told him all that he had found out.

Nicholas was in great trouble, for he loved Madeline very dearly. He went to her and begged her not to marry Gride, but she thought it her duty. He went to Gride, too, but the hideous old miser only sneered at him.

At last, in desperation, he told Kate, and the brother and sister went together to Bray's house. They reached it just as the wedding was about to begin.

Ralph Nickleby, who was there, foamed with fury to find the nephew he so hated again stepping between him and his evil designs. He tried to bar them out, but Nicholas forced him back.

They would doubtless have come to blows, but at that moment there came from another room the sound of a fall, and a scream from Madeline. The excitement had proved too much for her father. His heart had failed and he had fallen dead on the floor. Thus Providence interfered to bring the wicked scheme of the marriage to naught.

Vainly did Gride bemoan the loss of the money he had hoped to gain, and vainly did Ralph Nickleby, with curses, try to prevent. Nicholas thrust them both aside, lifted the unconscious Madeline as easily as if she had been a baby, placed her with Kate in a coach and, daring Ralph to follow; jumped up beside the coachman and bade him drive away.

He took her to his own home, where his mother and Kate cared for her tenderly till she had recovered from the shock and was her own lovely self again.

The penalty that he had so long deserved was soon to overtake Ralph Nickleby. He lost much of his wealth through a failure, and close on the heels of this misfortune came the news that the infamous plot he had formed against Smike had been discovered and that Squeers, his accomplice, had been arrested.

The most terrible blow came last. A man whom Ralph had long ago ruined and had caused to be transported for a crime, confessed that he had been the one who, many years before, had left Smike at Dotheboys Hall, and he confessed also that Smike was really Ralph Nickleby's own son

by a secret marriage. Ralph had not known this, because the man, in revenge, had falsely told him the child was dead.

The knowledge that, in Smike, he had been persecuting his own son was the crowning blow for cruel Ralph Nickleby. When he heard this he locked himself up alone in his great house and never was seen alive again. His body was found in the garret where he had hanged himself to a rafter.

Poor Smike, however, did not live to sorrow over the villainy of his father. The exposure and hardships of his years at Squeers's school had broken his health. He had for long been gradually growing weaker, and at last one day he died peacefully, with Nicholas's arms around him.

Every one of whose villainy this story tells came to a bad end. Sir Mulberry Hawk quarreled with young Lord Verisopht and shot him dead in the duel that followed. For this he himself had to fly to a foreign country, where he finally died miserably in jail. Gride, the miser who had plotted to marry Madeline, met almost as terrible a fate as Ralph's. His house was broken into by burglars one night and he was found murdered in his bed.

Squeers was declared guilty and transported for seven years. When the news reached Dotheboys Hall such a cheer arose as had never been heard there. It came on the weekly "treacle day," and the boys ducked young Wackford in the soup kettle and made Mrs. Squeers swallow a big dose of her own brimstone. Then, big and little, they all ran away, just as Nicholas and Smike had done.

Kate married a nephew of the Cheeryble brothers, and Nicholas, of course, married Madeline, and in time became a partner in the firm. All of them lived near by, and their little children played together under the watchful care of old Noggs, the one-eyed clerk, who loved them all alike.

The children laid flowers every day on poor Smike's grave, and often their eyes filled with tears as they spoke low and softly of the dead cousin they had never known.

DEALINGS WITH THE FIRM OF DOMBEY AND SON WHOLESALE, RETAIL, AND FOR EXPORTATION

Published 1846–1848

<i>Scene:</i>	London, Brighton, and France
<i>Time:</i>	About 1830 to 1846

CHARACTERS

Mr. Dombey	A London merchant
Head of the firm of Dombey and Son	
'Little Paul'	His son
Florence	His daughter
Called by little Paul, 'Floy'	
Edith Granger	A widow
Later, Mr. Dombey's wife	
Walter Gay	A clerk for Dombey and Son
Later, Florence's husband	
Solomon Gills	His uncle
A ship's instrument maker. Known as Old Sol	
Captain Cuttle	A retired seaman
Bosom friend of Old Sol's	
Carker	Manager for Dombey and Son
Mrs. Pipchin	Proprietress of a children's boarding-house at Brighton
Later, Mr. Dombey's housekeeper	
Doctor Blimber	Proprietor of a boys' school at Brighton
Major Bagstock	A retired army officer
Diogenes	Doctor Blimber's dog
Later a pet of Florence's	

DOMBEY AND SON

I LITTLE PAUL

In London there was once a business house known as Dombey and Son. It had borne that name for generations, though at the time this story begins Mr. Dombey, the head of the house, had no son. He was a merchant, hard, cold and selfish, who thought the world was made only for his firm to trade in. He had one little daughter, Florence, but never since her birth had he loved or petted her because of his disappointment that she was not a boy.

When at last a son was born to him it wakened something at the bottom of his cold and heavy heart that he had never known before. He scarcely grieved for his wife, who died when the baby was born, but gave all his thought to the child. He named him Paul, and began at once to long for the time when he should become old enough to be a real member of the firm in which all his own interest centered – Dombey and Son. He hired the best nurse he could find, and, when he was not at his office, would sit and watch the baby Paul hour after hour, laying plans for his future. So selfishly was the father's soul wrapped up in this that he scarcely ever noticed poor, lonely little Florence, whose warm heart was starving for affection.

Little Paul's nurse was very fond of him, and of his sister, too; but she had children of her own also, and one day, instead of walking up and down with Florence and the baby near the Dombey house, she took the children to another part of the city to visit her own home.

This was a wrong thing to do, and resulted in a very unhappy adventure for Florence. On their way home a mad bull broke away from his keepers and charged through the crowded street. There was great screaming and confusion and people ran in every direction, Florence among the rest. She ran for a long way, and when she stopped, her nurse was nowhere to be seen. Terrified to find herself lost in the great city, she began to cry.

The next thing she knew, an ugly old woman, with red-rimmed eyes and a mouth that mumbled all the while, grasped her by the wrist and dragged her through the shabby doorway of a dirty house into a back room heaped with rags.

"I want that pretty frock," said she, "and that little bonnet and your petticoat. Come! Take them off!"

Florence, dreadfully frightened, obeyed. The old woman took away her shoes, too, and made her put on some filthy ragged clothing from the heaps on the floor. Then she let her go, first making her promise she would not ask any one to show her the way home.

The poor child could think of nothing else but to find her father's office at Dombey and Son's, and for two hours she walked, asking the way of everybody she met. She might not have found it at all, but at a wharf where she wandered, there happened to be a young clerk of Dombey and Son's, and the minute he was pointed out to her she felt such trust in his bright and open face that she caught his hand and sobbed out all her story.

This lad's name was Walter Gay. He lived with his uncle, honest old Solomon Gills, a maker of ship's instruments, who kept a little shop with the wooden figure of a midshipman set outside. Very few customers ever came into the shop, and, indeed, hardly any one else, for Old Sol, as the neighbors called him, had only one intimate friend.

This friend was a retired seaman named Captain Cuttle, who always dressed in blue, as if he were a bird and those were his feathers. He had a hook instead of a hand attached to his right wrist, a shirt collar so large that it looked like a small sail, and wherever he went he carried in his left hand a thick stick that was covered all over (like his nose) with knobs.

Captain Cuttle used to talk on land just as if he were at sea. He would say "Steady!" and "Belay, there!" and called Old Sol "Shipmate," as though the little shop, in which he spent his evenings, was a ship. He had a deep, rumbling voice, in which he would sing *Lovely Peg*, the only song he knew, and which he never but once got through to the last line. But in spite of his queer ways and talk, Captain Cuttle had the softest, kindest heart in the world. He thought old Solomon Gills the greatest man alive, and was as fond as possible of "Wal'r," as he called the nephew. And, indeed, Walter was a handsome boy, and as good as he was handsome.

Walter soothed Florence's tears and took her, ragged clothes and all, straight home to Solomon Gills's shop, where his uncle gave her a warm supper, while Walter ran to the Dombey house with the news that she was found, and to bring back a dress for her to wear.

So Florence's adventure turned out very well in one way, since through it she first met Walter Gay; but it turned out badly in another way, for Mr. Dombey was angry that any one should have seen a daughter of his in such a plight, and, unjustly enough, treasured this anger against Walter. Florence, however, never forgot her rescuer after that day, and as for Walter, he fell quite in love with her.

Florence loved her little brother very dearly, but Paul, in the constant companionship of his father, grew up without boys or play. His face was old and wistful, and he had an old-fashioned way of sitting, brooding in his little arm-chair beside his father, looking into the fire. He used to ask strange, wise questions, and the only time he seemed childlike at all was when he was with Florence. He was never strong and well, like her, but he grew tired easily, and used to say that his bones ached.

Mr. Dombey at length grew anxious about Paul's health and sent him with Florence to Brighton, a town on the sea-coast, to the house of a Mrs. Pipchin, a stooped old lady with a mottled face, a hooked nose and a hard gray eye.

Mrs. Pipchin took little children to board, and her idea of "managing" them was to give them everything they didn't like and nothing they did like. She lived in a gloomy house, so windy that it always sounded to any one in it like a great shell which one had to hold to his ear whether he liked it or not. The children there stayed most of the time in a bare room they called "the dungeon," with a big ragged fireplace in it. They, had only bread and butter and rice to eat, while Mrs. Pipchin had tea and mutton chops and buttered toast and other nice things.

Little Paul's father did not know what a dreary place this was for a child, or doubtless he would not have sent him there. Mr. Dombey knew so little about children that it seemed as if he had never been a child himself. Paul was not happy – except when he was out on the beach with Florence, who used to draw him in a little carriage and sing to him and tell him stories. Once a week Mr. Dombey came to Brighton and then she and little Paul would go to his hotel to take tea with him.

Paul seemed to find a curious fascination in Mrs. Pipchin. He would sit by the hour before the fire looking steadily at her, where she sat with her old black cat beside her, till his gaze quite disturbed her. He did not care to play with other children – only with Florence, whom he called "Floy." Often, as they sat together on the beach, he would ask her what it was the sea was always saying, and would rise up on his couch to listen to something he seemed to hear, far, far away.

Walter Gay, meanwhile, in London, was working away and thinking often of Florence. He was greatly worried about his Uncle Solomon, for the business of the old instrument maker was in a bad way, and Old Sol himself was melancholy.

One day Walter came home from his work at Dombey and Son's to find that an officer had taken possession of the shop and all that was in it for debt. His old Uncle Sol was sobbing like a child, and not knowing what else to do, he went post-haste for Captain Cuttle.

He found the captain with his hat on, peeling potatoes with a knife screwed into the wooden socket in his wrist instead of the hook. When he told him what had happened, Captain Cuttle jumped up, put all the money he had, his silver watch, some spoons and a pair of sugar-tongs into his pocket and went back at once with him to the shop.

But the debt, he found, was far too big to be thus paid, and Captain Cuttle advised Walter to go to Mr. Dombey and ask him to help them, or else everything in the shop would have to be sold, and that would kill old Solomon Gills.

It was Saturday, and Mr. Dombey had gone to see little Paul, so Walter and Captain Cuttle took the next coach for Brighton.

They found him with the children at breakfast, and Walter, discouraged by his cold look, faltered lamely through his story, while Captain Cuttle laid on the table the money, the watch, the spoons and the sugar-tongs, offering them to help pay the debt. Mr. Dombey was astonished at his strange appearance and indignant at being annoyed by such an errand, so that Florence, seeing his mood and Walter's trouble, began to sob. Little Paul, however, stood looking from Walter to his father so intently and wisely that the latter, telling him he was one day to be a part of Dombey and Son, asked him if he would like to loan Walter the money.

Paul joyfully said yes, and Mr. Dombey, telling Walter that it was to be considered a loan from the boy, gave him a note which would at once release his uncle from his difficulty. So Walter and Captain Cuttle went gladly back to London.

Soon after this, when Paul was six years old, his father thought he should be studying, so he put him in a school next door to Mrs. Pipchin's.

The master was Doctor Blimber, a portly gentleman in knee-breeches, with a bald head and a double chin. He made all the boys there study much too hard; even those only six years old had to learn Greek and history. Poor little Paul did the best he could, but such difficult tasks made him giddy and dull. It was only the Saturdays he enjoyed; these he spent with Florence on the seashore or in Mrs. Pipchin's bare room.

Paul would have broken down sooner under Doctor Blimber's system but that Florence bought all the books he studied and studied them herself, so as to help him on Saturdays. People called him "old-fashioned," and that troubled him a great deal, but he tried to love even the old watch-dog at Doctor Blimber's, and before the holidays came everybody in the school liked him.

But before the term ended little Paul fell sick. He seemed not to be ill of any particular disease, but only weak; so weak he had to sit propped up with pillows at the entertainment Doctor Blimber gave on the final evening. After that everything was hazy until he found himself, somehow, at home in bed, with Florence beside him.

He lay there day after day, watching and dreaming. He dreamed often of a swift, silent river that flowed on and on, and he wanted to stop it with his hands.

"Why will it never stop, Floy?" he would ask her. "It is bearing me away, I think."

There were many shadowy figures that came and went. One came often and sat long, but never spoke. One day he saw it was his father, and he called out to it: "Don't be so sorry for me, dear papa. Indeed, I am quite happy."

Once he roused himself, and there were many about the bed: Florence, his father, his old nurse and Walter Gay, and he called each by name and waved his hand to them.

Florence took him in her arms and he heard the swift river flowing.

"How fast it runs, Floy! It is taking me with it. There is a shore before me now. Who is standing on the bank?"

He put his hands together behind her neck, as he had been used to do at his prayers.

"Mama is like you, Floy," he said. "I know her by her face. The light about the head is shining upon me as I go."

So little Paul died.

II

HOW FLORENCE LOST HER FATHER

It was a sad, sad house for many days after that, and Florence, in her loneliness, often thought her heart would break. Her father she scarcely ever saw, for he sat alone in his room. Every night she would steal down the dark hall to his door, and lay her head against the panels, hungering for a little love; but he thought only of his dead son, and gave no sign of tenderness to her.

One of Doctor Blimber's pupils begged for and brought her Diogenes, the old watch-dog which little Paul had petted at the school and this dog was all she had to love. She had not seen Walter Gay since the death of her brother, though he himself thought of her very often.

Walter's prospects, thanks to an enemy he had made without knowing it, had changed since then. This enemy was Carker, the manager at Dombey and Son's.

Carker was a thin man, with the whitest, most regular teeth, which he continually showed in an unpleasant smile. There was something cat-like about him; the more he disliked a person the wider was his smile. Carker had a brother whom he hated, and Walter unconsciously earned his enmity by liking and being kind to this brother.

Mr. Dombey was not fond of Walter either, the less so because Florence liked him, and disliking Florence, he disliked all for whom she cared. So, between Mr. Dombey and Carker, Walter was ordered to go, on business for the firm, on a long voyage to the West Indies.

Walter was not deceived. He knew he was not sent there for his own good, but in order not to worry his uncle he and Captain Cuttle pretended that it was a splendid opportunity. So old Solomon Gills tried not to sorrow for his going.

Florence heard of the voyage, and, the night before Walter sailed, in she came to the little shop where Walter had brought her years before when she had been lost. She kissed Old Sol and called Walter her brother, and said she would never forget him.

And so Walter, when next day he sailed away, waving his hand to his uncle and Captain Cuttle, went with even more of love in his heart for Florence than he had had.

After his going Florence was lonelier than before. She was all alone, save for the dog Diogenes and her books and music. Her father was much away, and in the evenings she could go into his room and nestle in his easy chair without fear of repulse. She kept the room in order and a fresh nosegay on the table, and never left it without leaving on his deserted desk a kiss and a tear. The purpose of her life, she determined, should be to try continually to let her father know how much she loved him.

But months passed and she had no chance. Her father, in fact, seldom came near the house. He was away visiting in the country with a Major Bagstock, who had struck up an acquaintance with him because of Mr. Dombey's wealth.

Bagstock (who had a habit of referring to himself as "J. B." or "Joey B.," or almost anything but his full name) was as fat as a dancing bear, with a purple, apoplectic-looking face, and a laugh like a horse's cough. He was a glutton, and stuffed himself so at meals that he did little but choke and wheeze through the latter half of them. He was a great flatterer, however, and he flattered so well that Mr. Dombey, blind from his own pride, thought him a very proper person indeed. And even though everybody laughed at the major, Mr. Dombey always found him most agreeable company.

There was an old lady at the town they visited who was poor, but very fond of fashion and rich people. She had no heart, and was silly enough, even though she was seventy years old, to wear rouge on her cheeks and dress like a girl of seventeen. She had a widowed daughter, Edith Granger, a proud, lovely woman, who despised the life her mother led, but, in spite of this, was weak enough to be influenced by her.

Major Bagstock introduced Mr. Dombey to the mother, and the latter soon made up her mind that her daughter should marry him. The major (who wanted Mr. Dombey to marry so he himself

could profit by the dinners and entertainments that would follow) helped this affair on all he could, and Edith, though at times she hated herself for the false part she was playing, agreed to it.

To tell the truth, Mr. Dombey was so full of his own conceit that he never stopped to wonder if Edith could really love him. She was beautiful and as cold and haughty as he was himself, and that was all he considered. So Major Bagstock and the old lady were soon chuckling and wheezing together with delight at the success of their plan, and before long Edith had promised to marry Florence's father.

Poor Florence! She had other griefs of her own by this time. Carker, of Dombey and Son, with the false smile and the white teeth, came several times to see her, asking if she had messages to send to her father – each time seeming purposely to wound her by recalling her father's dislike. She tried to like the smooth, oily manager, but there was something in his face she could not but distrust.

To add to her trouble, the ship by which Walter Gay had sailed for the West Indies had not yet arrived there. It was long overdue, and in the absence of news people began to fear it had been lost. She went to the little shop where the wooden midshipman stood, but found old Solomon Gills and Captain Cuttle in as great anxiety.

Old Sol, indeed, was soon in such distress for fear Walter had been drowned, that he felt he could bear the suspense no longer. One day, soon after Florence's visit, he disappeared from London, leaving a letter for Captain Cuttle.

This letter said he had gone to the West Indies to search for Walter, and asked the captain to care for the little shop and keep it open, so that it could be a home for his nephew if he should ever appear. As for himself, Old Sol said if he did not return within a year he would be dead, and the captain should take the shop for his own.

The disappearance of his old friend was a great blow to bluff Captain Cuttle, but, determined to do his part, he left his own lodgings and took up his place at the sign of the wooden midshipman to wait for news either of Walter or of old Solomon Gills.

Florence knew nothing about this, for the captain had not the heart to tell her. And, for her own part, she had much to think of in the approaching marriage of her father, in preparation for which the house was full of painters and paper-hangers, making it over for the bride.

The first time Florence saw Edith was when one day she entered the parlor to find her father there with a strange, beautiful lady beside him. Mr. Dombey told her the lady would soon be her mama, and Edith, touched by the child's sweet face, bent down and kissed her so tenderly that Florence, so starved for affection, began at that moment to love her, and to hope through Edith's love finally to win the love of her father.

The wedding was a very grand one, and many people were at the church to see it. Even Captain Cuttle watched it from the gallery, and Carker's smile, as he looked on, showed more of his white teeth than ever. The only thing that marred Florence's happiness and hope on this day was the knowledge that Walter had not been heard from and the fear that he might never return.

But in spite of her brave hope, after her father and Edith came back from their wedding journey and the life of parties and dinners began, Florence was soon disheartened. In the first flush of confidence she opened all her soul to Edith and begged her to teach her to win her father's liking. But Edith, knowing (as Florence did not know) how she had sold herself in this rich marriage and that she had no particle of love in her heart for her husband, told her sadly that she could not help her. This puzzled Florence greatly, for she loved Edith and knew that Edith loved her in return.

In fact, it was Florence's trust and innocence that made Edith's conscience torture her the more. In Florence's pure presence she felt more and more unworthy, and the knowledge that her husband's hardness of heart was crushing the child's life and happiness made her hate him.

Florence saw, before many months passed, that her father and Edith did not live in love and contentment. Indeed, how could they? She had married for ambition, he for pride, and neither loved nor would yield to the other. They had not the same friends or acquaintances. Hers were people of

fashion; his were men of business. At the dinners they gave, Mr. Dombey did not think Edith treated his friends politely enough. He began to reprove her more and more often, and when she paid no heed he finally chid her openly and sternly in the presence of Carker (who brought his smile and gleaming teeth often to the house), knowing this action would most wound Edith's pride. And at length he took the management of the house out of her hands and hired as housekeeper Mrs. Pipchin, the old ogre of Brighton, at whose house Florence and little Paul had once lived.

The worst of it all was that the more Mr. Dombey grew to dislike his wife the more he saw she loved Florence, and this made him detest the poor child more than ever. He imagined, in his cruel selfishness, that as Florence had come between him and the love of little Paul, so she was now coming between him and his wife. Finally he sent Carker to Edith, telling her she must no longer sit or talk with Florence – that they must see each other only in his presence.

Florence's cup of bitterness was now almost full, for she knew nothing of this command, and, when she saw that Edith avoided her, sorrowed in secret. She was quite alone again now, save for Diogenes. Neither Major Bagstock, her father's flatterer, nor Carker, with his cat-like smile, could she see without a shudder, and all the while her heart was aching for her father's love.

Mr. Dombey's insults were heaped more and more upon the defenseless Edith, till at last, made desperate by his pride and cruelty, she prepared a terrible revenge. On the morning of the anniversary of their wedding-day Mr. Dombey was startled by the news that Edith had run away with the false-hearted Carker!

On that terrible morning, when the proud old man sat stunned in his room, Florence, yielding to her first impulse of grief and pity for him, ran to him to comfort him. But when she would have thrown her arms around his neck he lifted his arm and struck her so that she tottered.

And as he did so he bade her follow Edith, since they had always been in league!

In that blow Florence felt at last his cruelty, neglect and hatred trampling down any feeling of compassion he may once have had for her. She saw she had no longer a father she could love; and, wringing her hands, with her head bent to hide her agony of tears, ran out of the house that could no more be her home, into the heartless street.

III

HOW FLORENCE REACHED A REFUGE

For a long time she ran without purpose, weeping, and not knowing where to go. But at last she thought of the day, so many years before, when she had been lost and when Walter Gay had found her. He had taken her then to the shop of his uncle, old Solomon Gills. There, she thought, she might at least find shelter.

When she got to the sign of the wooden midshipman she had just enough strength to knock and push open the door, and then, at sight of Captain Cuttle's honest face, all her strength left her, and she fainted on the threshold.

Captain Cuttle was cooking his breakfast. He knew her at once, even though she had grown to be a young lady. He lifted her and laid her on the sofa, calling her his "lady lass," and bathed her face in cold water till she opened her eyes and knew him. She told him all her story, and he comforted her, and told her the shop should be her home just as long as she would stay in it. When she had eaten some toast and drunk some tea he made her lie down in the little upper room and sleep till she woke refreshed at evening.

When she came down the stair she found Captain Cuttle cooking dinner. He seemed to her then to have some great, joyful and mysterious secret. All through the evening and until she went to bed he would persist in drawing the conversation around to Walter, which brought the tears again and again to her eyes.

Then he would rumble out, "Wal'r's drown-ded, ain't he, pretty?" and nod his head and look very wise.

Indeed, Captain Cuttle *did* have a wonderful secret. While Florence had been sleeping he had received a great piece of news: Walter, whom every one had believed drowned, had escaped death alone of all on the wrecked vessel. He had clung to a spar when the ship went down, and had been picked up by a vessel going in another direction, so he had had no way of sending back news of his safety. The ship that had rescued him had at last brought him back to London, and it would not be long now before he would appear at the shop.

You may guess Captain Cuttle's heart was full of thankfulness. But, not knowing much about such matters, he had an idea that the good news must be broken very gently to Florence. So at last he commenced to tell her a story about a shipwreck in which only one was saved, and then she began to suspect the truth and her heart beat joyfully. Just as he finished the story the door opened. There was Walter himself, alive and well, and with a cry of joy she sprang to his arms.

There was much to talk of that night in the little shop. With her face on Captain Cuttle's shoulder, Florence told him how and why she had left her home. And Walter, as he took her hand and kissed it, knew that she was a homeless, wandering fugitive, but richer to him thus than in all the wealth and pride of her former station, that had once made her seem so far off from him. Very soon after that he told Florence that he loved her – not as a brother, but as something even dearer – and she promised to be his wife.

On the evening before their wedding-day one more surprise came to them. They were all gathered in the shop when the outer door opened. Captain Cuttle suddenly hit the table a terrific blow with his hook, shouted "Sol Gills, ahoy!" and tumbled into the arms of a man in an old, weather-beaten coat. It was old Solomon Gills indeed, returned from his long search, and now, to see Walter there, weeping with joy.

In another moment Walter and Florence were both in his arms, too, and everybody was laughing and crying and talking together. Old Sol had been half-way around the world in his search for Walter, but had finally heard of his safety and started home, knowing he would go there also. It was a very joyous evening, that last evening of Florence's girl life.

The next morning Walter and Florence paid an early visit to the grave of little Paul. She bade it a long good-by, for Walter had become an officer of a ship and she was to make the coming voyage with her husband. Then they went to the church, where they were married, and a few days later they sailed away to China (with Captain Cuttle's big watch and sugar-tongs and teaspoons, that he had once offered to Mr. Dombey, for wedding presents), content in each other's love.

Often, indeed, in this happy honeymoon Florence remembered the father who had spurned her. But Walter's love had taken away the bitterness of that thought. She tried to love her father now rather as she loved the memory of little Paul – not as a cruel, cold, living man, but as some one who had once lived and who might once have loved her.

IV

HOW FLORENCE FOUND HER FATHER AT LAST

Mr. Dombey, alone in the silent house, had made no search for Florence. His pride bade him hide all traces of his grief and rage from the world. He had only one thought – to find where Carker had fled with his wife, to follow and to kill him. He hired detectives and at last discovered that Carker had gone to a certain city in France. And to that place he followed him.

Now Edith, desperate as she had been, had not really been so wicked as Mr. Dombey supposed her. She had deserted him, but she had *not* run away with Carker. In all the trouble between herself and Mr. Dombey, Carker (the smooth, smiling hypocrite!) had labored to make matters worse. He had lied to Mr. Dombey about his wife and taunted her with her position, and done everything in

his power to make them hate each other more bitterly. At last, when he saw Edith could bear it no longer, he had begged her to run away with him, and when she refused, he had threatened her in many cowardly ways. But Edith hated him as much as she disliked her husband, and had not the least idea of running away with him. She had pretended to Carker that she would do so, and had led her husband and everybody else to think she *had* done so, but this was only to wound her husband's pride, and to punish him for all his tortures. Carker had followed her to France, but, once there, he had found the tables turned. Edith laughed at him and scorned him, and sent him from her, baffled and furious.

Carker was thus caught in his own trap. He had lost his own position and reputation, and had gained nothing for all his evil plots. And besides this, he was a fugitive, and Mr. Dombey, the man he had wronged, was on his track.

When he learned his enemy had followed him to France, Carker, raging, but cowardly, fled back to England; and back to England Edith's revengeful husband followed him day and night. The wicked manager knew no more peace or rest. He traveled into the country, seeking some lonely village in which to hide, but he could not shake off that grim pursuer.

They met at last face to face one day on a railroad platform when neither was expecting to see the other.

In the surprise of the meeting, Carker's foot slipped – he stepped backward, directly in the path of the engine that was roaring up the track. It caught him, and tossed him, and tore him limb from limb, and its iron wheels crushed and ground him to pieces.

And that was the end of Carker, of the white teeth and false smile, and Mr. Dombey went back to London, still proud and alone, still cold and forbidding.

But his conscience at last had begun to cry out against him, and to deafen its voice he plunged more and more recklessly into business, spending money too lavishly, and taking risks of which, in other days, he would not have thought.

The months went by and little by little the old firm of Dombey and Son became more entangled. Soon there were whispers that the business was in difficulty, but Mr. Dombey did not hear them. One morning the crash came. A bank closed and then suddenly the word went around that the old firm had failed.

It was too true. The proud, hard-hearted merchant, who had driven his daughter from him, was ruined and a beggar. His rich friends, whom he had treated so haughtily, shrugged their shoulders and sneered. Even Major Bagstock at his club grew purple in the face with chuckling.

The servants were all sent away, most of the furniture was sold at a public sale, and the old man, who had once been so proud and held his gray head so high, still sat on hour after hour in the echoing house, so empty now that even the rats would not live in it. What was he thinking?

At last, in his agony, his sorrow, his remorse, his despair, he remembered Florence. He saw again her trembling lips, her lonely face longing for love – the terrible hopeless change that came over it when his own cruel arm struck her on that final day when she had stood before him.

His pride at last had fallen. He knew now himself what it was to be rejected and deserted. He thought how the daughter he had disliked, of them all, had never changed in her love for him. And by his own act he had lost her for ever. His son, his wife, his fortune, all had gone, and now at last in his wretchedness he knew that Florence would always have been true to him if he had only let her.

Days passed, but he never left the house; every night he wandered through the empty rooms like a ghost. He grew to be a haggard, wasted likeness of himself. And one day the thought came to him that it would be better if he, too, were dead, even if it be by his own hand. This thought clung to him. He could not shake it off.

One day he took a pistol from his dressing-table and sat hugging it to his breast. At length he rose and stood in front of a mirror with the weapon in his hand.

But suddenly he heard a cry – a piercing, loving, rapturous cry – and he saw at his feet, clasping his knees, with her face lifted to his, Florence, his long-lost daughter.

"Papa, dearest papa!" she cried, "I have come back to you. I never can be happy more without you."

He tottered to a chair, feeling her draw his arms around her neck. He felt her wet cheek laid against his own. He heard her soft voice telling him that now she herself had a little child – a baby boy born at sea – whom she and Walter had named Paul.

"Dear papa," she said, "you will come home with me. We will teach our little child to love and honor you, and we will tell him when he can understand that you had a son of that name once, and that he died and that you were sorry; but that he is gone to Heaven, where we all hope to see him sometime. Kiss me, papa, as a promise that you will be reconciled. Never let us be parted any more!"

His hard heart had been melting while she spoke. As she clung closer to him he kissed her, and she heard him mutter, "Oh, God forgive me, for I need it very much!"

She drew him to his feet, and walking with a feeble gait he went with her. With her eyes upon his face and his arm about her, she led him to the coach waiting at the door and carried him away.

Mr. Dombey was very ill for a long time. When he recovered he was no longer his old self, but a gentle, loving, white-haired old man. Walter did not go to sea again, but found a position of great trust and confidence in London, and in their home the old man felt growing stronger and stronger his new-found love for the daughter whom till now he had never really known.

Florence never saw Edith again but once. Then the latter came back to bid her farewell for ever before she went to live in Italy. In these years Edith had seen her own pride and grieved for her fault. There were tears in her stern, dark eyes when Florence asked if she would send some message to Mr. Dombey.

"Tell him," she answered, "that if in his own present he can find a reason to think less bitterly of me, I asked him to do so. I will try to forgive him his share of blame; let him try to forgive me mine."

Time went happily by in the home of Walter and Florence. They often visited the little shop where stood the wooden midshipman, now in a new suit of paint. The sign above the door had become "Gills and Cuttle," for Old Sol and the Captain had gone into partnership, and the firm had grown rich through the successes of some of Solomon Gills's old investments which had finally turned out well.

Walter was beloved by everybody who knew him, and in time refounded the old firm of Dombey and Son.

Often in the summer, on the sea-beach, old Mr. Dombey might have been seen wandering with Florence's little children. The oldest was little Paul, and he thought of him sometimes almost as of the other little Paul who died.

But most of all the old gentleman loved the little girl. He could not bear to see her sit apart or with a cloud on her face. He often stole away to look at her in her sleep, and was fondest and most loving to her when there was no one by.

The child used to say then sometimes:

"Dear grandpa, why do you cry when you kiss me?"

But he would only answer, "Little Florence! Little Florence!" and smooth away the curls that shaded her earnest eyes.

THE POSTHUMOUS PAPERS OF THE PICKWICK CLUB

Published 1836–1837

<i>Scene:</i>	London, Neighboring Towns, Bath, and the Country
<i>Time:</i>	1827 to 1831

CHARACTERS

Mr. Samuel Pickwick	A gentleman of an inquiring mind
Founder and chairman of "The Pickwick Club"	
Sam Weller	His body-servant
Mrs. Bardell	His London landlady
Tupman Snodgrass Winkle Tupman Snodgrass Winkle	Members of "The Pickwick Club"
Alfred Jingle	A strolling actor and adventurer
Later, known as "Friz-Marshall"	
Job Trotter	His servant
Mrs. Budger	A rich widow
Doctor Slammer	An army surgeon
Mrs. Budger's suitor	
Mr. Wardle	A country gentleman
A friend of the Pickwickians	
Emily	His daughter
Miss Wardle	His spinster sister
Joe	Mr. Wardle's footman
Known as "The Fat Boy"	
Tony Weller	A stage driver. Sam's father
Mrs. Weller	His second wife
Mrs. Leo Hunter	A lady with a fondness for knowing celebrated persons
Mr. Peter Magnus	One of Mr. Pickwick's traveling acquaintances
Nupkins	Mayor of Ipswich
Mrs. Nupkins	His wife
Miss Nupkins	His daughter
Ben Allen Bob Sawyer	Medical students
Arabella Allen	Ben's pretty sister
Sergeant Buzfuz	Mrs. Bardell's lawyer
Mr. Dowler	One of Mr. Pickwick's acquaintances at Bath
Mrs. Dowler	His wife
Mr. Angelo Cyrus Bantam	A society leader at Bath
Mary	Nupkins's pretty housemaid

THE PICKWICK PAPERS

I

THE PICKWICKIANS BEGIN THEIR ADVENTURES THEY MEET MR. ALFRED JINGLE, AND WINKLE IS INVOLVED IN A DUEL

Once upon a time, in London, there was a club called "The Pickwick Club." Mr. Samuel Pickwick, its founder and chairman, was a benevolent, simple-hearted old gentleman of some wealth, with a taste for science. He delighted to invent the most profound theories, to explain the most ordinary happenings and to write long papers to be read before the Club. He had a large bald head, and eyes that twinkled behind round spectacles, and he made a speech with one hand under his coat tails and the other waving in the air.

His fellow members looked upon Mr. Pickwick as a very great man, and when he proposed that he and three others form a "Corresponding Society," which should travel about and forward to the club accounts of their adventures, the idea was at once adopted.

The three that Mr. Pickwick chose were named Tupman, Snodgrass and Winkle. Tupman was middle-aged with a double chin and was so fat that for years he had not seen the watch chain that crossed his silk waistcoat. But he had a youthful, romantic disposition, and a great liking for the fair sex. Snodgrass, who had no parents, was a ward of Mr. Pickwick's and imagined himself a poet. Winkle was a young man whose father had sent him to London to learn life; he wore a green shooting-coat and his great ambition was to be considered a sportsman, though at heart he was afraid of either a horse or a gun. With these three companions Mr. Pickwick prepared to set out in search of adventures.

Next morning as he drove in a cab to the inn where all were to take the coach, Mr. Pickwick began to chat with the driver. The cabman amused himself by telling the most impossible things, all of which Mr. Pickwick believed. When he said his horse was forty-two years old and that he often kept him out three weeks at a time without resting, down it went in Mr. Pickwick's note-book as a wonderful instance of the endurance of horses. Unfortunately, however, the driver thought Mr. Pickwick was putting down the number of the cab so as to complain of him, and as they arrived just then at the inn, he jumped from his seat with the intention of fighting his dismayed passenger. He knocked off Mr. Pickwick's spectacles and, dancing back and forth as the other's three comrades rushed to the rescue, planted a blow in Mr. Snodgrass's eye, another in Tupman's waistcoat and ended by knocking all the breath out of Winkle's body.

From this dilemma they were rescued by a tall, thin, long-haired, young man in a faded green coat, worn black trousers and patched shoes, who seized Mr. Pickwick and lugged him into the inn by main force, talking with a jaunty independent manner and in rapid and broken sentences:

"This way, sir – where's your friends? – all a mistake – never mind – here, waiter – brandy and water – raw beefsteak for the gentleman's eye – eh, – ha-ha!"

The seedy-looking stranger, whose name was Alfred Jingle, was a passenger on the same coach that day and entertained the Pickwickians with marvelous stories of his life in Spain. None of these was true, to be sure, but they were all entered in Mr. Pickwick's note-book. In gratitude, that night the latter invited Jingle to dinner at the town inn where they stopped.

The dinner was long, and almost before it was over not only Mr. Pickwick, but Snodgrass and Winkle also were asleep. Tupman, however, was more wakeful; a ball, the waiter had told him, was to be held that night on the upper floor and he longed to attend it. Jingle readily agreed, especially when Tupman said he could borrow for him a blue dress suit, the property of the sleeping Winkle.

They were soon dressed and at the ball. Jingle's jaunty air gained him a number of introductions. Before long he was dancing with a little old widow named Mrs. Budger, who was very rich, and to whom he at once began to make love. There was an army surgeon present named Slammer – a short fat man with a ring of upright black hair around his head, and a bald plain on top of it – who had been courting the rich widow himself. Doctor Slammer was old; Jingle was young, and the lady felt flattered. Every moment the doctor grew angrier and at last tried to pick a quarrel with the wearer of the blue dress suit, at which Jingle only laughed. The ball over, Tupman and Jingle went down stairs. Winkle's clothes were returned to their place, and Jingle, promising to join the party at dinner next day, took his departure.

The Pickwickians were hardly awake next morning when an army officer came to the inn inquiring which gentleman of their number owned a blue dress suit with gilt buttons. When told that Mr. Winkle had such a costume he demanded to see him, and at once, in the name of his friend Doctor Slammer, challenged him to fight a duel that night at sunset.

Poor Winkle almost fainted with surprise. When the stranger explained that the wearer of the blue suit had insulted Doctor Slammer, Winkle concluded that he must have drunk too much wine at dinner, changed his clothes, gone somewhere, and insulted somebody – of all of which he had no recollection. He saw no way, therefore, but to accept the bloodthirsty challenge, hoping that something would happen to prevent the duel.

Winkle was dreadfully afraid, for he had never fired a pistol in his life. He chose Snodgrass for his second, hoping the latter would tell Mr. Pickwick; but Snodgrass, he soon found to his dismay, had no idea of doing so. The day wore heavily away, and Winkle could think of no escape. At sunset they walked to the appointed spot – a lonely field – and at last Winkle found himself, pistol in hand, opposite another man armed likewise, and waiting the signal to shoot.

At that moment Doctor Slammer saw that the man he faced was not the one who had insulted him at the ball. Explanations were soon made and the whole party walked back together to the inn, where Winkle introduced his new friends to the Pickwickians. Jingle, however, was with the latter, and Doctor Slammer at once recognized him as the wearer of the blue dress suit. The doctor flew into a rage and only the statement of his fellow officer, that Jingle was not a gentleman, but a strolling actor far beneath the doctor's dignity, prevented an encounter. As it was, Slammer stumped off in anger, leaving the Pickwickians to enjoy the evening in their own way.

II

TUPMAN HAS A LOVE-AFFAIR WITH A SPINSTER, AND THE PICKWICKIANS FIND OUT THE REAL CHARACTER OF JINGLE

Next day a military drill was held just outside the town and the Pickwickians went to see it. In the confusion of running officers and prancing horses they became separated from one another. Mr. Pickwick, Snodgrass and Winkle found themselves between two lines of troops, in danger of being run down. At this moment they saw Tupman standing in an open carriage near by and, hurrying to it, were hoisted in.

The carriage belonged to a short, stout old gentleman named Wardle who had attended some of the club's meetings in London and knew Mr. Pickwick by sight. He lived at a place near by called Dingley Dell, from which he had driven to see the drill, with his old maid sister and his own two pretty daughters. Fastened behind was a big hamper of lunch and on the box was a fat boy named Joe, whom Mr. Wardle kept as a curiosity because he did nothing but eat and sleep. Joe went on errands fast asleep and snored as he waited on the table. He had slept all through the roaring of the cannon and the old gentleman had to pinch him awake to serve the luncheon.

They had a merry time that day, Tupman being deeply smitten with the charms of the elderly Miss Wardle, and Snodgrass no less in love with Emily, one of the pretty daughters. When the review was over the old gentleman invited them all to visit Dingley Dell next day.

Early in the morning they set out, Mr. Pickwick driving Tupman and Snodgrass in a chaise, while Winkle rode on horseback to uphold his reputation as a sportsman. Mr. Pickwick was distrustful of the horse he hired, but the hostler assured him that even a wagon-load of monkeys with their tails burnt off would not make him shy.

Winkle had never ridden a horse before, but he was ashamed to admit it.

For a while all went well; then the luckless Winkle dropped his whip and when he dismounted the horse would not let him mount again. Mr. Pickwick got out of the chaise to help, and at this the animal jerked the bridle away and trotted home. Hearing the clatter the other horse bolted, too. Snodgrass and Tupman jumped for their lives and the chaise was smashed to pieces against a wooden bridge. With difficulty the horse was freed from the ruins and, leading him, the four friends walked the seven miles to Dingley Dell, where they found Mr. Wardle and the fat boy, the latter fast asleep as usual, posted in the lane to meet them.

Brushes, a needle and thread and some cherry-brandy soon cured their rents and bruises and they forgot their misfortunes in an evening of pleasure. Mr. Wardle's mother was a deaf old lady with an ear-trumpet, who loved to play whist. When she disliked a person she would pretend she could not hear a word he said, but Mr. Pickwick's jollity and compliments made her forget even to use her ear-trumpet. Tupman flirted with the spinster aunt and Snodgrass whispered poetry into Emily's ear to his heart's content.

Next morning Mr. Wardle took Winkle rook-shooting. The pair set out with their guns, preceded by the fat boy and followed by Mr. Pickwick, Snodgrass and the corpulent Tupman. Winkle, who disliked to admit his ignorance of guns, showed it in a painful way. His first shot missed the birds, and lodged itself in the arm of Tupman, who fell to the ground. The confusion that followed can not be described. They bound up his wounds and supported him to the house, where the ladies waited at the garden gate, Mr. Wardle calling out to them not to be frightened.

The warning, however, had no effect on the spinster aunt. At the sight of her Tupman wounded, she began to scream. Old Mr. Wardle told her not to be a fool, but Tupman was affected almost to tears and spoke her name with such romantic tenderness that the poor foolish lady felt quite a flutter at her heart.

A surgeon found the wound a slight one, and as a cricket match was to be played that day, the host left Tupman in the care of the ladies and carried off the others to the game.

When they reached the field, the first words that fell on Mr. Pickwick's ear made him start:

"This way – capital fun – glorious day – make yourself at home – glad to see you – very." It was Jingle, still clad in his faded green coat. He had fallen in with the visiting players, and by telling wonderful tales of the games he had played in the West Indies, soon convinced them he was a great cricket player. Seeing him greet Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Wardle, thinking him a friend of his guest, procured him an invitation to the dinner that followed the match. There Jingle made good use of his time in eating and drinking, and at midnight was heard leading with great effect the chorus:

"We won't go home till morning."

Meanwhile, the romantic Tupman at Dingley Dell had been free to woo the middle-aged spinster. This he did with such success that when evening came, he and she sat together in a vine-covered arbor in the garden like a pair of carefully folded kid gloves – bound up in each other. He had just printed a kiss on her lips when both looked up to see the fat boy, perfectly motionless, staring into the arbor.

"Supper's ready," said the fat boy, and his look was so blank that they both concluded he must have been asleep and had seen nothing.

It was long past midnight when a tremendous noise told that the absent ones had returned. All rushed to the kitchen, where Jingle's voice was heard crying: "Cricket dinner – glorious party – capital songs – very good – wine ma'am – wine!" Mr. Pickwick, Snodgrass and Winkle went to bed, but the talkative Jingle remained with the ladies and before they retired had made Tupman almost mad with jealousy by his attentions to the spinster aunt, who showed herself greatly pleased with his politeness.

Now the fat boy, for once in his life, had not been asleep when he had announced supper that evening. He had seen Tupman's love-making, and took the first occasion to tell the deaf old lady, as she sat in the garden arbor next morning. He was obliged to shout it in her ear, and thus the whole story was overheard by Jingle, who happened to be near.

The deceitful Jingle saw in this a chance to benefit himself. The spinster, he thought, had money; what could he better do than turn her against Tupman, and marry her himself? With this plan he went to Tupman, recited what the fat boy had told, and advised him, for a time, in order to throw off the suspicions of the old lady and of Mr. Wardle, to pay special attention to one of the younger daughters and to pretend to care nothing for the spinster. He told Tupman that the latter herself had made this plan and wished him to carry it out for her sake. Tupman, thinking it the wish of his lady-love, did this with such success that the old lady concluded the fat boy must have been dreaming.

The spinster, however, thought Tupman false, and Jingle used the next few days to make such violent love to her that the silly creature believed him, forgot Tupman, and agreed to run away with the deceiver to London.

There was great excitement when their absence was discovered, and the wrathful Mr. Wardle and Mr. Pickwick pursued them at once in a four-horse chaise. They rode all night and, reaching London, at once began to inquire at various inns to find a trace of the runaway pair.

They came at length to one called The White Hart, in whose courtyard a round-faced manservant was cleaning boots. This servant, whose name was Sam Weller, wore a coat with blue glass buttons, a bright red handkerchief tied around his neck and an old white hat stuck on the side of his head. He spoke with a quaint country accent, but he was a witty fellow, with a clever answer for every one.

"Werry well, I'm agreeable," he said when Mr. Pickwick gave him a gold piece. "What the devil do you want with me, as the man said when he see the ghost?"

With Sam Weller's aid, they soon found that Jingle and the spinster were there, and entered the room in which the couple sat at the very moment Jingle was showing the marriage license which he had just brought. The spinster at once went into violent hysterics, and Jingle, seeing the game was up, accepted the sum of money which Mr. Wardle offered him to take himself off.

There were deep lamentations when the confiding spinster found herself deserted by the faithless Jingle, and slowly and sadly Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Wardle bore her back to Dingley Dell.

The heartbroken Tupman had already left there, and with feelings of gloom Mr. Pickwick, with Snodgrass and Winkle, also departed.

III

MR. PICKWICK HAS AN INTERESTING SCENE WITH MRS. BARDELL, HIS HOUSEKEEPER. FURTHER PURSUIT OF JINGLE LEADS TO AN ADVENTURE AT A YOUNG LADIES' BOARDING-SCHOOL

Mr. Pickwick lived in lodgings, let for a single gentleman, in the house of a Mrs. Bardell, a widow with one little boy. For a long time she had secretly adored her benevolent lodger, as some one far above her own humble station.

Mr. Pickwick had not forgotten Sam Weller, the servant who had aided in the pursuit of Jingle, and on returning to London he wrote, asking Sam to come to see him, intending to offer him a position as body-servant. Sam came promptly and Mr. Pickwick then proceeded to tell his landlady of his plan – a more or less delicate matter, since it would cause some change in her household affairs.

"Mrs. Bardell," said he, "do you think it a much greater expense to keep two people than one?"

"La, Mr. Pickwick!" answered Mrs. Bardell, fancying she saw matrimony in his eye. "That depends on whether it's a saving person."

"Very true," said Mr. Pickwick, "but the person I have in my eye" – here he looked at Mrs. Bardell – "has this quality. And to tell you the truth, I have made up my mind."

Mrs. Bardell blushed to her cap border. Her lodger was going to propose! "Oh, Mr. Pickwick!" she said, "you're very kind, sir. I'm sure I ought to be a very happy woman."

"It'll save you a deal of trouble," Mr. Pickwick went on, "and when I'm in town you'll always have somebody to sit with you."

"Oh, you dear – " said Mrs. Bardell.

Mr. Pickwick started.

"Oh, you kind, good, playful dear!" said Mrs. Bardell, and flung herself on his neck with a cataract of tears.

The astonished Mr. Pickwick struggled violently, pleading and reproofing, but in vain. Mrs. Bardell clung the tighter, and exclaiming frantically that she would never leave him, fainted away in his arms. At the same moment Tupman, Winkle and Snodgrass entered the room. Mr. Pickwick tried to explain, but in their faces he read that they suspected him of making love to the widow.

This reflection made him miserable and ill at ease. He lost no time in taking Sam Weller into his service, on condition that he travel with the Pickwickians in their further search for adventures, and at once proposed to his three comrades another journey.

Next day, therefore, found them on the road for Eatanswill, a town near London which was then on the eve of a political election. This was a very exciting struggle and interested them greatly.

Here, one morning soon after their arrival, a fancy dress breakfast was given by Mrs. Leo Hunter, a lady who had once written an *Ode to an Expiring Frog* and who made a great point of knowing everybody who was at all celebrated for anything. All of the Pickwickians attended the breakfast. Mr. Pickwick's dignity was too great for him to don a fancy costume, but the rest wore them, Tupman going as a bandit in a green velvet coat with a two-inch tail.

Mrs. Leo Hunter herself, in the character of Minerva, insisted on presenting Mr. Pickwick to all the guests.

In the midst of the gaiety Mrs. Leo Hunter's husband called out: "My dear, here comes Mr. Fitz-Marshall," and, to his astonishment, Mr. Pickwick heard a well-known voice exclaiming: "Coming, my dear ma'am – crowds of people – full room – hard work – very!"

It was Jingle. Mr. Pickwick indignantly faced him, but the impostor, at the first glance turned and fled. Mr. Pickwick, after hurriedly questioning his hostess, who told him Mr. Fitz-Marshall lived at an inn in a village not far away, left the entertainment instantly, bent on pursuit. With Sam Weller, his faithful servant, he took the next stage-coach and nightfall found him lodged in a room in that very inn, while Sam set himself to discover Jingle's whereabouts.

With the money Mr. Wardle had paid him Jingle had set up as a gentleman: he even had a servant – a sneaking fellow with a sallow, solemn face and lank hair, named Job Trotter, who could burst into tears whenever it suited his purpose and whose favorite occupation seemed to be reading a hymn-book. Sam Weller soon picked an acquaintance with Job, and it was not long before the latter confided to him that Jingle his master (whom he pretended to think very wicked) had plotted to run away that same night, with a beautiful young lady from a boarding-school just outside the village, at which he was a frequent caller. Job said his master was such a villain that he had made up his mind to betray him.

Sam took Job to Mr. Pickwick, to whom he repeated his tale, adding that he and his master were to be let into the school building at ten o'clock, and that if Mr. Pickwick would climb over the garden wall and tap on the kitchen door a little before midnight, he, Job, would let him in to catch Jingle in the very act of eloping.

This seemed to Mr. Pickwick a good plan, and he proceeded to act upon it. In good time that night Sam hoisted him over the high garden-wall of the school, after which he returned to the inn, while his master stealthily approached the building.

It was very still. When the church chimes struck half-past eleven Mr. Pickwick tapped on the door. Instead of being opened by Job, however, a servant-girl appeared with a candle. Mr. Pickwick had presence of mind enough to hide behind the door as she opened it. She concluded the noise must have been the cat.

Mr. Pickwick did not know what was best to do. To make matters worse, a thunder-storm broke and he had no refuge from the rain. He was thoroughly drenched before he dared repeat the signal.

This time windows were thrown open and frightened voices demanded "Who's there?" Mr. Pickwick was in a dreadful situation. He could not retreat, and when the door was timidly opened and some one screamed "A man!" there was a dreadful chorus of shrieks from the lady principal, three teachers, five female servants and thirty young lady boarders, all half-dressed and in a forest of curl papers.

Mr. Pickwick was desperate. He protested that he was no robber – that he would even consent to be tied or locked up, only to convince them. A closet stood in the hall; as a pledge of good faith he stepped inside it. Its door was quickly locked and only then the trembling principal consented to listen to him. By the time he had told his story, he knew that he had been cruelly hoaxed by Jingle and Job Trotter. She knew not even the name of Mr. Fitz-Marshall. For her own part she was certain Mr. Pickwick was crazy, and he had to stay in the stuffy closet over an hour while at his request some one was sent to find Sam Weller.

The latter came at length, bringing with him old Mr. Wardle, who, as it happened, unknown to Mr. Pickwick, was stopping at the inn. Explanations were made and Mr. Pickwick, choking with wrath, returned to the inn to find Jingle and his servant gone, and to be, himself, for some time thereafter, a prey to rheumatism.

A serious matter at this juncture called Mr. Pickwick home. This was a legal summons notifying him that Mrs. Bardell, his landlady, had brought a suit for damages against him, claiming he had promised to marry her and had then run away. A firm of tricky lawyers had persuaded her to this in the hope of getting some money out of it themselves. Mr. Pickwick was very angry, but there was nothing for it but to hire a lawyer, so he and Sam Weller set out without delay.

IV

SAM WELLER MEETS HIS FATHER, AND THE PURSUIT OF JINGLE IS CONTINUED. MR. PICKWICK MAKES A STRANGE CALL ON A MIDDLE-AGED LADY IN YELLOW CURL PAPERS

Having arranged this matter in London, master and servant sat one evening in a public house when Sam recognized in a stout man with his face buried in a quart pot, his own father, old Tony Weller, the stage-coach driver, and with great affection introduced him to Mr. Pickwick.

"How's mother-in-law?" asked Sam.

The elder Mr. Weller shook his head as he replied, "I've done it once too often, Samivel. Take example by your father, my boy, and be very careful o' widders, 'specially if they've kept a public house."

Mrs. Weller the second, indeed, was the proprietress of a public house. To a shrill voice and a complaining disposition she added a dismal sort of piety which showed itself in much going to meeting, in considering her husband a lost and sinful wretch and in the entertaining of a prim-faced, red-nosed, rusty old hypocrite of a preacher who sat by her fireside every evening consuming quantities of toast and pineapple rum, and groaning at the depravity of her husband, who declined to give money to the preacher's society for sending flannel waistcoats and colored handkerchiefs to the infant negroes of the West Indies. As may be imagined, Sam's father led a sorry life at home.

The meeting with the elder Weller proved a fortunate one, for when Sam told of their experiences with Jingle and Job Trotter, his father declared that he himself had driven the pair to the town of Ipswich, where they were then living. Nothing would satisfy Mr. Pickwick, when he heard this, but pursuit, and he and Sam set out next morning by coach, Mr. Pickwick having written to the other Pickwickians to follow him.

On the coach was a red-haired man with an inquisitive nose and blue spectacles, whose name was Mr. Peter Magnus, and with whom (since they stopped at the same inn) Mr. Pickwick dined on his arrival. Mr. Magnus, before they parted for the night, grew confidential and informed him that he had come there to propose to a lady who was in the inn at that very moment.

For some time after he retired, Mr. Pickwick sat in his bedroom thinking. At length he rose to undress, when he remembered he had left his watch down stairs, and taking a candle he went to get it. He found it easily, but to retrace his steps proved more difficult. A dozen doors he thought his own, and a dozen times he turned a door-knob only to hear a gruff voice within. At last he found what he thought was his own room, the door ajar. The wind had blown out his candle, but the fire was bright, and Mr. Pickwick, as he retired behind the bed curtains to undress, smiled till he almost cracked his nightcap strings as he thought of his wanderings.

Suddenly the smile faded – some one had entered the room and locked the door. "Robbers!" thought Mr. Pickwick. He peered out between the curtains and almost fainted with horror. Standing before the mirror was a middle-aged lady in yellow curl papers, brushing her back-hair.

"Bless my soul!" thought Mr. Pickwick. "I must be in the wrong room. This is fearful!"

He waited a while, then coughed, first gently, then more loudly.

"Gracious Heaven!" said the middle-aged lady. "What's that?"

"It's – it's only a gentleman, ma'am," said Mr. Pickwick.

"A strange man!" exclaimed the lady with a terrific scream.

Mr. Pickwick put out his head in desperation.

"Wretch!" she said, covering her face with her hands. "What do you want here?"

"Nothing, ma'am – nothing whatever, ma'am," said Mr. Pickwick earnestly. "I am almost ready to sink, ma'am, beneath the confusion of addressing a lady in my nightcap (here the lady snatched off hers) but I can't get it off, ma'am! (here Mr. Pickwick gave it a tremendous tug). It is evident to me now that I have mistaken this bedroom for my own."

"If this be true," said the lady sobbing violently, "you will leave it instantly."

"Certainly, ma'am," answered Mr. Pickwick appearing, "I – I – am very sorry, ma'am."

The lady pointed to the door. With his hat on over his nightcap, his shoes in his hand and his coat over his arm, Mr. Pickwick opened the door, dropping both shoes with a crash. "I trust, ma'am," he resumed, bowing very low, "that my unblemished character – " but before he could finish the sentence the lady had thrust him into the hall and bolted the door.

Luckily Mr. Pickwick met, coming along the corridor, the faithful Sam Weller who took him safely to his room.

V

**THE PICKWICKIANS FIND THEMSELVES IN THE
GRASP OF THE LAW. THE FINAL EXPOSURE
OF JINGLE, AND A CHRISTMAS
MERRYMAKING**

Mr. Pickwick was still indoors next morning, when Sam, strolling through the town, met, coming from a certain garden-gate, the wily Job Trotter. Job tried at first to disguise himself by making a horrible face, but Sam was not to be deceived, and finding this trick vain, the other burst into tears of joy to see him.

Job told Sam that his master, Jingle, had bribed the mistress of the boarding-school to deny to Mr. Pickwick that she knew him, and had then cruelly deserted the beautiful young lady for a richer one. But this time Sam was too wise to believe anything Job said.

Meanwhile, in the inn, Mr. Pickwick was giving Mr. Peter Magnus some good advice as to the best method of proposing. The latter finally plucked up his courage, saw the lady, proposed to her, and was accepted. In his gratitude, he insisted on taking Mr. Pickwick to be introduced to her.

The instant he saw her, however, Mr. Pickwick uttered an exclamation, and the lady, with a slight scream, hid her face in her hands. She was none other than the owner of the room into which Mr. Pickwick had intruded the night before.

Mr. Peter Magnus, in astonishment, demanded where and when they had seen each other before. This the lady declared she would not reveal for the world, and Mr. Pickwick likewise refusing, the other flew into a jealous rage, which ended in his rushing from the room swearing he would challenge Mr. Pickwick to mortal combat. Tupman, Winkle and Snodgrass being announced at that moment, Mr. Pickwick joined them, and the middle-aged lady was left alone in a state of terrible alarm.

The longer she thought the more terrified she became at the idea of possible bloodshed and harm to her lover. At length, overcome by dread, and knowing no other way to stop the duel, she hastened to the house of the mayor of the town, a pompous magistrate named Nupkins, and begged him to stop the duel. Not wishing to make trouble for Mr. Peter Magnus, she declared that the two rioters who threatened to disturb the peace of the town were named Pickwick and Tupman; these two, Nupkins, thinking them cutthroats from London, at once sent men to arrest.

Mr. Pickwick was just telling his followers the story of his mishap of the night before, when a half-dozen officers burst into the room. Boiling with indignation, Mr. Pickwick had to submit, and the officers put him and Tupman into an old sedan-chair and carried them off, followed by Winkle and Snodgrass and by all the town loafers.

Sam Weller met the procession and tried to rescue them, but was knocked down and taken prisoner also. So they were all brought to Nupkins's house.

The mayor refused to hear a word Mr. Pickwick said and was about to send them all to jail as desperate characters when Sam Weller called his master aside and whispered to him that the house they were in was the very one from which he had seen Job Trotter come, and from this fact he guessed that Jingle himself had wormed himself into the good graces of the mayor. At this Mr. Pickwick asked to have a private talk with Nupkins.

This was grudgingly granted and in a few moments Mr. Pickwick had learned that Jingle, calling himself "Captain Fitz-Marshall," had imposed so well on the pompous mayor that the latter's wife and daughter had introduced him everywhere and he himself had boasted to everybody of his acquaintance.

It was Nupkins's turn to feel humble when Mr. Pickwick told him Jingle's real character. He was terribly afraid the story would get out and that the town would laugh at him, so he became all at once tremendously polite, declared their arrest had been all a mistake and begged the Pickwickians to make themselves at home. Sam Weller was sent down to the kitchen to get his dinner, where he met a pretty housemaid named Mary, with whom he proceeded to fall very much in love for the first time in his life.

Jingle and Job walked into the trap a little later, not expecting the kind of reception they were to find there. But even before the combined scorn of Nupkins, Mrs. Nupkins, Miss Nupkins and the Pickwickians, Jingle showed a brazen front. He knew pride would prevent the mayor from exposing him, and when finally shown the door, he left with a mocking jeer, followed by the chuckling Job.

In spite of his own troubles Mr. Pickwick left Ipswich comforted by the defeat of Jingle. As for Sam, he kissed the pretty housemaid behind the door and they parted with mutual regrets.

To atone for these difficult adventures, the Pickwickians prepared for a long visit to Dingley Dell, where they spent an old-fashioned Merry Christmas; where they found the fat boy even fatter and Mr. Wardle even jollier; where Tupman was not saddened by the sight of his lost love, the spinster aunt, who had been sent to live with another relative; where Snodgrass came more than ever to admire Emily, the pretty daughter; where Winkle fell head over ears in love with a black-eyed young lady visitor named Arabella Allen, who wore a nice little pair of boots with fur around the top; where they went skating and Mr. Pickwick broke through, and had to be carried home and put to bed; where they hung mistletoe and told stories, and altogether enjoyed themselves in a hundred ways.

Ben Allen, Arabella's brother, reached Dingley Dell on Christmas Day – a thick-set, mildewy young man, with short black hair, a long white face and spectacles. He was a medical student, and brought with him his chum, Bob Sawyer, a slovenly, smart, swaggering young gentleman, who smelled strongly of tobacco smoke and looked like a dissipated Robinson Crusoe. Ben intended that his chum should marry his sister Arabella, and Bob Sawyer paid her so much attention that Winkle began to hate him on the spot.

The Christmas merrymaking was all too soon over, and as Mrs. Bardell's lawsuit against Mr. Pickwick was shortly to be tried, the Pickwickians returned regretfully to the city.

VI

THE CELEBRATED CASE OF BARBELL AGAINST PICKWICK. SERGEANT BUZFUZ'S SPEECH AND AN UNEXPECTED VERDICT

On the morning of the trial Mr. Pickwick went to court certain that the outcome would be in his favor. The room was full of people, and all the Pickwickians were there when he arrived. The Judge was a very short man, so plump that he seemed all face and waistcoat. When he had rolled in upon two little turned legs, and sat down at his desk, all you could see of him was two little eyes, one broad pink face, and about half of a comical, big wig. Scarcely had the jurors taken their seats, when Mrs. Bardell's lawyers brought in the lady herself, half hysterical, and supported by two tearful lady friends. The ushers called for silence and the trial began.

The lawyer who spoke for Mrs. Bardell was named Sergeant Buzfuz, a blustering man with a fat body and a red face. He began by picturing Mr. Pickwick's housekeeper as a lonely widow who had been heartlessly deceived by the villainy of her lodger. He declared that for two years, Mrs. Bardell had attended to Mr. Pickwick's comforts, that once he had patted her little boy on the head and asked him how he would like to have another father; that he had also asked her to marry him, and on the same day had been seen by three of his friends holding her in his arms and soothing her agitation. Drawing forth two scraps of paper, Sergeant Buzfuz went on:

"Gentlemen, one word more. Two letters have passed between these parties, which speak volumes. They are not open, fervent letters of affection. They are sly, underhanded communications evidently intended by Pickwick to mislead and delude any one into whose hands they might fall. Let me read the first: '*Dear Mrs. B. – Chops and tomato Sauce. Yours, Pickwick.*' Gentlemen, what does this mean? Chops! Gracious Heavens! and Tomato Sauce. Gentlemen, is the happiness of a trusting female to be trifled away by such shallow tricks? The next has no date. '*Dear Mrs. B. – I shall not be at home till to-morrow.*' And then follows this remarkable expression – '*Don't trouble yourself about the warming-pan.*' The warming-pan! Why is Mrs. Bardell begged not to trouble herself about this warming-pan, unless (as is no doubt the case) it is a mere substitute for some endearing word or promise, cunningly used by Pickwick, with a view to his intended desertion?

"But enough of this, gentlemen. It is hard to smile with an aching heart. My client's hopes are ruined. All is gloom in the house; the child's sports are forgotten while his mother weeps. But Pickwick, gentlemen, Pickwick, the pitiless destroyer – Pickwick who comes before you to-day with his heartless tomato sauce and warming-pans – Pickwick still rears his head, and gazes without a sigh on the ruins he has made. Damages, gentlemen, heavy damages is the only punishment with which you can visit him. And for these damages, my client now appeals to a high-minded, a right-feeling, a sympathizing jury of her countrymen!"

With this Sergeant Buzfuz stopped, and began to call his witnesses. The first was one of Mrs. Bardell's female cronies, whose testimony of course, was all in her favor.

Then Winkle was called. Knowing that he was a friend of Mr. Pickwick's, Mrs. Bardell's lawyers browbeat and puzzled him till poor Mr. Winkle had the air of a disconcerted pickpocket, and was in a terrible state of confusion. He was soon made to tell how, with Tupman and Snodgrass, he had come into Mr. Pickwick's lodgings one day to find him holding Mrs. Bardell in his arms. The other two Pickwickians were also compelled to testify to this.

Nor was this all. Sergeant Buzfuz finally entrapped the agonized Winkle into telling how Mr. Pickwick had been found at night in the wrong room at the Ipswich Inn and how as a result a lady's marriage had been broken off and the whole party arrested and taken before the mayor. Poor Winkle was obliged to tell this, though he knew it would hurt the case of Mr. Pickwick. When he was released he rushed away to the nearest inn, where he was found some hours later by the waiter, groaning dismally with his head under the sofa cushions.

Mr. Pickwick's case looked black. The only comfort he received was from the testimony of Sam Weller, who tried to do Mrs. Bardell's side all possible harm yet say as little about his master as he could, and who kept the court room in a roar of laughter with his sallies.

"Do you mean to tell me, Mr. Weller," said Sergeant Buzfuz finally, "that you saw nothing of Mrs. Bardell's fainting in the arms of Mr. Pickwick? Have you a pair of eyes, Mr. Weller?"

"Yes, I *have* a pair of eyes," replied Sam, "and that's just it. If they was a pair o' patent-double-million-magnifyin'-gas-miscroscopes of hextra power, p'r'aps I might be able to see through a flight o' stairs and a deal door; but bein' only eyes, you see, my wision's limited." Sergeant Buzfuz could make nothing out of Sam, and so the case for Mrs. Bardell closed.

Mr. Pickwick's lawyer made a long speech in his favor, but it was of no use. The evidence seemed all against him. The jury found him guilty of breach of promise of marriage, and sentenced him to pay Mrs. Bardell her damages.

Mr. Pickwick was speechless with indignation. He vowed that not one penny would he ever pay if he spent the rest of his life in a jail. His own lawyer warned him that if he did not pay within two months, Mrs. Bardell's lawyers could put him into the debtors' prison, but Mr. Pickwick prepared to start on another excursion with his three friends, still declaring that he would never pay.

VII
WINKLE HAS AN EXCITING ADVENTURE WITH MR.
DOWLER, AND WITH THE AID OF MR. PICKWICK
AND SAM WELLER DISCOVERS
THE WHEREABOUTS OF MISS
ARABELLA ALLEN

At Bath, a resort very popular with people of fashion, the Pickwickians decided to spend the next two months, and started by coach at once, accompanied by Sam Weller. On the coach they fell in with a fierce-looking, abrupt gentleman named Dowler, with a bald, glossy forehead and large black whiskers, who introduced them to the society of Bath, particularly to Mr. Angelo Cyrus Bantam, master of ceremonies at the famous Assembly-Room, where the fashionable balls were held. Mr. Bantam carried a gold eye-glass, a gold snuff-box, gold rings on his finger, a gold watch in his waistcoat pocket, a gold chain and an ebony cane with a gold head. His linen was the whitest, his wig the blackest, and his teeth were so fine that it was hard to tell the real ones from the false ones.

Mr. Bantam made the Pickwickians welcome and in three days' time they were settled in a fine house, where Mr. and Mrs. Dowler also lodged. Mr. Pickwick passed his days in drinking the spring-water for which Bath was famous, and in walking; his evenings he spent at the Assembly balls, at the theater or in making entries in his journal.

One evening Mrs. Dowler was carried off to a party in her sedan-chair, leaving her husband to sit up for her. The Pickwickians had long since gone to bed, and Mr. Dowler fell fast asleep while he waited. It was a very windy night and the sedan-carriers, who brought the lady home, knocked in vain at the door. Mr. Dowler did not wake, though they knocked like an insane postman.

At length Winkle in his own room was roused by the racket. He donned slippers and dressing-gown, hurried down stairs half asleep and opened the door. At the glare of the torches he jumped to the conclusion that the house was on fire and rushed outside, when the door blew shut behind him.

Seeing a lady's face at the window of the sedan-chair, he turned and knocked at the door frantically, but with no response. He was undressed and the wind blew his dressing-gown in a most unpleasant manner. "There are people coming down the street now. There are ladies with 'em; cover me up with something! Stand before me!" roared Winkle, but the chairmen only laughed. The ladies were nearer and in desperation he bolted into the sedan-chair where Mrs. Dowler was.

Now Mr. Dowler, a moment before, had bounced off the bed, and now threw open the window just in time to see this. He thought his wife was running away with another man, and seizing a supper knife, the indignant husband tore into the street, shouting furiously.

Winkle, hearing his horrible threats, did not wait. He leaped out of the sedan-chair and took to his heels, hotly pursued by Dowler. He dodged his pursuer at length, rushed back, slammed the door in Dowler's face, gained his bedroom, barricaded his door with furniture and packed his belongings. At the first streak of dawn, he slipped out and took coach for Bristol.

Mr. Pickwick was greatly vexed over Winkle's unheroic flight. Sam Weller soon discovered where he had gone, and Mr. Pickwick sent him after the fugitive, bidding him find Winkle and either compel him to return or keep him in sight until Mr. Pickwick himself could follow.

Winkle, meanwhile, walking about the Bristol streets, chanced to stop at a doctor's office to make some inquiries, and in a young medical gentleman in green spectacles recognized, to his huge surprise, Bob Sawyer, the bosom friend of Ben Allen, both of whom he had met on Christmas Day at Dingley Dell. Bob, in delight, dragged Winkle into the back room where sat Ben Allen, amusing himself by boring holes in the chimney piece with a red-hot poker.

The precious couple had, in fact, set up shop together, and were using every trick they knew to make people think them great doctors with a tremendous practice. They insisted on Winkle's staying to supper, and it was lucky he did so, for he heard news of Arabella, the pretty girl who had worn the little boots with fur around the top at Dingley Dell, and with whom he had fallen in love. He learned that Arabella had scorned the sprightly Bob Sawyer, and that her brother, in anger, had taken her away from Mr. Wardle's and put her in the house of an old aunt – a dull, close place not far from Bristol. Before he bade them good night, Winkle had determined to find her.

He met with a shock, on returning to his inn, to come suddenly upon Dowler sitting in the coffee-room. Winkle drew back, very pale, and was greatly surprised to see the bloodthirsty Dowler do likewise as, growing even paler than Winkle, he began an apology for his action of the evening before. As a matter of fact, Dowler had run away from Bath, too, at dawn, in fear of Winkle, and thought now the latter had pursued him. Winkle, suspecting this, put on a look of great fierceness but accepted the apology, and the pair shook hands.

Winkle's plan for finding Arabella Allen met now with a set-back. Sam Weller arrived at midnight and insisted that Winkle be waked at once. Once in his room, Sam told him Mr. Pickwick's instructions and declared he would not leave his sight till Winkle came back with him to Bath. This was awkward, but luckily, Mr. Pickwick himself, to whom Sam wrote, arrived next day and released his follower.

Mr. Pickwick approved of Winkle's determination to find the pretty Arabella, and so the next morning Sam Weller was sent on a voyage of discovery among the servants of the town. For many hours Sam searched in vain without a clue.

In the afternoon he sat in a lane running between rows of gardens in one of the suburbs, when a gate opened and a maid-servant came out to shake some carpets. Sam gallantly rose to help her, when she uttered a half-suppressed scream. It was Mary, the good-looking housemaid whom Sam had kissed at the house of Nupkins, the mayor of Ipswich, on the day of the arrest of the Pickwickians and the exposure of Jingle. She had left her place there for this new situation.

When Sam had finished his gallant speeches and Mary her blushing, he told her of Winkle's search. What was his surprise when she told him that Arabella was living the very next door. She let Sam come into the garden, and presently when Arabella came out to walk, he scrambled on to the wall and pleaded Winkle's cause.

"Ve thought ve should ha' been obliged to straitveskit him last night," he declared. "He's been a-ravin' all day; and he says if he can't see you afore to-morrow night's over, he vishes he may be somethin'-unpleasanted if he don't drownd hisself."

Arabella, in great distress at this prospect, promised she would be in the garden next evening, and Sam returned with the news to Mr. Pickwick and Winkle.

The next evening all three set out for the spot. Mary let them into the garden and, while Winkle climbed the wall to throw himself at Arabella's feet, Mr. Pickwick kept guard at the gate with a dark lantern. So far he threw its beam that a scientific gentleman who lived a few houses away, seeing the light from his window, took it for some new and wonderful freak of electricity and came out to investigate.

Before he arrived, however, Winkle had scrambled back over the wall and Arabella had run into the house. Seeing the scientific gentleman's head poked out of a garden-gate as they passed, Sam gave it a gentle tap with his fist and then, hoisting Mr. Pickwick on his back, and followed by Winkle, he ran off at full speed, leaving the scientific gentleman to go back to his room and write a long article about the wonderful light and to tell how he had received a shock of electricity which left him stunned for a quarter of an hour afterward.

The Pickwickians' stay at Bath came to an end soon after this adventure, and their leader, with Sam Weller, returned to London.

VIII

MR. PICKWICK'S EXPERIENCES IN THE DEBTORS' PRISON, WHERE HE FINDS AN OLD ENEMY AND HEAPS COALS OF FIRE ON THE HEAD OF MRS. BARDELL

Mr. Pickwick had not been long in London when his lawyer's warning proved too true. One morning a bailiff forced his way to his bedroom and, since he had not paid the damages to Mrs. Bardell, arrested him in bed, waited till he was dressed and carried him off to the debtors' prison.

The prison was called The Fleet. It was a gloomy building with a heavy gate, guarded by a turnkey, holding all classes, from laboring men to broken-down spendthrifts. Its filthy galleries, and low coffee-room reeked with tobacco smoke and its open court was noisy with the oaths of card-players. In some of the rooms lived men with their wives and whole families of children, and Mr. Pickwick found he would have to pay extra even to have a room to himself.

Caged with this coarse, vulgar crowd, Mr. Pickwick suffered greatly, but no idea of paying the unjust damages entered his mind. Instead, he busied himself with wandering about the prison and learning all he could of its customs and inmates. Those who, like himself, had money were well-treated. Those who had none lived in starvation and wretchedness. In one wall was a kind of iron cage, within which was posted a lean and hungry prisoner who rattled a money-box and called out: "Remember the poor debtors!" The money he collected from passers-by in the street was divided and bought food for the poorest.

As Mr. Pickwick entered the room given over to the latter class, he started. In one of its occupants, clad in tattered garments and yellow shirt, pinched with starvation and pale with illness, he saw Alfred Jingle; and near him, faithful still in rags and dirt, was Job Trotter.

Jingle was no longer jaunty and impudent. He had pawned all his belongings; had lived, in fact, for the last week on a silk umbrella with an ivory handle. His smile now was a mere twitch of the face as he said: "Nothing soon – starve – die – workhouse funeral – serve him right – all over – drop the curtain!" Unable, however, to keep up this make-believe recklessness, Jingle sat down at length and sobbed like a child.

Mr. Pickwick was greatly moved at the sight, and gave Job some money for his master as he turned away.

Sam Weller had come with Mr. Pickwick to the prison. The latter, however, told his servant he must now leave him, though his wages would go on as usual. Sam pretended to agree, but lost no time in going to his father with a plan by which he, too, should be sent to the Fleet Prison for debt, so as to be near his master. He borrowed some money from the old stage-driver, and then when he refused to pay it, his father had him arrested and sent to the prison as he wished. Old Tony Weller and all his friends went with him, and gave him three tremendous cheers at the door. When Mr. Pickwick saw Sam return and learned what he had done, he was much affected at the devotion of this faithful servant and felt himself more fond of him than ever.

It was a long time before Winkle, Tupman and Snodgrass learned of their leader's imprisonment and came to see him. Sam also had visitors in the person of his mother-in-law (who, of course, did not know he had brought about his own arrest) and the hypocritical, red-nosed preacher who came with her to lecture him on his evil ways.

Old Tony Weller came, too, with a plan that he had thought of for Mr. Pickwick's escape in a piano.

"It'll hold him easy," he whispered, "with his hat and shoes on, and breathe through the legs, vich is holler. Have a passage ready taken for 'Mericker. The 'Merikin gov'ment will never give him

up when they finds as he's got money to spend, Sammy. Let him stop there till Mrs. Bardell's dead, then let him come back and write a book about the 'Merikins as'll pay all his expenses and more if he blows 'em up enough."

But Mr. Pickwick did not avail himself of this plan to escape to America. Day by day he wandered about the prison, learning its tales of misery and hopelessness, till his head and his heart ached and he could bear no more. For three months he remained there, shut up all day, stealing from his room only at night, and no entreaties would induce him to pay the money which was keeping him a prisoner.

Mrs. Bardell's lawyers meanwhile grew impatient. They had not been paid even the costs of the trial, and these Mrs. Bardell had agreed to pay if they won the suit. As Mr. Pickwick had not paid the damages, however, she had no money, and so the lawyers at last had her arrested, and she, too, was sent to the Fleet Prison. After a few hours there, Mrs. Bardell was willing to do anything to escape, and she agreed if Mr. Pickwick paid the costs, to release him from the damages.

Mr. Pickwick was still so indignant that he would possibly not have consented, but at this juncture Winkle entered, leading by the hand the beautiful girl who had been Arabella Allen, but whom he introduced now as Mrs. Winkle. He had run away with her from the old aunt's house, with the help of Mary, the pretty housemaid, and they had been married without the knowledge of Winkle's father. They had come to Mr. Pickwick to beg him to go and plead with old Mr. Winkle for forgiveness.

Arabella's tears and Winkle's plight proved too much for Mr. Pickwick's resolution. He paid Mrs. Bardell's costs and left Fleet Prison that very day, with Sam Weller, whose father, of course, immediately released him also.

IX

SNODGRASS GETS INTO DIFFICULTIES, BUT WINS HIS LADY-LOVE. THE ADVENTURES OF THE PICKWICKIANS COME TO AN END

Mr. Pickwick journeyed first to Bristol, to break the news of Arabella's marriage to her brother, Ben Allen. The latter was angry at first, but finally he and Bob Sawyer shook hands with the visitor and agreed to treasure no ill-feeling.

Both the young gentlemen insisted on going with Mr. Pickwick to the Winkle homestead – a circumstance which did not make that visit an easy one. Arabella's brother went fast asleep in the parlor while they waited, and when Bob Sawyer pinched him, as the old gentleman entered, he awoke with a shriek without the least idea where he was.

This was most embarrassing to Mr. Pickwick, but he said all he could for Winkle. The old gentleman, however, would send no message to his son, and Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller returned with disappointment.

In London Sam found a letter awaiting him from his father. His mother-in-law was dead and the public house and its earnings were now the old stage-driver's. Sam went to see old Tony and found him terrified. All the widows in town were setting their caps for him and he was afraid one of them would succeed in marrying him. He had determined to sell out the business, give the money to Mr. Pickwick to invest for him, and keep to stage-driving so as to be safe.

While Sam sat with his father talking matters over, the red-nosed preacher came sidling in to inquire whether Mrs. Weller's will had not left some money for him. He felt so much at home that he went to the cupboard and poured himself out a big tumbler of his favorite pineapple rum. This was more than old Tony Weller could stand. He fell upon the old hypocrite, kicked him through the door and ducked him in the horse trough.

Mr. Pickwick, meanwhile, had been arranging to buy the release of Jingle and Job Trotter, and to send them to the West Indies, where they might have a chance to make an honest living. While he was attending to this at his lawyer's, a prolonged knock came at the door. It was Joe, Mr. Wardle's fat boy, erect, but gone fast asleep between his knocks.

Mr. Wardle came up from his carriage, delighted to see his old friend, of whose imprisonment he had just heard. He told Mr. Pickwick that his daughter Emily had fallen in love with Snodgrass, and that, discovering it, he had brought her to London to ask the advice of Mr. Pickwick in the matter. While they talked he sent the fat boy back to the inn to tell Emily that Mr. Pickwick would dine there with them.

The fat boy went on this errand, and coming suddenly into the inn sitting-room, discovered Emily, with her waist encircled with Snodgrass's arm while Arabella and her pretty housemaid were obligingly looking out of the window. There was but one thing to do: they bribed the fat boy not to tell!

Snodgrass, unluckily, stayed too long. As he was leaving, he heard Mr. Wardle, with Mr. Pickwick and Winkle, coming up the stair. He was obliged to retreat, and took refuge in Mr. Wardle's bedroom, from which there was no escape, save through the dining-room.

The dinner hour was a painful one to Emily, for the fat boy's secret kept him awake, and he winked at her and at Arabella so often that Mr. Wardle noticed it. The latter sent him into the bedroom finally for his snuff-box and he came out very pale, Mr. Snodgrass having seized him there, and begged him to tell some one secretly to release him.

Accordingly the fat boy made desperate efforts to attract Mr. Pickwick's attention – first by making faces at him when he thought no one else was looking and finally by running a pin into his leg. But this did not have the desired results. Mr. Pickwick concluded he was crazy, and Mr. Wardle was about to have him taken down stairs, when into the confusion, with a very red face, walked Snodgrass, out of the bedroom. He explained his presence there, declared his love for Emily, was forgiven on the spot and joined the dinner.

The happiness of all was complete when old Mr. Winkle arrived (having made up his mind to see his son's wife and judge for himself) and found Arabella so sweet that he kissed her and forgave Winkle on the instant.

Thus the last adventure of the Pickwickians ended happily. Mr. Pickwick had seen, before this, that the marriage of his companions would change his own life. He withdrew his name from the Pickwick Club (which thereupon went to pieces), and purchased a house near London for the entertainment of his friends, and there a few days later Snodgrass and Emily were married in the presence of Mr. Wardle and all the Pickwickians.

After the wedding, Snodgrass bought a farm near Dingley Dell where, with Emily, he lived many years, and was always accounted a great poet on account of his pensive and absent-minded manner. Winkle, with Arabella, settled a half-mile from Mr. Pickwick. Tupman never again fell in love, though for years his romantic air made him the admiration of numerous single ladies of the neighborhood.

Ben Allen and Bob Sawyer went to India as surgeons where (after having had yellow fever fourteen times) they became teetotalers and thereafter did well. Mrs. Bardell continued to let lodgings to single gentlemen, but never had another breach of promise suit. Old Tony Weller finally gave up business and retired to live on the interest of the money Mr. Pickwick had invested for him, having, to the end of his life, a great dislike for widows. His son, Sam, remaining faithful to his master, Mr. Pickwick at length made Mary, the pretty maid, his housekeeper, on condition that she marry Sam, which she did at once.

Mr. Pickwick lived happily, occupied in writing his adventures and in acting as godfather to the children of Snodgrass and Winkle. He never regretted what he had done for Jingle and Job Trotter, who became in time worthy members of society. He was a favorite with all and the children loved

him. Every year he went to Mr. Wardle's to a large merrymaking, attended by his faithful Sam Weller, between whom and his master there was a regard that nothing but death could end.

LITTLE DORRIT

Published 1855–1857

<i>Scene:</i>	London and Various Places on the Continent
<i>Time:</i>	1827 to 1830

CHARACTERS

Mr. Dorrit	An inmate of the debtors' prison
Known as "The Father of the Marshalsea." Later a wealthy man of the world	
"Little Dorrit"	His daughter Amy
Fanny	His older daughter
"Tip"	His son
Mrs. General	His daughters' chaperon
Arthur Clennam	Little Dorrit's champion
Mr. Clennam	His father
Mrs. Clennam	His supposed mother
Flintwinch	A family servant
Later Mrs. Clennam's partner in business	
Affery	His wife, and Mrs. Clennam's servant
Pancks	A rent collector. Little Dorrit's friend
John Chivery	The son of one of the prison turnkeys
Little Dorrit's suitor	
Maggy	A half-witted woman
Doyce	An inventor. Arthur's partner in business
Rigaud	A blackmailing adventurer and jailbird
Mr. Tre Barnacle	A self-important official in the "Circumlocution Office"
Mr. Merdle	A supposedly wealthy man of affairs in London
Mrs. Merdle	His wife
Mr. Meagles	A business man. Arthur's friend
Mrs. Meagles	His wife
"Pet"	Their daughter
"Tattycoram"	Pet's maid

LITTLE DORRIT

I

HOW ARTHUR CAME HOME FROM CHINA

A long, long time ago there lived in London a young man named Clennam. He was an orphan, and was brought up by a stern uncle, who crushed and repressed his youth and finally forced him to marry a cold, unfeeling, stubborn woman whom he did not in the least love.

Some time before this marriage, the nephew had met a beautiful young woman, also an orphan, whom a rich man named Dorrit was educating to be a singer, since she had a remarkable voice. Clennam had fallen in love with her and had persuaded her to give him all her love in return. There had even been a kind of ceremony of marriage between them.

But they were both very poor and could not really marry for fear of the anger of Clennam's cruel uncle, who finally compelled his nephew to marry the other woman, whom he had picked out for him. And the singer, because she loved him and could not bear to see him made a beggar, gave him up. So Clennam married one woman while loving another, and this, as all wrong things must do, resulted in unhappiness for them both.

The singer had given him a little silk watch-paper worked in beads with the initials D. N. F. These letters stood for the words, "Do Not Forget."

The wife saw the paper with her husband's watch in his secret drawer and wondered what it meant. One day she found an old letter, that had passed between her husband and the singer, which explained the initials and betrayed the secret of their love.

She was hard and unforgiving. Though she had never loved Clennam herself, her anger was terrible. She went to the singer, and under threat of for ever disgracing her in the eyes of the world, she made her give up to her her baby boy, Arthur, to rear as her own. She promised, in return, that the little Arthur should be provided for and should never know the real history of his parentage. She also compelled her husband and the singer to take an oath that neither would ever see or communicate with the other again.

Mrs. Clennam, in taking this terrible revenge, cheated herself into believing that she was only the instrument of God, carrying out His will and punishment. But in reality she was satisfying the rage and hatred of her own heart. Year by year she nursed this rage in the gloomy house in which Clennam lived and where he carried on the London branch of his business.

It was an old brick house separated from the street by a rusty courtyard. It seemed to have once been about to slide down sidewise, but had been propped up as though it leaned on some half-dozen gigantic crutches. Inside it was dark and miserable, with sunken floors and blackened furniture. In a corner of the sitting-room was an ugly old clock that was wound once a week with an iron handle, and on the walls were pictures showing the "Plagues of Egypt." The only pleasure the grim woman enjoyed was reading aloud from those parts of the Old Testament which call for dreadful punishments to fall upon all the enemies of the righteous, and in these passages she gloried.

In this melancholy place the boy Arthur Clennam grew up in silence and in dread, wondering much why they lived so lonely and why his father and mother (for so he thought Mrs. Clennam to be) sat always so silent with faces turned from each other.

There were but two servants, an old woman named Affery, and Flintwinch, her husband, a short, bald man, who was both clerk and footman, and who carried his head awry and walked in a one-sided crab-like way, as though he were falling and needed propping up like the house. Flintwinch was cunning and without conscience. Very few secrets his mistress had which he did not know, and they often quarreled.

At length the uncle, who had compelled the unhappy marriage of Arthur's father, died. Feeling sorry at the last for the wretched singer, whose life had been ruined, he left her in his will a sum of money, and another sum to the youngest niece of the man who had befriended and educated her – Mr. Dorrit.

This money, however, Mrs. Clennam did not intend either the woman she hated or the niece of her patron should get. She hid the part of the will which referred to it, and made Flintwinch (who, beside her husband, was the only one who knew of it) promise not to tell. Arthur's father she compelled to sail to China, to take charge of the branch of his business in that country, and when Arthur was old enough, she sent him there also.

For twenty years, while Arthur stayed with his father on the other side of the world, Mrs. Clennam, cold and unforgiving as ever, lived on in the old, tumbling house, carrying on the London business with the aid of Flintwinch.

The poor, forsaken singer lost her mind and at last died. Mr. Dorrit, of course, knowing nothing about the hidden will, could not claim his share, and the guilty secret remained (except for Arthur's unhappy father) in possession of only Mrs. Clennam and the crafty Flintwinch.

So the years rolled by, and Mrs. Clennam's cold gray eyes grew colder, her gray hair grayer and her face more hard and stony. She went out less and less, and finally paralysis made her keep to her room and her chair.

The time came when Arthur's father lay dying with his son beside him. On his death-bed he did not forget the money which had never been restored. He had not strength to write, but with his dying hand he gave Arthur his watch, making him promise to take it back to England to the wife whose anger and hatred still lived. The watch still held the little paper with the bead initials that stood for "Do not forget," and he meant thus to remind her of the wrong which was still unrighted.

Many times thereafter, on his way back to London, Arthur thought of his father's strange manner and wondered if it could be that some wrong deed lay on his conscience. This idea clung to him, so that when he saw Mrs. Clennam again on his arrival, and spoke to her of his father's last hours, he asked her if she thought this might be so. But at this her anger rose; she upbraided him and declared if he ever referred again to the subject she would renounce him as her son and cast him off for ever.

It was her guilty conscience, of course, that caused this burst of rage. And yet, just because it was not for the money's sake that she had done that evil act, but because she so hated the woman to whom it should have been given, she tried to convince herself that she had acted rightly, as the instrument of God, to punish wickedness. She had told herself this falsehood over and over again so often that she had ended by quite believing it to be the truth.

Arthur said no more to her about the matter. He was a man now, and his father's death had made him master of a very considerable fortune. He decided that he would not carry on the business, but would make a new one for himself. This resolution angered Mrs. Clennam greatly, but she grimly determined to carry it on herself, and in Arthur's place took the wily Flintwinch as her partner and told Arthur coldly to go his own way.

II THE CHILD OF THE MARSHALSEA

On the first night of his return to the house of his childhood Arthur had noticed there a little seamstress, with pale, transparent face, hazel eyes and a figure as small as a child's. She wore a spare thin dress, spoke little, and passed through the rooms noiselessly and shy. They called her "Little Dorrit." She came in the morning and sewed quietly till nightfall, when she vanished. It had been so rare in the old days for any one to please the mistress of that gloomy house that the little creature's presence there interested Arthur greatly and he longed to know something of her history.

He soon found there was nothing to be learned from Flintwinch, and so one night he followed Little Dorrit when she left the house. To his great surprise he saw her finally enter a great bare building surrounded with spiked walls and called The Marshalsea.

This was a famous prison where debtors were kept. In those days the law not only permitted a man to be put in jail for debt, but compelled him to stay there till all he owed was paid – a strange custom, since while he was in jail he was unable to earn any money to pay with. In fact, in many cases poor debtors had to stay there all their lives.

Inside the walls of the Marshalsea the wives and children of unfortunate prisoners were allowed to come to live with them just as in a boarding-house or hotel, but the debtors themselves could never pass out of the gate. Arthur entered the prison ignorant of its rules and so stayed too long, for presently the bell for closing rang, the gates were shut, and he had to stay inside all night. This was not so pleasant, but it gave him a chance easily to find out all he wished to learn of Little Dorrit's history.

Her father, before she was born, had lost all his money through a business failure, and had thus been thrown into the Marshalsea. There Amy, or Little Dorrit, as they came to call her, was born; there her mother had languished away, and there she herself had always lived, mothering her pretty frivolous sister Fanny, and her lazy, ne'er-do-well brother, "Tip."

Her father had been an inmate of the prison so many years that he was called "The Father of the Marshalsea." From being a haughty man of wealth, he had become a shabby old white-haired dignitary with a soft manner, who took little gifts of money which any one gave him half-shamefacedly and to the mortification of Little Dorrit alone.

The child had grown up the favorite of the turnkeys and of all the prison, calling the high, blank walls "home." When she was a little slip of a girl she had her sister and brother sent to night-school for a time, and later taught herself fine sewing, so that at the time Arthur Clennam returned to London she was working every day outside the walls, for small wages. Each night she returned to the prison to prepare her father's supper, bringing him whatever she could hide from her own dinner at the house where she sewed, loving him devotedly through all.

She even had a would-be lover, too. The son of one of the turnkeys, a young man with weak legs and weak, light hair, soft-hearted and soft-headed, had long pursued her in vain. He was now engaged in seeking comfort for his hopeless love by composing epitaphs for his own tombstone, such as:

Here Lie the Mortal Remains of

JOHN CHIVERY

Never Anything Worth Mentioning

Who Died of a Broken Heart, Requesting With

His Last Breath that the Word

AMY

Might be Inscribed Over His Ashes

Which Was Done by His Afflicted Parents

Old Mr. Dorrit held his position among the Marshalsea prisoners with great fancied dignity and received all visitors and new-comers in his room like a man of society at home. During that evening Arthur called on him and treated the old man so courteously and talked to Little Dorrit with such kindness that she began to love him from that moment.

Many things of Little Dorrit's pathetic story Arthur learned that night. His first surprise at finding her in the Clennam house mingled strangely with his old thought that his father on his death-bed seemed to be troubled by some remorseful memory; and as he slept in the gloomy prison he dreamed that the little seamstress was in some mysterious way mingled with this wrong and remorse.

There was more truth than fancy in this dream. Not knowing the true history of his parentage, and wholly ignorant of the sad life and death of the poor singer, his own unhappy mother, Arthur had never heard the name Dorrit. He did not know, to be sure, that it was the name of the wealthy patron who had once educated her. As a matter of fact, this patron had been Little Dorrit's own uncle, who now was living in poverty. It was to his youngest niece that the will Mrs. Clennam had wickedly hidden declared the money should go. And as Little Dorrit was this niece, it rightfully belonged to her. The real reason of Mrs. Clennam's apparent kindness to Little Dorrit was the pricking of her conscience, which gave her no rest.

But all this Arthur could not guess. Nevertheless, he had gained such an interest in the little seamstress that next day he determined to find out all he could about her father's unfortunate affairs.

He had great difficulty in this. The Government had taken charge of old Mr. Dorrit's debts, and his affairs were in the hands of a department which some people sneeringly called the "Circumlocution Office" – because it took so much time and talk for it to accomplish anything. This department had a great many clerks, every one of whom seemed to have nothing to do but to keep people from troubling them by finding out anything.

Arthur went to one clerk, who sent him to a Mr. Tite Barnacle, a fat, pompous man with a big collar, a big watch chain and stiff boots. Mr. Barnacle treated him quite as an outsider and would give him no information whatever. Then he tried another department, where they said they knew nothing of the matter. Still a third advised him not to bother about it. So at last he had to give up, quite discouraged.

Though he could do nothing for Little Dorrit's father, Arthur did what he could for her lazy brother. He paid his debts so that he was released from the Marshalsea, and this kindness, though Tip himself was ungrateful to the last degree, endeared him still more to Little Dorrit, who needed his friendship so greatly.

The night her brother was released she came to Arthur to thank him – alone save for a half-witted woman named Maggie, who believed she herself was only ten years old, and called Little Dorrit "Little Mother," and who used to go with her when she went through the streets at night. Little Dorrit was dressed so thinly and looked so slight and helpless that when she left, Arthur felt as if he would like to take her up in his arms and carry her home again.

It would have been better if he had. For when they got back to the Marshalsea the prison gates had closed for the night and they had to stay out till morning. They wandered in the cold street till nearly dawn; then a kind-hearted sexton who was opening a church let them come in and made Little Dorrit a bed of pew cushions, and there she slept a while with a big church-book for a pillow. Arthur did not know of this adventure till long afterward, for Little Dorrit would not tell him for fear he should blame himself for letting them go home alone.

Little Dorrit had one other valuable friend beside Arthur at this time. This was a rent collector named Pancks, who was really kind-hearted, but who was compelled to squeeze rent money out of the poor by his master. The latter looked so good and benevolent that people called him "The Patriarch," but he was at heart a genuine skinflint, for whose meanness Pancks got all the credit. Pancks was a short, wiry man, with a scrubby chin and jet-black eyes, and when he walked or talked he puffed and blew and snorted like a little steam-engine.

Little Dorrit used sometimes to go to sew at the house of "The Patriarch," and Pancks often saw her there. One day he greatly surprised her by asking to see the palm of her hand, and then he pretended to read her fortune. He told her all about herself (which astonished her, for she did not know that he knew anything of her history), and then, with many mysterious puffs and winks, he told her she would finally be happy. After that she seemed to meet Pancks wherever she went – at Mrs. Clennam's and at the Marshalsea as well – but at such meetings he would pretend not to know her. Only sometimes, when no one else was near, he would whisper:

"I'm Pancks, the gipsy – fortune-telling."

These strange actions puzzled Little Dorrit very much. But she was far from guessing the truth: that Pancks had for some time been interested (as had Arthur Clennam) in finding out how her father's affairs stood. He had discovered thus, accidentally, that old Mr. Dorrit was probably the heir at law to a great estate that had lain for years forgotten, unclaimed and growing larger all the time. The question now was to prove this, and this, Pancks, out of friendship for Little Dorrit, was busily trying to do.

One day the rent-collector came to Arthur to tell him that he had succeeded. The proof was all found. Mr. Dorrit's right was clear; all he had to do was to sign his name to a paper, and the Marshalsea gates would open and he would be free and a rich man.

Arthur found Little Dorrit and told her the glad tidings. They made her almost faint for joy, although all her rejoicing was for her father. Then he put her in a carriage and drove as fast as possible with her to the prison to carry her father the great news.

Little Dorrit told the old man with her arms around his neck, and as she clasped him, thinking that she had never yet in her life known him as he had once been, before his prison years, she cried:

"I shall see him as I never saw him yet – my dear love, with the dark cloud cleared away! I shall see him, as my poor mother saw him long ago! O my dear, my dear! O father, father! O thank God, thank God!"

So "The Father of the Marshalsea" left the old prison, in which he had lived so long, and all the prisoners held a mass-meeting and gave him a farewell address and a dinner.

On the last day, when they drove away from the iron gates, old Mr. Dorrit was in fine, new clothing, and Tip and Fanny were clad in the height of fashion. Poor Little Dorrit, in joy for her father and grief at parting from Arthur (for they were to go abroad at once), did not appear at the last moment, and Arthur, who had come to see them off, hastening to her room, found that she had fainted away. He carried her gently down to the carriage, and as he lifted her in, he saw she had put on the same thin little dress that she had worn on the day he had first seen her.

So, amid cheers and good wishes, they drove away, and Arthur, as he walked back through the crowded streets, somehow felt very lonely.

III

WHAT RICHES BROUGHT TO THE DORRITS

Great changes came to old Mr. Dorrit with his money. As they traveled slowly through Switzerland and into Italy, he put on greater dignity daily. He lived each day suspecting that every one was in some way trying to slight him and grew very much ashamed of his past years in the Marshalsea, and forbade all mention of them. He hired a great number of servants, and, to improve the manners of Fanny and Little Dorrit, he employed a woman named Mrs. General, who had many silly notions of society.

Little Dorrit could not even say "father" without being reproved by Mrs. General. "Papa is preferable, my dear," the lady would insist, "and, besides, it gives a pretty form to the lips. Papa, potatoes, poultry, prunes and prisms are all good words for the lips. You will find it serviceable in the formation of a demeanor, if you say to yourself in company – on entering a room, for instance – 'Papa, potatoes, poultry, prunes and prisms!'"

Fanny and Tip were as spoiled as possible. Fanny, morning and night, thought of nothing but wearing costly dresses and "going into society," and Tip did little but play cards and bet on horse-races. Only Little Dorrit, through all, kept her old sweet self unchanged.

Wherever they went they lived in splendid hotels. In Venice the palace they occupied was six times as big as the whole Marshalsea. Mr. Dorrit, when he remembered Arthur Clennam at all, spoke of him as an upstart who had intruded his presence upon them in their poverty, and quickly forgot all his kindness and his efforts to help and comfort them.

But Little Dorrit never forgot. Her present existence seemed a dream. She tried to care for her father as she used to do, but he was afraid people would think he had not been used to servants (foolish man!) so she lost even the little pleasure of her old prison life in the Marshalsea. There were valets and maids now to do all the little things she had once loved to do with her own hands, and she seemed to be no longer of use to him. She loved her father as dearly as she always had, but now she had begun to feel that she could never see him as he used to be before his prison days, because first poverty and now wealth had changed him. The old sad shadow came over her. He grew angry at her and chid her, and hurt her. It seemed he had entirely forgotten the old days when she slaved so for him.

Poor little Dorrit! She was far lonelier now than she had ever been before in the debtors' prison – lonelier and unhappier than Arthur Clennam in London could have guessed. The gay, fashionable life of her brother and sister did not attract her. She was timid of joining in their gaities. She asked leave only to be left alone, and went about the city in a gondola in a quiet, scared, lost manner. It often seemed to her as if the Marshalsea must be just behind the next big building, or Mrs. Clennam's

house, where she had first met Arthur, just around the next corner. And she used to look into gondolas as they passed, as if she might see Arthur any minute.

In the days of their prison-poverty Fanny had occasionally earned some money by dancing at a theater. There she had met a silly, chuckle-headed young man, the son of a Mrs. Merdle, and he had been fascinated by her beauty. Now, in their wealth, he saw Fanny again and fell even more deeply in love with her. Mrs. Merdle was a cold-hearted, artificial woman, who kept a parrot that was always shrieking, and who thought of nothing but riches and society. She would have refused to let her son marry Fanny in the old days, but now it was another matter. He proposed, and Fanny, who had been made angry a thousand times by Mrs. Merdle's insolence and patronizing ways, made up her mind to marry him if only to take her revenge on his mother.

Mrs. Merdle's husband always stayed in London. He was immensely rich – so rich that people said everything he touched turned into gold. He was a quiet, dull man, with dull red cheeks, and cared nothing at all for society, though everybody flattered and courted him.

When old Mr. Dorrit saw Mrs. Merdle's son was in love with Fanny he was greatly pleased. He had by this time grown so selfish that he considered much less her happiness than his own profit, and he thought if they were married he could persuade Mr. Merdle to invest his own great fortune for him, so that he would be even richer than he was now. Mr. Merdle's name had been growing bigger and bigger every day. Nobody believed the great man could make a mistake, but that he was going to keep on getting richer and richer (though nobody knew how he did it) as long as he lived.

So, before long, Fanny married Mrs. Merdle's son, and went back to London to take up life in the magnificent Merdle mansion with her silly, chuckle-headed husband. Mr. Merdle had got a very rich position for him in the "Circumlocution Office" with which Arthur Clennam had had so much trouble once on a time.

Old Mr. Dorrit went to London, too, and, as he had schemed, gave the famous Mr. Merdle all his fortune to invest. Then he returned to Italy, where, in Rome, his faithful and lonely Little Dorrit waited lovingly for him.

On the night after he reached Rome Mrs. Merdle gave a dinner party to a large company, and Little Dorrit and her father attended.

In the midst of the dinner he suddenly called to her across the table. His voice was so loud and excited that all the guests were frightened and rose to their feet. Little Dorrit ran to him and put her arms about him, for she saw at once that he was not himself.

He began to address the company, and his first words showed that his mind had failed. He imagined he was still in the debtors' prison and that all the rich people about him were the other poor prisoners. He made them a speech, welcoming them to its walls, thanking them in advance for any money they might give to him as "The Father of the Marshalsea." And he ended by calling for the old turnkey he had known there to help him up the narrow stair to bed, as he had been used to do in the prison.

Little Dorrit was not ashamed – she loved him too much for that. Her only wish was to soothe him, and with a pale, frightened face, she begged him to come with her.

They got him away at last and carried him to his house. Once laid on his bed, he never rose from it again. Nor did he regain his memory of the immediate present. That, with its show and its servants, its riches and power, in which Little Dorrit had had so small a part, had faded out for ever, and now his mind, back in the Marshalsea, recognized his daughter as his only stay and faithful comfort.

It was well so, for this was the father she had most loved.

So she watched beside him day and night, while every day his life grew weaker and weaker. Every day the shadow of death stole deeper and deeper over his face, until one morning, when the dawn came, they saw that he would never wake again.

IV WHAT HAPPENED TO ARTHUR CLENNAM

Arthur, meanwhile, had missed Little Dorrit greatly. He was very friendly with a couple named Meagles – a comely, healthy, good-humored and kind-hearted pair, and he was so lonely he almost thought himself in love with their daughter "Pet" for a while. But Pet soon married a portrait-painter and went to live abroad.

Mr. and Mrs. Meagles had a little orphan maid whom they called "Tattycoram," for no particular reason except that her first name had been Hattie, and the name of the man who founded the asylum where they found her was "Coram." Tattycoram had a very bad temper, so that Mr. Meagles, when he saw one of these fits coming on, used to stop and say, "Count twenty-five, Tattycoram." And Tattycoram would count twenty-five, and by that time the fit of temper was over.

But one day she had an attack that was very much worse than usual – so much worse that she couldn't wait to count twenty-five, and ran away. And it was a long time before they saw Tattycoram again.

At Mr. Meagles's house Arthur met an inventor named Doyce, a quiet, straightforward man, whom he soon came to like. Doyce had made a useful invention and for twelve years had been trying to bring it to the notice of the British Government. But this matter, too, had to go through the famous "Circumlocution Office," and so there it had stuck just as Arthur's inquiry had done.

Arthur having chosen no new business as yet, before long proposed a partnership between himself and Doyce. The latter agreed readily, and the new firm was established. Soon after this Doyce went abroad on business, leaving Arthur to manage the affairs.

All might have gone well but for the fame of Mr. Merdle. His wealth seemed so enormous, and his plans so sure, that many people throughout England, just as old Mr. Dorrit had done, put their money in his care. Even Pancks, the rent collector, did so, and strongly advised Arthur to do the same. Convinced by such advice Arthur was unhappily led to invest the money of the new firm in Merdle's schemes.

One day soon after, Mr. Merdle, whom every one had looked up to and respected, killed himself, and then to every one's astonishment it was found that his money was all gone, that his schemes were all exploded, and that the famous man who had dined and wined with the great was simply the greatest forger and the greatest thief that had ever cheated the gallows.

But it was too late then. Arthur's firm was utterly ruined with all the rest. What hurt him most was the knowledge that by using the firm's money he had ruined his honest partner, Doyce.

In order to set the latter as near right as he could, Arthur turned over every cent of his own personal fortune to pay as much of the firm's debt as it would, keeping nothing of value but his clothes and his books. Beside doing this, he wrote out a statement, declaring that he, Arthur Clennam, had of his own act and against his partner's express caution, used the firm's money for this purpose, and that he alone, and not Doyce, was to blame. He declared also that his own share (if any remained out of the wreck) should go to his partner, and that he himself would work as a mere clerk, at as small a salary as he could live on.

He published this statement at once, unwisely no doubt, when all London was so enraged against Merdle and glad to have some one on whom to vent its madness. In the public anger and excitement the generosity of his act was lost sight of. A few hours later a man who had invested some of his money in Arthur's firm, and thus lost it, had him arrested for debt, and that night he entered the dismal iron gates of the Marshalsea prison, not now as a visitor, but as one whom the pitiless bars locked in from liberty.

The turnkey took him up the old familiar staircase and into the old familiar room in which he had so often been. And as he sat down in its loneliness, thinking of the fair, slight form that had dwelt in it so long, he turned his face to the wall and sobbed aloud, "Oh, my Little Dorrit!"

Wherever he looked he seemed to see her, and just as she herself in a foreign country found herself looking and listening for his step and voice, so, too, it was with him.

In the days that followed he thought of her all the while. He was too depressed and too retiring and unhappy to mingle with the other prisoners, so he kept his own room and made no friends. The rest disliked him and said he was proud or sullen.

A burning, reckless mood soon added its sufferings to his dread and hatred of the place. The thought grew on him that he would in the end break his heart and die there. He felt that he was being stifled, and at times the longing to be free made him believe he must go mad. A week of this suffering found him in his bed in the grasp of a slow, wasting fever. He felt light-headed and delirious, and heard tunes playing that he knew were only in his brain.

One day when he had dragged himself to his chair by the window, the door of his room seemed to open to a quiet figure, which dropped a mantle it wore; then it seemed to be Little Dorrit in her old dress, and it seemed first to smile and then to burst into tears.

He roused himself, and all at once he saw that it was no dream. She was really there, kneeling by him now with her tears falling on his hands and her voice crying, "Oh, my best friend! Don't let me see you weep! I am your own poor child come back!"

No one had told her he was ill, for she had just returned from Italy. She made the room fresh and neat, sewed a white curtain for its window, and sent out for grapes, roast chicken and jellies, and every good thing. She sat by him all day, smoothing his hot pillow or giving him a cooling drink.

Though he had been strangely blind, he knew at last that she must have loved him all along. And to find her great heart turned to him thus in his misfortune made him realize that during all those months in the lonely prison he had been loving her, too, though he had not known it.

A feeling of peace came to him. Whenever he opened his eyes he saw her at his side – the same trusting Little Dorrit that he had always known.

V

"ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL"

All the while these things were happening, Mrs. Clennam and Flintwinch had continued their grim partnership.

Mrs. Clennam at last decided to burn the part of the will she had hidden, so that her share in the wicked plan could never be found out. Flintwinch, however, wishing for his own purposes to keep her in his power, deceived her. He cunningly put in its place a worthless piece of paper, and this Mrs. Clennam burned instead. Flintwinch then locked up the real piece in an iron box, with a lot of private letters that had been written by the poor crazed singer to Mrs. Clennam, begging her forgiveness. The box he gave to his brother, who took it to Holland with him for safe-keeping.

But Flintwinch, in this deception, overreached himself.

There was an adventurer in Holland named Rigaud, who used to drink and smoke with this brother. He was an oily villain, who had been in jail in France on suspicion of having murdered his wife. He had shaggy dry hair streaked with red, and a thick mustache, and when he smiled his eyes went close together, his mustache went up under his hooked nose, and his nose came down over his mustache. Rigaud saw the box, concluded it contained something valuable, and made up his mind to get it. His chance came when the brother of Flintwinch died suddenly one day, and he lost no time in making away with the iron box.

By means of the letters it contained, he soon guessed the secret which Mrs. Clennam had been for so many years at such pains to conceal, and, deciding that by this knowledge he could squeeze money out of her, he came to London to find and threaten her.

But she, believing she had burned the part of the will which Rigaud claimed to possess, refused to listen to him, until at last, maddened by her refusals, he searched out the Dorrits.

He soon discovered that the man who had educated the singer (Arthur's real mother) was Frederick Dorrit, Little Dorrit's dead uncle, and that it was Little Dorrit herself, since she was his youngest niece, from whom the money was now being unjustly kept.

Rigaud easily found Little Dorrit, for she was now in the Marshalsea nursing Arthur, where he lay sick, and to her the cunning adventurer sent a copy of the paper in a sealed packet, asking her, if it was not reclaimed before the prison closed that same night, to open and read it herself.

He then went to the Clennam house, told Mrs. Clennam and Flintwinch what he had done and demanded money at once as the price of his reclaiming the packet before Little Dorrit should learn the secret it held.

At this Flintwinch had to confess what he had done, and Mrs. Clennam knew that the fatal paper had not been burned, after all.

The wretched woman, seeing this sharp end to all her scheming, was almost distracted. She had not walked a step for twelve years, but now her excitement and frenzy gave her unnatural strength. She rose from her invalid chair and ran with all her speed from the house. Old Affery, the servant, followed her mistress, wringing her hands as she tried vainly to overtake her.

Mrs. Clennam did not pause till she had reached the prison and found Little Dorrit. She told her to open the packet at once and to read what it contained, and then, kneeling at her feet, she promised to restore to her all she had withheld, and begged her to forgive and to come back with her to tell Rigaud that she already knew the secret and that he might do his worst.

Little Dorrit was greatly moved to see the stern, gray-haired woman at her feet. She raised and comforted her, assuring her that, come what would, Arthur should never learn the truth from her lips. This return of good for evil from the one she had most injured brought the tears to the hard woman's eyes. "God bless you," she said in a broken voice.

Side by side they hastened back to the Clennam house, but as they reached the entrance of its dark courtyard there came a sudden noise like thunder. For one instant they saw the building, with the insolent Rigaud waiting smoking in the window; then the walls heaved, surged outward, opened and fell into pieces. Its great pile of chimneys rocked, broke and tumbled on the fragments, and only a huge mass of timbers and stone, with a cloud of dust hovering over it, marked the spot where it had stood.

The rotten old building, propped up so long, had fallen at last. For years old Affery had insisted that the house was haunted. She had often heard mysterious rustlings and noises, and in the mornings sometimes she would find little heaps of dust on the floors. Curious, crooked cracks would appear, too, in the walls, and the doors would stick with no apparent reason. These things, of course, had been caused by the gradual settling of the crazy walls and timbers, which now finally had collapsed all at once.

Frightened, they ran back to the street and there Mrs. Clennam's strange strength left her, and she fell in a heap upon the pavement.

She never from that hour was able to speak a word or move a finger. She lived for three years in a wheel-chair, but she lived – and died – like a statue.

For two days workmen dug industriously in the ruins before they found the body of Rigaud, with his head smashed to atoms beneath a huge beam.

They dug longer than that for the body of Flintwinch, and stopped at last when they came to the conclusion that he was not there. By that time, however, he had had a chance to get together all of the firm's money he could lay his hands on and to decamp. He was never seen again in England,

but travelers claimed to have seen him in Holland, where he lived comfortably under the name of "Mynheer Von Flyntevynge" – which is, after all, about as near as one can come to saying "Flintwinch" in Dutch.

No one grieved greatly over his loss. It was long before Arthur knew of these events, and Little Dorrit was too happy in nursing him back to health to think much about it.

She was not content with this, either, but wrote to Mr. and Mrs. Meagles, who were abroad, of the sick man's misfortune. The former went at once in search of Doyce and brought him back to London, where together they set the firm of "Doyce and Clennam" on its feet again and arranged to buy Arthur's liberty. They did not tell Arthur anything of this, however, in order that they might surprise him.

Mr. Meagles, for Little Dorrit's sake, tried hard to find the fragment of the will which Rigaud had kept in the iron box. But it was Tattycoram, the little maid with the bad temper, who finally found it in a lodging Rigaud had occupied, and brought it to Mr. Meagles, praying on her knees that he take her back into his service, which, to be sure, he was very glad to do.

Arthur, while he was slowly growing better, had thought much of his condition. Though Little Dorrit had begged him again and again to take her money and use it as his own, he had refused, telling her as gently as he could that now that she was rich and he a ruined man, this could never be, and that, as the time had long gone by when she and the Marshalsea had anything in common, they two must soon part.

One day, however, when he was well enough to sit up, Little Dorrit came to his room in the prison and told him she had received a very great fortune and asked him again if he would not take it.

"Never," he told her.

"You will not take even half of it?" she asked pleadingly.

"Never, dear Little Dorrit!" he said emphatically.

Then, at last, she laid her face on his breast crying:

"I have nothing in the world. I am as poor as when I lived here in the Marshalsea. I have just found that papa gave all we had to Mr. Merdle and it is swept away with the rest. My great fortune now is poverty, because it is all you will take. Oh, my dearest and best, are you quite sure you will not share my fortune with me now?"

He had locked her in his arms, and his tears were falling on her cheek as she said joyfully:

"I never was rich before, or proud, or happy. I would rather pass my life here in prison with you, and work daily for my bread, than to have the greatest fortune that ever was told and be the greatest lady that ever was honored!"

But Arthur's prison life was to be short. For Mr. Meagles and Doyce burst upon them with all the other good news at once. Arthur was free, the firm had been reestablished with him at its head, and to-morrow the debtors' prison would be only a memory.

Next morning, before they left the Marshalsea for ever, Little Dorrit handed Arthur a folded paper, and asked him to please her by putting it into the fire with his own hand.

"Is it a charm?" he asked.

"It is anything you like best," she answered, standing on tiptoe to kiss him. "Only say 'I love you' as you do it!"

He said it, and the paper burned away. And so the will that had been the cause of so much pain and wrong was turned to ashes. Little Dorrit kept the promise she had made, and Arthur never learned of the sin of which the woman he had always called his mother had been guilty.

Then, when all good-bys had been said, they walked together to the very same church where Little Dorrit had slept on the cushions the night she had been locked out of the Marshalsea, and there she and Arthur were married. Doyce gave the bride away.

And among the many who came to witness the wedding were not only Pancks, and Maggie, the half-witted woman, but even a group of Little Dorrit's old turnkey friends from the prison – among

whom was the disconsolate Chivery, who had so long solaced himself by composing epitaphs for his own tombstone, and who went home to meditate over his last inscription:

STRANGER! Respect the Tomb of

JOHN CHIVERY, JUNIOR

Who Died at an Advanced Age not Necessary to

Mention. He Encountered His Rival and

Felt Inclined

To Have a Round with Him;

But, for the Sake of the Loved One, Conquered

Those Feelings of Bitterness and Became

MAGNANIMOUS

LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT

Published 1843–1844

<i>Scene:</i>	London, Neighboring Towns, New York and the Mississippi Valley
<i>Time:</i>	1842

CHARACTERS

Martin Chuzzlewit	A young gentleman
Chuzzlewit	His grandfather. A rich old man
Mary Graham	Old Chuzzlewit's nurse and secretary
Jonas	His grasping nephew
Chuffey	An aged clerk to Jonas's father
Pecksniff	An architect and hypocrite
A distant relative of Old Chuzzlewit's	
Charity	His daughter
Mercy	His daughter. Later, Jonas's wife
Tom Pinch	A charity pupil of Pecksniff's
Ruth	His sister
John Westlock	One of Pecksniff's former pupils
Mark Tapley	An assistant at a village inn
Later, Martin's comrade in the United States	
Bevan	An American
Mrs. Todgers	The proprietress of a London boarding-house
Montague Tigg	A penniless adventurer
Later known as "Tigg Montague," and president of the Anglo-Bengalee Company	
"Sairey" Gamp	A nurse
"Mrs. Harris"	An imaginary friend of Sairey Gamp's
Nadgett	A police spy

MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT

I

HOW MARTIN LEFT ENGLAND

Martin Chuzzlewit was the grandson of an old man who, from being poor, became so rich that he found not only that people bowed low and flattered him, but that many of his relatives were trying by every trick to get some of his money.

The old man was naturally suspicious and obstinate, and when he saw this he began to distrust everybody and to think the whole world selfish and deceitful. He had loved most of all his grandson, Martin, but at length his heart became hardened to him also.

This was partly Martin's own fault, for he was somewhat selfish, but he had, nevertheless, a great deal of good in him. And perhaps his selfishness was partly his grandfather's fault, too, because the latter had brought him up to believe he would inherit all his money and would sometime be very rich.

At last, ill and grown suspicious of every one he met, old Chuzzlewit gave a home to a beautiful orphan girl named Mary Graham, and kept her near him as his nurse and secretary. In order that she might not have any selfish interest in being kind to him, he took an oath in her presence that he would not leave her a cent when he died. He paid her monthly wages and it was agreed that there should be no affection shown between them.

In spite of his seeming harshness, Mary knew his heart was naturally kind, and she soon loved him as a father. And he, softened by her sympathy, came in spite of himself to love her as a daughter.

It was not long before young Martin, too, had fallen very deeply in love with Mary. He concluded too hastily, however, that his grandfather would not approve of his marrying her, and told the old man his intentions in such a fiery way that Chuzzlewit resented it.

The old man accused Martin of a selfish attempt to steal from him Mary's care, and at this, Martin, whose temper was as quick as his grandfather's flew to anger. They quarreled and Martin left him, declaring he would henceforth make his own way until he was able to claim Mary for his wife.

While he was wondering what he should do, Martin saw in a newspaper the advertisement of a Mr. Pecksniff, an architect, living near Salisbury, not many miles from London, who wished a pupil to board and teach. An architect was what Martin wanted to be, and he answered the advertisement at once and accepted Pecksniff's terms.

Now, to tell the truth, Martin had another reason for this. Pecksniff was his grandfather's cousin, and he knew the old man thought him the worst hypocrite of all his relatives, and disliked him accordingly. And Martin was so angry with his grandfather that he went to Pecksniff's partly to vex him.

Pecksniff was just the man old Chuzzlewit thought him. He was a smooth, sleek hypocrite, with an oily manner. He had heavy eyelids and a wide, whiskerless throat, and when he talked he fairly oozed virtuous sayings, for which people deemed him a most moral and upright man. He was a widower with two daughters, Charity and Mercy, the older of whom had a very bitter temper, which made it hard for the few students as long as they stayed there.

After Pecksniff had once got a pupil's money in advance, he made no pretense of teaching him. He kept him drawing designs for buildings, and that was all. If any of the designs were good, he said nothing to the pupil, but sold them as his own, and pocketed the money. His pupils soon saw through him and none of them had ever stayed long except one.

This one was named Tom Pinch. He had been poor and Mr. Pecksniff had pretended to take him in at a reduced rate. But really Pinch paid as much as the others, beside being a clever fellow

who made himself useful in a thousand ways. He was a musician, too, and played the organ in the village church, which was a credit to Pecksniff.

With all this, Pinch was a generous, open-hearted lad, who believed every one honest and true, and he was so grateful to Pecksniff (whose hypocrisy he never imagined) that he was always singing his praises everywhere. In return for all this, Pecksniff treated him with contempt and made him quite like a servant.

Tom Pinch, however, was a favorite with every one else. He had a sister Ruth who loved him dearly, but he seldom saw her, for she was a governess in the house of a brass and iron founder, who did not like her to have company. One of Tom's greatest friends had been a pupil named John Westlock, who in vain had tried to open the other's eyes to Pecksniff's real character. When Westlock came into his money he had left and gone to live in London, and it was to take his vacant place that the new pupil Martin was now coming.

Another friend of Pinch's was Mark Tapley, a rakish, good-humored fellow, whose one ambition was to find a position so uncomfortable and dismal that he would get some credit for being jolly in it. Tapley was an assistant at The Blue Dragon, the village inn, whose plump, rosy landlady was so fond of him that he might have married her if he had chosen to. But, as Tapley said, there was no credit in being jolly where he was so comfortable, so he left The Blue Dragon and went off, too, to London.

With neither Westlock nor Mark Tapley there Tom Pinch was lonely and welcomed the arrival of Martin, with whom he soon made friends. Mr. Pecksniff folded his new pupil to his breast, shed a crocodile tear and set him to work designing a grammar-school.

Old Chuzzlewit soon heard where Martin his grandson was, and wrote to Pecksniff asking him to meet him in London. Pecksniff was so anxious to curry favor with the rich old man that, taking his daughters with him, he left at once for London, where they put up at a boarding-house kept by a Mrs. Todgers, while Pecksniff awaited the arrival of old Chuzzlewit.

Mrs. Todgers's house smelled of cabbage and greens and mice, and Mrs. Todgers herself was bony and wore a row of curls on the front of her head like little barrels of flour. But a number of young men boarded there, and Charity and Mercy enjoyed themselves very much.

One whom they met on this trip to London was a remote relative of theirs, a nephew of old Chuzzlewit's, named Jonas. Jonas's father was eighty years old and a miser, and the son, too, was so mean and grasping that he often used to wish his father were dead so he would have his money.

The old father, indeed, would have had no friend in his own house but for an old clerk, Chuffey, who had been his schoolmate in boyhood and had always lived with him. Chuffey was as old and dusty and rusty as if he had been put away and forgotten fifty years before and some one had just found him in a lumber closet. But in his own way Chuffey loved his master.

Jonas called on the two Pecksniff daughters, and Charity, the elder, determined to marry him. Jonas, however, had his own opinion, and made up his mind to marry Mercy, her younger sister.

Before long old Chuzzlewit reached London, and when Pecksniff called he told him his grandson, Martin, was an ingrate, who had left his protection, and asked the architect not to harbor him. Pecksniff, who worshiped the other's money and would have betrayed his best friend for old Chuzzlewit's favor, returned home instantly, heaped harsh names upon Martin and ordered him to leave his house at once.

Martin guessed what had caused Pecksniff to change his mind so suddenly, and with hearty contempt for his truckling action, he left that very hour in the rain, though he had only a single silver piece in his pocket. Tom Pinch, in great grief for his trouble, ran after him with a book as a parting gift, and between its leaves Martin found another silver piece – all Tom had.

Most of the way to London Martin walked. Once there he took a cheap lodging, and tried to find some vessel on which he could work his passage to America, for there, as he walked, he had

made up his mind to go. But he found no such opportunity. His money gone, he pawned first his watch and then his other belongings, one by one, until he had nothing left, and was even in distress for food.

Yet his pride was strong, and he gave what was almost his last coin to escape the attentions of one Montague Tigg, a dirty, jaunty, bold, mean, swaggering, slinking vagabond of the shabby-genteel sort, whom he recognized as one who had more than once tried to squeeze money out of his grandfather.

At last, when he was almost in despair, a surprise came in the shape of an envelop addressed to himself, containing no letter, but a bank-note for a generous amount. There was no clue whatever to the sender, but the sum was enough to pay his passage and he determined therefore to sail next day.

While he was still wondering at this good luck, Martin chanced to come upon Mark Tapley, the old assistant at The Blue Dragon Inn. Tapley had found London too pleasant a place to be jolly in with any credit, and, as he had heard America was a very dismal place, he proposed to go with Martin.

As it happened, Tapley knew that Mary Graham was then in London, for he had seen old Chuzzlewit going into his house. When Martin learned this he sent a letter to her by Tapley, and she met him next morning in a little park near by. There he told her of his leaving Pecksniff's and of his coming voyage.

She was very sorrowful over his departure, but he cheered her by telling her he would soon return, well and prosperous, for her. She told him that Pecksniff seemed somehow to have made his grandfather trust him, and that by his advice they were both to move to The Blue Dragon Inn, near his house. Martin told her of Pecksniff's true character, warned her against him, and begged her to trust in Tom Pinch as a true friend. So they parted, pledging each other their love whatever befell.

Before Martin left next day Mary sent him a diamond ring, which he thought his grandfather had given her, but for which in reality she had paid all her savings, so that he should have with him something of value to sell if he be in want.

So Martin and Mark Tapley took ship for America, and Mary Graham and old Chuzzlewit went to live at The Blue Dragon, to the huge satisfaction of the oily Pecksniff, who thought now he could easily get the rich old man under his thumb.

II

PECKSNIFF AND OLD CHUZZLEWIT

After his first burst of anger at Martin's leaving him, old Chuzzlewit, to Mary's eyes, seemed to grow gradually a different man. He appeared more old and stooped and deaf, and took little interest in anything.

After they came to The Blue Dragon Inn, Pecksniff threw himself constantly in old Chuzzlewit's way, flattering and smooth, and before long Mary saw, to her grief, that the old man was coming more and more under the other's influence. When she was alone with him he seemed more his former eager self; but let Pecksniff appear and the strange dull look would come and he would seem only anxious to ask his advice about the smallest matters.

Little wonder Pecksniff concluded he could wind his victim around his finger. At length he proposed that old Chuzzlewit and Mary leave The Blue Dragon, where he said he felt sure they were not comfortable, and come and live with him under his own roof. To Mary's dismay, the old man consented, and they were soon settled in the architect's house.

The only thing that now seemed to stand in Pecksniff's way was Mary, and he decided that, as old Chuzzlewit was fond of her, he himself would marry her. Once married to her, he reasoned, with both of them to influence old Chuzzlewit, it would be easy to do what they pleased with him and with his money, too. With this end in view, he began to persecute poor Mary with his attentions, squeezing her hand and throwing kisses to her when no one else was looking.

Charity, Pecksniff's older daughter, was not blind to his plan. She was in a sour temper because the miserly Jonas, who came from London often now to see them, had begun to make love to Mercy instead of to her. To see her father now paying so much attention to Mary Graham made Charity angry, and she left her father's house and went to live in London at Mrs. Todgers's boarding-house, where she set her cap to catch a young man, whether he wanted to be caught or not. As for Mercy, the younger sister, she was leading Jonas such a dance that she thought very little of her father's schemes.

His vinegary daughter Charity out of the way, Pecksniff began to persecute Mary more and more. One day he made her so angry by holding her hand and kissing it that she threatened to complain to old Chuzzlewit. Pecksniff told her that if she did he would use all his influence to turn the old man still more against his grandson. The poor girl was in great trouble then, for she loved Martin and feared Pecksniff's growing power with old Chuzzlewit. And seeing that this threat frightened her, Pecksniff continued his annoyances.

According to Martin's parting advice, Mary had learned to like and to trust Tom Pinch, in spite of his mistaken worship of Pecksniff. One day while Tom was practising the organ at the church she came to him and, confiding in him, told all that she had endured.

In his simple-heartedness he had admired and looked up to Pecksniff all his life, but this evidence opened Tom Pinch's eyes. At last he saw the pompous hypocrite in his true light. He agreed with her that the architect was a scoundrel, and comforted her, and asked her always to trust in his own friendship.

Unluckily while they talked there was an eavesdropper near. It was Pecksniff himself. He had gone into the church to rest, and lying down in one of the high-back pews, had gone to sleep, and now the voices of Tom and Mary had awakened him. He listened and waited till they had both gone; then he stole out and went home by a roundabout way.

That night he went to old Chuzzlewit and, pretending to shed tears of sorrow, told him he had overheard Tom Pinch, the pauper pupil, whom he had trusted and befriended, making love to Mary, the old man's ward, in the church. Making a great show of his respect and regard for old Chuzzlewit, he told him this villain should not remain under his roof one night longer. Then he called in Tom Pinch and, abusing and insulting him in Chuzzlewit's presence, sent him away as he had sent away Martin.

Tom was feeling so bad over his loss of faith in his idol, Pecksniff, that he did not greatly mind this last blow. In fact, he had about concluded he could not live any longer with such a wicked hypocrite anyway. He packed his things and set off for London, feeling almost as if the world had come to an end.

Once there, however, he plucked up spirit and felt better. First of all he looked up Westlock, the former pupil of Pecksniff's, and found him the same friendly, clever fellow now in his riches as he was of old. Westlock was glad Tom had at last found his master out, and began at once to plan for his future. Next Tom went to see his sister Ruth at the house where she was governess.

He arrived there at a fortunate time, for the vulgar brass and iron founder who had hired her to try to teach his spoiled little daughter was at that moment scolding Ruth harshly for what was not her fault at all.

Tom had been gaining a spirit of his own since he had parted from Pecksniff, and, now, at sight of his gentle little sister's tears, his honest indignation rose. He gave her unjust employer a lecture that left him much astonished, and then, drawing Ruth's arm through his, he led her from the house for ever.

It was not long before each had told the other all that had happened. Tom decided that they should part no more, and they set out together to find a lodging. They took some rooms in a quiet neighborhood and settled down together till Tom could find something to do.

Ruth was a neat housekeeper, but she had to learn to cook, and they had great fun over their first meal. While she was making her first beefsteak pudding Westlock called with a great piece of news. An agent had come to him asking him to offer to his friend Tom Pinch a position as a librarian

at a good salary. Who the employer was Tom was not to know. Here was a rare mystery, and Ruth in her mingled excitement and pie-making looked so sweet and charming that then and there Westlock fell in love with her.

Tom and he went at once to the agent who had made this extraordinary offer, and he took them to an unoccupied house, to a dusty room whose floor was covered all over with books. Tom, he said, was to arrange and make a list of these. Then he gave him the key, told him to come to him each week for his salary, and disappeared.

Still wondering, the two friends went back together, for of course Westlock had to taste the beefsteak pudding. Ruth had supper waiting for them. Every minute Westlock thought she grew more lovely, and as he walked home he knew he was in love at last.

Now, the mystery of Tom's library, and of the bank-note that Martin had received when his money was all gone, would have been a very joyful one to them both if they could have guessed it. Old Chuzzlewit, whom they believed so harsh, and whom the wily Pecksniff thought he had got under his thumb, was a very deep and knowing old man indeed. He had never ceased to love Martin, his grandson, though he had misunderstood him at first, but he had seen very plainly that the lad was growing selfish and he wished to save him from this. He had longed for nothing more than that Martin and Mary should marry, but he wished to try their love for each other as well as Martin's affection for him. It was to test Pecksniff that old Chuzzlewit had asked the architect to send Martin from his house, and when he saw that Pecksniff was fawning hound enough to do it, he determined to punish him in the end. It was old Chuzzlewit who had found where Martin lodged in London, and had sent him the bank-note. And, won by Tom Pinch's goodness and honor, it was he who now, secretly, made him this position. If Pecksniff had guessed all this, he would probably have had a stroke of apoplexy.

III

JONAS GETS RID OF AN ENEMY

Jonas, meanwhile, in his miserly soul, had been wishing that his old father would hurry and die. He wanted the money and he wanted to marry Mercy Pecksniff, and to do both he preferred the old man out of his way. He thought of this and wished it so long that at last he began to think of helping the matter along.

His father kept in a drawer some cough lozenges which he constantly used. Jonas at last bought some poison from a dissipated man who needed money badly, and made some lozenges like them. These he put in his father's drawer instead of the others.

His father, however, and Chuffey, the old clerk, noticed that the lozenges were not the same, and they guessed what Jonas had done. The shock of discovering that his own son had tried to murder him proved the old man's death. He made Chuffey promise not to betray Jonas, then fell in a fit and never spoke again.

Jonas naturally thought the poison had done the work, and was at first in dreadful fear of discovery. He made a fine funeral, with four-horse coaches, velvet trappings and silver plate, so that people would think he loved his father, and not till the body was buried did he forget his dread.

Chuffey, however, seemed to go almost daft. He would walk and cry and wring his hands and talk so strangely about his master's death that Jonas feared he would cause suspicion that all was not right. So he hired a nurse to come and keep him in his room.

This nurse went by the name of "Sairey" Gamp. She was a fat old woman, with a red face, a husky voice and a moist eye, which often turned up so as to show only the white. Wherever she went she carried a faded umbrella with a round white patch on top, and she always smelled of whisky. Mrs. Gamp was fond of talking of a certain "Mrs. Harris," whom she spoke of as a dear friend, but whom nobody else had ever seen. When she wanted to say something nice of herself she would put it in the mouth of Mrs. Harris. She was always quoting, "I says to Mrs. Harris," or "Mrs. Harris says to

me." People used to say there was no such person at all, but this never failed to make Mrs. Gamp very angry.

She was a cruel nurse, and her way of making a sick man swallow a dose of medicine was by choking him till he gasped and then putting the spoon down his throat.

Such was the guardian Jonas chose to keep old Chuffey quiet in London, while he himself courted Pecksniff's daughter at her father's house. And it was not very long before he proposed to Mercy and they were married.

If Pecksniff had searched London he could not have found a worse man for his daughter to marry. But Pecksniff cared for nothing but money, and, as Jonas was now rich, he pretended great love for his new son-in-law and went around with his hands clasped and his eyes lifted to Heaven in pious thankfulness. As for Jonas, he began to treat Mercy brutally and soon she was miserable.

Jonas, meanwhile, had fallen in with a very prosperous individual. This was none other than Montague Tigg, the bold, jaunty, swaggering, shabby-genteel Tigg, who had once been glad to beg a coin from any one he knew. Now he had changed in both appearance and name. His face was covered with glossy black whiskers, his clothes were the costliest and his jewelry the most expensive. He was known now as "Mr. Tigg Montague," and was president of the great "Anglo-Bengalee Company."

The Anglo-Bengalee Company was a business which pretended to insure people's lives. It had fine offices with new furniture, new paper and a big brass plate on the door. It looked most solid and respectable, but it was really a trap, for Tigg and its other officers were only waiting until they had taken in enough money to run away with it to a foreign country. Jonas, sharp as he was, was deceived into believing it an honest enterprise. He came there to get his wife's life insured, and so he met Tigg.

Tigg, however, knowing Jonas of old, knew he had a great deal of money of his own, and thought, too, that he might influence Mr. Pecksniff, now his father-in-law. Tigg flattered Jonas accordingly, telling him what a sharp man he was and offered to make him a director in the company. He assured Jonas that there would be enormous profits and showed him how, by putting his own money into it, he could cheat other people out of much more. This idea tickled Jonas and he agreed.

Having got thus far, Tigg hired a spy named Nadgett to see if he could discover whether Jonas had ever committed any crime, the knowledge of which would put him in their power. Nadgett began his work, got on the right side of Sairey Gamp, the nurse, found out that old Chuffey was locked up for fear he might talk, and soon had a suspicion that Jonas had been concerned in his father's death.

As an experiment Tigg boldly charged him with it one day, and knew in an instant, by the way Jonas's face whitened with fear, that he had stumbled on the truth. He then told Jonas he not only must put into the company more of his own money, but must persuade Pecksniff to do likewise.

Jonas dared not now refuse. He thought of escaping to some other country, but wherever he turned he found Tigg's spies watching, and at last, he determined on a second murder to hide the first – the murder of Tigg, who knew his secret.

Tigg did not forget his plan to ensnare Pecksniff. To do this he took Jonas by carriage from London to Salisbury and, mile by mile, as they sped, the latter laid his plans. Near their destination accident came near assisting him. In the storm the carriage was upset and Tigg was thrown under the horses' feet. Jonas lashed the struggling horses, hoping they would trample and kill his companion, but the driver pulled him out just in time.

They finally reached The Blue Dragon Inn, and there, the next day, Jonas brought Pecksniff to dine with Tigg, and the latter told the architect all about his wonderful company. Though Pecksniff pretended he took the idea as a joke, yet the thought of cheating other people for big profits was very attractive to him. Before the evening was over he had fallen into the trap and had promised next day to give Tigg his money.

Jonas, his part of the bargain finished, hurried back to London. There, after telling Mercy not to disturb him, as he expected to sleep all next day, he locked himself into his room. When it was

dark he dressed himself in a rough suit that he had prepared for disguise, let himself out by a rear way and took the stage back again to the village where he had left Tigg with Pecksniff.

He lay in wait in a wood through which Tigg passed after his last call on the architect, and there he killed him with a club. Then he went swiftly back to London and let himself into his room again, thinking no one had noticed his absence.

But there had been an eye at the shutter of the window in the house opposite that did not fail to observe Jonas when he went and when he came. And this eye belonged to Nadgett, the spy.

IV

WHAT CAME OF MARTIN'S TRIP TO AMERICA

While these things were occurring, much had happened to Martin and Mark Tapley far away in America.

The sailing vessel on which they crossed was crowded and dirty, and in order to save their money they had taken passage in the steerage. For a long time Martin was very seasick, and even when he grew better he was so ashamed at having to travel in the worst and cheapest part of the vessel that he would not go on deck.

But Tapley had none of this false pride. He made friends with all, helped every one he could and soon became such a general favorite that (as he thought sadly) he was having much too good a time for him to be jolly with any credit.

The long voyage of so many weeks came to an end at last, and they reached New York. They found it a strange place indeed, and met many strange characters in it. Only one they met pleased them: a gentleman named Bevan, and from him they got much information and advice. There seemed, however, to be little opening for an architect in New York, and Martin at length decided to go West and settle in some newer region.

In the western town where they left the train they found a land agent who was selling lots in a new settlement, on the Mississippi River, called Eden. To buy their railway tickets Martin had already sold the ring Mary Graham had given him, and he had just enough to purchase a tract of land in Eden and to pay their fare there.

Martin looked at the agent's splendid plans of the new town, showing wharves, churches and public buildings, and thought it a capital place for a young architect; so they closed the bargain without more ado and took the next steamer down the desolate Mississippi.

A terrible disappointment awaited them when they found what Eden really was – a handful of rotting log cabins set in a swamp. The wharves and public buildings existed only on the agent's map with which he had so cruelly cheated them. There were only a few wan men alive there – the rest had succumbed to the sickly hot vapor that rose from the swamp and hung in the air. At the sight of what they had come to, Martin lay down and wept in very despair. But for his comrade's cheerfulness he would have wholly given up hope.

Next morning Martin found himself in the grip of the deadly fever with which the place reeked, and for many days thereafter he lay helpless and burning, nursed like a child by the faithful Mark Tapley. When he had begun to recover it came the other's turn to fall ill and Martin took his place at nursing.

Through all Tapley never complained. At last he found himself in circumstances where to be jolly was really a credit to anybody. He always insisted that he was in great spirits, and when he was weakest and could not speak he wrote "jolly" on a slate for Martin to see.

Watching beside his friend day by day, Martin came to know himself truly and to see his own selfishness. As he nursed Tapley to health again he determined to root it out of his nature and to return to England a nobler man. He began to think not of what he had sacrificed for Mary, but of what she would have sacrificed for him, and to wish with all his heart that he had not parted from

his grandfather in anger. And even before Tapley was able to sit up Martin had determined to return as soon as possible to England.

He laid aside his pride and wrote to Bevan, who had befriended them in New York, to borrow money enough to bring them both to that city. Once there, Tapley found a position as cook in the same ship that had brought them from England and his wages proved sufficient to pay for Martin's passage.

So Martin started back to the home he had parted from a year before, poorer than he had left it, but at heart a better and a sounder man. His false pride was gone now. He mingled with others and helped them, and by the time they landed he was as popular a passenger as Mark Tapley was a cook.

Almost the first man they saw on landing, curiously enough, was the oily Pecksniff. They saw him escorted along the street, pointed out by the crowds as "the great architect." On that day the corner stone of a splendid public building was to be laid, and Pecksniff's design for this structure had taken the prize. The two comrades went with the crowd to hear Pecksniff's speech, and looking over a gentleman's shoulder at a picture of the building as it was to look, Martin saw that it was the very grammar school he himself had designed when he had first come to Pecksniff's. The old rascal had stolen the plans!

Martin was angry, of course, but there was no help for it, and besides he had other things to think of. Mary Graham, to be sure, was his first thought, and he and Tapley set out at once for The Blue Dragon to learn the latest news.

The rosy landlady laughed and cried together to see them and Mark Tapley kissed her so many times that she was quite out of breath. She cooked the finest dinner in the world for them and told them all she knew about their friends: how Tom Pinch had been sent away, and how every one said that Pecksniff intended to marry Mary. This news made Martin grind his teeth, and it would have been unlucky for the architect if he had been near at that moment.

Martin first sent Tapley with a note addressed to his grandfather, but Pecksniff, who came to the door, tore up the letter before the bearer's face. Mark told Martin of this, and together they forced themselves into the house, and into the room where old Chuzzlewit sat, with Pecksniff beside him, and Mary standing behind his chair.

Martin's grandfather hardly looked at him, keeping his eyes on Pecksniff's face, as though he depended on him even for his thoughts. Martin, seeing this, was almost hopeless, but he did as he had determined, and in a few manly words begged old Chuzzlewit's pardon for his own haste and temper, and asked him to take him back to his favor. While he talked, Mary had hidden her face in her hands and was weeping, for she believed his grandfather so wholly in Pecksniff's power that she had no hope for Martin.

Pecksniff was in rare good humor, for it was this very day that he had turned his money over to Tigg to make a fortune for him in the great Anglo-Bengalee Company. Now, rejoicing in his opportunity, he took it upon himself to answer. He called Martin a shameless, cowardly vagabond and ordered him from the door. Then he gave his arm to the old man and led him out of the room.

Martin clasped Mary for a moment in his arms as he kissed her and told her to keep up heart. Then he left the house and set out with Mark Tapley for London.

V

OLD CHUZZLEWIT'S PLOT SUCCEEDS

Where was the guilty Jonas meanwhile? Shivering at every sound, listening for the news that Tigg's body had been found in the wood, wondering if by any chance the crime might be laid on him.

Already fate was weaving a net about his feet. The man from whom he had bought the poison to kill his father had fallen very ill, and in his illness had repented of the part he had played. He had confessed to Westlock, whom, before he had fallen into wicked company, he had once known.

Westlock sent for old Chuzzlewit, and he, too, was told the story of the purchased poison. Then together the three went to Jonas's house and brought him face to face with his accuser.

Confronted with their evidence Jonas gave himself up for lost, but old Chuffey, whom he had so abused, escaped the watchful eye of Sairey Gamp and entered just in time to keep his promise to his dead master and to clear Jonas, the son. He told them how it had really happened: How Jonas had intended to kill his father but how the latter's death had been due, not to the poison which he had never taken, but to the knowledge of his son's wickedness.

Jonas, in the reaction from his fear, laughed aloud, and was abusively ordering them to leave, when the door opened and the color suddenly left his cheeks. Policemen stood there, and at their head was Nadgett, the spy.

In another moment there were handcuffs on his wrists and he knew not only that the murder of Tigg had been discovered, but that every action of his own on that fatal night had been traced and that he was surely doomed to die on the gallows.

When he realized that he was lost he fell to the floor in pitiable fear. They put him in a wagon to take him to jail, but when they arrived there they found him motionless in his seat. He had swallowed some of his own poison which he carried in his pocket, and was as dead as any hangman could have made him.

Old Chuzzlewit had yet another purpose to carry out before he left London, and for this purpose he asked Westlock to meet him in his rooms at a certain time next day. He sent for Tom Pinch and his sister Ruth, for his grandson Martin, and Mark Tapley, and last, but not least, for Pecksniff himself, all to meet him there at the same hour.

All save Pecksniff arrived together, and greatly astonished most of them were, you may be sure, to see old Chuzzlewit so changed. For now the dull, bent look had vanished. His eyes were bright, his form erect and every feature eager and full of purpose. Even Mary Graham scarcely knew what to make of it.

As they sat wondering and waiting for old Chuzzlewit to speak, Pecksniff came hurriedly in, to start back as if at a shock of electricity. But he recovered himself, and clasped his hands with a look of pious joy to see the old man safe and well. Then he looked around him and shook his head.

"Oh, vermin! Oh, bloodsuckers!" he said. "Horde of unnatural plunderers and robbers! Begone! Leave him and do not stay in a spot hallowed by the gray hairs of this patriarchal gentleman!"

He advanced with outstretched arms, but he had not seen how tightly old Chuzzlewit's hand clasped the walking-stick he held. The latter, in one great burst of indignation, rose up, and with a single blow, stretched him on the ground. Mark Tapley dragged him into a corner and propped him against the wall, and in this ridiculous position, cringing, and with his assurance all gone, Pecksniff listened, as did they all, to the old man's story.

He told the assembled company how the curse of selfishness had seemed to him always to rest upon his family. How he had misunderstood Martin, his best loved grandson, and how he had seen Pecksniff doing his best to add to this bad feeling. He beckoned Martin to him and put Mary's hand in his, as he told how he had tested them both and had at last resolved to see to what a length the hypocrisy of Pecksniff would lead him. How to this end he had pretended febleness of mind and had planned and plotted finally to expose Pecksniff and set all right.

When he had finished the door was opened and Pecksniff, looking all shrunken and frowsy and yellow, passed out, never to enter again into the lives of any of them.

There was a great and joyful gathering that night, when all these, so strangely united, took dinner together. Martin sat beside Mary, while Westlock walked home with Ruth, and before they reached there she had promised to be his wife.

Martin and Mary were married soon, and old Chuzzlewit made Martin his heir. He also gave a home to poor Mercy, the wife of the dead Jonas. Tom Pinch lived a long and happy life in the home which Westlock made for Ruth, where he had a fine organ on which he played every day. Mark

Tapley, of course, married the rosy landlady of The Blue Dragon, and settled down at the inn, which he renamed The Jolly Tapley.

Charity Pecksniff succeeded in ensnaring her young man at last. The day they were to be married, however, he did not come to the church, but ran off to Van Diemen's Land, and she lived and died a vinegary, shrewish old maid.

As for Pecksniff himself, having lost all his money in the Anglo-Bengalee Company (which, of course, went to pieces on Tigg's death), he sank lower and lower, till at last, a drunken, squalid old man, he eked out a miserable existence writing whining begging letters to the very people whom he had once labored so hard to make unhappy.

OUR MUTUAL FRIEND

Published 1864–1865

<i>Scene:</i>	London and Neighboring Towns
<i>Time:</i>	1860

CHARACTERS

Mr. Harmon	A rich dust collector
Mr. Boffin	Foreman of the dust business and heir to the Harmon fortune
Known as "The Golden Dustman"	
Mrs. Boffin	His wife
John Harmon	Mr. Harmon's son
Later Mr. Boffin's secretary, under the name of "John Rokesmith"	
Mr. Veneering	A rich man with social and political ambitions
Mr. Wilfer	A clerk in Mr. Veneering's office
Bella	His daughter
Silas Wegg	A one-legged ballad seller
"Rogue" Riderhood	A riverman of bad reputation
Later a lock tender	
Hexam	A riverman
Charley	His son
Lizzie	His daughter
"Jenny Wren"	A crippled friend of Lizzie's, known as "The Dolls' Dressmaker"
Eugene Wrayburn	A reckless young lawyer
Headstone	A schoolmaster
Mr. Venus	A dismal young man with a dismal trade — the stringing together of human skeletons on wires

OUR MUTUAL FRIEND

I

WHAT HAPPENED TO JOHN HARMON

In London there once lived an old man named Harmon who had made a great fortune by gathering the dust and ashes of the city and sorting it for whatever it contained of value. He lived in a house surrounded by great mounds of dust that he had collected.

He was a hard-hearted man and when his daughter would not marry as he wished he turned her out of the house on a winter's night. The poor girl died soon after, and her younger brother (a boy of only fourteen), indignant at his father's cruelty, ran away to a foreign country, where for years he was not heard of.

The old man, hard-hearted as he was, and though he never spoke of the son save with anger and curses, felt this keenly, for in his own way he had loved the boy.

A Mr. Boffin was foreman of Harmon's dust business, and both he and his wife had loved the two children. Being kind and just people, they did not hesitate to let the father know how wicked they considered his action, and they never ceased to grieve for the poor little John who had run away. So, though they did not guess it, the old man made up his mind they were an honest and deserving pair.

One morning the dust collector was discovered dead in his bed, and then it was found that he had left a very curious will. The will bequeathed all his vast fortune to the son who had run away, on one condition: that he marry a young lady by the name of Bella Wilfer, the daughter of a poor London clerk.

The son had never seen Bella in his life, and in fact the old man himself had seen her only a few times – and that was a long, long time before, when she was a very little girl. He was sitting in the park one Sunday morning, and the baby Bella, because her father would not go the exact way she wanted, was screaming and stamping her little foot. Old Mr. Harmon, having such a stubborn temper himself, admired it in the little child, and came to watch for her. Then, for some strange reason, which nobody ever could guess, he had put the baby's name in his will, declaring that his son John should get his money only by marrying this little girl. And the will declared, moreover, that if the son, John Harmon, should die, or should refuse to marry Bella, all the fortune should go to Mr. Boffin.

The lawyers had great trouble in finding where John Harmon was, but finally they did so, and received word that he would return at once to England.

The ship he sailed on reached London, but the passenger it carried did not appear. A few days later, a riverman named Hexam found a body floating in the River Thames, which flows through the middle of London. In his pockets were the letters the lawyers had written to John Harmon, and there seemed no doubt that the unfortunate young man had been murdered and his body thrown into the river.

The night the body was found, while it lay at the police station, a young man, very much excited, came and asked to see it. He would not tell who he was, and his whole appearance was most wild and strange. The police wondered, but they saw no reason to detain the stranger, so after looking at the body, he went away again very hastily.

A great stir was made about the case, and the police tried their best to discover the murderer, but they were unsuccessful. Then it occurred to them that there was something suspicious in the appearance of the young man that night. They tried to find him, but he seemed to have disappeared.

At last the fortune was turned over to Mr. Boffin, and all but a few people thought no more about the murder.

Now, it was not really true that John Harmon had been drowned. This is what had happened:

The young man had come back to England unwillingly, though he was coming to such wealth. Having left his father so long before in anger, he hardly liked to touch the money. And he dreaded having to marry a young lady he had never seen, with whom all his life he might be most unhappy.

On the ship was a seaman about his own age whose face somewhat resembled his own. With this man Harmon became friendly and before the ship reached England he had told him his trouble and his dread. The other proposed that Harmon disguise himself in sailor's clothes, go into the neighborhood where Miss Bella Wilfer lived, and see if she was one whom he could love.

Now the man whom Harmon was thus trusting was a villain, who, while he had been listening to the other's story, had been planning a crime against him. He had made up his mind to kill Harmon, and, as he looked so much like him, to marry Bella himself and claim the fortune.

Near the docks where the ship came in was a sailors' boarding-house owned by a riverman of bad reputation named "Rogue" Riderhood. Riderhood had once been the partner of Hexam, the man who found the floating body, but one day he was caught trying to rob a live man and Hexam had cast him off. The seaman took Harmon to this house and there he secretly got from Riderhood some poison. Last he persuaded Harmon to change clothes with him.

All that remained now was to get rid of the real Harmon. To do this he put the poison in a cup of coffee, and Harmon, drinking this, became insensible.

The lodging-house hung out over the river and the wicked man had intended throwing the other's body, dressed now in seaman's clothing, into the water. But fate was quickly to spoil his plan. He and some others fell to quarreling over the money found in the clothing of the unconscious man. The result was a desperate fight, and when it was over there were *two* bodies thrown from the window into the black river – the drugged man and the seaman who had planned his murder.

The shock of the cold water brought the drugged Harmon to his senses. He struck out, and after a terrible struggle succeeded in reaching shore. The exposure and the poison made him very ill and he lay abed in an inn for some days. While he was lying helpless there the drowned body of the seaman was found by Hexam, the riverman. As it wore the clothes of John Harmon, and had his papers in its pockets, every one supposed, of course, that it was the body of the missing heir.

The first thing John Harmon saw after he was well enough to walk was a printed notice announcing the finding of his own dead body – which gave him a very queer sensation. Lying there he had had time to think over the adventure and he had guessed pretty nearly how it all had happened. He went at once to the police station to look at the corpse and saw it was that of his false friend, who had tried to lure him to his death. So it was the real John Harmon who had so excitedly appeared that night to the police inspectors, and had vanished immediately, and whom they had searched for so long in vain, under the suspicion that he himself was the murderer.

He had a very good reason for not letting the police find him, too. Now that the world considered him dead, he had determined, before he came to life, to carry out his first plan, and to find out for himself just what kind of person the Bella Wilfer he was expected to marry was, and whether Mr. and Mrs. Boffin, who had been so kind to him in his childhood, would still be as true to his memory in their wealth. For this reason he did not correct the error that had been made. He took the name of John Rokesmith, and, to get acquainted with Bella, hired lodgings in her own father's house.

Mr. Wilfer was a clerk for a Mr. Veneering, a man who had made a big fortune in the drug business and wanted now to get into Parliament. Everything the Veneerings had was brand new. They spent a great deal of money entertaining society people at dinners, but Mr. Veneering spent very little on his clerks. Bella's father, though he was always as happy as a cherub, was so poor that he never had been able to buy a whole new suit at once. His hat was shabby before he could afford a coat, and his trousers were worn before he got to new shoes. So he was glad enough indeed to get a lodger.

Mr. and Mrs. Boffin, to be sure, now had the great fortune. They bought a fine house, and everybody called Mr. Boffin "The Golden Dustman," because he was so rich. Mrs. Boffin wore velvet dresses, and Mr. Boffin, thinking that now he was rich he ought to know a great deal about books,

bought a big volume of the *History of the Roman Empire* and hired a man with a wooden leg who kept a ballad shop near by to come and read to him in the evenings.

But in spite of all their fine things, Mr. and Mrs. Boffin remained the same good, kind-hearted couple they had always been. John Harmon (or John Rokesmith, as he now called himself), soon found this out, for he cleverly got a position as Mr. Boffin's secretary, taking charge of all his papers and preventing many dishonest people from cheating him. And Mr. and Mrs. Boffin, never suspecting who he really was, instead of "secretary," called him "Our Mutual Friend," and soon grew fond of him.

Nor did they forget Bella Wilfer (for whose disappointment, at not getting the rich husband she had expected, they felt very sorry), and soon invited her to live with them. Bella was a good-tempered, pretty girl, though inclined to be somewhat selfish and spoiled, and she was not sure, after all, that she would have liked a husband who had been willed to her like a dozen silver spoons; so she did not grieve greatly, and accepted Mr. and Mrs. Boffin's offer gratefully.

So now the secretary, John Rokesmith, beside being constantly with Mr. and Mrs. Boffin, whom he had always loved, had a chance to see Bella every day, and he was not long in finding out that it would be very easy, indeed, for him to fall in love with her.

II

LIZZIE HEXAM AND THE DOLLS' DRESSMAKER

Hexam, the riverman who had found the body floating in the Thames, made a living by watching in his boat for drowned bodies, and getting any rewards that might be offered for finding them. He had two children – a daughter, Lizzie, who used to row the boat for him, and a younger son, Charley.

Lizzie was a beautiful girl and a good daughter, and she never ceased to beseech her father to quit this ghastly business. She saved every cent she could get to give her brother some schooling, and kept urging the boy until he left home and became a teacher in a respectable school. For her own part she chose to stay by her father, hoping, in spite of her hatred of his calling, to make him sometime something better.

The night Hexam found the body the lawyers who had the Harmon will in charge came to his house to see about it. One of them, a careless young man by the name of Eugene Wrayburn, was greatly struck with the beauty of Lizzie, and pitied her because of the life she was obliged to live, and this interest in her made him even more deeply interested in the case of the odd will and the strange murder.

Now Mr. and Mrs. Boffin, since they were rich, had offered a great reward for the arrest of the murderer of John Harmon. To get this reward and at the same time to avenge himself on his old partner Hexam for casting him off, Rogue Riderhood went to the lawyers and declared that it was Hexam himself who had really killed the man whose body he had found. Riderhood swore that Hexam had confessed the crime to him.

Wrayburn, knowing what a shock this charge against her father would be for Lizzie, went with the officers sent to seize him. But they made no arrest, for that night Hexam himself was drowned by accidentally falling from his own boat.

But the false charge against him lay heavy on Lizzie's mind. She hated the river and all that was connected with it, and soon found herself a decent lodging in another part of London.

Here she lived with a weird little dwarf of a girl, so deformed that she could scarcely walk at all. "I can't get up," she used to say to strangers, "because my back's bad and my legs are queer."

She had an odd face, with sharp gray eyes, and her wits were sharper yet. She worked at the strangest trade in the world. She had visiting cards on which was printed:

MISS JENNIE WREN

DOLLS' DRESSMAKER

Dolls Attended at Their Own Residence

She was really and truly a dolls' dressmaker and sat all day long making tiny frocks out of silk and ribbon. Every evening she would hobble out to the door of the theater or of a house where a ball was going on and wait until a lady came out in a beautiful costume; then she would take careful note of it and go home and dress a doll just like it. She even made a minister doll, in clerical collar and surplice, and used to rent him out for doll weddings.

But in spite of her trade she disliked children, because the rude ones of the neighborhood called her names through her keyhole and mimicked her bent back and crooked legs.

"Don't talk to *me* of children," she often said; "*I* know their tricks and their manners!" and when she said this she would make a fierce little jab in the air with her needle, as if she were putting out somebody's eyes.

Jennie Wren had a miserable drunkard of a father, whom she called her "troublesome child."

"He is enough to break his mother's heart," she would say when he staggered in. "I wish I had never brought him up. Ugh! You muddling, disgraceful, prodigal old son! I can't bear to look at you. Go into your corner this minute." And the wretched creature, whining and maudlin, would shuffle into his corner in disgrace, not daring to disobey her.

The odd little dolls' dressmaker was cheerful and merry with all her trials and loved Lizzie Hexam very much. Wrayburn, the young lawyer, used to come to see them, but she did not approve of him. She saw almost before Lizzie did herself that the latter was falling in love with Wrayburn, and the wise little creature feared that this would only bring pain to Lizzie, because she was an uneducated girl and Wrayburn a gentleman, who, when he married, would be expected to marry a lady far above Lizzie's station. Lizzie knew this, too, but she could not help loving Wrayburn, and as for the lawyer, he thought nothing of what the outcome might be.

Meanwhile Lizzie's brother Charley, for whom she had worked so hard, was doing well at school, but now that he was getting up in the world he had turned out to be a selfish boy and was afraid that his sister might draw him down.

One day he came to visit her, bringing with him the master of his school. The master's name was Headstone. He was a gloomy, passionate, revengeful man who dressed always in black and had no friends. Unfortunately enough, the first time he saw Lizzie he fell in love with her. It was unfortunate in more ways than one, for Lizzie disliked him greatly, and he was, as it proved, a man who would stop at nothing – not even at the worst of crimes – to attain an object.

When Lizzie's brother found Headstone wanted to marry her, in his selfishness he saw only what a fine thing it would be for himself, and when she refused, he said many harsh things and finally left her in anger, telling her she was no longer a sister of his.

This was not the worst either, for she knew Headstone had been made almost angry by her dislike, and she was in dreadful fear lest he do harm to Eugene Wrayburn, whom he suspected she loved.

In her anxiety Lizzie left her lodging with the dolls' dressmaker, and found employment in a paper-mill in a village on the river, some miles from London, letting neither Wrayburn nor Headstone know where she had gone.

The schoolmaster imagined that the lawyer (whom he now hated with a deadly hatred) knew where she was, and in order to discover if he visited her he began to dog the other's footsteps. At night, after teaching all day in school, Headstone would lie in wait outside the lawyer's door and whenever he came out would follow him.

Wrayburn soon discovered this and delighted to fool his enemy. Every night he would take a new direction and lead his pursuer for hours about the city. So that in a few weeks Headstone became almost insane with murderous anger and disappointment.

So things went on for a long while. Lizzie continued to love Eugene Wrayburn, who kept trying in every way to find her. Headstone, the schoolmaster, kept watching him and meditating evil. The little dolls' dressmaker worked on cheerily every day in the city, and in their fine house Mr. and Mrs. Boffin grew fonder and fonder of Miss Bella, whom John Rokesmith, the secretary, thought more beautiful every day.

III

THE RISE AND FALL OF SILAS WEGG

The wooden-legged ballad seller whom Mr. Boffin had hired to read to him was a sly, dishonest rascal named Silas Wegg, who soon made up his mind to get all the money he could out of his employer.

There is an old story of a camel who once asked a shopkeeper to let him put his nose in at the shop door to warm it. The shopkeeper consented, and little by little the camel got his head, then his neck, then his shoulders and at last his whole body into the shop, so that there was no room for the poor shopkeeper, who had to sit outside in the cold. Wegg soon began to act like the camel and took such advantage of easy-going Mr. Boffin that the latter at last let him live rent-free in the house amid the dust heaps, which he himself had occupied before he got old Harmon's money.

Wegg imagined the mounds contained treasures hidden by the old man and thought it would be a fine thing to cheat Mr. Boffin out of them. So every night he spent hours prodding the heaps. Finally he persuaded a Mr. Venus (a man who had been disappointed in love and made a melancholy living by stringing skeletons together on wires), to become his partner in the search.

One day Wegg really did find something. It was a parchment hidden in an empty pump, and he soon saw that it was a second will of old Harmon's, later than the one already known, leaving the whole fortune, not to the son at all, but to the Crown.

When Wegg saw this his hypocritical soul swelled with joy, for he thought, sooner than give up all the money to the Crown, Mr. Boffin would pay him a great deal to destroy this new will. He was such a rascal himself that it never occurred to him that maybe Mr. Boffin would prefer to be honest. He took it for granted everybody else was as bad as he was himself, yet all the while he tried to make himself believe that he was upright and noble in all he did, as hypocrites generally do.

The only point Wegg could not make up his mind about was how much he could squeeze out of his benefactor, Mr. Boffin. At first he had thought of asking for half, but the more he hugged his secret the lesser the half seemed. At last he determined to demand for himself, as the price for giving up the will, all but a very small share of the whole fortune.

Now Mr. Venus, though he had yielded at first to the rosy temptations of Wegg, was after all quite honest at heart, and his conscience troubled him so that at last he went and told Mr. Boffin all about Wegg's discovery.

The Golden Dustman at first thought Mr. Venus had some underhanded plan, so he pretended he was terribly frightened for fear of Wegg and the will he had found.

As a matter of fact, sly old Mr. Boffin was not afraid in the least, because he knew something that neither Wegg nor Venus, nor even John Rokesmith, the secretary, knew. This was, that the old original dustman, Harmon, had made still a *third* will, later than either of the others. The first will

found was the one that had called the son back to England to marry Bella. The second will was the one leaving all his fortune to the Crown, which Wegg had found in the empty pump. The third and last one gave all the money to Mr. Boffin, no matter whom the son married, and gave none to any one else. And this third and last will, the one that was the *true* will, The Golden Dustman had long ago found himself, buried in a bottle in one of the dust heaps.

Mr. Boffin had never told any one about this last will, because he had all the fortune anyway. Now, however, seeing how Wegg had planned to act, he was very glad he had found it. And when he was convinced that Mr. Venus was really honest and wanted no reward whatever, Mr. Boffin determined to fool the rascally Wegg up to the very last moment.

Wegg's plan was not to demand the money until he had fully searched all the dust mounds. Mr. Boffin spurred Wegg on in this regard by making him read to him in the evenings from a book called *The Lives of Famous Misers* which he had bought: about the famous Mr. Dancer who had warmed his dinner by sitting on it and died naked in a sack, and yet had gold and bank-notes hidden in the crevices of the walls and in cracked jugs and tea-pots; of an old apple woman in whose house a fortune was found wrapped up in little scraps of paper; of "Vulture Hopkins" and "Blewbury Jones" and many others whose riches after their death were found hidden in strange places. While Wegg read, Mr. Boffin would pretend to get tremendously excited about his dust mounds, so that Wegg grew surer and surer there must be riches hidden in them.

Finally The Golden Dustman sold the mounds and had them carted away little by little, Wegg watching every shovelful for fear he would miss something.

Mr. Boffin hired a foreman to manage the removal of the dust who wore Wegg down to skin and bone. He worked by daylight and torchlight, too. Just as Wegg, tired out by watching all day in the rain, would crawl into bed, the foreman, like a goblin, would reappear and go to work again. Sometimes Wegg would be waked in the middle of the night, and sometimes kept at his post for as much as forty-eight hours at a stretch, till he grew so gaunt and haggard that even his wooden leg looked chubby in comparison.

At last he could not keep quiet any longer and he told Mr. Boffin what he had found. Mr. Boffin pretended the most abject dread. Wegg bullied and browbeat him to his heart's content, and ended by ordering him, like a slave, to be ready to receive him on a certain morning, and to have the money ready to pay him.

When he went to the fine Boffin house to keep this appointment he entered insolently, whistling and with his hat on. A servant showed him into the library where Mr. Boffin and the secretary sat waiting, and where the secretary at once astonished him by taking off the hat and throwing it out of the window.

In another moment Wegg found himself seized by the cravat, shaken till his teeth rattled, and pinned in a corner of the room, where the secretary knocked his head against the wall while he told him in a few words what a scoundrel he was.

When he learned that the will he had discovered was worthless paper, Wegg lost all his bullying air and cringed before them. Mr. Boffin was disposed to be merciful and offered to make good his loss of his ballad business, but Wegg, grasping and mean to the last, set its value at such a ridiculously high figure that Mr. Boffin put his money back into his pocket.

Then, at a sign from John Rokesmith, one of the servants caught Wegg by the collar, hoisted him on his back, ran down to the street with him and threw him into a garbage cart, where he disappeared from view with a tremendous splash.

And that, so far as this story is concerned, was the end of Silas Wegg.

IV BELLA AND THE GOLDEN DUSTMAN

It was not long before John Rokesmith, the secretary, was very much in love with Bella indeed. Bella saw this plainly, but the fine house and costly clothes had quite spoiled her, and, thinking him only a poor secretary and her father's lodger, she treated him almost with contempt.

Yet he would not tell her who he was, for he did not want her to marry him merely because of the money it would bring her. She hurt his feelings often, but in spite of it she could not help being attracted to him. He had a way, too, of looking at her that made her feel how proud and unjust she was, and sometimes made her quite despise herself.

But having had a taste of the pleasures and comforts that wealth would bring, Bella had quite determined when she married to marry nobody but a very rich man. Mr. and Mrs. Boffin both noticed how changed she was growing from her own sweet self and regretted it, for they liked Bella and they liked the secretary, too, and they could easily see that the latter was in love with her.

One day Mrs. Boffin went to the secretary's room for something. As she entered, Rokesmith, who was sitting sadly over the fire, looked up with a peculiar expression that told the good woman all in a flash who he was.

"I know you now," she cried, "you're little John Harmon!"

In the joy and surprise she almost fainted, but he caught her and set her down beside him. Just then in came Mr. Boffin, and the secretary told them the whole story, and how he now loved Bella, but would not declare himself because of her contempt.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Boffin were so glad to know he was really alive they fell to crying with joy. The Golden Dustman declared that, no matter how the last will read, John should have the fortune for his own. Rokesmith (or Harmon) at first refused to do this, but Mr. Boffin swore that if he did not he himself would not touch the money, and it would have to go to the Crown anyway. So at last it was agreed that Mr. Boffin should keep a small portion for his own, but that the other should take all the rest.

Mr. Boffin wanted to tell everybody the truth at once, but John would not let them. You see he wouldn't marry Bella for anything unless she loved him for himself alone. And she was growing so fond of riches that there seemed little chance of this happening.

Nevertheless they believed that at heart Bella was good and sweet, if they could only get to her real self, so Mr. Boffin that moment made a plan.

He determined to show Bella how much unhappiness misused riches could cause, and how too much money might sometimes spoil the kindest and best people. As a lesson to her in this he was to pretend gradually to turn into a mean, hard-hearted miser. They agreed that he should begin to treat the secretary harshly and unjustly in Bella's presence, feeling sure that her true self would stand up for him when he was slighted, and be kinder to him when he seemed poorest and most friendless.

The Golden Dustman began the new plan that very night. Every day he made himself act like a regular brown bear, and every evening he would say, "I'll be a grislier old growler to-morrow." He made the secretary slave from morning till night and found fault with him and sneered at his poverty and cut down his wages.

Each afternoon, when he went walking with Bella, Mr. Boffin would make her go into bookshops and inquire if they had any book about a miser. If they had, he would buy it, no matter what it cost, and lug it home to read. He began to drive hard bargains for everything he bought and all his talk came to be about money and the fine thing it was to have it.

"Go in for money, my dear," he would say to Bella. "Money's the article! You'll make money of your good looks, and of the money Mrs. Boffin and me will leave you, and you'll live and die rich. That's the state to live and die in – R-r-rich!"

Bella was greatly shocked at the sorrowful change in Mr. Boffin. Wealth began to look less lovely when she saw him growing so miserly. She began to wonder if she herself might ever become like that, too, and sometimes, when she thought how kind and generous the old Mr. Boffin had been, she fairly hated money and wished it had never been invented.

There was an old woman who peddled knitting-work through the country whom Mr. and Mrs. Boffin had befriended, and to whom they had given a letter to carry wherever she went. This letter asked whoever should find her, if she fell sick, to let them know. The old woman fell and died one day by the roadside near the spot where Lizzie Hexam was now living, and Lizzie, finding the letter, wrote about it to Mr. and Mrs. Boffin.

They sent the secretary and Bella, to make arrangements for the poor woman's burial, and in this way Bella met Lizzie and became her friend. Lizzie soon told her all her story, and Bella, seeing how unselfishly she loved, began to think her own ambition to marry for money a mean and ignoble thing. She thought how patient and kind the secretary had always been, and, knowing he loved her, wished heartily that her own coldness had not forbidden him to tell her so.

One day Mr. Boffin's pretended harsh treatment of his secretary seemed to come to a climax. He sent for him to come to the room where Mrs. Boffin and Bella sat, and made a fearful scene. He said he had just heard that he, Rokesmith, had been presuming on his position to make love to Bella – a young lady who wanted to marry money, who had *a right* to marry money, and who was very far from wanting to marry a poor beggar of a private secretary! He threw the wages that were due Rokesmith on the floor and discharged him on the spot, telling him the sooner he could pack up and leave, the better.

Then, at last, in the face of this apparent meanness and injustice, Bella saw herself and Mr. Boffin's money and John Rokesmith's love and dignity, all in their true light. She burst out crying, begged Rokesmith's forgiveness, told Mr. Boffin he was an old wretch of a miser, and when the secretary had gone, she said Rokesmith was a gentleman and worth a million Boffins, and she would not stay in the house a minute longer.

Then she packed up her things and went straight to her father's office. All the other clerks had gone home, for it was after hours, and she put her head on his shoulder and told him all about it.

And while they were talking, in came John Rokesmith, and seeing her there alone with her father, rushed to her and caught her in his arms.

"My dear, brave, noble, generous girl!" he said, and Bella, feeling all at once that she had never been quite so happy in her life, laid her head on his breast, as if that were the one place for it in all the world.

They had a talk together and then walked home to Mr. Wilfer's poor little house, Bella's father agreeing that she had done exactly the proper thing, and Bella herself feeling so happy now in having John Rokesmith's love, that she cared not a bit for the fine mansion and clothes and money of the Boffins which she had left for ever.

A few days later John Rokesmith and Bella were married and went to live in a little furnished cottage outside of London, where they settled down as happy as two birds.

V THE END OF THE STORY

While these things were happening at Mr. Boffin's house, Eugene Wrayburn, with Headstone the schoolmaster watching him like a hawk, had never left off trying to find where Lizzie Hexam had gone. At length, through the "troublesome child" of the little dolls' dressmaker, he learned the name of the village where she was living and went at once to see her.

Headstone followed close behind him and when, from his hiding-place, he saw how glad Lizzie was to see the lawyer, he went quite mad with jealousy and hate, and that moment he determined to kill Wrayburn.

It happened that Rogue Riderhood was then working on the river that flowed past the village, where he tended a lock. The schoolmaster, in order to turn suspicion from himself in case any one should see him when he did this wicked deed, observing carefully how Riderhood was dressed, got himself clothes exactly like the lock tender's, even to a red handkerchief tied around his neck.

In this guise, with murder in his heart, he lay in wait along the riverside till Wrayburn passed one evening just after he had bade good night to Lizzie Hexam. The schoolmaster crept up close behind the lawyer and struck him a fearful crashing blow on the head with a club. Wrayburn grappled with him, but Headstone struck again and again with the bloody weapon, and still again as the other lay prostrate at his feet, and dragging the body to the bank, threw it into the river. Then he fled.

Lizzie Hexam had not yet turned homeward from the riverside. She heard through the night the sound of the blows, the faint moan and the splash. She ran to the spot, saw the trampled grass, and, looking across the water, saw a bloody face drifting away. She ran to launch a boat, and rowed with all her strength to overtake it.

But for her dreadful life on the river with her father she could not have found the drowning man in the darkness, but she did, and then she saw it was the man she loved. One terrible cry she uttered, then rowed with desperate strokes to the shore and with superhuman strength carried him to a near-by inn.

Wrayburn was not dead, but was dreadfully disfigured. For many days he hovered between life and death. Jennie Wren, the dolls' dressmaker, came, and she and Lizzie nursed him. As soon as he could speak he made them understand that before he died he wanted Lizzie to marry him. A minister was sent for, and with him came John Rokesmith and Bella. So the sick man was married to Lizzie, and from that hour he began to get better, till before long they knew that he would recover.

Meanwhile, not waiting to see the result of his murderous attack, Headstone had fled down the river bank to the hut where Riderhood lived and there the villainous lock tender let him rest and sleep. As the schoolmaster tossed in his guilty slumber, Riderhood noted that his clothes were like his own. He unbuttoned the sleeping man's jacket, saw the red handkerchief, and, having heard from a passing boatman of the attempted murder, he guessed that Headstone had done it and saw how he had plotted to lay the crime on him.

When the schoolmaster went away Riderhood followed him, watched him change clothes in the bushes and rescued the bloody garments the other threw away.

With these in his hands he faced the schoolmaster one day in his class room and made him promise, under threat of exposure, to come that night to the hut by the lock. Headstone was afraid to disobey. When he came, Riderhood told him he must give him money at once or he would follow him till he did.

Headstone refused and, as the other had threatened, when he started back to London, he found the lock tender by his side. He returned to the hut and the other did the same.

He started again, and again the other walked beside him. Then Headstone, turning suddenly, caught Riderhood around the waist and dragged him to the edge of the lock.

"Let go!" said Riderhood. "You can't drown me!"

"I can," panted Headstone. "And I can drown myself. I'll hold you living and I'll hold you dead. Come down!"

Riderhood went over backward into the water, and the schoolmaster upon him. When they found them, long afterward, Riderhood's body was girdled still with the schoolmaster's arms and they held him tight.

This was the awful end of the two wicked men whom fate had brought into Lizzie's life.

All this time, of course, Bella had been believing her husband to be very poor. At first he had intended to tell her who he was on the day they were married, but he said to himself: "No, she's so unselfish and contented I can't afford to be rich yet." So he pretended to get a position in the city at small wages. Then after a few months he thought it over again, and he said to himself, "She's such a cheerful little housewife that I can't afford to be rich yet." And at last a little baby was born to Bella, and then they were so happy that he said, "She's so much sweeter than she ever was that I can't afford to be rich just yet!"

But meantime Bella was imagining that Mr. Boffin was a cruel old miser, and Mr. Boffin didn't like this, so John agreed that he would tell her all about it.

But first he got Bella to describe exactly the kind of house she would like if they were very, very rich, and when she told him, he and Mr. Boffin had the Boffin mansion fixed over in just the way she had said – with a nursery with rainbow-colored walls and flowers on the staircase, and even a little room full of live birds, and a jewel box full of jewels on the dressing-table.

Fate, however, had arranged even a greater trial of Bella's love for him than all the others. As they walked together on the street one day, they came face to face with a man who had been in the police office on the night the body which every one believed to be John Harmon's had lain there. He had seen the entrance of the agitated stranger, and had helped the police in their later vain search for Rokesmith. Now he at once recognized Bella's husband as that man, who the police believed had probably committed the murder.

Rokesmith knew the man had recognized him, and when they got home he told Bella that he was accused of killing the man the Harmon will had bidden her marry.

But nothing now could shake her faith in him. "How dare they!" she cried indignantly. "My beloved husband." He caught her in his arms at that, and while he held her thus the officers entered to arrest him.

Rokesmith found the matter very easy to explain to the satisfaction of the police, but he told Bella nothing as yet, and, trusting and believing in him absolutely, she waited in great wonder. Next day he told her he had a new position and that now they must live in the city where he had taken a furnished house for them.

They drove together to see it. Strangely enough it seemed to be in the same street as Mr. Boffin's house, and stranger yet, the coach stopped at Mr. Boffin's own door. Her husband put his arm around her and drew her in, and she saw that everything was covered with flowers. As he led her on she exclaimed in astonishment to see the little room full of birds just as she had wished.

Suddenly her husband opened a door and there was Mr. Boffin beaming and Mrs. Boffin shedding tears of joy, and folding her to her breast as she said: "My deary, deary, deary, wife of John and mother of his little child! My loving loving, bright bright, pretty pretty! Welcome to your house and home, my deary!"

Then of course the whole story came out. The mystery was solved and she knew that John Rokesmith was the true John Harmon and that her husband was really the man the Harmon will had picked out for her to marry.

In the splendid Boffin house they lived happily for many years, surrounded by Bella's children. And they were never so happy as when they welcomed Eugene Wrayburn with Lizzie his wife, or Jennie Wren, the little dolls' dressmaker.

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

Published 1859

<i>Scene:</i>	London and Paris
<i>Time:</i>	1775 to 1792

CHARACTERS

Doctor Manette	A French physician
Rescued after long imprisonment in the Bastille	
Lucie	His daughter
Miss Pross	Her English nurse
Sydney Carton	An idle and dissipated law student
Mr. Lorry	The agent of an English bank doing business in Paris
The Marquis de St. Evrémonde	A French nobleman
Charles Darnay	His nephew
A young Frenchman living in England as a tutor Later, the Marquis de St. Evrémonde, and Lucie's husband A young Frenchman living in England as a tutor Later, the Marquis de St. Evrémonde, and Lucie's husband	
Gabelle	The steward of Darnay's French estates
Defarge	A Paris wine shop keeper
A leader of the revolutionists	
Madame Defarge	His wife
Barsad	A spy and turnkey

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

I

HOW LUCIE FOUND A FATHER

A little more than a hundred years ago there lived in London (one of the two cities of this tale) a lovely girl of seventeen named Lucie Manette. Her mother had died when she was a baby, in France, and she lived alone with her old nurse, Miss Pross, a homely, grim guardian with hair as red as her face, who called Lucie "ladybird" and loved her very much. Miss Pross was sharp of speech and was always snapping people up as if she would bite their heads off, but, though she seldom chose to show it, she was the kindest, truest, most unselfish person in the world. Lucie had no memory of her father, and had always believed he also had died when she was a baby.

One day, however, through a Mr. Lorry, the agent of a bank, she learned a wonderful piece of news. He told her that her father was not dead, but that he had been wickedly thrown into a secret prison in Paris before she was born, and had been lost thus for eighteen long years. This prison was the Bastille – a cold, dark building like a castle, with high gray towers, a deep moat and drawbridge, and soldiers and cannon to defend it.

In those days in France the rich nobles who belonged to the royal court were very powerful and overbearing, and the rest of the people had few rights. One could be put into prison then without any trial at all, so that many innocent people suffered. Lucie's mother had guessed that Doctor Manette (for he was a physician) had in some way incurred the hatred of some one of the nobles and had thus been taken from her; but all she certainly knew was that he had disappeared one day in Paris and had never come back.

For a year she had tried in every way to find him, but at length, desolate and heartbroken, she had fallen ill and died, leaving little Lucie with only Miss Pross, her English nurse, to care for her. Mr. Lorry himself, who told Lucie this story, having known her father, had brought her, a baby, to London in his arms.

Now, he told her, after all these years, her father had been released, and was at that moment in Paris in charge of a man named Defarge, who had once been his servant. But the long imprisonment had affected his mind, so that he was little more than the broken wreck of the man he had once been. Mr. Lorry was about to go to Paris to identify him, and he wished Lucie to go also to bring him to himself.

You can imagine that Lucie's heart was both glad and sorrowful at the news; joyful that the father she had always believed dead was alive, and yet full of grief for his condition. She hastily made ready and that same day set out with Mr. Lorry for France.

When they reached Paris they went at once to find Defarge. He was a stern, forbidding man, who kept a cheap wine shop in one of the poorer quarters of the city. He took them through a dirty courtyard behind the shop and up five flights of filthy stairs to a door, which he unlocked for them to enter.

In the dim room sat a withered, white-haired old man on a low bench making shoes. His cheeks were worn and hollow, his eyes were bright and his long beard was as white as snow. He wore a ragged shirt, and his hands were thin and transparent from confinement. It was Lucie's father, Doctor Manette!

He scarcely looked up when they entered, for his mind was gone and he knew no one. All that seemed to interest him was his shoemaking. He had forgotten everything else. He even thought his own name was "One hundred and five, North Tower," which had been the number of his cell in the Bastille.

Lucie's heart almost broke to see him. She wanted to throw her arms about him, to lay her head on his breast and tell him she was his daughter who loved him and had come to take him home at last. But she was afraid this would frighten him.

She came close to him, and after a while he began to look at her. She greatly resembled her dead mother, and presently her face seemed to remind him of something. He unwound a string from around his neck and unfolded a little rag which was tied to it, and there was a lock of hair like Lucie's. Then he suddenly burst into tears – the first he had shed for long, long years – and the tears seemed to bring back a part of the past. Lucie took him in her arms and soothed him, while Mr. Lorry went to bring the coach that was to take them to England.

Through all their preparations for departure her father sat watching in a sort of scared wonder, holding tight to Lucie's hand like a child, and when they told him to come with them he descended the stairs obediently. But he would not go into the coach without his bench and shoemaking tools, and, to quiet him, they were obliged to take them, too.

So the father and daughter and Mr. Lorry journeyed back to Lucie's home in London. All the miles they rode Lucie held her father's hand, and the touch seemed to give him strength and confidence.

On the boat crossing to London was a young man who called himself Charles Darnay, handsome, dark and pale. He was most kind to Lucie, and showed her how to make a couch on deck for her father, and how she could shelter it from the wind. In the long months that followed their arrival, while the poor old man regained a measure of health, she never forgot Darnay's face and his kindness to them.

Doctor Manette's mind and memory came slowly back with his improving health. There were some days when his brain clouded. Then Lucie would find him seated at his old prison bench making shoes, and she would coax him away and talk to him until the insanity would pass away.

So time went by peacefully till a strange thing happened: Charles Darnay, who had been so kind to Lucie and her father on the boat, was arrested on a charge of treason.

England at that time was not on good terms with France, and Darnay, who was of French birth, was accused of selling information concerning the English forts and army to the French Government. This was a very serious charge, for men convicted of treason then were put to death in the cruelest ways that could be invented.

The charge was not true, and Darnay himself knew quite well who was working against him.

The fact was that Charles Darnay was not his true name. He was really Charles St. Evrémonde, the descendant of a rich and noble French family, though he chose to live in London as Charles Darnay, and earned his living by giving lessons in French. He did this because he would not be one of the hated noble class of his own country, who treated the poor so heartlessly.

In France the peasants had to pay many oppressive taxes, and were wretched and half-starved, while the rich nobles rode in gilded coaches, and, if they ran over a little peasant child, threw a coin to its mother and drove on without a further thought. Among the hardest-hearted of all, and the most hated by the common people, were the Evrémondes, the family of the young man who was now accused of treason. As soon as he was old enough to know how unjust was his family's treatment of the poor who were dependent on them, he had protested against it. When he became a man he had refused to live on the money that was thus taken from the hungry peasantry, and had left his home and come to London to earn his own way by teaching.

His heartless uncle, the Marquis de St. Evrémonde, in France, the head of the family, hated the young man for this noble spirit. It was this uncle who had invented the plot to accuse his nephew of treason. He had hired a dishonest spy known as Barsad, who swore he had found papers in Darnay's trunk that proved his guilt, and, as Darnay had been often back and forth to France on family matters, the case looked dark for him.

Cruelly enough, among those who were called to the trial as witnesses, to show that Darnay had made these frequent journeys to France, were Doctor Manette and Lucie – because they had seen him on the boat during that memorable crossing. Lucie's tears fell fast as she gave her testimony, believing him innocent and knowing that her words would be used to condemn him.

Darnay would doubtless have been convicted but for a curious coincidence: A dissipated young lawyer, named Sydney Carton, sitting in the court room, had noticed with surprise that he himself looked very much like the prisoner; in fact, that they were so much alike they might almost have been taken for twin brothers. He called the attention of Darnay's lawyer to this, and the latter – while one of the witnesses against Darnay was making oath that he had seen him in a certain place in France – made Carton take off his wig (all lawyers wear wigs in England while in court) and stand up beside Darnay. The two were so alike the witness was puzzled, and he could not swear which of the two he had seen. For this reason Darnay, to Lucie's great joy, was found not guilty.

Sydney Carton, who had thought of and suggested this clever thing, was a reckless, besotted young man. He cared for nobody, and nobody, he used to say, cared for him. He lacked energy and ambition to work and struggle for himself, but for the sake of plenty of money with which to buy liquor, he studied cases for another lawyer, who was fast growing rich by his labor. His master, who hired him, was the lion; Carton was content, through his own indolence and lack of purpose, to be the jackal.

His conscience had always condemned him for this, and now, as he saw the innocent Darnay's look, noble and straightforward, so like himself as he might have been, and as he thought of Lucie's sweet face and of how she had wept as she was forced to give testimony against the other, Carton felt that he almost hated the man whose life he had saved.

The trial brought Lucie and these two men (so like each other in feature, yet so unlike in character) together, and afterward they often met at Doctor Manette's house.

It was in a quiet part of London that Lucie and her father lived, all alone save for the faithful Miss Pross. They had little furniture, for they were quite poor, but Lucie made the most of everything. Doctor Manette had recovered his mind, but not all of his memory. Sometimes he would get up in the night and walk up and down, up and down, for hours. At such times Lucie would hurry to him and walk up and down with him till he was calm again. She never knew why he did this, but she came to believe he was trying vainly to remember all that had happened in those lost years which he had forgotten. He kept his prison bench and tools always by him, but as time went on he gradually used them less and less often.

Mr. Lorry, with his flaxen wig and constant smile, came to tea every Sunday with them and helped to keep Doctor Manette cheerful. Sometimes Darnay, Sydney Carton and Mr. Lorry would meet there together, but of them all, Darnay came oftenest, and soon it was easy to see that he was in love with Lucie.

Sydney Carton, too, was in love with her, but he was perfectly aware that he was quite undeserving, and that Lucie could never love him in return. She was the last dream of his wild, careless life, the life he had wasted and thrown away. Once he told her this, and said that, although he could never be anything to her himself, he would give his life gladly to save any one who was near and dear to her.

Lucie fell in love with Darnay at length and one day they were married and went away on their wedding journey.

Until then, since his rescue, Lucie had never been out of Doctor Manette's sight. Now, though he was glad for her happiness, yet he felt the pain of the separation so keenly that it unhinged his mind again. Miss Pross and Mr. Lorry found him next morning making shoes at the old prison bench and for nine days he did not know them at all. At last, however, he recovered, and then, lest the sight of it affect him, one day when he was not there they chopped the bench to pieces and burned it up.

But her father was better after Lucie came back with her husband, and they took up their quiet life again. Darnay loved Lucie devotedly. He supported himself still by teaching. Mr. Lorry came from the bank oftener to tea and Sydney Carton more rarely, and their life was peaceful and content.

Once after his marriage, his cruel uncle, the Marquis de St. Evrémonde, sent for Darnay to come to France on family matters. Darnay went, but declined to remain or to do the other's bidding.

But his uncle's evil life was soon to be ended. While Darnay was there the marquis was murdered one night in his bed by a grief-crazed laborer, whose little child his carriage had run over.

Darnay returned to England, shocked and horrified the more at the indifference of the life led by his race in France. Although now, by the death of his uncle, he had himself become the Marquis de St. Evrémonde, yet he would not lay claim to the title, and left all the estates in charge of one of the house servants, an honest steward named Gabelle.

He had intended after his return to Lucie to settle all these affairs and to dispose of the property, which he felt it wrong for him to hold; but in the peace and happiness of his life in England he put it off and did nothing further.

And this neglect of Darnay's – as important things neglected are apt to prove – came before long to be the cause of terrible misfortune and agony to them all.

II

DARNAY CAUGHT IN THE NET

While these things were happening in London, the one city of this tale, other very different events were occurring in the other city of the story – Paris, the French capital.

The indifference and harsh oppression of the court and the nobles toward the poor had gone on increasing day by day, and day by day the latter had grown more sullen and resentful. All the while the downtrodden people of Paris were plotting secretly to rise in rebellion, kill the king and queen and all the nobles, seize their riches and govern France themselves.

The center of this plotting was Defarge, the keeper of the wine shop, who had cared for Doctor Manette when he had first been released from prison. Defarge and those he trusted met and planned often in the very room where Mr. Lorry and Lucie had found her father making shoes. They kept a record of all acts of cruelty toward the poor committed by the nobility, determining that, when they themselves should be strong enough, those thus guilty should be killed, their fine houses burned, and all their descendants put to death, so that not even their names should remain in France. This was a wicked and awful determination, but these poor, wretched people had been made to suffer all their lives, and their parents before them, and centuries of oppression had killed all their pity and made them as fierce as wild beasts that only wait for their cages to be opened to destroy all in their path.

They were afraid, of course, to keep any written list of persons whom they had thus condemned, so Madame Defarge, the wife of the wine seller, used to knit the names in fine stitches into a long piece of knitting that she seemed always at work on.

Madame Defarge was a stout woman with big coarse hands and eyes that never seemed to look at any one, yet saw everything that happened. She was as strong as a man and every one was somewhat afraid of her. She was even crueller and more resolute than her husband. She would sit knitting all day long in the dirty wine shop, watching and listening, and knitting in the names of people whom she hoped soon to see killed.

One of the hated names that she knitted over and over again was "Evrémonde." The laborer who, in the madness of his grief for his dead child, had murdered the Marquis de St. Evrémonde, Darnay's hard-hearted uncle, had been caught and hanged; and, because of this, Defarge and his wife and the other plotters had condemned all of the name of Evrémonde to death.

Meanwhile the king and queen of France and all their gay and careless court of nobles feasted and danced as heedlessly as ever. They did not see the storm rising. The bitter taxes still went on. The

wine shop of Defarge looked as peaceful as ever, but the men who drank there now were dreaming of murder and revenge. And the half-starved women, who sat and looked on as the gilded coaches of the rich rolled through the streets, were sullenly waiting – watching Madame Defarge as she silently knitted, knitted into her work names of those whom the people had condemned to death without mercy.

One day this frightful human storm, which for so many years had been gathering in France, burst over Paris. The poor people rose by thousands, seized whatever weapons they could get – guns, axes, or even stones of the street – and, led by Defarge and his tigerish wife, set out to avenge their wrongs. Their rage turned first of all against the Bastille, the old stone prison in which so many of their kind had died, where Doctor Manette for eighteen years had made shoes. They beat down the thick walls and butchered the soldiers who defended it, and released the prisoners. And wherever they saw one of the king's uniforms they hanged the wearer to the nearest lamp post. It was the beginning of the terrible Revolution in France that was to end in the murder of thousands of innocent lives. It was the beginning of a time when Paris's streets were to run with blood, when all the worst passions of the people were loosed, and when they went mad with the joy of revenge.

The storm spread over France – to the village where stood the great château of the Evrémonde family, and the peasants set fire to it and burned it to the ground. And Gabelle (the servant who had been left in charge by Darnay, the new Marquis de St. Evrémonde, whom they had never seen, but yet hated) they seized and put in prison. They stormed the royal palace and arrested the king and queen, threw all who bore noble names or titles into dungeons, and, as they had planned, set up a government of their own.

Darnay, safe in London with Lucie, knew little and thought less of all this, till he received a pitiful letter from Gabelle, who expected each morning to be dragged out to be killed, telling of the plight into which his faithfulness had brought him, and beseeching his master's aid.

This letter made Darnay most uneasy. He blamed himself, because he knew it was his fault that Gabelle had been left so long in such a dangerous post. He did not forget that his own family, the Evrémondes, had been greatly hated. But he thought the fact that he himself had refused to be one of them, and had given his sympathy rather to the people they oppressed, would make it possible for him to obtain Gabelle's release. And with this idea he determined to go himself to Paris.

He knew the very thought of his going, now that France was mad with violence, would frighten Lucie, so he determined not to tell her. He packed some clothing hurriedly and left secretly, sending a letter back telling her where and why he was going. And by the time she read this he was well on his way from England.

Darnay had expected to find no trouble in his errand and little personal risk in his journey, but as soon as he landed on the shores of France he discovered his mistake. He had only to give his real name, "the Marquis de St. Evrémonde," which he was obliged to do if he would help Gabelle, and the title was the signal for rude threats and ill treatment. Once in, he could not go back, and he felt as if a monstrous net were closing around him (as indeed, it was) from which there was no escape.

He was sent on to Paris under a guard of soldiers, and there he was at once put into prison to be tried – and in all probability condemned to death – as one of the hated noble class whom the people were now killing as fast as they could.

The great room of the prison to which he was taken Darnay found full of ladies and gentlemen, most of them rich and titled, the men chatting, the women reading or doing embroidery, all courteous and polite, as if they sat in their own splendid homes, instead of in a prison from which most of them could issue only to a dreadful death. He was allowed to remain here only a few moments; then he was taken to an empty cell and left alone.

It happened that the bank of which Mr. Lorry was agent had an office also in Paris, and the old gentleman had come there on business the day before Darnay arrived. Mr. Lorry was an Englishman born, and for him there was no danger. He knew nothing of the arrest of Darnay until a day or two

later, when, as he sat in his room, Doctor Manette and Lucie entered, just arrived from London, deeply agitated and in great fear for Darnay's safety.

As soon as Lucie had read her husband's letter she had followed at once with her father and Miss Pross. Doctor Manette, knowing Darnay's real name and title (for, before he married Lucie, he had told her father everything concerning himself), feared danger for him. But he had reasoned that his own long imprisonment in the Bastille – the building the people had first destroyed – would make him a favorite, and render him able to aid Darnay if danger came. On the way, they had heard the sad news of his arrest, and had come at once to Mr. Lorry to consider what might best be done.

While they talked, through the window they saw a great crowd of people come rushing into the courtyard of the building to sharpen weapons at a huge grindstone that stood there. They were going to murder the prisoners with which the jails were by this time full!

Fearful that he would be too late to save Darnay, Doctor Manette rushed to the yard, his white hair streaming in the wind, and told the leaders of the mob who he was – how he had been imprisoned for eighteen years in the Bastille, and that now one of his kindred, by some unknown error, had been seized. They cheered him, lifted him on their shoulders and rushed away to demand for him the release of Darnay, while Lucie, in tears, with Mr. Lorry and Miss Pross, waited all night for tidings.

But none came that night. The rescue had not proved easy. Next day Defarge, the wine shop keeper, brought a short note to Lucie from Darnay at the prison, but it was four days before Doctor Manette returned to the house. He had, indeed, by the story of his own sufferings, saved Darnay's life for the time being, but the prisoner, he had been told, could not be released without trial.

For this trial they waited, day after day. The time passed slowly and terribly. Prisoners were no longer murdered without trial, but few escaped the death penalty. The king and queen were beheaded. Thousands were put to death merely on suspicion, and thousands more were thrown into prison to await their turn. This was that dreadful period which has always since been called "The Reign of Terror," when no one felt sure of his safety.

There was a certain window in the prison through which Darnay sometimes found a chance to look, and from which he could see one dingy street corner. On this corner, every afternoon, Lucie took her station for hours, rain or shine. She never missed a day, and thus at long intervals her husband got a view of her.

So months passed till a year had gone. All the while Doctor Manette, now become a well-known figure in Paris, worked hard for Darnay's release. And at length his turn came to be tried and he was brought before the drunken, ignorant men who called themselves judge and jury.

He told how he had years before renounced his family and title, left France, and supported himself rather than be a burden on the peasantry. He told how he had married a woman of French birth, the only daughter of the good Doctor Manette, whom all Paris knew, and had come to Paris now of his own accord to help a poor servant who was in danger through his fault.

The story caught the fancy of the changeable crowd in the room. They cheered and applauded it. When he was acquitted they were quite as pleased as if he had been condemned to be beheaded, and put him in a great chair and carried him home in triumph to Lucie.

There was only one there, perhaps, who did not rejoice at the result, and that was the cold, cruel wife of the wine seller, Madame Defarge, who had knitted the name "Evrémonde" so many times into her knitting.

III SYDNEY CARTON'S SACRIFICE

That same night of his release all the happiness of Darnay and Lucie was suddenly broken. Soldiers came and again arrested him. Defarge and his wife were the accusers this time, and he was to be retried.

The first one to bring this fresh piece of bad news to Mr. Lorry was Sydney Carton, the reckless and dissipated young lawyer. Probably he had heard, in London, of Lucie's trouble, and out of his love for her, which he always carried hidden in his heart, had come to Paris to try to aid her husband. He had arrived only to hear, at the same time, of the acquittal and the rearrest.

As Carton walked along the street thinking sadly of Lucie's new grief, he saw a man whose face and figure seemed familiar. Following, he soon recognized him as the English spy, Barsad, whose false testimony, years before in London, had come so near convicting Darnay when he was tried for treason. Barsad (who, as it happened, was now a turnkey in the very prison where Darnay was confined) had left London to become a spy in France, first on the side of the king and then on the side of the people.

At the time of this story England was so hated by France that if the people had known of Barsad's career in London they would have cut off his head at once. Carton, who was well aware of this, threatened the spy with his knowledge and made him swear that if worst came to worst and Darnay were condemned, he would admit Carton to the cell to see him once before he was taken to execution. Why Carton asked this Barsad could not guess, but to save himself he had to promise.

Next day Darnay was tried for the second time. When the judge asked for the accusation, Defarge laid a paper before him.

It was a letter that had been found when the Bastille fell, in the cell that had been occupied for eighteen years by Doctor Manette. He had written it before his reason left him, and hidden it behind a loosened stone in the wall; and in it he had told the story of his own unjust arrest. Defarge read it aloud to the jury. And this was the terrible tale it told:

The Marquis de St. Evrémonde (the cruel uncle of Darnay), when he was a young man, had dreadfully wronged a young peasant woman, had caused her husband's death and killed her brother with his own hand. As the brother lay dying from the sword wound, Doctor Manette, then also a young man, had been called to attend him, and so, by accident, had learned the whole. Horrified at the wicked wrong, he wrote of it in a letter to the Minister of Justice. The Marquis whom it accused learned of this, and, to put Doctor Manette out of the way, had him arrested secretly, taken from his wife and baby daughter and thrown into a secret cell of the Bastille, where he had lived those eighteen years, not knowing whether his wife and child lived or died. He waited ten years for release, and when none came, at last, feeling his mind giving way, he wrote the account, which he concealed in the cell wall, denouncing the family of Evrémonde and all their descendants.

The reading of this paper by Defarge, as may be guessed, aroused all the murderous passions of the people in the court room. There was a further reason for Madame Defarge's hatred, for the poor woman whom Darnay's uncle had so wronged had been her own sister! In vain old Doctor Manette pleaded. That his own daughter was now Darnay's wife made no difference in their eyes. The jury at once found Darnay guilty and sentenced him to die by the guillotine the next morning.

Lucie fainted when the sentence was pronounced. Sydney Carton, who had witnessed the trial, lifted her and bore her to a carriage. When they reached home he carried her up the stairs and laid her on a couch.

Before he went, he bent down and touched her cheek with his lips, and they heard him whisper: "For a life you love!"

They did not know until next day what he meant.

Carton had, in fact, formed a desperate plan to rescue Lucie's husband, whom he so much resembled in face and figure, even though it meant his own death. He went to Mr. Lorry and made him promise to have ready next morning passports and a coach and swift horses to leave Paris for England with Doctor Manette, Lucie and himself, telling him that if they delayed longer, Lucie's life and her father's also would be lost.

Next, Carton bought a quantity of a drug whose fumes would render a man insensible, and with this in his pocket early next morning he went to the spy, Barsad, and bade him redeem his promise and take him to the cell where Darnay waited for the signal of death.

Darnay was seated, writing a last letter to Lucie, when Carton entered. Pretending that he wished him to write something that he dictated, Carton stood over him and held the phial of the drug to his face. In a moment the other was unconscious. Then Carton changed clothes with him and called in the spy, directing him to take the unconscious man, who now seemed to be Sydney Carton instead of Charles Darnay, to Mr. Lorry's house. He himself was to take the prisoner's place and suffer the penalty.

The plan worked well. Darnay, who would not have allowed this sacrifice if he had known, was carried safely and without discovery, past the guards. Mr. Lorry, guessing what had happened when he saw the unconscious figure, took coach at once with him, Doctor Manette and Lucie, and started for England that very hour. Miss Pross was left to follow them in another carriage.

While Miss Pross sat waiting in the empty house, who should come in but the terrible Madame Defarge! The latter had made up her mind, as Carton had suspected, to denounce Lucie also. It was against the law to mourn for any one who had been condemned as an enemy to France, and the woman was sure, of course, that Lucie would be mourning for her husband, who was to die within the hour. So she stopped on her way to the execution to see Lucie and thus have evidence against her.

When Madame Defarge entered, Miss Pross read the hatred and evil purpose in her face. The grim old nurse knew if it were known that Lucie had gone, the coach would be pursued and brought back. So she planted herself in front of the door of Lucie's room, and would not let Madame Defarge open it.

The savage Frenchwoman tried to tear her away, but Miss Pross seized her around the waist, and held her back. The other drew a loaded pistol from her breast to shoot her, but in the struggle it went off and killed Madame Defarge herself.

Then Miss Pross, all of a tremble, locked the door, threw the key into the river, took a carriage and followed after the coach.

Not long after the unconscious Darnay, with Lucie and Doctor Manette, passed the gates of Paris, the jailer came to the cell where Sydney Carton sat and called him. It was the summons to die. And with his thoughts on Lucie, whom he had always hopelessly loved, and on her husband, whom he had thus saved to her, he went almost gladly.

A poor little seamstress rode in the death cart beside him. She was so small and weak that she feared to die, and Carton held her cold hand all the way and comforted her to the end. Cruel women of the people sat about the guillotine knitting and counting with their stitches, as each poor victim died. And when Carton's turn came, thinking he was Darnay, the hated Marquis de St. Evrémonde, they cursed him and laughed.

Men said of him about the city that night that it was the peacefulest man's face ever beheld there. If they could have read his thought, if he could have spoken it in words it would have been these:

"I see the lives, for which I lay down mine, peaceful and happy in that England I shall see no more. I see Lucie and Darnay with a child that bears my name, and I see that I shall hold a place in their hearts for ever. I see her weeping for me on the anniversary of this day. I see the blot I threw upon my name faded away, and I know that till they die neither shall be more honored in the soul of the other than I am honored in the souls of both. It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known!"

BLEAK HOUSE

Published 1852–1853

<i>Scene:</i>	London and the Country
<i>Time:</i>	1832 to 1852

CHARACTERS

Mr. Jardyce	Master of Bleak House
Mr. Boythorn	His friend
Sir Leicester Dedlock	An aged nobleman
Mr. Boythorn's neighbor	
Lady Dedlock	His wife
Mr. Tulkinghorn	His lawyer
Captain Hawdon	A dissipated and poverty-stricken copyist in London, known as "Nemo"
Esther Summerson	Mr. Jardyce's ward
In reality a daughter of Captain Hawdon and Lady Dedlock	
Ada Clare Richard Carstone	Wards of Mr. Jardyce
Vholes	Richard's lawyer
Mrs. Rouncewell	Sir Leicester's housekeeper
"Mr. George"	Proprietor of a London shooting-gallery
Her son	
Hortense	Lady Dedlock's French maid
Miss Flite	A little, old, demented woman
Mrs. Jellyby	A lady greatly interested in the welfare of the heathen
Caddy Jellyby	Her daughter
Harold Skimpole	A trifler with life, preferring to live at other people's expense
Allan Woodcourt	A young surgeon
Grandfather Smallweed	A money-lender
Mrs. Smallweed	His crazy wife
Mr. Turveydrop	The proprietor of a dancing school and a model of deportment
Prince Turveydrop	His son. Later, Caddy's husband
Joe	A crossing sweeper
Krook	A dealer in rags and old bottles
"Lady Jane"	His cat

BLEAK HOUSE

I

THE COURT OF CHANCERY

An Englishman named Jarndyce, once upon a time having made a great fortune, died and left a great will. The persons appointed to carry out its provisions could not agree; they fell to disputing among themselves and went to law over it.

The court which in England decides such suits is called the Court of Chancery. Its action is slow and its delays many, so that men generally consider it a huge misfortune to be obliged to have anything to do with it. Sometimes it has kept cases undecided for many years, till the heirs concerned were dead and gone; and often when the decision came at last there was no money left to be divided, because it had all been eaten up by the costs of the suit. Lawyers inherited some cases from their fathers, who themselves had made a living by them, and many suits had become so twisted that nobody alive could have told at last what they really meant.

Such came to be the case with the Jarndyce will. It had been tried for so many years that the very name had become a joke. Those who began it were long since dead and their heirs either knew nothing of it or had given up hope of its ever being ended.

The only one who seemed to be interested in it was a little old woman named Miss Flite, whom delay and despair in a suit of her own had made half crazy. For many years she had attended the Chancery Court every day and many thoughtless people made fun of her.

She was wretchedly poor and lived in a small room over a rag-and-bottle shop kept by a man named Krook. Here she had a great number of birds in little cages – larks and linnets and goldfinches. She had given them names to represent the different things which the cruel Chancery Court required to carry on these shameful suits, such as Hope, Youth, Rest, Ashes, Ruin, Despair, Madness, Folly, Words, Plunder and Jargon. She used to say that when the Jarndyce case was decided she would open the cages and let the birds all go.

The last Jarndyce that was left had given up in disgust all thought of the famous lawsuit and steadfastly refused to have anything to do with it. He lived quietly in the country in a big, bare building called Bleak House. He was past middle-age, and his hair was silver-gray, but he was straight and strong and merry.

He was rich, yet was so tender-hearted and benevolent that all who knew him loved him. Most of his good deeds he never told, for he had a great dislike to being thanked. It used to be said that once, after he had done an extremely generous thing for a relative of his, seeing her coming in the front gate to thank him, he escaped by the back door and was not seen again for three months. He never spoke ill of his neighbors, and whenever he was vexed he would pretend to look for a weather-cock and say, "Dear, dear! The wind must be coming from the east!"

It happened, finally, that all the other Jarndyce heirs had died except two, a young girl named Ada Clare and a young man named Richard Carstone. These two, who were cousins, were left orphans. The master of Bleak House, therefore, in the goodness of his heart, offered them a home with him, and this they thankfully accepted. Mr. Jarndyce now wished to find a companion for Ada Clare; and this is how Esther Summerson comes into this story.

Esther was a sweet girl who had been brought up by a stern, hard-hearted woman whom she had always called "godmother," in ignorance of her parentage. She had never known who were her mother or father, for from earliest babyhood her godmother had forbidden her to ask questions concerning them, and she would have had a sad and lonely youth but for her sunny disposition.

It was not till her godmother died suddenly that she found she had a guardian, and that he was Mr. Jarndyce of Bleak House. How he came to be her guardian was a mystery to her, but she was glad to find herself not altogether friendless. Although he had taken the pains to see her more than once, and had noticed with pleasure what a cheerful, loving nature she had, yet Esther had never, so far as she knew, seen him, so that she received his invitation to come and live at Bleak House with joyful surprise.

She went, on the day appointed, to London, and there she met Ada, whom she began to love at once, and Richard, a handsome, careless young fellow of nineteen. They spent the day together and got well acquainted before they took the morrow's coach to Bleak House.

At the Chancery Court they met poor, crazy little Miss Flite, who insisted on taking them to her room above the rag-and-bottle shop to show them her caged birds. And that night (as they had been directed) they stayed at the house of a Mrs. Jellyby, of whom Mr. Jarndyce had heard as a woman of great charity.

Mrs. Jellyby was a woman with a mission, which mission was the education of the natives of Borrioboola-Gha, in Africa, and the cultivation there of the coffee-bean. She thought of nothing else, and was for ever sending out letters or pamphlets about it.

But she seemed unable to see or think of anything nearer home than Africa. The house was unswept, the children dirty and always under foot, and the meals half-cooked. She would sit all day in slipshod slippers and a dress that did not meet in the back, drinking coffee and dictating to her eldest daughter Caddy (who hated Africa and all its natives) letters about coffee cultivation and the uplifting of the natives of Borrioboola-Gha.

A very strange sort of philanthropist both Esther and Ada thought Mrs. Jellyby. Perhaps, however, Mr. Jarndyce sent them there for a useful lesson, for he afterward asked them what they thought of her, and he seemed well pleased to learn that they considered her ideas of doing good in the world extremely odd.

Next day they drove to Bleak House. Not one of them had ever seen Mr. Jarndyce, but they found him all they had imagined and more – the kindest, pleasantest and most thoughtful person in the world. Before they had been there two days they felt as if they had known him all their lives.

Bleak House was a building where one went up and down steps from one room to another, and where there were always more rooms when one thought he had seen them all. In the daytime there was horseback riding or walking to amuse them, and in the evenings Ada often sang and played to the rest. Altogether the time flew by most pleasantly, and, judging by Mr. Jarndyce's jollity, the wind seldom showed any signs of coming from the east.

It was soon clear to everybody that Richard was in love with Ada and that Ada was beginning to love him in return. This pleased Mr. Jarndyce, for he was fond of both.

But he was fondest of Esther. He made her his housekeeper and she carried a big bunch of keys and kept the house as clean as a new pin. He used to say she reminded him of:

"Little old woman and whither so high?
To sweep the cobwebs out of the sky."

She was so cheerful, he said, she would sweep the cobwebs out of anybody's sky. And from this they took to calling her "Little Old Woman," and "Cobweb," and "Mother Hubbard," till none of them thought of her real name at all.

Bleak House had a number of visitors who came more or less often. One of these was an old school friend of Mr. Jarndyce's, named Boythorn. He was a big, blustering man with a laugh as big as himself. Wherever he went he carried a tiny tame canary, that used to sit at meal-time perched on the top of his great shaggy head. It was odd to see this wee bird sitting there unafraid, even at one of his "ha-ha-ha's" that shook the whole house.

Mr. Boythorn was exceedingly tender-hearted, but took delight in pretending to be the stubbornest, most cross-grained, worst-tempered individual possible. His neighbor was Sir Leicester Dedlock, a dignified and proud old baronet, and him Mr. Boythorn loved to keep in perpetual anger by bringing against him all manner of lawsuits regarding the boundary between their land.

Another visitor whom Esther found amusing was Harold Skimpole, a light, bright creature of charming manners, with a large head and full of simple gaiety. He was a man who seemed to trifle with everything. He sang a little, composed a little and sketched a little. But his songs were never completed and his sketches never finished.

His aim in life seemed to be to avoid all responsibility, and to find some one else to pay his debts. He always spoke of himself as a "child," though he was middle-aged. He claimed to have no idea whatever of the value of money. He would take a handful of coins from his pocket and say laughing, "Now, there's some money. I have no idea how much. I don't know how to count it. I dare say I owe more than that. If good-natured people don't stop letting me owe them, why should I? There you have Harold Skimpole." Mr. Jarndyce was far too honest and innocent himself to see through the man's hollow selfishness and was continually paying his debts, as they soon learned.

Most of all Bleak House's visitors, Esther came to like Allan Woodcourt, a handsome dark-haired young surgeon, and before long she found herself unconsciously looking and longing for his coming. Woodcourt was poor, however, and although he was in love with Esther he did not tell her, but soon sailed away on a long voyage as a ship's doctor.

II

LADY DEDLOCK'S SECRET

Sir Leicester Dedlock, whom Mr. Boythorn so loved to torment, was seventy years old. His wife, many years younger than himself, he had married for love. Lady Dedlock was not noble by birth – no one, indeed, knew who she had been before her marriage – but she was very beautiful. She was as proud and haughty, too, as she was lovely, and was much sought after. But with all her popularity she had few close friends, and no one in whom she confided.

Even her housekeeper, Mrs. Rouncewell, a fine, handsome old woman who had been Sir Leicester's servant for fifty years, thought her cold and reserved. Mrs. Rouncewell herself had had a son George, who many years before had gone off to be a soldier and had never come back; and, looking at her mistress's face, she often wondered if the shadow of pain there was the mark of some old grief or loss of which no one knew. However that may have been, the old baronet loved his wife and was very proud of her.

Sir Leicester's family lawyer was named Tulkinghorn. He was a dull, dignified man who always dressed in black and seldom spoke unless he had to. His one passion was the discovery of other people's secrets. He knew more family secrets than any one else in London, and to discover a new one he would have risked all his fortune.

Now, among the very many persons connected in some way or other with the famous Jarndyce case, which seemed destined never to end, was Sir Leicester Dedlock, and one day (the Chancery Court having actually made a little progress) Mr. Tulkinghorn brought the baronet some legal papers to read to him.

As the lawyer held one in his hand, Lady Dedlock, seeing the handwriting, asked in an agitated voice who had written it. He answered that it was the work of one of his copyists. A moment later, as he went on reading, they found that Lady Dedlock had fainted away.

Her husband did not connect her faintness with the paper, but Mr. Tulkinghorn did, and that instant he determined that Lady Dedlock had a secret, that this secret had something to do with the copyist, and that what this secret was, he, Tulkinghorn, would discover.

He easily found that the writing had been done by a man who called himself "Nemo," and who lived above Krook's rag-and-bottle shop, a neighbor to crazy little Miss Flite of the Chancery Court and the many bird-cages.

Krook himself was an ignorant, spectacled old rascal, whose sole occupations seemed to be to sleep and to drink gin, a bottle of which stood always near him. His only intimate was a big, gray, evil-tempered cat called "Lady Jane," who, when not lying in wait for Miss Flite's birds, used to sit on his shoulder with her tail sticking straight up like a hairy feather. People in the neighborhood called his dirty shop the "Court of Chancery," because, like that other court, it had so many old things in it and whatever its owner once got into it never got out again.

In return for Mr. Tulkinghorn's money Krook told him all he knew about his lodger. Nemo, it seemed, was surly and dissipated and did what legal copying he could get to do in order to buy opium with which he drugged himself daily. So far as was known, he had but one friend – Joe, a wretched crossing sweeper, to whom, when he had it, he often gave a coin.

Thus much the lawyer learned, but from the strange lodger himself he learned nothing. For when Krook took him to the room Nemo occupied, they found the latter stretched on his couch, dead (whether by accident or design no one could tell) of an overdose of opium.

Curious to see how Lady Dedlock would receive this news, Mr. Tulkinghorn called on her and told her of the unknown man's death. She pretended to listen with little interest, but his trained eye saw that she was deeply moved by it, and he became more anxious than ever to find out what connection there could be between this proud and titled woman and the miserable copyist who had lived and died in squalor.

Chance favored Mr. Tulkinghorn's object. One night he saw Joe, the ragged crossing sweeper pointing out to a woman whose face was hidden by a veil, and whose form was closely wrapped in a French shawl, the gate of the cemetery where Nemo had been buried. Later, at Sir Leicester's, he saw Lady Dedlock's maid, Hortense – a black-haired, jealous French woman, with wolf-like ways – wearing the same shawl.

He cunningly entrapped the maid into coming to his house one night wearing both veil and shawl, and there brought her unexpectedly face to face with Joe. By the boy's actions Mr. Tulkinghorn decided at once that Joe had never seen Hortense before, and that instant, he guessed the truth – that the veiled woman who had gone to the cemetery was really Lady Dedlock herself, and that she had worn her maid's clothes to mislead any observer.

This was a clever trick in the lawyer, but it proved too clever for his own good, for, finding she had been enticed there for some deeper purpose, Hortense flew into a passion with him. He sneered at her and turned her out into the street, threatening if she troubled him to have her put into prison. Because of this she began to hate him with a fierceness which he did not guess.

Mr. Tulkinghorn felt himself getting nearer to his goal. But he now had to find out who Nemo really had been.

If he had only known it, Krook could have aided him. The old man had found a bundle of old letters in Nemo's room after his death, and these were all addressed to "Captain Hawdon."

Krook himself could not read, except enough to spell out an address, and he had no idea what the letters contained. But he was quick to think the bundle might be worth some money. So he put it carefully away.

But Mr. Tulkinghorn found out nothing from Krook, for one day a strange thing happened. Krook had drunk so much gin in his life that he had become perfectly soaked with alcohol, so that he was just like a big spongeful of it. Now, it is a curious fact that when a great mass of inflammable material is heaped together, sometimes it will suddenly burst into flame and burn up all in a minute, without anything or anybody setting fire to it. This is just what happened to Krook. As he stood in the middle of the dirty shop, without any warning, all in a twinkling, he blazed up and burned, clothes and all, and in less time than it takes to tell it, there was nothing left but a little pile of ashes, a burnt

mark in the floor and a sticky smoke that stuck to the window-panes and hung in the air like soot. And this was all the neighbors found when they came to search for him.

This was the end of Krook, and the rag-and-bottle shop was taken possession of by Grandfather Smallweed, a hideous, crippled money-lender, who had been his brother-in-law, and who at once went to work ransacking all the papers he could find on the premises.

Grandfather Smallweed was a thin, toothless, wheezy, green-eyed old miser, who was so nearly dead from age and asthma that he had to be wheeled about by his granddaughter Judy.

He had a wife who was out of her mind. Everything said in her hearing she connected with the idea of money. If one said, for example, "It's twenty minutes past noon," Mrs. Smallweed would at once begin to gabble: "Twenty pence! Twenty pounds! Twenty thousand millions of bank-notes locked up in a black box!" and she would not stop till her husband threw a cushion at her (which he kept beside him for that very purpose) and knocked her mouth shut.

Grandfather Smallweed soon discovered the bundle of letters hidden back of the shelf where Lady Jane, Krook's big cat, slept.

The name they bore, "Captain Hawdon," was familiar enough to the money-lender. Long ago, when Hawdon was living a dissipated life in London, he had borrowed money from Grandfather Smallweed, and this money was still unpaid when he had disappeared. It was said that he had fallen overboard from a vessel and had been drowned.

To think now that the captain had been living as a copyist all these years in London, free from arrest for the debt, filled the wizened soul of the old man with rage. He was ready enough to talk when Mr. Tulkinghorn questioned him, and finally sold him the bundle of letters.

The lawyer saw that they were in Lady Dedlock's penmanship; it remained to prove that the dead Nemo had really been Captain Hawdon.

Mr. Tulkinghorn, of course, had many specimens of the copyist's hand, and after much search he found a man who had once been a fellow soldier of the captain's. He was called "Mr. George," and kept a shooting-gallery. Mr. George had among his papers a letter once written him by Captain Hawdon, and not knowing the purpose for which it was to be used, loaned it to the lawyer. The handwriting was the same! And thus Mr. Tulkinghorn knew that the copyist had really been Captain Hawdon and that the letters in the bundle had once been written to him by the woman who was now the haughty Lady Dedlock.

It was a strange, sad story that the letters disclosed, as Mr. Tulkinghorn, gloating over his success, read them, line by line. The man who had fallen so low as to drag out a wretched existence by copying law papers – whom, until she saw the handwriting in the lawyer's hands, she had believed to be dead – was a man Lady Dedlock had once loved.

Many years before, when a young woman, she had run away from home with him. A little child was born to them whom she named Esther. When she and Hawdon had separated, her sister, to hide from the world the knowledge of the elopement, had told her the baby Esther was dead, had taken the child to another part of the country, given her the name of Summerson, and, calling herself her godmother instead of her aunt, brought her up in ignorance of the truth. Years had gone by and Captain Hawdon was reported drowned. At length the little Esther's mother had met and married Sir Leicester Dedlock, and in his love and protection had thought her dark past buried from view for ever.

All this the pitiless lawyer read in the letters, and knew that Lady Dedlock's happiness was now in his hands. And as he thought how, with this knowledge, he could torture her with the fear of discovery, his face took on the look of a cat's when it plays with a mouse it has caught.

Meanwhile Lady Dedlock had suffered much. The knowledge that Hawdon had not been drowned as she had supposed, had come to her like a thunderclap. And the news of his death, following so soon after this discovery, had unnerved her. She felt Mr. Tulkinghorn's suspicious eyes watching her always and began to tremble in dread of what he might know.

In the midst of these fears, she accidentally discovered one day that the baby name of Esther Summerson of Bleak House had been, not Summerson, but Hawdon.

This made Lady Dedlock guess the whole truth – that Esther was in reality her own daughter. As soon as she was alone, she threw herself on her knees in the empty room with sobs, crying:

"Oh, my child! My child! Not dead in the first hours of her life, as my cruel sister told me, but sternly nurtured by her, after she had renounced me and my name! Oh, my child! My child!"

III

LITTLE JOE PLAYS A PART

While these events, which so closely concerned Esther, were occurring in London, life at Bleak House went quietly on. Ada and Esther had become bosom friends, and both loved and respected Mr. Jarndyce above every one. Harold Skimpole, as charming and careless as ever, and as willing as ever that some one else should pay his debts for him, was often there, and whenever they went to the city they saw Miss Flite and Mrs. Jellyby, the latter still busily sending letters about the growing of coffee and the education of the natives of Borrioboola-Gha.

Esther grew especially to like Caddy, the slipshod daughter to whom Mrs. Jellyby dictated her letters. The poor girl had much good in her, and Esther encouraged and helped her all she could. Caddy finally fell in love with Prince Turveydrop, a blue-eyed, flaxen-haired young man whose father kept a dancing school.

Old Mr. Turveydrop, his father, was a fat man with a false complexion, false teeth, false whiskers, a wig and a padded chest. He always carried a cane, eye-glass and snuff-box and was so tightly buttoned up that when he bowed you could almost see creases come into the whites of his eyes. He thought himself a model of politeness and stood about to show off his clothes while he made his son, Prince, do all the teaching.

Caddy was so tired of hearing about Africa that at last she married Prince and moved into the Turveydrop dancing school, and Mrs. Jellyby had to hire a boy to help her with her great plans for the education of the natives of Borrioboola-Gha.

Once Esther and Ada went with Mr. Jarndyce to visit Mr. Boythorn – the man with the tremendous laugh and the pet canary – at his country house where he lived in one perpetual quarrel with his neighbor, Sir Leicester Dedlock. Esther had often heard of the beauty of Lady Dedlock, and one Sunday in the village church she saw her. There was something strangely familiar in her look that reminded Esther of her godmother. An odd sensation came over her then and she felt her heart beat quickly. But this was before Lady Dedlock had guessed the truth, and Esther and she did not meet.

Richard Carstone had soon begun to be a source of great anxiety to all at Bleak House. It was plainly to be seen that he loved Ada dearly, and that she loved him as well, but to Mr. Jarndyce's regret he had begun to think and dream of the famous chancery suit and of the fortune that would be his when it ended. Mr. Jarndyce, from his own bitter experience, hated the Chancery Court and everything connected with it, and saw with grief that Richard was growing to be a ne'er-do-well, who found it easier to trust in the future than to labor in the present.

In spite of all advice Richard went from bad to worse. He began the study of medicine, soon changed this for law, and lastly decided to enter the army. He was naturally a spendthrift, and as long as his money lasted Harold Skimpole found him a very fine friend and helped him spend it.

Skimpole also introduced to him a knavish lawyer named Vholes, who made him believe the great chancery suit must soon end in his favor, and who (when Richard had put the case in his hands) proceeded to rob him of all he had. He poisoned his mind, too, against Mr. Jarndyce, so that Richard began to think his truest friend deceitful.

Ada saw this with pain, but she loved Richard above all else, and the more so when she saw him so wretched and deceived; and at last, without telling either Mr. Jarndyce or Esther what she was

going to do, she went to Richard one day and married him, so that, as her husband, he could take the little fortune she possessed to pay Vholes to go on with the chancery suit.

A great misfortune befell Esther about this time – a misfortune that came to her, strangely enough, through little Joe, the crossing sweeper.

Half-starved, ragged and homeless all his life, Joe had never known kindness save that given to him by the poor copyist who had lived above Krook's rag-and-bottle shop. He lived (if having a corner to sleep in can be called living) in a filthy alley called "Tom-all-Alone's." It seemed to him that every one he met told him to "move on." The policeman, the shopkeepers at whose doors he stopped for warmth, all told him to "move on," till the wretched lad wondered if there was any spot in London where he could rest undisturbed.

Mr. Tulkinghorn, in his search to find out the woman who had hired Joe to show her the cemetery, had dogged him so with his detective that at length the lad had become frightened and left London for the open country. There he was taken very ill, and on the highway near Bleak House one evening Esther found him helpless and delirious with fever.

Touched by his condition she had him taken at once to Bleak House and put to bed, intending when morning came to send for a doctor.

But in the morning little Joe was missing. Though they searched high and low he was not to be found, and they decided that in his delirium he had taken to the road again. It was not till long after that Esther found his leaving had been brought about by Harold Skimpole, who was then visiting Bleak House, and who, in his selfishness, feared the boy might be the bearer of some contagious disease.

This unfortunately proved to be the case. Joe's illness was smallpox, and a few days later a maid of Esther's fell ill with it. Esther nursed her day and night, and just as she was recovering was stricken with it herself.

In her unselfishness and love for the rest, before unconsciousness came, she made the maid promise faithfully to allow no one (particularly neither Mr. Jarndyce nor her beloved Ada) to enter the room till all danger was past.

For many days Esther hovered between life and death and all the time the maid kept her word. Caddy came from the Turveydrop dancing school early and late, and little Miss Flite walked the twenty miles from London in thin shoes to inquire for her. And at length, slowly, she began to grow well again.

But the disease had left its terrible mark. When she first looked in a mirror she found that her beauty was gone and her face strangely altered.

This was a great grief to her at first, but on the day when Mr. Jarndyce came into her sick-room and held her in his arms and said, "My dear, dear girl!" she thought, "He has seen me and is fonder of me than before. So what have I to mourn for?" She thought of Allan Woodcourt, too, the young surgeon somewhere on the sea, and she was glad that, if he had loved her before he sailed away, he had not told her so. Now, she told herself, when they met again and he saw her so sadly changed he would have given her no promise he need regret.

When she was able to travel, Esther went for a short stay at the house of Mr. Boythorn, and there, walking under the trees she grew stronger.

One day, as she sat in the park that surrounded the house, she saw Lady Dedlock coming toward her, and seeing how pale and agitated she was, Esther felt the same odd sensation she had felt in the church. Lady Dedlock threw herself sobbing at her feet, and put her arms around her and kissed her, as she told her that she was her unhappy mother, who must keep her secret for the sake of her husband, Sir Leicester.

Esther thought her heart must break with both grief and joy at once. But she comforted Lady Dedlock, and told her nothing would ever change her love for her, and they parted with tears and kisses.

Another surprise of a different sort awaited Esther on her return to Bleak House. Mr. Jarndyce told her that he loved her and asked her if she would marry him. And, remembering how tender he had always been, and knowing that he loved her in spite of her disfigured face, she said yes.

But one day – the very day he returned – Esther saw Allan Woodcourt on the street. Somehow at the first glimpse of him she knew that she had loved him all along. Then she remembered that she had promised to marry Mr. Jarndyce, and she began to tremble and ran away without speaking to Woodcourt at all.

But they soon met, and this time it was Joe the crossing sweeper who brought them together. Woodcourt found the poor ragged wanderer in the street, so ill that he could hardly walk. He had recovered from smallpox, but it had left him so weak that he had become a prey to consumption. The kind-hearted surgeon took the boy to little Miss Flite and they found him a place to stay in Mr. George's shooting-gallery, where they did what they could for him, and where Esther and Mr. Jarndyce came to see him.

Joe was greatly troubled when he learned he had brought the smallpox to Bleak House, and one day he got some one to write out for him in very large letters that he was sorry and hoped Esther and all the others would forgive him. And this was his will.

On the last day Allan Woodcourt sat beside him, "Joe, my poor fellow," he said.

"I hear you, sir, but it's dark – let me catch your hand."

"Joe, can you say what I say?"

"I'll say anything as you do, sir, for I know it's good."

"Our Father."

"Our Father; yes, that's very good, sir."

"Which art in Heaven."

"Art in Heaven. Is the light a-comin', sir?"

"Hallowed be thy name."

"Hallowed be – thy – "

But the light had come at last. Little Joe was dead.

IV

ESTHER BECOMES THE MISTRESS OF BLEAK HOUSE

When the last bit of proof was fast in his possession Mr. Tulkinghorn, pluming himself on the cleverness with which he had wormed his way into Lady Dedlock's secret, went to her at her London home and informed her of all he had discovered, delighting in the fear and dread which she could not help showing. She knew now that this cruel man would always hold his knowledge over her head, torturing her with the threat of making it known to her husband.

Some hours after he had gone home, she followed him there to beg him not to tell her husband what he had discovered. But all was dark in the lawyer's house. She rang the private bell twice, but there was no answer, and she returned in despair.

By a coincidence some one else had been seen to call at Mr. Tulkinghorn's that same night. This was Mr. George, of the shooting-gallery, who came to get back the letter he had loaned to the lawyer.

When morning came it was found that a dreadful deed had been done that night. Mr. Tulkinghorn was found lying dead on the floor of his private apartment, shot through the heart. All the secrets he had so cunningly discovered and gloated over with such delight had not been able to save his life there in that room.

Mr. Tulkinghorn was so well-known that the murder made a great sensation. The police went at once to the shooting-gallery to arrest Mr. George and he was put into jail.

He was able later to prove his innocence, however, and, all in all, his arrest turned out to be a fortunate thing. For by means of it old Mrs. Rouncewell, Lady Dedlock's housekeeper, discovered

that he was her own son George, who had gone off to be a soldier so many years before. He had made up his mind not to return till he was prospering. But somehow this time had never come; bad fortune had followed him and he had been ashamed to go back.

But though he had acted so wrongly he had never lost his love for his mother, and was glad to give up the shooting-gallery and go with Mrs. Rouncewell to become Sir Leicester's personal attendant.

At first, after the death of Mr. Tulkinghorn, Lady Dedlock had hoped that her dread and fear were now ended, but she soon found that this was not to be. The telltale bundle of letters was in the possession of a detective whom the cruel lawyer had long ago called to his aid, and the detective, thinking Lady Dedlock herself might have had something to do with the murder, thought it his duty to tell all that his dead employer had discovered to Sir Leicester.

It was a fearful shock to the haughty baronet to find so many tongues had been busy with the name his wife had borne so proudly. When the detective finished, Sir Leicester fell unconscious, and when he came to his senses had lost the power to speak.

They laid him on his bed, sent for doctors and went to tell Lady Dedlock, but she had disappeared.

Almost at one and the same moment the unhappy woman had learned not only that the detective had told his story to Sir Leicester, but that she herself was suspected of the murder. These two blows were more than she could bear. She put on a cloak and veil and, leaving all her money and jewels behind her, with a note for her husband, went out into the shrill, frosty wind. The note read:

"If I am sought for or accused of his murder, believe I am wholly innocent. I have no home left, I will trouble you no more. May you forget me and forgive me."

They gave Sir Leicester this note, and great agony came to the stricken man's heart. He had always loved and honored her, and he loved her no less now for what had been told him. Nor did he believe for a moment that she could be guilty of the murder. He wrote on a slate the words, "Forgive – find," and the detective started at once to overtake the fleeing woman.

He went first to Esther, to whom he told the sad outcome, and together they began the search. For two days they labored, tracing Lady Dedlock's movements step by step, through the pelting snow and wind, across the frozen wastes outside of London, where brick-kilns burned and where she had exchanged clothes with a poor laboring woman, the better to elude pursuit – then back to London again, where at last they found her.

But it was too late. She was lying frozen in the snow, at the gate of the cemetery where Captain Hawdon, the copyist whom she had once loved, lay buried.

So Lady Dedlock's secret was hidden at last by death. Only the detective, whose business was silence, Sir Leicester her husband, and Esther her daughter, knew what her misery had been or the strange circumstances of her flight, for the police soon succeeded in tracing the murder of Mr. Tulkinghorn to Hortense, the revengeful French maid whom he had threatened to put in prison.

One other shadow fell on Esther's life before the clouds cleared away for ever.

Grandfather Smallweed, rummaging among the papers in Krook's shop, found an old will, and this proved to be a last will made by the original Jarndyce, whose affairs the Court of Chancery had been all these years trying to settle. This will bequeathed the greater part of the fortune to Richard Carstone, and its discovery, of course, would have put a stop to the famous suit.

But the suit stopped of its own accord, for it was found now that there was no longer any fortune left to go to law about or to be willed to anybody. All the money had been eaten up by the costs.

After all the years of hope and strain, this disappointment was too much for Richard, and he died that night, at the very hour when poor crazed little Miss Flite (as she had said she would do when the famous suit ended) gave all her caged birds their liberty.

The time came at length, after the widowed Ada and her baby boy had come to make their home with Mr. Jarndyce, when Esther felt that she should fulfil her promise and become the mistress

of Bleak House. So she told her guardian she was ready to marry him when he wished. He appointed a day, and she began to prepare her wedding-clothes.

But Mr. Jarndyce, true-hearted and generous as he had always been, had an idea very different from this in his mind. He had found, on Allan Woodcourt's return from his voyage, that the young surgeon still loved Esther. His keen eye had seen that she loved him in return, and he well knew that if she married him, Jarndyce, it would be because of her promise and because her grateful heart could not find it possible to refuse him. So, wishing most of all her happiness, he determined to give up his own love for her sake.

He bought a house in the town in which Woodcourt had decided to practise medicine, remodeled it and named it "Bleak House," after his own. When it was finished in the way he knew Esther liked best, he took her to see it, telling her it was to be a present from him to the surgeon to repay him for his kindness to little Joe.

Then, when she had seen it all, he told her that he had guessed her love for Woodcourt, and that, though she married the surgeon and not himself, she would still be carrying out her promise and would still become the mistress of "Bleak House."

When she lifted her tearful face from his shoulder she saw that Woodcourt was standing near them.

"This is 'Bleak House,'" said Jarndyce. "This day I give this house its little mistress, and, before God, it is the brightest day of my life!"

HARD TIMES

Published 1854

<i>Scene:</i>	Coketown (an English factory town) and the Country.
<i>Time:</i>	About 1850

CHARACTERS

Mr. Gradgrind	A believer in "facts"
Mrs. Gradgrind	His wife
Louisa	Their daughter
Tom	Their son
Josiah Bounderby	A pompous mill owner and banker
Later, Louisa's husband	
"Mrs. Pegler"	His mother
Mrs. Sparsit	His housekeeper
Mr. M'Choakumchild	A schoolmaster
Sleary	The proprietor of a circus
"Signor" Jupe	The clown
Cecelia Jupe	His daughter. Known as "Sissy"
Stephen Blackpool Rachel	Mill workers
James Harthouse	A man of the world
"Merrylegs"	Signor Jupe's performing dog

HARD TIMES

I

MR. GRADGRIND AND HIS "SYSTEM"

In a cheerless house called Stone Lodge, in Coketown, a factory town in England, where great weaving mills made the sky a blur of soot and smoke, lived a man named Gradgrind. He was an obstinate, stubborn man, with a square wall of a forehead and a wide, thin, set mouth. His head was bald and shining, covered with knobs like the crust of a plum pie, and skirted with bristling hair. He had grown rich in the hardware business, and was a school director of the town.

He believed in nothing but "facts." Everything in the world to him was good only to weigh and measure, and wherever he went one would have thought he carried in his pocket a rule and scales and the multiplication table. He seemed a kind of human cannon loaded to the muzzle with facts.

"Now, what I want is facts!" he used to say to Mr. M'Choakumchild, the schoolmaster. "Teach boys and girls nothing but facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Nothing else is of any service to anybody. Stick to facts, sir."

He had several children whom he had brought up according to this system of his, and they led wretched lives. No little Gradgrind child had ever seen a face in the moon, or learned *Mother Goose* or listened to fairy stories, or read *The Arabian Nights*. They all hated Coketown, always rattling and throbbing with machinery; they hated its houses all built of brick as red as an Indian's face, and its black canal and river purple with dyes. And most of all they hated facts.

Louisa, the eldest daughter, looked jaded, for her imagination was quite starved under their teachings. Tom, her younger brother, was defiant and sullen. "I wish," he used to say, "that I could collect all the facts and all the figures in the world, and all the people who found them out, and I wish I could put a thousand pounds of gunpowder under them and blow them all up together!"

Louisa was generous, and the only love she knew was for her selfish, worthless brother, who repaid her with very little affection. Of their mother they saw very little; she was a thin, white, pink-eyed bundle of shawls, feeble and ailing, and had too little mind to oppose her husband in anything.

Strangely enough, Mr. Gradgrind had once had a tender heart, and down beneath the facts of his system he had it still, though it had been covered up so long that nobody would have guessed it. Least of all, perhaps, his own children.

Mr. Gradgrind's intimate friend, – one whom he was foolish enough to admire, – was Josiah Bounderby, a big, loud, staring man with a puffed head whose skin was stretched so tight it seemed to hold his eyes open. He owned the Coketown mills and a bank besides, and was very rich and pompous.

Bounderby was a precious hypocrite, of an odd sort. His greatest pride was to talk continually of his former poverty and wretchedness, and he delighted to tell everybody that he had been born in a ditch, deserted by his wicked mother, and brought up a vagabond by a drunken grandmother – from which low state he had made himself wealthy and respected by his own unaided efforts.

Now, this was not in the least true. As a matter of fact, his grandmother had been a respectable, honest soul, and his mother had pinched and saved to bring him up decently, had given him some schooling, and finally apprenticed him in a good trade. But Bounderby was so ungrateful and so anxious to have people think he himself deserved all the credit, that after he became rich he forbade his mother even to tell any one who she was, and made her live in a little shop in the country forty miles from Coketown.

But in her good and simple heart the old woman was so proud of her son that she used to spend all her little savings to come into town, sometimes walking a good part of the way, cleanly and plainly dressed, and with her spare shawl and umbrella, just to watch him go into his fine house or to look

in admiration at the mills or the fine bank he owned. On such occasions she called herself "Mrs. Pegler," and thought no one else would be the wiser.

The house in which Bounderby lived had no ornaments. It was cold and lonely and rich. He made his mill-hands more than earn their wages, and when any of them complained, he sneered that they wanted to be fed on turtle-soup and venison with a golden spoon.

Bounderby had for housekeeper a Mrs. Sparsit, who talked a great deal of her genteel birth, rich relatives and of the better days she had once seen. She was a busybody, and when she sat of an evening cutting out embroidery with sharp scissors, her bushy eyebrows and Roman nose made her look like a hawk picking out the eyes of a very tough little bird. In her own mind she had set her cap at Bounderby.

So firmly had Mr. Gradgrind put his trust in the gospel of facts which he had taught Louisa and Tom that he was greatly shocked one day to catch them (instead of studying any one of the dry sciences ending in "ology" which he made them learn) peeping through the knot holes in a wooden pavilion along the road at the performance of a traveling circus.

The circus, which was run by a man named Sleary, had settled itself in the neighborhood for some time to come, and all the performers meanwhile boarded in a near-by public house, The Pegasus's Arms. The show was given every day, and at the moment of Mr. Gradgrind's appearance one "Signor" Jupe, the clown, was showing the tricks of his trained dog, Merrylegs, and entertaining the audience with his choicest jokes.

Mr. Gradgrind, dumb with amazement, seized both Louisa and Tom and led them home, repeating at intervals, with indignation: "What would Mr. Bounderby say!"

This question was soon answered, for the latter was at Stone Lodge when they arrived. He reminded Mr. Gradgrind that there was an evil influence in the school the children attended, which no doubt had led them to such idle pursuits – this evil influence being the little daughter of Jupe, the circus clown. And Bounderby advised Mr. Gradgrind to have the child put out of the school at once.

The name of the clown's little daughter was Cecelia, but every one called her Sissy. She was a dark-eyed, dark-haired, appealing child, frowned upon by Mr. M'Choakumchild, the schoolmaster, because somehow many figures would not stay in her head at one time.

When the circus first came, her father, who loved her very much, had brought her to the Gradgrind house and begged that she be allowed to attend school. Mr. Gradgrind had consented. Now, however, at Bounderby's advice, he wished he had not done so, and started off with the other to The Pegasus's Arms to find Signor Jupe and deny to little Sissy the right of any more schooling.

Poor Jupe had been in great trouble that day. For a long time he had felt that he was growing too old for the circus business. His joints were getting stiff, he missed in his tumbling, and he could no longer make the people laugh as he had once done. He knew that before long Sleary would be obliged to discharge him, and this he thought he could not bear to have Sissy see.

He had therefore made up his mind to leave the company and disappear. He was too poor to take Sissy with him, so, loving her as he did, he decided to leave her there where at least she had some friends. He had come to this melancholy conclusion this very day, and had sent Sissy out on an errand so that he might slip away, accompanied only by his dog, Merrylegs, while she was absent.

Sissy was returning when she met Mr. Gradgrind and Bounderby, and came with them to find her father. But at the public house she met only sympathizing looks, for all of the performers had guessed what her father had done. They told her as gently as they could, but poor Sissy was at first broken-hearted in her grief and was comforted only by the assurance that her father would certainly come back to her before long.

While Sissy wept Mr. Gradgrind had been pondering. He saw here an excellent chance to put his "system" to the test. To take this untaught girl and bring her up from the start entirely on facts would be a good experiment. With this in view, then, he proposed to take Sissy to his house and to care for and teach her, provided she promised to have nothing further to do with the circus or its members.

Sissy knew how anxious her father had been to have her learn, so she agreed, and was taken at once to Stone Lodge and set to work upon facts.

But alas! Mr. Gradgrind's education seemed to make Sissy low-spirited, but no wiser. Every day she watched and longed for some message from her father, but none came. She was loving and lovable, and Louisa liked her and comforted her as well as she could. But Louisa was far too unhappy herself to be of much help to any one else.

Several years went by. Sissy's father had never returned. She had grown into a quiet, lovely girl, the only ray of light in that gloomy home. Mr. Gradgrind had realized one of his ambitions, had been elected to Parliament and now spent much time in London. Mrs. Gradgrind was yet feebler and more ailing. Tom had grown to be a young man, a selfish and idle one, and Bounderby had made him a clerk in his bank. Louisa, not blind to her brother's faults, but loving him devotedly, had become, in this time, an especial object of Bounderby's notice.

Indeed, the mill owner had determined to marry her. Louisa had always been repelled by his coarseness and rough ways, and when he proposed for her hand she shrank from the thought. If her father had ever encouraged her confidence she might then have thrown herself on his breast and told him all that she felt, but to Mr. Gradgrind marriage was only a cold fact with no romance in it, and his manner chilled her. Tom, in his utter selfishness, thought only of what a good thing it would be for him if his sister married his employer, and urged it on her with no regard whatever for her own liking.

At length, thinking, as long as she had never been allowed to have a sentiment that could not be put down in black and white, that it did not much matter whom she married after all, and believing that at least it would help Tom, she consented.

She married Bounderby, the richest man in Coketown, and went to live in his fine house, while Mrs. Sparsit, the housekeeper, angry and revengeful, found herself compelled to move into small rooms over Bounderby's bank.

II THE ROBBERY OF BOUNDERBY'S BANK

In one of Bounderby's weaving mills a man named Stephen Blackpool had worked for years. He was sturdy and honest, but had a stooping frame, a knitted brow and iron-gray hair, for in his forty years he had known much trouble.

Many years before he had married; unhappily, for through no fault or failing of his own, his wife took to drink, left off work, and became a shame and a disgrace to the town. When she could get no money to buy drink with, she sold his furniture, and often he would come home from the mill to find the rooms stripped of all their belongings and his wife stretched on the floor in drunken slumber. At last he was compelled to pay her to stay away, and even then he lived in daily fear lest she return to disgrace him afresh.

What made this harder for Stephen to bear was the true love he had for a sweet, patient, working woman in the mill named Rachel. She had an oval, delicate face, with gentle eyes and dark, shining hair. She knew his story and loved him, too. He could not marry her, because his own wife stood in the way, nor could he even see or walk with her often, for fear busy tongues might talk of it, but he watched every flutter of her shawl.

One night Stephen went home to his lodging to find his wife returned. She was lying drunk across his bed, a besotted creature, stained and splashed, and evil to look at. All that night he sat sleepless and sick at heart.

Next day, at the noon hour, he went to his employer's house to ask his advice. He knew the law sometimes released two people from the marriage tie when one or the other lived wickedly, and his whole heart longed to marry Rachel.

But Bounderby told him bluntly that the law he had in mind was only for rich men, who could afford to spend a great deal of money. And he further added (according to his usual custom) that he had no doubt Stephen would soon be demanding the turtle-soup and venison and the golden spoon.

Stephen went home that night hopeless, knowing what he should find there. But Rachel had heard and was there before him. She had tidied the room and was tending the woman who was his wife. It seemed to Stephen, as he saw her in her work of mercy, there was an angel's halo about her head.

Soon the wretched creature she had aided passed out of his daily life again to go he knew not where, and this act of Rachel's remained to make his love and longing greater.

About this time a stranger came to Coketown. He was James Harthouse, a suave, polished man of the world, good-looking, well-dressed, with a gallant yet indolent manner and bold eyes.

Being wealthy, he had tried the army, tried a Government position, tried Jerusalem, tried yachting and found himself bored by them all. At last he had tried facts and figures, having some idea these might help in politics. In London he had met the great believer in facts, Mr. Gradgrind, and had been sent by him to Coketown to make the acquaintance of his friend Bounderby. Harthouse thus met the mill owner, who introduced him to Louisa, now his wife.

The year of married life had not been a happy one for her. She was reserved and watchful and cold as ever, but Harthouse easily saw that she was ashamed of Bounderby's bragging talk and shrank from his coarseness as from a blow. He soon perceived, too, that the only love she had for any one was given to Tom, though the latter little deserved it. In his own mind Harthouse called her father a machine, her brother a whelp and her husband a bear.

Harthouse was attracted by Louisa's beauty no less than by her pride. He was without conscience or honor, and determined, though she was already married, to make her fall in love with him. He knew the surest way to her liking was to pretend an interest in Tom, and he at once began to flatter the sullen young fellow. Under his influence the latter was not long in telling the story of Louisa's marriage, and in boasting that he himself had brought it about for his own advancement.

To Louisa, Harthouse spoke regretfully of the lad's idle habits, yet hopefully of his future, so that she, deeming him honestly Tom's friend, confided in him, telling him of her brother's love of gambling and how she had more than once paid his debts by selling some of her own jewelry. In such ways as these Harthouse, step by step, gained an intimacy with her.

While Harthouse was thus setting his net, Stephen Blackpool, the mill worker, was on trial.

It was a time of great dissatisfaction among workmen throughout the country. In many towns they were banding themselves together into "unions" in order to gain more privileges and higher wages from their employers. This movement in time had reached Coketown. Rachel was opposed to these unions, believing they would in the end do their members more harm than good, and knowing her mind, Stephen had long ago promised her that he would never join one. The day had come, however, when a workman who thus declined was looked on with suspicion and dislike by his fellows, and at length – though all had liked and respected Stephen – because he steadfastly refused to join the rest, he found himself shunned. Day after day he went to and from his work alone and spoken to by none, and, not seeing Rachel in these days, was lonely and disheartened.

This condition of things did not escape the eye of Bounderby, who sent for Stephen and questioned him. But even in his trouble, thinking his fellow workmen believed themselves in the right, Stephen refused to complain or to bear tales of them. Bounderby, in his arrogance, chose to be angry that one of his mill-hands should presume not to answer his questions and discharged him forthwith, so that now Stephen found himself without friends, money or work.

Not wholly without friends, either, for Rachel was still the same. And he had gained another friend, too. While he told her that evening in his lodgings what had occurred, and that he must soon go in search of work in some other town, Louisa came to him. She had witnessed the interview in which her husband had discharged this faithful workman, had found out where he lived, and had

made her brother Tom bring her there that she might tell Stephen how sorry she was and beg him to accept money from her to help him in his distress.

This kindness touched Stephen. He thanked her and took as a loan a small portion of the money she offered him.

Tom had come on this errand with his sister in a sulky humor. While he listened now a thought came to him. As Louisa talked with Rachel, he beckoned Stephen from the room and told him that he could perhaps aid him in finding work. He told him to wait during the next two or three evenings near the door of Bounderby's bank, and promised that he himself would seek Stephen there and tell him further.

There was no kindness, however, in this proposal. It was a sudden plan, wicked and cowardly. Tom had become a criminal. He had stolen money from the bank and trembled daily lest the theft become known. What would be easier now, he thought, than to hide his crime, by throwing suspicion on some one else? He could force the door of the safe before he left at night, and drop a key of the bank door, which he had secretly made, in the street where it would afterward be found. He himself, then, next morning, could appear to find the safe open and the money missing. Stephen, he considered, would be just the one to throw suspicion upon.

All unconscious of this plot, Stephen in good faith waited near the bank during three evenings, walking past the building again and again, watching vainly for Tom to appear. Mrs. Sparsit, at her upper window, wondered to see his bowed form haunting the place. Nothing came of his waiting, however, and the fourth morning saw him, with his thoughts on Rachel, trudging out of town along the highroad, bravely and uncomplainingly, toward whatever new lot the future held for him.

Tom's plot worked well. Next day there was a sensation in Coketown. Bounderby's bank was found to have been robbed. The safe, Tom declared, he had found open, with a large part of its contents missing. A key to the bank door was picked up in the street; this, it was concluded, the thief had thrown away after using. Who had done it? Had any suspicious person been seen about the place?

Many people remembered a strange old woman, apparently from the country, who called herself "Mrs. Pegler," and who had often been seen standing looking fixedly at the bank. What more natural than to suspect her?

Then another rumor began to grow. Stephen Blackpool, discharged from the mill by Bounderby himself – the workman who had been shunned by all his comrades, to whom no one spoke – he had been seen recently loitering, night after night, near the robbed bank. Where was he? Gone, none knew where!

In an hour Stephen was suspected. By the next day half of Coketown believed him guilty.

III HARTHOUSE'S PLAN FAILS

Two persons, however, had a suspicion of the truth. One of these was the porter of the bank, whose suspicion was strong. The other was Louisa, who, though her love denied it room, hid in her secret heart a fear that her brother had had a share in the crime. In the night she went to Tom's bedside, put her arms around him and begged him to tell her any secret he might be keeping from her. But he answered sullenly that he did not know what she meant.

Mrs. Sparsit's fine-bred nerves (so she insisted) were so shaken by the robbery that she came to Bounderby's house to remain till she recovered.

The feeble, pink-eyed bundle of shawls that was Mrs. Gradgrind, happening to die at this time, and Louisa being absent at her mother's funeral, Mrs. Sparsit saw her opportunity. She had never forgiven Louisa for marrying Bounderby, and she now revenged herself by a course of such flattery that the vulgar bully began to think his cold, proud wife much too regardless of him and of his importance.

What pleased the hawk-faced old busybody most was the game the suave Harthouse was playing, which she was sharp enough to see through at once. If Louisa would only disgrace herself by running away with Harthouse, thought Mrs. Sparsit, Bounderby might be free again and she might marry him. So she watched narrowly the growing intimacy between them, hoping for Louisa's ruin.

There came a day when Bounderby was summoned on business to London, and Louisa stayed meanwhile at the Bounderby country house, which lay some distance from Coketown. Mrs. Sparsit guessed that Harthouse would use this chance to see Louisa alone, and, to spy upon her, took the train herself, reaching there at nightfall.

She went afoot from the station to the grounds, opened the gate softly and crept close to the house. Here and there in the dusk, through garden and wood, she stole, and at length she found what she sought. There under the trees stood Harthouse, his horse tied near by, and talking with him was Louisa.

Mrs. Sparsit stood behind a tree, like Robinson Crusoe in his ambuscade against the savages, and listened with all her ears. She could not hear all, but caught enough to know that he was telling her he loved her, and begging her to leave her husband, her home and friends, and to run away with him.

In her delight and in the noise of rain upon the foliage (for a thunder-storm was rolling up) Mrs. Sparsit did not catch Louisa's answer. Where and when Harthouse asked her to join him, she could not hear, but as he mounted and rode away she thought he said "To-night."

She waited in the rain, rejoicing, till her patience was at length rewarded by seeing Louisa, cloaked and veiled as if for a journey, come from the house and go toward the railroad station. Then Mrs. Sparsit, drawing her draggled shawl over her head to hide her face, followed, boarded the same train, and hastened to tell the news of his wife's elopement to Bounderby in London.

Wet to the skin, her feet squashing in her shoes, her clothes spoiled and her bonnet looking like an over-ripe fig, with a terrible cold that made her voice only a whisper, and sneezing herself almost to pieces, Mrs. Sparsit found Bounderby at his city hotel, exploded with the combustible information she carried and fainted quite away on his coat collar.

Furious at the news she brought, Bounderby hustled her into a fast train, and together, he raging and glaring and she inwardly jubilant, they hurried toward Coketown to inform Mr. Gradgrind, who was then at home, of his daughter's doings.

But where, meanwhile, was Louisa? Not run away with Harthouse, as Mrs. Sparsit so fondly imagined, but safe in her own father's house in Coketown.

She had suffered much without complaint, but Harthouse's proposal had been the last straw. Added to all the insults she had suffered at her husband's hands, and her fearful suspicion of Tom's guilt, it had proven too much for her to bear. She had pretended to agree to Harthouse's plan only that she might the more quickly rid herself of his presence.

Mr. Gradgrind, astonished at her sudden arrival at Stone Lodge, was shocked no less at her ghastly appearance than by what she said. She told him she cursed the hour when she had been born to grow up a victim to his teachings; that her whole life had been empty; that every hope, affection and fancy had been crushed from her very infancy and her better angel made a demon. She told him the whole truth about her marriage to Bounderby – that she had married him solely for the advancement of Tom, the only one she had ever loved – and that now she could no longer live with her husband or bear the life she had made for herself.

And when she had said this, Louisa, the daughter his "system" had brought to such despair, fell at his feet.

At her pitiful tale the tender heart that Mr. Gradgrind had buried in his long-past youth under his mountain of facts stirred again and began to beat. The mountain crumbled away, and he saw in an instant, as by a lightning flash, that the plan of life to which he had so rigidly held was a complete and hideous failure. He had thought there was but one wisdom, that of the head; he knew at last that there was a deeper wisdom of the heart also, which all these years he had denied!

When she came to herself, Louisa found her father sitting by her bedside. His face looked worn and older. He told her he realized at last his life mistake and bitterly reproached himself. Sissy, too, was there, her love shining like a beautiful light on the other's darkness. She knelt beside the bed and laid the weary head on her breast, and then for the first time Louisa burst into sobs.

Next day Sissy sought out Harthouse, who was waiting, full of sulky impatience at the failure of Louisa to appear as he had expected. Sissy told him plainly what had occurred, and that he should never see Louisa again. Harthouse, realizing that his plan had failed, suddenly discovered that he had a great liking for camels, and left the same hour for Egypt, never to return to Coketown.

It was while Sissy was absent on this errand of her own that the furious Bounderby and the triumphant Mrs. Sparsit, the latter voiceless and still sneezing, appeared at Stone Lodge.

Mr. Gradgrind took the mill owner greatly aback with the statement that Louisa had had no intention whatever of eloping and was then in that same house and under his care. Angry and blustering at being made such a fool of, Bounderby turned on Mrs. Sparsit, but in her disappointment at finding it a mistake, she had dissolved in tears. When Mr. Gradgrind told him he had concluded it would be better for Louisa to remain for some time there with him, Bounderby flew into a still greater rage and stamped off, swearing his wife should come home by noon next day or not at all.

To be sure Louisa did not go, and next day Bounderby sent her clothes to Mr. Gradgrind, advertised his country house for sale, and, needing something to take his spite out upon, redoubled his efforts to find the robber of the bank.

And he began by covering the town with printed placards, offering a large regard for the arrest of Stephen Blackpool.

IV STEPHEN'S RETURN

Rachel had known, of course, of the rumors against Stephen, and had been both indignant and sorrowful. She alone knew where he was, and how to find him, for deeming it impossible, because of his trouble with the Coketown workmen, to get work under his own name, he had taken another.

Now that he was directly charged with the crime, she wrote him the news at once, so that he might lose no time in returning to face the unjust accusation. Being so certain herself of his innocence, she made no secret of what she had done, and all Coketown waited, wondering whether he would appear or not.

Two days passed and he had not come, and then Rachel told Bounderby the address to which she had written him. Messengers were sent, who came back with the report that Stephen had received her letter and had left at once, saying he was going to Coketown, where he should long since have arrived.

Another day with no Stephen, and now almost every one believed he was guilty, had taken Rachel's letter as a warning and had fled. All the while Tom waited nervously, biting his nails and with fevered lips, knowing that Stephen, when he came, would tell the real reason why he had loitered near the bank, and so point suspicion to himself.

On the third day Mrs. Sparsit saw a chance to distinguish herself. She recognized on the street "Mrs. Pegler," the old countrywoman who also had been suspected. She seized her and, regardless of her entreaties, dragged her to Bounderby's house and into his dining-room, with a curious crowd flocking at their heels.

She plumed herself on catching one of the robbers, but what was her astonishment when the old woman called Bounderby her dear son, pleading that her coming to his house was not her fault and begging him not to be angry even if people did know at last that she was his mother.

Mr. Gradgrind, who was present when they entered, having always heard Bounderby tell such dreadful tales of his bringing-up, reproached her for deserting her boy in his infancy to a drunken grandmother. At this the old woman nearly burst with indignation, calling on Bounderby himself to

tell how false this was and how she had pinched and denied herself for him till he had begun to be successful.

Everybody laughed at this, for now the true story of the bullying mill owner's tales was out. Bounderby, who had turned very red, was the only one who did not seem to enjoy the scene. After he had wrathfully shut every one else from the house, he vented his anger on Mrs. Sparsit for meddling (as he called it) with his own family affairs. He ended by giving her the wages due her and inviting her to take herself off at once.

So Mrs. Sparsit, for all her cap-setting and spying, had to leave her comfortable nest and go to live in a poor lodging as companion to the most grudging, peevish, tormenting one of her noble relatives, an invalid with a lame leg.

But meanwhile another day had passed – the fourth since Rachel had sent her letter – and still Stephen had not come. On this day, full of her trouble, Rachel had wandered with Sissy, now her fast friend, some distance out of the town, through some fields where mining had once been carried on.

Suddenly she cried out – she had picked up a hat and inside it was the name "Stephen Blackpool." An instant later a scream broke from her lips that echoed over the country-side. Before them, at their very feet, half-hidden by rubbish and grasses, yawned the ragged mouth of a dark, abandoned shaft. That instant both Rachel and Sissy guessed the truth – that Stephen, returning, had not seen the chasm in the darkness, and had fallen into its depths.

They ran and roused the town. Crowds came from Coketown. Rope and windlass were brought and two men were lowered into the pit. The poor fellow was there, alive but terribly injured. A rough bed was made, and so at last the crushed and broken form was brought up to the light and air.

A surgeon was at hand with wine and medicines, but it was too late. Stephen spoke with Rachel first, then called Mr. Gradgrind to him and asked him to clear the blemish from his name. He told him simply that he could do so through his son Tom. This was all. He died while they bore him home, holding the hand of Rachel, whom he loved.

Stephen's last words had told the truth to Mr. Gradgrind. He read in them that his own son was the robber. Tom's guilty glance had seen also. With suspicion removed from Stephen, he felt his own final arrest sure.

Sissy noted Tom's pale face and trembling limbs. Guessing that he would attempt flight too late, and longing to save the heartbroken father from the shame of seeing his son's arrest and imprisonment, she drew the shaking thief aside and in a whisper bade him go at once to Sleary, the proprietor of the circus to which her father had once belonged. She told him where the circus was to be found at that season of the year, and bade him ask Sleary to hide him for her sake till she came. Tom obeyed. He disappeared that night, and later Sissy told his father what she had done.

Mr. Gradgrind, with Sissy and Louisa, followed as soon as possible, intending to get his son to the nearest seaport and so out of the country on a vessel, for he knew that soon he himself, Tom's father, would be questioned and obliged to tell the truth. They traveled all night, and at length reached the town where the circus showed.

Sleary, for Sissy's sake, had provided Tom with a disguise in which not even his father recognized him. He had blacked his sullen face and dressed him in a moth-eaten greatcoat and a mad cocked hat, in which attire he played the role of a black servant in the performance. Tom met them, grimy and defiant, ashamed to meet Louisa's eyes, brazen to his father, anxious only to be saved from his deserved punishment.

A seaport was but three hours away. He was soon dressed and plans for his departure were completed. But at the last moment danger appeared. It came in the person of the porter of Bounderby's bank, who had all along suspected Tom. He had watched the Gradgrind house, followed its master when he left and now laid hands on Tom, vowing he would take him back to Coketown.

In this moment of the father's despair, Sleary the showman saved the day for the shivering thief. He agreed with the porter that as Tom was guilty of a crime he must certainly go with him,

and he offered, moreover, to drive the captor and his prisoner at once to the nearest railroad station. He winked at Sissy as he proposed this, and she was not alarmed. The porter accepted the proposal at once, but he did not guess what the showman had in mind.

Sleary's horse was an educated horse. At a certain word from its owner it would stop and begin to dance, and would not budge from the spot till he gave the command in a particular way. He had an educated dog, also, that would do anything it was told. With this horse hitched to the carriage and this dog trotting innocently behind, the showman set off with the porter and Tom, while Mr. Gradgrind and Louisa, whom Sissy had told to trust in Sleary, waited all night for his return.

It was morning before Sleary came back, with the news that Tom was undoubtedly safe from pursuit, if not already aboard ship. He told them how, at the word from him, the educated horse had begun to dance; how Tom had slipped down and got away, while the educated dog, at his command, had penned the frightened porter in the carriage all night, fearing to stir.

Thus Tom, who did not deserve any such good luck, got safely away, but though his father was spared the shame of ever seeing his son behind the bars of a jail, yet he was a broken man ever after the truth became known.

What was the fate of all these? Bounderby, a bully to the last, died of a fit five years afterward, leaving his entire fortune to the perpetual support of twenty-five humbugs, each of whom was required to take the name of "Josiah Bounderby of Coketown." Louisa never remarried, but lived to be the comfort of her father and the loving comrade of Sissy Jupe. Sissy never found her father, and when at last Merrylegs, his wonderful dog, came back alone to die of old age at Sleary's feet, all knew that his master must be dead. Tom died, softened and penitent, in a foreign land. Rachel remained the same pensive little worker, always dressed in black, beloved by all and helping every one, even Stephen's besotted wife.

As for Mr. Gradgrind, a white-haired, decrepit old man, he forgot all the facts on which he had so depended, and tried for ever after to mingle his life's acts with Faith, Hope and Charity.

THE MYSTERY OF EDWIN DROOD

Published 1870

<i>Scene:</i>	London and Cloisterham, a Neighboring Town
<i>Time:</i>	About 1865

CHARACTERS

Edwin Drood	A young engineer
John Jasper	His uncle and guardian. A choir master
Rosa Bud	An orphan girl, engaged to marry Drood Known as "Rosebud"
Mr. Grewgious	A lawyer. Her guardian
Miss Twinkleton	The principal of the Young Ladies' Seminary in Cloisterham
The Reverend Mr. Crisparkle	A minister
Neville Landless	Mr. Crisparkle's pupil
Helena	His twin sister
Rosebud's room-mate in the seminary	
Luke Honeythunder	A self-styled "philanthropist" and bore. Guardian of Neville and Helena
Lieutenant Tartar	A retired naval officer
"Dick Datchery"	A detective
Durdles	A stone-mason and chiseler of tombstones
"The Deputy"	A street Arab

THE MYSTERY OF EDWIN DROOD

I JOHN JASPER

In the quiet town of Cloisterham, in England, in a boarding-school, once lived a beautiful girl named Rosa Bud – an amiable, wilful, winning, whimsical little creature whom every one called Rosebud. She was an orphan. Her mother had been drowned when she was only seven years old and her father had died of grief on the first anniversary of that day.

Her father's friend and college mate, a Mr. Drood, had comforted his last hours, and they had agreed between them that when Rosebud was old enough she should marry Mr. Drood's son Edwin, then a little boy. Her father put this wish in his will, as did Mr. Drood, who died also soon after his friend, and so Rosebud and Edwin Drood grew up knowing that, though not bound in any way, each was intended for the other. So it came about that, while if they had been let alone they might have fallen in love naturally, yet as it was they were always shy and ill at ease with one another. Yet they liked each other, too.

Rosebud's guardian was a Mr. Grewgious, an arid, sandy man who looked as if he might be put in a grinding-mill and turned out first-class snuff. He had scanty hair like a yellow fur tippet, and deep notches in his forehead, and was very near-sighted. He seemed to have been born old, so that when he came to London to call on Rosebud amid all the school-girls he used to say he felt like a bear with the cramp. Grewgious, however, under his oddity had a very tender heart, particularly for Rosebud, whose mother he had been secretly in love with before she married. But he had grown up a dry old bachelor, living in gloomy rooms in London, and no one would have guessed him ever to have been a bit romantic.

The school Rosebud attended was called Nun's House. Miss Twinkleton, the prim old maid who managed it, termed it a "Seminary for Young Ladies." It had a worn front, with a shining brass door-plate that made it look at a distance like a battered old beau with a big new eye-glass stuck in his blind eye. Here Rosebud lived a happy life, the pet of the whole seminary, till she was a young lady.

Cloisterham was a dull, gray town with an ancient cathedral, which was so cold and dark and damp that looking into its door was like looking down the throat of old Father Time. The cathedral had a fine choir, which sang at all the services and was taught and led by a music-master whose name was John Jasper. This Jasper, as it happened, was the uncle and guardian of Edwin Drood.

Drood, who was studying to be an engineer, was very fond of his uncle and came often to Cloisterham to visit him, so that Rosebud saw a great deal of her intended husband. He always called her "Pussy." He used to call on her at the school and take her walking and buy her candy at a Turkish shop, called "Lumps of Delight," and did his best to get on well with her, though he felt awkward.

Drood and Jasper were much more like two friends than like uncle and nephew, for the choir master was very little older than the other.

Jasper seemed to be wonderfully fond of Drood, and every one who knew him thought him a most honorable and upright man; but in reality he was far different. At heart he hated the cathedral and the singing, and wished often that he could find relief, like some old monk, in carving demons out of the desks and seats. He had a soul that was without fear or conscience.

One vile and wicked practice he had which he had hidden from all who knew him. He was an opium smoker. He would steal away to London to a garret kept by a mumbling old woman who knew the secret of mixing the drug, and there, stretched on a dirty pallet, sometimes with a drunken Chinaman or a Lascar beside him, would smoke pipe after pipe of the dreadful mixture that stole away his senses and left him worse than before. Hours later he would awake, give the woman money

and hurry back to Cloisterham just in time, perhaps, to put on his church robes and lead the cathedral choir.

Though no one knew of this, and though Edwin Drood thought his uncle was well-nigh perfect, Rosebud, after she grew up, had no liking for Jasper. He gave her music lessons and every time they met he terrified her. She felt sometimes that he haunted her thoughts like a dreadful ghost. He seemed almost to make a slave of her with his looks, and she felt that in every glance he was telling her that he, Jasper, loved her and yet compelled her to keep silence. But, though disliking the choir master so, and shivering whenever he came near her, Rosebud did not know how to tell Edwin, who she knew loved and believed in Jasper, of her feelings.

II THE COMING OF NEVILLE LANDLESS

One of the ministers in charge of the cathedral was the Reverend Mr. Crisparkle, a ruddy, young, active, honest fellow, who was perpetually practising boxing before the looking-glass or pitching himself head-foremost into all the streams about the town for a swim, even when it was winter and he had to break the ice with his head.

Mr. Crisparkle sometimes took young men into his home to live while he tutored them to prepare them for college. One day he received word from a Mr. Luke Honeythunder in London, telling him he was about to bring to Cloisterham a twin brother and sister, Neville and Helena Landless, the young man to be taught by Mr. Crisparkle and his sister Helena to be put in Miss Twinkleton's seminary.

This Luke Honeythunder called himself a philanthropist, but he was a queer sort of one, indeed. He was always getting up public meetings and talking loudly, insisting on everybody's thinking exactly as he did, and saying dreadful things of them if they did not.

Helena and Neville Landless had been born in Ceylon, where as little children they had been cruelly treated by their stepfather. But they had brave spirits, and four times in six years they had run away, only to be brought back each time and punished. On each of these occasions (the first had been when they were but seven years old) Helena had dressed as a boy and once had even tried to cut off her long hair with Neville's pocket-knife. At length their cruel stepfather died, and they were sent to England, where for no other reason than that his name was continually appearing in the newspapers, Mr. Honeythunder had been appointed their guardian.

No wonder the brother and sister had grown up thinking everybody was their enemy. They were quite prepared to hate Mr. Crisparkle when their guardian brought them. But by the time Mr. Honeythunder had gone (and Mr. Crisparkle was as glad as they were when he went home) they liked the young minister and felt that they would be happy there. They were a handsome pair, and Mr. Crisparkle was attracted to them both. Neville was lithe, and dark and rich in color; Helena was almost like a gypsy, slender, supple and quick. Both seemed half shy, half defiant, as though their blood were untamed.

To make them welcome that first evening, Mr. Crisparkle invited to his house Jasper, the choir master, with Edwin Drood, who was visiting him, and Rosebud from the seminary. Before they parted Rosebud was asked to sing.

Jasper played her accompaniment, and while she sang he watched her lips intently. All at once, to their great astonishment, Rosebud covered her face with her hands and, crying out, "I can't bear this! I am frightened! Take me away!" burst into tears.

Helena, the new-comer, who had liked Rosebud at first sight, seemed to understand her better than any one else. She laid her on a sofa, soothed her, and in a few moments Rosebud seemed again as usual. Mr. Crisparkle and Edwin Drood thought it only a fit of nervousness. To her relief, they made light of the matter, and so the evening ended.

But later, at Nun's House, where she and Helena were to be room-mates, Rosebud told her new friend how much she disliked Jasper and how his eyes terrified her, and how, as she sang, with his eyes watching her lips, she felt as if he had kissed her.

While the two girls were talking of this, Neville and Edwin Drood, who had gone with them as far as the door of the seminary, were walking back together. Mr. Crisparkle had told Neville of Drood's betrothal to Rosebud, and Neville now spoke of it. Drood, who had felt all along that he and Rosebud did not get along well together and who was sensitive on the subject, was unjustly angry that the other should so soon know what he considered his own private affair. He answered in a surly way and, as both were quick-tempered, they soon came to high words.

As it happened, Jasper was walking near, and, overhearing, came between them. He reproved them good-naturedly and took them to his rooms, where he insisted they should drink a glass of wine with him to their good fellowship. There he did a dastardly thing. He mixed with the wine a drug which, once drunk, aroused their angry passions. Their speech grew thick and the quarrel began again. Safe now from any spectator, Jasper did not attempt to soothe them. He let them go on until they were about to come to blows. Then, pretending the greatest indignation, he threw himself upon Neville and forced him, hatless, from the house.

In the cool night air Neville's strange dizziness, and with it his rage, cleared away. He realized that the blame for the quarrel had been Jasper's, but he did not guess the drugging of the wine and could not explain the incident even to himself. He went, however, manfully and sorrowfully to Mr. Crisparkle and told him what had occurred, and naturally Mr. Crisparkle, who had never found Edwin Drood quarrelsome, thought it the fault of Neville's hot blood and revengeful character.

He was the more certain of this when Jasper came to him, bringing Neville's hat, and told him his own story of the meeting. Jasper told him falsely that Neville had made a murderous attack on Drood, and but for him would have laid his nephew dead at his feet. He warned the minister that Neville had a tigerish nature and would yet be guilty of terrible crime. Mr. Crisparkle liked Neville, and all this saddened him, for he had not the least suspicion that Jasper was lying for a cruel purpose of his own.

The affair was an unhappy one for Neville. Jasper took care that the story spread abroad, and as it went it grew, so that almost everybody in Cloisterham came to consider Helena's brother a sullen fellow of a furious temper. And they believed it the more because Neville made no secret of the fact that he had fallen in love, too, with Rosebud, and in this they thought they saw a reason for his hating Edwin Drood.

Mr. Crisparkle was a faithful friend. He concluded soon that the fault was not all on Neville's side. But he was anxious to have the two young men friends, and he begged his pupil for his own part to lay aside the ill feeling. He went to the choir master also on the same errand, and Jasper assured him that his nephew would do the same. He even promised, hypocritically, that to bring this about he would invite both Edwin Drood and Neville to dine with him on Christmas Eve, in his own rooms, where they might meet and shake hands.

Both young men promised to come to the dinner, and Mr. Crisparkle was highly pleased, little dreaming what the outcome would be.

III THE CHOIR MASTER'S DINNER

There was a quaint character in Cloisterham named Durdles. He was a stone-mason whose specialty was the chiseling of tombstones. He was an old bachelor and was both a very skilful workman and a very great sot. He had keys to all the cathedral vaults and was fond of prowling about the old pile and its dismal crypt, for ever tap-tapping, with a little hammer he carried, on its stones and walls, hunting for forgotten cavities, in which, perhaps, centuries before, persons had been buried. He wore

a coarse flannel suit with horn buttons and a yellow handkerchief with draggled ends, and it was a daily sight to see him perched on a tombstone eating his dinner out of a bundle. When he was not feeling well he used to say he had a touch of "tomb-atism," instead of rheumatism.

Durdles was drunk so much that he was never certain about getting home at night, so he had hired, at a penny a day, a hideous small boy, known as "The Deputy" to throw stones at him whenever he found him out of doors after ten o'clock, and drive him home to his little hole of an unfurnished stone house.

The Deputy used to watch for Durdles after this hour, and when he saw him he would dance up and sing:

"Widdy, widdy, wen!
I ketches – him – out – arter ten!
Widdy, widdy wy!
When he – don't – go – then – I shy!
Widdy, widdy, Wake-Cock-Warning!"

It was a part of the bargain that he must give this warning before he began to throw the stones, and when Durdles heard this yell he knew what was coming.

Before the Christmas Eve dinner Jasper picked a friendship with Durdles, and, pretending he wanted to make a trip by moonlight with him among the vaults, he persuaded him one night to be his guide. While they were in the crypt of the cathedral Jasper plied him with liquor which he had brought, to such purpose that Durdles went fast asleep and the key of the crypt fell from his hand. He had a dim idea that Jasper picked up the key and went away with it, and was a long time gone, but when he awoke he could not tell whether this had really happened or not. And this, when The Deputy stoned him home that night, was all he could remember of the expedition.

But what Jasper had really done while Durdles was asleep – whether he had taken away the key to make a copy of it so as to make one like it for some evil purpose of his own, or whether he wanted to be able to unlock that dark underground place and hide something in it sometime when no one would be with him – this only Jasper himself knew!

The Christmas season arrived, and Edwin Drood, according to his promise, came to Cloisterham to his uncle's dinner, at which he was to meet Neville.

Before leaving, however, he called upon Mr. Grewgious, Rosebud's guardian, who had sent for him with a particular purpose. This purpose was to give into his hands a ring set with diamonds and rubies that had belonged to Rosebud's mother. It had been left in trust to Mr. Grewgious to give to the man who married her, that he might himself put it on her finger. And in accordance with the trust, the lawyer charged Drood if anything should be amiss or if anything happened between him and Rosebud, to bring back the ring.

Mr. Grewgious gave him this keepsake with such wise and friendly advice on the seriousness of marriage that all the way to Cloisterham with the ring in his pocket, Edwin Drood was very thoughtful. He asked himself whether he really loved Rosebud as a man should love his wife, whether he had not drifted into this betrothal rather as a result of their parents' wish and wills than from any deeper feeling. And he began to wonder if by marrying her thus he would not be doing her a vast injustice. He decided, therefore, to tell her all that was in his mind and be guided by her judgment.

Rosebud, meanwhile, in the silence of the Christmas vacation, with only Helena for her companion, had been thinking of the same matter, and her wise little head had reached almost the same conclusion. When Drood came they walked out together under the trees by the cathedral. Their talk was not so difficult after all as each had feared it would be, and both felt relieved when they decided they could be far happier to remain as brother and sister, and not become husband and wife. So they agreed without pain on either side.

Drood's only anxiety was for his uncle. He thought Jasper had looked forward to his marriage to Rosebud so long that he would be pained and disappointed to learn it was not to be. So he concluded he would not tell him as yet. Poor Rosebud! She was greatly agitated. She felt the falseness of Jasper, and knew that he loved her himself, but she realized the impossibility of telling this to the nephew who believed in him. So she was silent. Drood, for his part, since the betrothal was ended, said nothing to her of the ring Grewgious had given to him, intending to return it to the lawyer.

They kissed each other when they parted. The wicked choir master, who happened to be walking near, saw the embrace and thought it the kiss of lovers soon to be wed. Drood left Rosebud then, to pass the time till the hour of the dinner in Jasper's rooms.

Neville that day had determined, the dinner over, to start at dawn next morning on a walking tour, to be absent a fortnight. He bought a knapsack and a heavy steel-shod stick in preparation for this expedition, and bade his sister Helena and Mr. Crisparkle good-by before he went to the appointed meeting at the choir master's.

Jasper himself, it was noticed, had never seemed in better spirits than on that day, nor had he ever sung more sweetly than in the afternoon service before the dinner which he gave to the two young men. If he was contemplating a terrible crime, no one would have guessed it from his serene face and his agreeable manner.

Edwin Drood had one warning just before he went up the postern stair that led to his Uncle Jasper's. The old hag who mixed the opium in the London garret where the choir master smoked the drug, had more than once tried to find out who her strange, gentlemanly visitor was. She had listened to his mutterings in his drunken slumber, and at length that day had followed him from London to Cloisterham, only to lose track of him there. As Drood strolled, waiting for the dinner hour to strike from the cathedral chimes, he passed her and she begged money from him.

He gave it to her and she asked him his name and whether he had a sweetheart. He answered Edwin, and that he had none. "Be thankful your name's not Ned," she said, "for it's a bad name and a threatened name!"

"Ned" was the name Jasper always called him by, but Drood did not think seriously of the old woman's words. He could not have guessed that the threats she spoke of against the Ned who had a sweetheart had been murmured in his drugged slumber by his own uncle against himself. And yet something at just that moment made him shudder.

So the chimes struck, and Edwin Drood went on to Jasper's rooms to meet his uncle and Neville Landless – went to his doom! For from that time no one who loved him ever saw him again in this world!

IV JASPER SHOWS HIS TEETH

That night a fearful tempest howled over Cloisterham. In the morning early, as the storm was breaking, Jasper, the choir master, came pale, panting and half-dressed, to Mr. Crisparkle's, asking for Edwin Drood. He said his nephew had left his rooms the evening before with Neville Landless to go to the river to look at the storm, and had not returned.

Strange rumors sprang up at once. Neville had left for his walking tour and an ugly suspicion flew from house to house. He had got only a few miles from the town when he was overtaken by a party of men, who surrounded him. Thinking at first that they were thieves, he fought them, but was soon rendered helpless and bleeding, and in the midst of them was taken back toward Cloisterham. Mr. Crisparkle and Jasper met them on the way, and from the former Neville first learned of what he was suspected.

The blood from his encounter with his captors was on his clothes and stick. Jasper pointed it out, and even those who had seen it fall there looked darkly at the stains. He was taken back to the town and to Mr. Crisparkle's house, who promised that he should remain in his own custody.

Neville's story was simple. He said they had gone to the river, as Jasper had said, and returned together, he to Mr. Crisparkle's, Edwin Drood to his uncle's. He had not seen the other since that time.

The river was dragged and its banks searched, but to no purpose, till Mr. Crisparkle himself found Drood's watch caught among some timbers in a weir.

But as the body could not be found, it could not be definitely proven that Drood was dead, or that any murder had been committed, so at last Neville was released. The whole neighborhood, however, believed him guilty of the murder. No one spoke to him and he was obliged to quit the place.

Beside his sister Helena and Rosebud, who, of course, believed in his innocence, he had but one friend there – Mr. Crisparkle. The latter stoutly refused to believe him guilty. When Neville left for London, through Mr. Grewgious, Rosebud's guardian, the minister found him a cheap lodging and made frequent trips to the city to help and advise him in his studies.

Mr. Grewgious had his own opinion of the affair. One day he went to Cloisterham to see Jasper, and there told him a thing the other did not yet know – that before that last night Edwin Drood and Rosebud had agreed not to marry. When he heard this the choir master's face turned the color of lead. He shrieked and fell senseless at the lawyer's feet. Mr. Grewgious went back to the city more thoughtful than ever, and it was not long before a detective came from London to Cloisterham and began to interest himself in all the doings of John Jasper.

The detective, to be sure, was not known as such. He called himself "Dick Datchery" and gave it out that he was an idle dog who lived on his money and had nothing to do. He was a curious-looking man, with a great shock of white hair, black eyebrows and a military air. He rented lodgings next door to the choir master, and before long had made friends with Durdles, the tombstone maker, and even with The Deputy of the "wake-cock warning."

Meanwhile Jasper, haggard and red-eyed, took again his place in the cathedral choir, while Neville Landless worked sadly and alone in his London garret. The latter made but one friend in this time – a lodger whose window adjoined his own. This lodger was Lieutenant Tartar, a retired young naval officer. Tartar might have lived in fine apartments, for he was rich, but he had been so long on shipboard that he felt more at home where the walls were low enough for him to knock his head on the ceiling. He used to climb across to Neville's room by the window ledges, and they became friendly – the warmer friends when Mr. Crisparkle discovered in the lieutenant a schoolmate who had once saved his life.

Later, too, Helena left Miss Twinkleton's Seminary and came to be with her brother. And so a year went by.

Vacation arrived, and one day when Rosebud was alone at Nun's House, Jasper, for the first time since Edwin Drood's disappearance, came to see her.

He found her in the garden, and she felt again the repulsion and fear she had always felt at sight of him. This time the choir master threw away all concealment. He told her that he had always loved her hopelessly and madly, though while she was betrothed to his nephew he had hidden the fact. She answered indignantly that, by look if not by word, he had always been false to Edwin Drood; that he had made her life unhappy by his pursuit of her, and that, though she had shrunk from opening his nephew's eyes, she had always known he was a wicked man.

Then, maddened by her dislike, Jasper swore that no one else should ever marry her – that he would pursue her to the death, and that if she repulsed him he would bring dreadful ruin upon Neville Landless. He said this, no doubt, knowing that Neville loved Rosebud, and thinking, perhaps, that she loved him in return.

When Jasper left her, Rosebud was faint from fear of his wicked eyes. She made up her mind to go at once for protection to Mr. Grewgious in London, and, leaving a note for Miss Twinkleton, she left by the next omnibus.

She told her guardian her story, he told it to Mr. Crisparkle, who came to London next morning, and between them they told Lieutenant Tartar. While Rosebud visited with Helena the three men took counsel together, agreeing that Jasper was a villain and planning how best to deal with him.

The next time the choir master visited the opium garret the old woman tracked him back to Cloisterham, with more success – with such success, indeed, that she heard him sing in the cathedral and found out his name from a stranger whom she encountered. This stranger was Dick Datchery, the detective, who discovered so much, before he left her, of Jasper's London habits that he went home in high good humor.

Datchery had a trick, whenever he was following a particular search, of marking each step of his progress by a chalk mark on a wall or door. To-day he must have been highly pleased, for he drew a thick line from the very top of the cupboard door to the bottom!

When Charles Dickens, the master story-teller, had told this tale thus far, he fell ill and died, and it was never finished. The mystery of the disappearance of Edwin Drood, what became of Rosebud and of Mr. Crisparkle, how Neville and Helena fared and what was the end of Jasper, are matters for each one of us to guess. Many have tried to finish this story and they have ended it in various ways. Before Dickens died, however, he told to a friend the part of the story that remained unwritten, and this, the friend has recorded, was to be as follows:

By means of the old woman of the opium den, Durdles, the tombstone maker, and The Deputy, the ragged stone-thrower, Dick Datchery unraveled the threads which finally, made into a net, caught Jasper, the murderer, in its meshes. Little by little, word by word, he was made at last to betray himself.

He had killed Edwin Drood, had hidden his body in one of the vaults and covered it with lime. But there had been one thing in the dead man's pocket which the lime could not destroy: this was the ring set with diamonds and rubies, that had been given to him by Mr. Grewgious. By this the murder was proven. Mr. Crisparkle and Mr. Grewgious worked hard to clear Neville Landless (of whose guilt, by the way, Mr. Honeythunder remained always sure), but poor Neville himself perished in aiding Lieutenant Tartar to seize the murderer.

Finding all hope of escape gone, Jasper confessed his crime in the cell in which he waited for death.

But, after all, the story closed happily, with the marriage of Mr. Crisparkle to Neville's sister Helena, and that of Lieutenant Tartar to pretty little Rosebud.