Mr. Mould was surrounded by his household gods. He was enjoying the sweets of domestic repose, and gazing on them with a calm delight. The day being sultry, and the window open, the legs of Mr. Mould were on the window-seat, and his back reclined against the shutter. Over his shining head a handkerchief was drawn, to guard his baldness from the flies. The room was fragrant with the smell of punch, a tumbler of which grateful compound stood upon a small round table, convenient to the hand of Mr. Mould; so deftly mixed, that as his eye looked down into the cool transparent drink, another eye, peering brightly from behind the crisp lemon-peel, looked up at him, and twinkled like a star.

Deep in the City, and within the ward of Cheap, stood Mr. Mould's establishment. His Harem, or, in other words, the common sitting-room of Mrs. Mould and family, was at the back, over the little counting-house behind the shop; abutting on a churchyard small and shady. In this domestic chamber Mr. Mould now sat; gazing, a placid man, upon his punch and home. If, for a moment at a time, he sought a wider prospect, whence he might return with freshened zest to these enjoyments, his moist glance wandered like a sunbeam through a rural screen of scarlet runners, trained on strings before the window; and he looked down, with an artist's eye, upon the graves.

The partner of his life, and daughters twain, were Mr. Mould's companions. Plump as any partridge was each Miss Mould, and Mrs. M. was plumper than the two together. So round and chubby were their fair proportions, that they might have been the bodies once belonging to the angels' faces in the shop below, grown up, with other heads attached to make them mortal. Even their peachy cheeks were puffed out and distended, as though they ought of right to be performing on celestial trumpets. The bodiless cherubs in the shop, who were depicted as constantly blowing those instruments for ever and ever without any lungs, played, it is to be presumed, entirely by ear.

In colleges of nursing today, the expression “a Mrs. Gamp” is still in use to describe a nurse who is totally irresponsible or incompetent, and, in these terms, it could be solemnly argued that Dickens' portrait is a satire aimed at improving conditions in the nursing profession before the days of Florence Nightingale. While his portrait may have contributed to such an end, its primary effect is, like many of Dickens' early creations, pure comedy. In later life, when reading his own works to public audiences, Dickens particularly enjoyed doing Mrs. Gamp, and sometimes he had to interrupt his reading because he himself was as convulsed with laughter as the members of his audience. This selection is from Chapter 25.

1. Of the 75 named characters in Dickens' sixth novel, Martin Chuzzlewit (1843), perhaps the most colorful is Mrs. Sarah Gamp, a fat red-faced widow who earns her livelihood as a nurse and midwife: "Like most persons who have attained to great eminence in their professions, she took to hers very kindly; insomuch, that setting aside her natural predilections as a woman, she went to a lying-in or to a laying-out with equal zest and relish." In the novel Mrs. Gamp is called upon to prepare for burial the body of one of the Chuzzlewit family. To perform these offices she is highly recommended by an undertaker, Mr. Mould.

Mrs. Gamp's funeral employment leads afterwards to her getting an appointment as a home-nurse for an elderly man, Mr. Chuffey. On this occasion, as on all others, Mrs. Gamp's principal concern is not with her patient's welfare but with assuring that she herself will be amply supplied, on the job, with food and drink (cucumbers, pickled salmon, and gin are special favorites of hers).

2. One of the 26 wards within the City; i.e., the core section (once walled) of the metropolis of London.

3. Print of a popular painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds, "Heads of Angels," exhibited in 1787, which portrays a girl's head in five different poses resembling "bodiless cherubs."
Mr. Mould looked lovingly at Mrs. Mould, who sat hard by, and was a helpmate to him in his punch as in all other things. Each seraph daughter, too, enjoyed her share of his regards, and smiled upon him in return. So bountiful were Mr. Mould’s possessions, and so large his stock in trade, that even there, within his house-hold sanctuary, stood a cumbrous press, whose mahogany maw was filled with shrouds, and winding-sheets, and other furniture of funerals. But, though the Misses Mould had been brought up, as one may say, beneath his eye, it had cast no shadow on their timid infancy or blooming youth. Sporting behind the scenes of death and burial from cradlehood, the Misses Mould knew better. Hatbands, to them, were but so many yards of silk or crape; the final robe but such a quantity of linen. The Misses Mould could idealize a player’s habit, or a court-lady’s petticoat, or even an act of parliament. But they were not to be taken in by palls. They made them sometimes.

The premises of Mr. Mould were hard of hearing to the boisterous noises in the great main streets, and nestled in a quiet corner, where the City strife became a drowsy hum, that sometimes rose and sometimes fell and sometimes altogether ceased: suggesting to a thoughtful mind a stoppage in Cheapside. The light came sparkling in among the scarlet runners, as if the churchyard winked at Mr. Mould, and said, “We understand each other”; and from the distant shop a pleasant sound arose of coffin-making with a low melodious hammer, rat, tat, tat, tat, atike promoting slumber and digestion.

“Quite the buzz of insects,” said Mr. Mould, closing his eyes in a perfect luxury. “It puts one in mind of the sound of animated nature in the agricultural districts. It’s exactly like the woodpecker tapping.”

“The woodpecker tapping the hollow elm tree,” observed Mrs. Mould, adapting the words of the popular melody to the description of wood commonly used in the trade.

“Ha, ha!” laughed Mr. Mould. “Not at all bad, my dear. We shall be glad to hear from you again, Mrs. M. Hollow elm tree, eh! Ha, ha! Very good indeed. I’ve seen worse than that in the Sunday papers, my love.”

Mrs. Mould, thus encouraged, took a little more of the punch, and handed it to her daughters, who dutifully followed the example of their mother.

“Hollow elm tree, eh?” said Mr. Mould, making a slight motion with his legs in his enjoyment of the joke. “It’s beech in the song. Elm, eh? Yes, to be sure. Ha, ha, ha! Upon my soul, that’s one of the best things I know!” He was so excessively tickled by the jest that he couldn’t forget it, but repeated twenty times, “Elm, eh? Yes, to be sure. Elm, of course. Ha, ha, ha! Upon my life, you know, that ought to be sent to somebody who could make use of it. It’s one of the smartest things that ever was said. Hollow elm tree, eh? Of course. Very hollow. Ha, ha, ha!”

Here a knock was heard at the room door.

“That’s Tacker, I know,” said Mrs. Mould, “by the wheezing he makes. Who that hears him now, would suppose he’d ever had wind enough to carry the feathers on his head! Come in, Tacker.”

“Beg your pardon, ma’am,” said Tacker, looking in a little way. “I thought our Governor was here.”

“Well! So he is,” cried Mould.

4. A busy street in the City.
5. A song written in America by Thomas Moore (1779–1852), “The Woodpecker,” concludes: “Every leaf was at rest, and I heard not a sound, / But the woodpecker tapping the hollow beech tree.”
6. An undertaker’s assistant, a “feather-man,” walked ahead of the hearse in funeral processions. On his head he carried a tray loaded with ostrich plumes, dyed black.
“Oh! I didn’t see you, I’m sure,” said Tacker, looking in a little farther. “You wouldn’t be inclined to take a walking one of two, with the plain wood and a tin plate,7 I suppose?”

“Certainly not,” replied Mr. Mould, “much too common. Nothing to say to it.”

“I told ’em it was precious low,” observed Mr. Tacker.

“Tell ’em to go somewhere else. We don’t do that style of business here,” said Mr. Mould. “Like their impudence to propose it. Who is it?”

“Why,” returned Tacker, pausing, “that’s where it is, you see. It’s the beadle’s son-in-law.”

“The beadle’s son-in-law, eh?” said Mould. “Well, I’ll do it if the beadle follows in his cocked hat; not else. We carry it off that way, by looking official, but it’ll be low enough then. His cocked hat, mind!”

“I’ll take care, sir,” rejoined Tacker. “Oh! Mrs. Gamp’s below, and wants to speak to you.”

“Tell Mrs. Gamp to come upstairs,” said Mould. “Now, Mrs. Gamp, what’s your news?”

The lady in question was by this time in the doorway, curtseying to Mrs. Mould. At the same moment a peculiar fragrance was borne upon the breeze, as if a passing fairy had hiccuped, and had previously been to a wine-vaults.

Mrs. Gamp made no response to Mr. Mould, but curtseied to Mrs. Mould again, and held up her hands and eyes, as in a devout thanksgiving that she looked so well. She was neatly, but not gaudily attired, in the weeds she had worn when Mr. Pecksniff had the pleasure of making her acquaintance; and was perhaps the turning of a scale more snuffy.

“There are some happy creeturs,” Mrs. Gamp observed, “as time runs back-’ards with, and you are one, Mrs. Mould; not that he need do nothing except use you in his owldacious way for years to come, I’m sure; for young you are and will be. I says to Mrs. Harris,” Mrs. Gamp continued, “only t’other day; the last Monday evening fortnight as ever dawned upon this Piljian’s Projiss of a mortal wale;8 I says to Mrs. Harris when she says to me, ‘Years and our trials, Mrs. Gamp, sets marks upon us all.’—‘Say not the words Mrs. Harris, if you and me is to be continual friends, for sech is not the case. Mrs. Mould,’ I says, making so free, I will confess, as use the name,” (she curtseyed here), “‘is one of them that goes agen the observation straight: and never, Mrs. Harris, whilst I’ve a drop of breath to draw, will I set by, and not stand up, don’t think it.’— ‘I ast your pardon, ma’am,’ says Mrs. Harris, ‘and I humbly grant your grace; for if ever a woman lived as would see her feller creeturs into fits to serve her friends, well do I know that woman’s name is Sairey Gamp.’”

At this point she was fain to stop for breath; and advantage may be taken of the circumstance, to state that a fearful mystery surrounded this lady of the name of Harris, whom no one in the circle of Mrs. Gamp’s acquaintance had ever seen; neither did any human being know her place of residence, though Mrs. Gamp appeared on her own showing to be in constant communication with her. There were conflicting rumors on the subject; but the prevalent opinion was that she was a phantom of Mrs. Gamp’s brain—as Messrs. Doe and Roe9 are fictions of the law—created for the express purpose of holding

7. For a “walking” funeral without a coach, the coffin would be of cheap wood and the fittings tinfoil-plated instead of being silver or brass.
8. Probably the Valley of Humiliation and the Valley of the Shadow of Death in Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress.
9. John Doe and Richard Roe, fictitious names used by lawyers to refer to plaintiffs and defendants.
visionary dialogues with her on all manner of subjects, and invariably winding up with a compliment to the excellence of her nature.

"And likeways what a pleasure," said Mrs. Gamp, turning with a tearful smile towards the daughters, "to see them two young ladies as I know'd afore a tooth in their pretty heads was cut, and have many a day seen—ah, the sweet creeturs!—playing at berryins down in the shop, and follerin' the orderbook to its long home in the iron safe! But that's all past and over, Mr. Mould"; as she thus got in a carefully regulated routine to that gentleman, she shook her head waggishly; "That's all past and over now, sir, an't it?"

"Changes, Mrs. Gamp, changes!" returned the undertaker.

"More changes too, to come, afore we've done with changes, sir," said Mrs. Gamp, nodding yet more waggishly than before. "Young ladies with such faces thinks of something else besides berryins, don't they, sir?"

"I am sure I don't know, Mrs. Gamp," said Mould, with a chuckle.—"Not bad in Mrs. Gamp, my dear?"

"Oh yes, you do know, sir!" said Mrs. Gamp, "and do does Mrs. Mould, your ansome pardner too, sir; and so do I, although the blessing of a daughter was deniged me; which, if we had had one, Gamp would certainly have drunk its little shoes right off its feet, as with our precious boy he did, and arterwards send the child a errand to sell his wooden leg for any money it would fetch as matches in the rough, and bring it home in liquor: which was truly done beyond his years, for ev'ry individle penny that child lost at toss or buy1 for kidney ones; and come home arterwards quite bold, to break the news, and offering to drown himself if that would be a satisfaction to his parents.—Oh yes, you do know, sir," said Mrs. Gamp, wiping her eye with her shawl, and resuming the thread of her discourse. "There's something besides births and berryins in the newspapers, an't there, Mr. Mould?"

Mr. Mould winked at Mrs. Mould, whom he had by this time taken on his knee, and said: "No doubt. A good deal more, Mrs. Gamp. Upon my life, Mrs. Gamp is very far from bad, my dear!"

"There's marryings, an't there, sir?" said Mrs. Gamp, while both the daughters blushed and tittered. "Bless their precious hearts, and well they knows it! Well you know'd it too, and well did Mrs. Mould, when you was at their time of life! But my opinion is, you're all of one age now. For as to you and Mrs. Mould, sir, ever having grandchildren—"

"Oh! Fie, fie! Nonsense, Mrs. Gamp," replied the undertaker. "Devilish smart, though. Ca-pi-tal!" This was in a whisper. "My dear”—aloud again—"Mrs. Gamp can drink a glass of rum, I dare say. Sit down, Mrs. Gamp, sit down."

Mrs. Gamp took the chair that was nearest the door, and casting up her eyes towards the ceiling, feigned to be wholly insensible to the fact of a glass of rum being in preparation, until it was placed in her hand by one of the young ladies, when she exhibited the greatest surprise.

"A thing," she said, "as hardly ever, Mrs. Mould, occurs with me unless it is when I am indisposed, and find my half a pint of porter settling heavy on the chest. Mrs. Harris often and often says to me, 'Sairey Gamp,' she says, 'you raly do amaze em!' 'Mrs. Harris,' I says to her, 'why so? Give it a name, I beg.' 'Telling the truth then, ma'am,' says Mrs. Harris, 'and shaming him as shall be nameless2

1. Gambling game played by street vendors selling meat pies. Tossing a coin would decide whether the customer paid or got his pies free (here kidney pies) [T. W. Hill's note].
betwixt you and me, never did I think till I know’d you, as any woman could
sick-nurse and monthly\(^3\) likeways, on the little that you takes to drink.’ ‘Mrs.
Harris,’ I says to her, ‘none on us knows what we can do till we tries; and wunst,
when me and Gamp kept ouse, I thought so too. But now,’ I says, ‘my half a
pint of porter fully satisfies; perwisin’, Mrs. Harris, that it is brought reg’lar, and
draw’d mild. Whether I sick or monthlies, ma’am, I hope I does my duty, but
I am but a poor woman, and I earns my living hard; therefore I do require it,
which I makes confession, to be brought reg’lar and draw’d mild.’”

The precise connection between these observations and the glass of rum, did
not appear; for Mrs. Gamp proposing as a toast “The best of lucks to all!” took
off the dram in quite a scientific manner, without any further remarks.

“And what’s your news, Mrs. Gamp?” asked Mould again, as that lady wiped
her lips upon her shawl, and nibbled a corner off a soft biscuit, which she
appeared to carry in her pocket as a provision against contingent drams. “How’s
Mr. Chuffey?”

“Mr. Chuffey, sir,” she replied, “is jest as usual; he an’t no better and he an’t
no worse. I take it very kind in the gentleman to have wrote up to you and said,
‘let Mrs. Gamp take care of him till I come home’; but ev’ry think he does is
kind. There an’t a many like him. If there was, we shouldn’t want no churches.”

“What do you want to speak to me about, Mrs. Gamp?” said Mould, coming
up the point.

‘Jest this, sir,’ Mrs. Gamp returned, “with thanks to you for asking. There is
a gent, sir, at the Bull in Holborn, as has been took ill there, and is bad abed.
They have a day nurse as was recommended from Bartholomew’s;\(^4\) and well
I knows her, Mr. Mould, her name bein’ Mrs. Prig, the best of creeturs. But she
is otherways engaged at night, and they are in wants of night-watching; con-
sequent she says to them, having reposed the greatest friendliness in me for
twenty year, ‘The soberest person going, and the best of blessings in a sick
room, is Mrs. Gamp. Send a boy to Kingsgate Street,’ she says ‘and snap her
up at any price, for Mrs. Gamp is worth her weight and more in goldian
guineas.’ My landlord brings the message down to me and says, ‘bein’ in a light
place where you are, and this job promising so well, why not unite the two?’
‘No, sir,’ I says, ‘not unbeknown to Mr. Mould, and therefore do not think it.
But I will go to Mr. Mould,” I says, ‘and ast him, if you like.’” Here she looked
sideways at the undertaker, and came to a stop.

“Night-watching, eh?” said Mould, rubbing his chin.

“From eight o’clock till eight, sir. I will not deceive you,” Mrs. Gamp
rejoined.

“And then go back, eh?” said Mould.

“Quite free then, sir, to attend to Mr. Chuffey. His ways bein’ quiet, and his
hours early, he’d be abed sir, nearly all the time. I will not deny,” said Mrs.
Gamp with meekness, “that I am but a poor woman, and that the money is an
object; but do not let that act upon you, Mr. Mould. Rich folks may ride on
camels, but it ain’t so easy for ’em to see out of a needle’s eye.\(^5\) That is my com-
fort, and I hope I knows it.”

“Well, Mrs. Gamp,” observed Mould, “I don’t see any particular objection to
your earning an honest penny under such circumstances. I should keep it

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3. Perform ordinary nursing and midwife-nursing.
5. Cf. “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye
of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the
country of God” (Matthew xix.24).
quiet, I think, Mrs. Gamp. I wouldn’t mention it to Mr. Chuzzlewit on his return, for instance, unless it were necessary, or he asked you point-blank.”

“The very words was on my lips, sir,” Mrs. Gamp rejoined. “Supposing that the gent should die, I hope I might take the liberty of saving as I know’d some-one in the undertaking line, and yet give no offense to you, sir?”

“Certainly, Mrs. Gamp,” said Mould, with much condescension. “You may casually remark, in such a case, that we do the thing pleasantly and in a great variety of styles, and are generally considered to make it as agreeable as possible to the feelings of the survivors. But don’t obtrude it, don’t obtrude it. Easy, easy! My dear, you may as well give Mrs. Gamp a card or two, if you please.”

Mrs. Gamp received them, and scenting no more rum in the wind (for the bottle was locked up again) rose to take her departure.

“Wishing ev’ry happiness to this happy family,” said Mrs. Gamp, “with all my heart. Good afternoon, Mrs. Mould! If I was Mr. Mould, I should be jealous of you, ma’am; and I’m sure, if I was you, I should be jealous of Mr. Mould.”

“Tut, tut! Bah, bah! Go along, Mrs. Gamp!” cried the delighted undertaker. “As to the young ladies,” said Mrs. Gamp, dropping a curtsey, “bless their sweet looks—how they can never reconsize it with their duties to be so grown up with such young parents, it an’t for sech as me to give a guess at.”

“Nonsense, nonsense. Be off, Mrs. Gamp!” cried Mould. But in the height of his gratification he actually pinched Mrs. Mould as he said it.

“T’ll tell you what, my dear,” he observed, when Mrs. Gamp had at last withdrawn and shut the door, “that’s a ve-ry shrewd woman. That’s a woman whose intellect is immensely superior to her station in life. That’s a woman who observes and reflects in an uncommon manner. She’s the sort of woman now,” said Mould, drawing his silk handkerchief over his head again, and composing himself for a nap, “one would almost feel disposed to bury for nothing: and do it neatly, too!”

Mrs. Mould and her daughters fully concurred in these remarks; the subject of which had by this time reached the street, where she experienced so much inconvenience from the air, that she was obliged to stand under an archway for a short time, to recover herself. Even after this precaution, she walked so unsteadily as to attract the compassionate regards of divers kind-hearted boys, who took the liveliest interest in her disorder; and in their simple language, bade her be of good cheer, for she was “only a little screwed.”

Whatever she was, or whatever name the vocabulary of medical science would have bestowed upon her malady, Mrs. Gamp was perfectly acquainted with the way home again; and arriving at the house of Anthony Chuzzlewit & Son, lay down to rest. Remaining there until seven o’clock in the evening, and then persuading poor old Chuffey to betake himself to bed, she sallied forth upon her new engagement. First, she went to her private lodgings in Kingsgate Street, for a bundle of robes and wrappings comfortable in the night season; and then repaired to the Bull in Holborn, which she reached as the clocks were striking eight.

As she turned into the yard, she stopped; for the landlord, landlady, and head chambermaid, were all on the threshold together, talking earnestly with a young gentleman who seemed to have just come or to be just going away.

Mrs. Gamp felt the necessity of advancing, bundle in hand, and introducing herself.

“The night-nurse,” she observed, “from Kingsgate Street, well beknown to Mrs. Prig the day-nurse, and the best of creeturs. How is the poor dear gentleman, tonight? If he an’t no better yet, still that is what must be expected and prepared...
for. It ain't the fust time by a many score, ma'am," dropping a curtsey to the landlady, “that Mrs. Prig and me has nussed together, turn and turn about, one off, one on. We knows each other's ways, and often gives relief when others failed. Our charges is but low, sir": Mrs. Gamp addressed herself to John on this head: “considerin' the nater of our painful dooty. If they wos made accordin' to our wishes, they would be easy paid.”

Regarding herself as having now delivered her inauguration address, Mrs. Gamp curtseyed all round, and signified her wish to be conducted to the scene of her official duties. The chambermaid led her, through a variety of intricate passages, to the top of the house; and pointing at length to a solitary door at the end of a gallery, informed her that yonder was the chamber where the patient lay. That done, she hurried off with all the speed she could make.

Mrs. Gamp traversed the gallery in a great heat from having carried her large bundle up so many stairs, and tapped at the door, which was immediately opened by Mrs. Prig, bonneted and shawled and all impatience to be gone. Mrs. Prig was of the Gamp build, but not so fat; and her voice was deeper and more like a man's. She had also a beard.

“I began to think you warn't a-coming!” Mrs. Prig observed, in some displeasure.

“It shall be made good tomorrow night,” said Mrs. Gamp, “honorable. I had to go and fetch my things.” She had begun to make signs of inquiry in reference to the position of the patient and his overhearing them—for there was a screen before the door—when Mrs. Prig settled that point easily.

“Oh!” she said aloud, “he's quiet, but his wits is gone. It an’t no matter wot you say.”

“Anythin' to tell afore you goes, my dear?” asked Mrs. Gamp, setting her bundle down inside the door, and looking affectionately at her partner.

“The pickled salmon,” Mrs. Prig replied, “is quite delicious. I can partick’ler recommend it. Don't have nothink to say to the cold meat, for it tastes of the stable. The drinks is all good.”

Mrs. Gamp expressed herself much gratified.

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

Mrs. Gamp thanked her for these hints, and giving her a friendly good night, held the door open until she had disappeared at the other end of the gallery. Having thus performed the hospitable duty of seeing her safely off, she shut it, locked it on the inside, took up her bundle, walked round the screen, and entered on her occupation of the sick chamber.

“A little dull, but not so bad as might be,” Mrs. Gamp remarked. “I'm glad to see a parapidge, in case of fire, and lots of roofs and chimley-pots to walk upon.”

It will be seen from these remarks that Mrs. Gamp was looking out of window. When she had exhausted the prospect, she tried the easy-chair, which she indignantly declared was “harder than a brickbadge.” Next she pursued her researches among the physic-bottles, glasses, jugs, and teacups; and when she had entirely satisfied her curiosity on all these subjects of investigation, she untied her bonnet-strings and strolled up to the bedside to take a look at the patient.

6. John Westlock, a former friend of the patient.
7. Brickbat (presumably)—a piece of brick commonly used as a missile in street fights.
A young man—dark and not ill-looking—with long black hair, that seemed the blacker for the whiteness of the bedclothes. His eyes were partly open, and he never ceased to roll his head from side to side upon the pillow, keeping his body almost quiet. He did not utter words; but every now and then gave vent to an expression of impatience or fatigue, sometimes of surprise; and still his restless head—oh, weary, weary hour!—went to and fro without a moment’s intermission.

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

“Ah!” said Mrs. Gamp, walking away from the bed, “he’d make a lovely corpse.”

She now proceeded to unpack her bundle; lighted a candle with the aid of a fire-box on the drawers; filled a small kettle as a preliminary to refreshing herself in the course of the night; laid what she called “a little bit of fire,” for the same philanthropic purpose; and also set forth a small teaboard, that nothing might be wanting for her comfortable enjoyment. These preparations occupied so long, that when they were brought to a conclusion it was high time to think about supper; so she rang the bell and ordered it.

“I think, young woman,” said Mrs. Gamp to the assistant chambermaid, in a tone of expressive weakness, “that I could pick a little bit of pickled salmon, with a nice little sprig of fennel, and a sprinkling of white pepper. I takes new bread, my dear, with jeest a little pat of fresh butter, and a mossel of cheese. In case there should be such a thing as a cowcumber in the ‘ouse, will you be so kind as to bring it, for I’m rather partial to ’em, and they does a world of good in a sick room. If they draws the Brighton Old Tipper here, I takes that ale at night, my love; it bein’ considered wakeful by the doctors. And whatever you do, young woman, don’t bring more than a shilling’s-worth of gin and water-warm when I rings the bell a second time; for that is always my allowance, and I never takes a drop beyond!”

Having preferred these moderate requests, Mrs. Gamp observed that she would stand at the door until the order was executed, to the end that the patient might not be disturbed by her opening it a second time; and therefore she would thank the young woman to “look sharp.”

A tray was brought with everything upon it, even to the cucumber; and Mrs. Gamp accordingly sat down to eat and drink in high good humor. The extent to which she availed herself of the vinegar, and supped up that refreshing fluid with the blade of her knife, can scarcely be expressed in narrative.

“Ah!” sighed Mrs. Gamp, as she meditated over the warm shilling’s-worth, “what a blessed thing it is—living in a wale—to be contented! What a blessed thing it is to make sick people happy in their beds, and never mind one’s self as long as one can do a service! I don’t believe a finer cowcumber was ever grow’d. I’m sure I never seen one!”

She moralized in the same vein until her glass was empty, and then administered the patient’s medicine, by the simple process of clutching his windpipe, to make him gasp, and immediately pouring it down his throat.

8. Extra strong ale named after a brewer in Brighton, Thomas Tipper, described in Chapter 19 as “the celebrated staggering ale, or Real Old Brighton Tipper.”
“I a’most forgot the piller, I declare!” said Mrs. Gamp, drawing it away. “There! Now he’s comfortable as can be, I’m sure! I must try to make myself as much so as I can.”

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

All these arrangements made, she lighted the rushlight, coiled herself up on her couch, and went to sleep. Ghostly and dark the room became, and full of lowering shadows. The distant noises in the streets were gradually hushed; the house was quiet as a sepulchre; the dead of night was coffined in the silent city.

1843–44

From David Copperfield

[The Journey to Salem House School]

The coach was in the yard, shining very much all over, but without any horses to it as yet; and it looked in that state as if nothing was more unlikely than its ever going to London. I was thinking this, and wondering what would ultimately become of my box, which Mr. Barkis had put down on the yard-pavement by the pole (he having driven up the yard to turn his cart), and also what would ultimately become of me, when a lady looked out of a bow-window where some fowls and joints of meat were hanging up, and said:

“Is that the little gentleman from Blunderstone?”

“Yes, ma’am,” I said.

“What name?” inquired the lady.

“Cooperfield, ma’am,” I said.

“Cooperfield, ma’am,” I said.

1. Dickens’ favorite novel was David Copperfield (1849–50). Like Great Expectations it is a novel of development, a Bildungsroman, recording, in first-person narrative, the painful and pleasurable experiences of growing up from childhood to maturity. Often these experiences center on a journey to new surroundings made by the central character, as the two following selections illustrate. The first journey, when David Copperfield is about 8 or 9 years old, is by coach from his home in Suffolk to a boarding-school near London, Salem House, to which he is sent by his stepfather, Mr. Murdstone, after a violent incident in which the boy was goaded into biting Mr. Murdstone’s hand.

David Copperfield’s unhappy experiences at Salem House, both during the period before school term begins and afterwards, culminate in his encounters with the sadistic headmaster, Mr. Creakle, a former “small hop-dealer” in London who “had taken to the schooling business after being bankrupt in hops, and making away with Mrs. Creakle’s money.” The depth of David’s unhappiness occurs, however, when he is a couple of years older. After the death of his mother he is removed from Salem House school and put to work in a blacking warehouse in London from which he finally resolves to run away and seek shelter with an aunt in Dover, whom he has never seen. The second selection features this desperate six-day journey on foot and its aftermath.

2. From Chapters V and VI.
“That won’t do,” returned the lady. “Nobody’s dinner is paid for here, in that name.”

“Is it Murdstone, ma’am?” I said.

“If you’re Master Murdstone,” said the lady, “why do you go and give another name, first?”

I explained to the lady how it was, who then rang a bell, and called out, “William! show the coffee-room!” upon which a waiter came running out of a kitchen on the opposite side of the yard to show it, and seemed a good deal surprised when he was only to show it to me.

It was a large long room with some large maps in it. I doubt if I could have felt much stranger if the maps had been real foreign countries, and I cast away in the middle of them. I felt it was taking a liberty to sit down, with my cap in my hand, on the corner of the chair nearest the door; and when the waiter laid a cloth on purpose for me, and put a set of casters on it, I think I must have turned red all over with modesty.

He brought me some chops, and vegetables, and took the covers off in such a bouncing manner that I was afraid I must have given him some offense. But he greatly relieved my mind by putting a chair for me at the table, and saying very affably, “Now, six-foot! come on!”

I thanked him, and took my seat at the board; but found it extremely difficult to handle my knife and fork with anything like dexterity, or to avoid splashing myself with the gravy, while he was standing opposite, staring so hard, and making me blush in the most dreadful manner every time I caught his eye. After watching me into the second chop, he said:

“There’s half a pint of ale for you. Will you have it now?”

I thanked him and said “Yes.” Upon which he poured it out of a jug into a large tumbler, and held it up against the light, and made it look beautiful.

“My eye!” he said. “It seems a good deal, don’t it?”

“It does seem a good deal,” I answered with a smile. For it was quite delightful to me to find him so pleasant. He was a twinkling-eyed, pimple-faced man, with his hair standing upright all over his head; and as he stood with one arm a-kimbo, holding up the glass to the light with the other hand, he looked quite friendly.

“There was a gentleman here yesterday,” he said—“a stout gentleman, by the name of Topsawyer—perhaps you know him?”

“No,” I said, “I don’t think——”

“In breeches and gaiters, broad-brimmed hat, grey coat, speckled choker,” said the waiter.

“No,” I said bashfully, “I haven’t the pleasure——”

“He came in here” said the waiter, looking at the light through the tumbler, “ordered a glass of this ale—would order it—I told him not—drank it, and fell dead. It was too old for him. It oughtn’t to be drawn; that’s the fact.”

I was very much shocked to hear of this melancholy accident, and said I thought I had better have some water.

“Why, you see,” said the waiter, still looking at the light through the tumbler, with one of his eyes shut up, “our people don’t like things being ordered and left. It offends ’em. But I’ll drink it, if you like. I’m used to it, and use is everything. I don’t think it’ll hurt me, if I throw my head back, and take it off quick. Shall I?”

I replied that he would much oblige me by drinking it, if he thought he could do it safely, but by no means otherwise. When he did throw his head back, and take it off quick, I had a horrible fear, I confess, of seeing him meet the fate of
the lamented Mr. Topsawyer, and fall lifeless on the carpet. But it didn't hurt him. On the contrary, I thought he seemed the fresher for it.

“What have we got here?” he said, putting a fork into my dish. “Not chops?” “Chops,” I said.

“Lord bless my soul!” he exclaimed, “I didn't know they were chops. Why a chop's the very thing to take off the bad effects of that beer! Ain't it lucky?”

So he took a chop by the bone in one hand, and a potato in the other, and ate away with a very good appetite, to my extreme satisfaction. He afterwards took another chop, and another potato; and after that another chop and another potato. When he had done, he brought me a pudding, and having set it before me, seemed to ruminate, and to become absent in his mind for some moments.

“How's the pie?” he said, rousing himself.

“It's a pudding,” I made answer.

“Pudding!” he exclaimed. “Why, bless me, so it is! What!” looking at it nearer. “You don't mean to say it's a batter-pudding?”

“Yes, it is indeed.”

“Why, a batter-pudding,” he said, taking up a table-spoon, “is my favourite pudding! Ain't that lucky? Come on, little 'un, and let's see who'll get most.”

The waiter certainly got most. He entreated me more than once to come in and win, but what with his table-spoon to my tea-spoon, his dispatch to my dispatch, and his appetite to my appetite, I was left far behind at the first mouthful, and had no chance with him. I never saw anyone enjoy a pudding so much, I think; and he laughed, when it was all gone, as if his enjoyment of it lasted still.

Finding him so very friendly and companionable, it was then that I asked for the pen and ink and paper, to write to Peggotty. He not only brought it immediately, but was good enough to look over me while I wrote the letter. When I had finished it, he asked me where I was going to school.

I said, “Near London,” which was all I knew.

“Oh! my eye!” he said, looking very low-spirited, “I am sorry for that.”

“Why?” I asked him.

“Oh, Lord!” he said, shaking his head, “that's the school where they broke the boy's ribs—two ribs—a little boy he was. I should say he was—let me see—how old are you, about?”

I told him between eight and nine.

“That's just his age,” he said. “He was eight years and six months old when they broke his first rib; eight years and eight months old when they broke his second, and did for him.”

I could not disguise from myself, or from the waiter, that this was an uncomfortable coincidence, and inquired how it was done. His answer was not cheering to my spirits, for it consisted of two dismal words, “With whopping.”

The blowing of the coach-horn in the yard was a seasonable diversion, which made me get up and hesitatingly inquire, in the mingled pride and diffidence of having a purse (which I took out of my pocket), if there were anything to pay.

“There's a sheet of letter-paper,” he returned. “Did you ever buy a sheet of letter-paper?”

I could not remember that I ever had.

“It's dear,” he said, “on account of the duty. Threepence. That's the way we're taxed in this country. There's nothing else, except the waiter. Never mind the ink. I lose by that.”

3. David's mother's maid.
“What should you—what should I—how much ought I to—what would it be right to pay the waiter, if you please?” I stammered, blushing.

“If I hadn’t a family, and that family hadn’t the cow-pock,” said the waiter, “I wouldn’t take a sixpence. If I didn’t support an aged pairint, and a lovely sister,”—here the waiter was greatly agitated—“I wouldn’t take a farthing. If I had a good place, and was treated well here, I should beg acceptance of a tri-ble, instead of taking of it. But I live on broken wittles—and I sleep on the coals”—here the waiter burst into tears.

I was very much concerned for his misfortunes, and felt that any recognition short of ninepence would be mere brutality and hardness of heart. Therefore I gave him one of my three bright shillings, which he received with much humility and veneration, and spun up with his thumb, directly afterwards, to try the goodness of.

It was a little disconcerting to me, to find, when I was being helped up behind the coach, that I was supposed to have eaten all the dinner without any assistance. I discovered this, from overhearing the lady in the bow-window say to the guard, “Take care of that child, George, or he’ll burst!” and from observing that the women-servants who were about the place came out to look and giggle at me as a young phenomenon. My unfortunate friend the waiter, who had quite recovered his spirits, did not appear to be disturbed by this, but joined in the general admiration without being at all confused. If I had any doubt of him, I suppose this half awakened it; but I am inclined to believe that with the simple confidence of a child, and the natural reliance of a child upon superior years (qualities I am very sorry any children should prematurely change for worldly wisdom), I had no serious mistrust of him on the whole, even then.

I felt it rather hard, I must own, to be made, without deserving it, the subject of jokes between the coachman and guard as to the coach drawing heavy behind, on account of my sitting there, and as to the greater expediency of my traveling by wagon. The story of my supposed appetite getting wind among the outside passengers, they were merry upon it likewise; and asked me whether I was going to be paid for, at school, as two brothers or three, and whether I was contracted for, or went upon the regular terms; with other pleasant questions. But the worst of it was, that I knew I should be ashamed to eat anything, when an opportunity offered, and that, after a rather light dinner, I should remain hungry all night—for I had left my cakes behind, at the hotel, in my hurry. My apprehensions were realized. When we stopped for supper I couldn’t muster courage to take any, though I should have liked it very much, but sat by the fire and said I didn’t want anything. This did not save me from more jokes, either; for a husky-voiced gentleman with a rough face, who had been eating out of a sandwich-box nearly all the way, except when he had been drinking out of a bot-tle, said I was like a boa-constrictor, who took enough at one meal to last him a long time; after which he actually brought a rash out upon himself with boiled beef.

We had started from Yarmouth at three o’clock in the afternoon, and we were due in London about eight next morning. It was Midsummer weather, and the evening was very pleasant. When we passed through a village, I pictured to myself what the inside of the houses were like, and what the inhabitants were about; and when boys came running after us, and got up behind and swung for a little way, I wondered whether their fathers were alive, and whether they were happy at home. I had plenty to think of, therefore, besides my mind.
running continually on the kind of place I was going to—which was an awful speculations. Sometimes, I remember, I resigned myself to thoughts of home and Peggotty, and to endeavoring, in a confused blind way, to recall how I had felt, and what sort of boy I used to be, before I bit Mr. Murdstone: which I couldn’t satisfy myself about by any means, I seemed to have bitten him in such a remote antiquity.

The night was not so pleasant as the evening, for it got chilly; and being put between two gentlemen (the rough-faced one and another) to prevent my tumbling off the coach, I was nearly smothered by their falling asleep, and completely blocking me up. They squeezed me so hard sometimes, that I could not help crying out, “Oh, if you please!”—which they didn’t like at all, because it woke them. Opposite me was an elderly lady in a great fur cloak, who looked in the dark more like a haystack than a lady, she was wrapped up to such a degree. This lady had a basket with her, and she hadn’t known what to do with it, for a long time, until she found that, on account of my legs being short, it could go underneath me. It cramped and hurt me so, that it made me perfectly miserable; but if I moved in the least, and made a glass that was in the basket rattle against something else (as it was sure to do), she gave me the cruelest poke with her foot, and said, “Come, don’t you fidget. Your bones are young enough, I’m sure!”

At last the sun rose, and then my companions seemed to sleep easier. The difficulties under which they had labored all night, and which had found utterance in the most terrific gasps and snorts, are not to be conceived. As the sun got higher, their sleep became lighter, and so they gradually one by one awoke. I recollect being very much surprised by the feint everybody made, then, of not having been to sleep at all, and by the uncommon indignation with which everyone repelled the charge. I labor under the same kind of astonishment to this day, having invariably observed that of all human weaknesses, the one to which our common nature is the least disposed to confess (I cannot imagine why) is the weakness of having gone to sleep in a coach.

What an amazing place London was to me when I saw it in the distance, and how I believed all the adventures of all my favorite heroes to be constantly enacting and re-enacting there, and how I vaguely made it out in my own mind to be fuller of wonders and wickedness than all the cities of the earth, I need not stop here to relate. We approached it by degrees, and got, in due time, to the inn in the Whitechapel district, for which we were bound. I forget whether it was the Blue Bull, or the Blue Boar; but I know it was the Blue Something, and that its likeness was painted up on the back of the coach.

The guard’s eye lighted on me as he was getting down, and he said at the booking-office door:

“Is there anybody here for a yoongster booked in the name of Murdstone, from Bloonderstone, Sooffolk, to be left till called for?”

Nobody answered.

“Try Copperfield, if you please, sir,” said I, looking helplessly down.

“Is there anybody here for a yoongster, booked in the name of Murdstone, from Bloonderstone, Sooffolk, but owning to the name of Copperfield, to be left till called for?” said the guard. “Come! Is there anybody?”

No. There was nobody. I looked anxiously around; but the inquiry made no impression on any of the bystanders, if I except a man in gaiters, with one eye, who suggested that they had better put a brass collar round my neck, and tie me up in the stable.
A ladder was brought, and I got down after the lady, who was like a haystack: not daring to stir, until her basket was removed. The coach was clear of passengers by that time, the luggage was very soon cleared out, the horses had been taken out before the luggage, and now the coach itself was wheeled and backed off by some hostlers, out of the way. Still, nobody appeared, to claim the dusty youngster from Blunderstone, Suffolk.

More solitary than Robinson Crusoe, who had nobody to look at him, and see that he was solitary, I went into the booking-office, and, by invitation of the clerk on duty, passed behind the counter, and sat down on the scale at which they weighed the luggage. Here, as I sat looking at the parcels, packages, and books, and inhaling the smell of stables (ever since associated with that morning), a procession of most tremendous considerations began to march through my mind. Supposing nobody should ever fetch me, how long would they consent to keep me there? Would they keep me long enough to spend seven shillings? Should I sleep at night in one of those wooden bins, with the other luggage, and wash myself at the pump in the yard in the morning; or should I be turned out every night, and expected to come again to be left till called for, when the office opened next day? Supposing there was no mistake in the case, and Mr. Murdstone had devised this plan to get rid of me, what should I do? If they allowed me to remain there until my seven shillings were spent, I couldn’t hope to remain there when I began to starve. That would obviously be inconvenient and unpleasant to the customers, besides entailing on the Blue Whatever-it-was, the risk of funeral expenses. If I started off at once, and tried to walk back home, how could I ever find my way, how could I ever hope to walk so far, how could I make sure of anyone but Peggotty, even if I got back? If I found out the nearest proper authorities, and offered myself to go for a soldier, or a sailor, I was such a little fellow that it was most likely they wouldn’t take me in. These thoughts, and a hundred other such thoughts, turned me burning hot, and made me giddy with apprehension and dismay. I was in the height of my fever when a man entered and whispered to the clerk, who presently slanted me off the scale, and pushed me over to him, as if I were weighted, bought, delivered, and paid for.

As I went out of the office, hand in hand with this new acquaintance, I stole a look at him. He was a gaunt, sallow young man, with hollow cheeks, and a chin almost as black as Mr. Murdstone’s; but there the likeness ended, for his whiskers were shaved off, and his hair, instead of being glossy, was rusty and dry. He was dressed in a suit of black clothes which were rather rusty and dry too, and rather short in the sleeves and legs; and he had a white neck-kerchief on, that was not over-clean. I did not, and do not suppose that this neck-kerchief was all the linen he wore, but it was all he showed or gave any hint of.

“You’re the new boy?” he said.
“Yes, sir,” I said.
I suppose I was. I didn’t know.
“I’m one of the masters at Salem House,” he said.
I made him a bow and felt very much overawed.

A short walk brought us—I mean the Master and me—to Salem House, which was enclosed with a high brick wall, and looked very dull. Over a door in this wall was a board with SALEM HOUSE upon it; and through a grating in this door we were surveyed, when we rang the bell, by a surly face, which I found, on the door being opened, belonged to a stout man with a bull-neck, a wooden leg, overhanging temples, and his hair cut close all round his head.
“The new boy,” said the Master.
The man with the wooden leg eyed me all over—it didn’t take long, for there was not much of me—and locked the gate behind us, and took out the key. We were going up to the house, among some dark heavy trees, when he called after my conductor.

“Hallo!”

We looked back, and he was standing at the door of a little lodge, where he lived, with a pair of boots in his hand.

“Here! The cobbler’s been,” he said, “since you’ve been out, Mr. Mell, and he says he can’t mend ’em any more. He says there ain’t a bit of the original boot left, and he wonders you expect it.”

With these words he threw the boots towards Mr. Mell, who went back a few paces to pick them up, and looked at them (very disconsolately, I was afraid) as we went on together. I observed then, for the first time, that the boots he had on were a good deal the worse for wear, and that his stocking was just breaking out in one place, like a bud.

Salem House was a square brick building with wings, of a bare and unfurnished appearance. All about it was so very quiet, that I said to Mr. Mell I supposed the boys were out; but he seemed surprised at my not knowing that it was holiday-time. That all the boys were at their several homes. That Mr. Creakle, the proprietor, was down by the sea-side with Mrs. and Miss Creakle. And that I was sent in holiday-time as a punishment for my misdoing. All of which he explained to me as he went along.

I gazed upon the schoolroom into which he took me, as the most forlorn and desolate place I had ever seen. I see it now. A long room, with three long rows of desks, and six of forms, and bristling all round with pegs for hats and slates. Scraps of old copy-books and exercises litter the dirty floor. Some silkworms’ houses, made of the same materials, are scattered over the desks. Two miserable little white mice, left behind by their owner, are running up and down in a dusty castle made of pasteboard and wire, looking in all the corners with their red eyes for anything to eat. A bird, in a cage very little bigger than himself, makes a mournful rattle now and then in hopping on his perch, two inches high, or dropping from it; but neither sings nor chirps. There is a strange unwholesome smell upon the room, like mildewed corduroys, sweet apples wanting air, and rotten books. There could not well be more ink splashed about it, if it had been roofless from its first construction, and the skies had rained, snowed, hailed, and blown ink through the varying seasons of the year.

Mr. Mell having left me while he took his irreparable boots upstairs, I went softly to the upper end of the room, observing all this as I crept along. Suddenly I came upon a pasteboard placard, beautifully written, which was lying on the desk, and bore these words: “Take care of him. He bites.”

I got upon the desk immediately, apprehensive of at least a great dog underneath. But, though I looked all round with anxious eyes, I could see nothing of him. I was still engaged in peering about, when Mr. Mell came back, and asked me what I did up there?

“I beg your pardon, sir,” says I, “if you please, I’m looking for the dog.”

“Dog?” says he. “What dog?”

“Isn’t it a dog, sir?”

“Isn’t what a dog?”

“That’s to be taken care of, sir; that bites?”

“No, Copperfield,” says he, gravely, “that’s not a dog. That’s a boy. My instructions are, Copperfield, to put this placard on your back. I am sorry to make such a beginning with you, but I must do it.”

With that he took me down, and tied the placard, which was neatly constructed for the purpose, on my shoulders like a knapsack; and wherever I went, afterwards, I had the consolation of carrying it.

What I suffered from that placard nobody can imagine. Whether it was possible for people to see me or not, I always fancied that somebody was reading it. It was no relief to turn round and find nobody; for wherever my back was, there I imagined somebody always to be. That cruel man with the wooden leg, aggravated my sufferings. He was in authority, and if he ever saw me leaning against a tree, or a wall, or the house, he roared out from his lodge-door in a stupendous voice, “Hallo, you sir! You Copperfield! Show that badge conspicuous, or I’ll report you!” The playground was a bare graveled yard, open to all the back of the house and the offices; and I knew that the servants read it, and the butcher read it, and the baker read it; that everybody, in a word, who came backwards and forwards to the house, of a morning when I was ordered to walk there, read that I was to be taken care of, for I bit. I recollect that I positively began to have a dread of myself, as a kind of wild boy who did bite.

There was an old door in this playground, on which the boys had a custom of carving their names. It was completely covered with such inscriptions. In my dread of the end of the vacation and their coming back, I could not read a boy’s name, without inquiring in what tone and with what emphasis he would read, “Take care of him. He bites.” There was one boy—a certain J. Steerforth—who I conceived, would read it in a rather strong voice, and afterwards pull my hair. There was another boy, one Tommy Traddles, who I dreaded would make game of it, and pretend to be dreadfully frightened of me. There was a third, George Demple, who I fancied would sing it. I have looked, a little shrinking creature, at that door, until the owners of all the names—there were five-and-forty of them in the school then, Mr. Mell said—seemed to send me to Coventry by general acclamation, and to cry out, each in his own way, “Take care of him. He bites!”

It was the same with the places at the desks and forms. It was the same with the groves of deserted bedsteads I peeped at, on my way to, and when I was in, my own bed. I remember dreaming night after night, of being with my mother as she used to be, or of going to a party at Mr. Peggotty’s, or traveling outside the stagecoach, or of dining again with my unfortunate friend the waiter, and in all these circumstances making people scream and stare, by the unhappy disclosure that I had nothing on but my little nightshirt, and that placard.

In the monotony of my life, and in my constant apprehension of the reopening of the school, it was such an insupportable affliction! I had long tasks every day to do with Mr. Mell; but I did them, there being no Mr. and Miss Murdstone here, and got through them without disgrace. Before, and after them, I walked about—supervised, as I have mentioned, by the man with the wooden leg. How vividly I call to mind the damp about the house, the green cracked flagstones in the court, an old leaky water-butt, and the discolored trunks of some of the grim trees, which seemed to have dripped more in the rain than other trees, and to have blown less in the sun! At one we dined, Mr.

5. To ostracize me.
Mell and I, at the upper end of a long bare dining-room, full of deal tables, and smelling of fat. Then, we had more tasks until tea, which Mr. Mell drank out of a blue tea-cup, and I out of a tin pot. All day long, and until seven or eight in the evening, Mr. Mell, at his own detached desk in the school-room, worked hard with pen, ink, ruler, books, and writing-paper, making out the bills (as I found) for last half-year. When he had put up his things for the night, he took out his flute, and blew at it, until I almost thought he would gradually blow his whole being into the large hole at the top, and ooze away at the keys.

I picture my small self in the dimly-lighted rooms, sitting with my head upon my hand, listening to the doleful performance of Mr. Mell, and conning tomorrow’s lessons. I picture myself with my books shut up, still listening to the doleful performance of Mr. Mell, and listening through it to what used to be at home, and to the blowing of the wind on Yarmouth flats, and feeling very sad and solitary. I picture myself going up to bed, among the unused rooms, and sitting on my bedside crying for a comfortable word from Peggotty. I picture myself coming downstairs in the morning, and looking through a long ghastly gash of a staircase window at the school-bell hanging on the top of an outhouse with a weathercock above it; and dreading the time when it shall ring J. Steerforth and the rest to work. Such time is only second, in my foreboding apprehensions, to the time when the man with the wooden leg shall unlock the rusty gate to give admission to the awful Mr. Creakle. I cannot think I was a very dangerous character in any of these aspects, but in all of them I carried the same warning on my back.

Mr. Mell never said much to me, but he was never harsh to me. I suppose we were company to each other, without talking. I forgot to mention that he would talk to himself sometimes, and grin, and clench his fist, and grind his teeth, and pull his hair in an unaccountable manner. But he had these peculiarities. At first they frightened me, though I soon got used to them.

I had led this life about a month, when the man with the wooden leg began to stump about with a mop and a bucket of water, from which I inferred that preparations were making to receive Mr. Creakle and the boys. I was not mistaken; for the mop came into the school-room before long, and turned out Mr. Mell and me, who lived where we could, and got on how we could, for some days, during which we were always in the way of two or three young women, who had rarely shown themselves before, and were so continually in the midst of dust that I sneezed almost as much as if Salem House had been a great snuff-box.

One day I was informed by Mr. Mell that Mr. Creakle would be home that evening. In the evening, after tea, I heard that he was come. Before bed-time, I was fetched by the man with the wooden leg to appear before him.

Mr. Creakle’s part of the house was a good deal more comfortable than ours, and he had a snug bit of garden that looked pleasant after the dusty playground, which was such a desert in miniature, that I thought no one but a camel, or a dromedary, could have felt at home in it. It seemed to me a bold thing even to take notice that the passage looked comfortable, as I went on my way, trembling, to Mr. Creakle’s presence: which so abashed me, when I was ushered into it, that I hardly saw Mrs. Creakle or Miss Creakle (who were both there, in the parlor), or anything but Mr. Creakle, a stout gentleman with a bunch of watch-chain and seals, in an arm-chair, with a tumbler and bottle beside him.

“So!” said Mr. Creakle. “This is the young gentleman whose teeth are to be filed! Turn him round.”
The wooden-legged man turned me about so as to exhibit the placard; and having afforded time for a full survey of it, turned me about again, with my face to Mr. Creakle, and posted himself at Mr. Creakle's side. Mr. Creakle's face was fiery, and his eyes were small, and deep in his head; he had thick veins in his forehead, a little nose, and a large chin. He was bald on top of his head; and had some thin wet-looking hair that was just turning grey, brushed across each temple, so that the two sides interlaced on his forehead. But the circumstance about him which impressed me most, was, that he had no voice, but spoke in a whisper. The exertion this cost him, or the consciousness of talking in that feeble way, made his angry face so much more angry, and his thick veins so much thicker, when he spoke, that I am not surprised, on looking back, at this peculiarity striking me as his chief one.

“Now,” said Mr. Creakle. “What’s the report of this boy?”

“There’s nothing against him yet,” returned the man with the wooden leg. “There has been no opportunity.”

I thought Mr. Creakle was disappointed. I thought Mrs. and Miss Creakle (at whom I now glanced for the first time, and who were, both, thin and quiet) were not disappointed.

“Come here, sir!” said Mr. Creakle, beckoning to me.

“Come here!” said the man with the wooden leg, repeating the gesture.

“I have the happiness of knowing your father-in-law,” whispered Mr. Creakle, taking me by the ear; “and a worthy man he is, and a man of a strong character. He knows me, and I know him. Do you know me? Hey?” said Mr. Creakle, pinching my ear with ferocious playfulness.

“Not yet, sir,” I said, flinching with the pain.

“Not yet? Hey?” repeated Mr. Creakle. “But you will soon. Hey?”

“You will soon. Hey?” repeated the man with the wooden leg. I afterwards found that he generally acted, with his strong voice, as Mr. Creakle’s interpreter to the boys.

I was very much frightened, and said I hoped so, if he pleased. I felt, all this while, as if my ear were blazing; he pinched it so hard.

“I’ll tell you what I am,” whispered Mr. Creakle, letting it go at last, with a screw at parting that brought the water into my eyes. “I’m a Tartar.”

“A Tartar,” said the man with the wooden leg.

“When I say I’ll do a thing, I do it,” said Mr. Creakle; “and when I say I will have a thing done, I will have it done.”

—Will have a thing done, I will have it done,” repeated the man with the wooden leg.

“I am a determined character,” said Mr. Creakle. “That’s what I am. I do my duty. That’s what I do. My flesh and blood,” he looked at Mrs. Creakle as he said this, “when it rises against me, is not my flesh and blood. I discard it. Has that fellow,” to the man with the wooden leg, “been here again?”

“No,” was the answer.

“No,” said Mr. Creakle. “He knows better. He knows me. Let him keep away. I say let him keep away,” said Mr. Creakle, striking his hand upon the table, and looking at Mrs. Creakle, “for he knows me. Now you have begun to know me too, my young friend, and you may go. Take him away.”

I was very glad to be ordered away, for Mrs. and Miss Creakle were both wiping their eyes, and I felt as uncomfortable for them as I did for myself. But I

had a petition on my mind which concerned me so nearly, that I couldn't help saying, though I wondered at my own courage:

“If you please, sir——”

Mr. Creakle whispered, “Hah! What’s this?” and bent his eyes upon me, as if he would have burnt me up with them.

“If you please, sir,” I faltered, “if I might be allowed (I am very sorry indeed, sir, for what I did) to take this writing off, before the boys come back——”

Whether Mr. Creakle was in earnest, or whether he only did it to frighten me, I don’t know, but he made a burst out of his chair, before which I precipitately retreated, without waiting for the escort of the man with the wooden leg, and never once stopped until I reached my own bedroom, where, finding I was not pursued, I went to bed, as it was time, and lay quaking, for a couple of hours.

* * *

[The Journey from London to Dover]7

I had resolved to run away.—To go, by some means or other, down into the country, to the only relation I had in the world, and tell my story to my aunt, Miss Betsey.

I have already observed that I don’t know how this desperate idea came into my brain. But, once there, it remained there; and hardened into a purpose than which I have never entertained a more determined purpose in my life. I am far from sure that I believed there was anything hopeful in it, but my mind was thoroughly made up that it must be carried into execution.

* * *

A plan had occurred to me for passing the night, which I was going to carry into execution. This was, to lie behind the wall at the back of my old school, in a corner where there used to be a haystack. I imagined it would be a kind of company to have the boys, and the bedroom where I used to tell the stories, so near me: although the boys would know nothing of my being there, and the bedroom would yield me no shelter.

I had had a hard day’s work, and was pretty well jaded when I came climbing out, at last, upon the level of Blackheath. It cost me some trouble to find out Salem House; but I found it, and I found a haystack in the corner, and I lay down by it; having first walked round the wall, and looked up at the windows, and seen that all was dark and silent within. Never shall I forget the lonely sensation of first lying down, without a roof above my head!

Sleep came upon me as it came on many other outcasts, against whom house-doors were locked, and house-dogs barked, that night—and I dreamed of lying on my old schoolbed, talking to the boys in my room; and found myself sitting upright, with Steerforth’s name upon my lips, looking wildly at the stars that were glistening and glimmering above me. When I remembered where I was at that untimely hour, a feeling stole upon me that made me get up, afraid of I don’t know what, and walk about. But the fainter glimmering of the stars, and the pale light in the sky where the day was coming, reassured me: and my eyes being very heavy, I lay down again, and slept—though with a knowledge in my sleep that it was cold—until the warm beams of the sun, and the ringing of the getting-up bell at Salem House, awoke me. If I could have hoped that

7. From Chapters XII and XIII.
Steerforth was there, I would have lurked about until he came out alone; but I knew he must have left long since. Traddles still remained, perhaps, but it was very doubtful; and I had not sufficient confidence in his discretion or good luck, however strong my reliance on his good-nature, to wish to trust him with my situation. So I crept away from the wall as Mr. Creakle’s boys were getting up, and struck into the long dusty track which I had first known to be the Dover Road when I was one of them, and when I little expected that any eyes would ever see me the wayfarer I was now, upon it.

What a different Sunday morning from the old Sunday morning at Yarmouth! In due time I heard the church-bells ringing, as I plodded on; and I met people who were going to church; and I passed a church or two where the congregation were inside, and the sound of singing came out into the sunshine, while the beadle sat and cooled himself in the shade of the porch, or stood beneath the yew-tree, with his hand to his forehead, glowering at me going by. But the peace and rest of the old Sunday morning were on everything, except me. That was the difference. I felt quite wicked in my dirt and dust, with my tangled hair. But for the quiet picture I had conjured up, of my mother in her youth and beauty, weeping by the fire, and my aunt relenting to her, I hardly think I should have had the courage to go on until next day. But it always went before me, and I followed.

I got, that Sunday, through three-and-twenty miles on the straight road, though not very easily, for I was new to that kind of toil. I see myself, as evening closes in, coming over the bridge at Rochester, footsore and tired, and eating bread that I had bought for supper. One or two little houses, with the notice, “Lodgings for Travelers,” hanging out, had tempted me; but I was afraid of spending the few pence I had, and was even more afraid of the vicious looks of the trampers I had met or overtaken. I sought no shelter, therefore, but the sky; and toiling into Chatham,—which, in that night’s aspect, is a mere dream of chalk, and drawbridges, and mastless ships in a muddy river, roofed like Noah’s arks,—crept, at last, upon a sort of grass-grown battery overhanging a lane, where a sentry was walking to and fro. Here I lay down, near a cannon; and, happy in the society of the sentry’s footsteps, though he knew no more of my being above him than the boys at Salem House had known of my lying by the wall, slept soundly until morning.

Very stiff and sore of foot I was in the morning, and quite dazed by the beating of drums and marching of troops, which seemed to hem me in on every side when I went down towards the long narrow street. Feeling that I could go but a very little way that day, if I were to reserve any strength for getting to my journey’s end, I resolved to make the sale of my jacket its principal business. Accordingly, I took the jacket off, that I might learn to do without it; and carrying it under my arm, began a tour of inspection of the various slop-shops.

It was a likely place to sell a jacket in; for the dealers in second-hand clothes were numerous, and were, generally speaking, on the look-out for customers at their shop-doors. But, as most of them had, hanging up among their stock, an officer’s coat or two, epaulettes and all, I was rendered timid by the costly nature of their dealings, and walked about for a long time without offering my merchandise to anyone.

This modesty of mine directed my attention to the marine-store shops, and such shops as Mr. Dolloby’s, in preference to the regular dealers. At last I found one that I thought looked promising, at the corner of a dirty lane, ending in an inclosure full of stinging-nettles, against the palings of which some
second-hand sailors’ clothes, that seemed to have overflowed the shop, were fluttering among some cots, and rusty guns, and oilskin hats, and certain trays full of so many old rusty keys of so many sizes that they seemed various enough to open all the doors in the world.

Into this shop, which was low and small, and which was darkened rather than lighted by a little window, overhung with clothes; and was descended into by some steps, I went with a palpitating heart; which was not relieved when an ugly old man, with the lower part of his face all covered with a stubbly grey beard, rushed out of a dirty den behind it, and seized me by the hair of my head. He was a dreadful old man to look at, in a filthy flannel waistcoat, and smelling terribly of rum. His bedstead, covered with a tumbled and ragged piece of patchwork, was in the den he had come from, where another little window showed a prospect of more stinging-nettles, and a lame donkey.

“Oh, what do you want?” grinned this old man, in a fierce, monotonous whine. “Oh, my eyes and limbs, what do you want? Oh, my lungs and liver, what do you want? Oh, goroo, goroo!”

I was so much dismayed by these words, and particularly by the repetition of the last unknown one, which was a kind of rattle in his throat, that I could make no answer; hereupon the old man, still holding me by the hair, repeated:

“Oh, what do you want? Oh, my eyes and limbs, what do you want? Oh, my lungs and liver, what do you want? Oh, goroo!”—which he screwed out of himself, with an energy that made his eyes start in his head.

“I wanted to know,” I said, trembling, “if you would buy a jacket.”

“Oh, let’s see the jacket!” cried the old man. “Oh, my heart on fire, show the jacket to us; Oh, my eyes and limbs, bring the jacket out!”

With that he took his trembling hands, which were like the claws of a great bird, out of my hair; and put on a pair of spectacles, not at all ornamental to his inflamed eyes.

“Oh, how much for the jacket?” cried the old man, after examining it. “Oh—goroo!—how much for the jacket?”


Every time he uttered this ejaculation, his eyes seemed to be in danger of starting out; and every sentence he spoke, he delivered in a sort of tune, always exactly the same, and more like a gust of wind, which begins low, mounts up high, and falls again, than any other comparison I can find for it.

“Well,” said I, glad to have closed the bargain, “I’ll take eighteenpence.”

“Oh, my liver!” cried the old man, throwing the jacket on a shelf. “Get out of the shop! Oh, my lungs, get out of the shop! Oh, my eyes and limbs—goroo!—don’t ask for money; make it an exchange.”

I never was so frightened in my life before or since; but I told him humbly that I wanted money, and that nothing else was of any use to me, but that I would wait for it, as he desired, outside, and had no wish to hurry him. So I went outside, and sat down in the shade in a corner. And I sat there so many hours, that the shade became sunlight, and the sunlight became shade again, and still I sat there waiting for the money.

There never was such another drunken madman in that line of business, I hope. That he was well known in the neighborhood, and enjoyed the reputation

8. Second-hand clothing dealer to whom David has sold his vest.
of having sold himself to the devil, I soon understood from the visits he received from the boys, who continually came skirmishing about the shop, shouting that legend, and calling to him to bring out his gold. “You ain’t poor, you know, Charley, as you pretend. Bring out your gold. Bring out some of the gold you sold yourself to the devil for. Come! It’s in the lining of the mattress, Charley. Rip it open and let’s have some!” This, and many offers to lend him a knife for the purpose, exasperated him to such a degree, that the whole day was a succession of rushes on his part, and flights on the part of the boys. Sometimes in his rage he would take me for one of them, and come at me, mouthing as if he were going to tear me in pieces; then, remembering me, just in time, would dive into the shop, and lie upon his bed, as I thought from the sound of his voice, yelling in a frantic way, to his own windy tune, the Death of Nelson; with an Oh! before every line, and innumerable Goroos interspersed.9 As if this were not bad enough for me, the boys, connecting me with the establishment, on account of the patience and perseverance with which I sat outside, half-dressed, pelted me, and used me very ill all day.

He made many attempts to induce me to consent to an exchange; at one time coming out with a fishing-rod, at another with a fiddle, at another with a cocked hat, at another with a flute. But I resisted all these overtures, and sat there in desperation; each time asking him, with tears in my eyes, for my money or my jacket. At last he began to pay me in halfpence at a time; and was full two hours getting by easy stages to a shilling.

“Oh, my eyes and limbs!” he then cried, peeping hideously out of the shop, after a long pause, “will you go for twopence more?”

“I can’t,” I said; “I shall be starved.”

“Oh, my lungs and liver, will you go for threepence?”

“I would go for nothing, if I could,” I said, “but I want the money badly.”

“Oh, go—roo!” (it is really impossible to express how he twisted this ejaculation out of himself, as he peeped round the doorpost at me, showing nothing but his crafty old head;) “will you go for fourpence?”

I was so faint and weary that I closed with this offer; and taking the money out of his claw, not without trembling, went away more hungry and thirsty than I had ever been, a little before sunset. But at an expense of threepence I soon refreshed myself completely; and, being in better spirits then, limped seven miles upon my road.

My bed at night was under another haystack, where I rested comfortably, after having washed my blistered feet in a stream, and dressed them as well as I was able, with some cool leaves. When I took the road again next morning, I found that it lay through a succession of hop-grounds and orchards. It was sufficiently late in the year for the orchards to be ruddy with ripe apples; and in a few places the hop-pickers were already at work. I thought it all extremely beautiful, and made up my mind to sleep among the hops that night: imagining some cheerful companionship in the long perspectives of poles, with the graceful leaves twining round them.

The trampers were worse than ever that day, and inspired me with a dread that is yet quite fresh in my mind. Some of them were most ferocious-looking ruffians, who stared at me as I went by; and stopped, perhaps, and called after

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9. Popular song about the Battle of Trafalgar, from the opera *The Americans* (1811) by John Braham and S. J. Arnold. The “Oh!” was an embellishment not present in the text: “In honor’s cause my life was pass’d / In honor’s cause I fall at last, / For England, home, and beauty, / For England, home, and beauty.”
me to come back and speak to them, and when I took to my heels, stoned me. I recollect one young fellow—a tinker, I suppose, from his wallet and brazier—who had a woman with him, and who faced about and stared at me thus; and then roared to me in such a tremendous voice to come back, that I halted and looked round.

“Come here, when you’re called,” said the tinker, “or I’ll rip your young body open.”

I thought it best to go back. As I drew nearer to them, trying to propitiate the tinker by my looks, I observed that the woman had a black eye.

“Where are you going?” said the tinker, gripping the bosom of my shirt with his blackened hand.

“I am going to Dover,” I said.

“Where do you come from?” asked the tinker, giving his hand another turn in my shirt, to hold me more securely.

“I come from London,” I said.

“What lay are you upon?” asked the tinker. “Are you a prig?”

“N—no,” I said.

“Ain’t you, by G—? If you make a brag of your honesty to me,” said the tinker, “I’ll knock your brains out.”

With his disengaged hand he made a menace of striking me, and then looked at me from head to foot.

“Have you got the price of a pint of beer about you?” said the tinker. “If you have, out with it, afore I take it away!”

I should certainly have produced it, but that I met the woman’s look, and saw her very slightly shake her head, and form “No!” with her lips.

“I am very poor,” I said, attempting to smile, “and have got no money.”

“Why, what do you mean?” said the tinker, looking so sternly at me, that I almost feared he saw the money in my pocket.

“Sir!” I stammered.

“What do you mean,” said the tinker, “by wearing my brother’s silk handkercher! Give it over here!” And he had mine off my neck in a moment, and tossed it to the woman.

The woman burst into a fit of laughter, as if she thought this a joke, and tossed it back to me, nodded once, as slightly as before, and made the word “Go!” with her lips. Before I could obey, however, the tinker seized the handkerchief out of my hand with a roughness that threw me away like a feather, and putting it loosely round his own neck, turned upon the woman with an oath, and knocked her down. I never shall forget seeing her fall backward on the hard road, and lie there with her bonnet tumbled off, and her hair all whitened in the dust; nor, when I looked back from a distance, seeing her sitting on the pathway, which was a bank by the roadside, wiping the blood from her face with a corner of her shawl, while he went on ahead.

This adventure frightened me so, that afterwards, when I saw any of these people coming, I turned back until I could find a hiding-place, where I remained until they had gone out of sight; which happened so often, that I was very seriously delayed. But under this difficulty, as under all the other difficulties of my journey, I seemed to be sustained and led on by my fanciful picture of my mother in her youth, before I came into the world. It always kept me company. It was there, among the hops, when I lay down to sleep; it was with me on my waking

1. Thief.
in the morning; it went before me all day. I have associated it, ever since, with
the sunny street of Canterbury, dozing as it were in the hot light; and with the
sight of its old houses and gateways, and the stately, grey Cathedral, with the
rooks sailing round the towers. When I came, at last, upon the bare, wide downs
near Dover, it relieved the solitary aspect of the scene with hope; and not until
I reached that first great aim of my journey, and actually set foot in the town
itself, on the sixth day of my flight, did it desert me. But then, strange to say,
when I stood with my ragged shoes, and my dusty, sunburnt, half-clothed fig-
ure, in the place so long desired, it seemed to vanish like a dream, and to leave
me helpless and dispirited.

I inquired about my aunt among the boatmen first, and received various
answers. One said she lived in the South Foreland Light, and had singed her
whiskers by doing so; another, that she was made fast to the great buoy outside
the harbor, and could only be visited at half-tide; a third, that she was locked
up in Maidstone Jail for child-stealing; a fourth, that she was seen to mount a
broom, in the last high wind, and make direct for Calais. The fly-drivers, among
whom I inquired next, were equally jocose and equally disrespectful; and the
shopkeepers, not liking my appearance, generally replied, without hearing what
I had to say, that they had got nothing for me. I felt more miserable and desti-
tute than I had done at any period of my running away. My money was all gone,
I had nothing left to dispose of; I was hungry, thirsty, and worn out; and seemed
as distant from my end as if I had remained in London.

The morning had worn away in these inquiries, and I was sitting on the step
of an empty shop at a street corner, near the market-lace, deliberating upon
wandering towards those other places which had been mentioned, when a fly-
driver, coming by with his carriage, dropped a horsecloth. Something good-
natured in the man's face, as I handed it up, encouraged me to ask him if he
could tell me where Miss Trotwood lived; though I had asked the question so
often, that it almost died upon my lips.

"Trotwood," said he. "Let me see. I know the name, too. Old lady?"
"Yes," I said, "rather."
"Pretty stiff in the back?" said he, making himself upright.
"Yes," I said. "I should think it very likely."
"Carries a bag?" said he: "bag with a good deal of room in it: is gruffish, and
comes down upon you, sharp?"

My heart sank within me as I acknowledged the undoubted accuracy of this
description.

"Why then, I tell you what," said he. "If you go up there," pointing with his
whip towards the heights, "and keep right on till you come to some houses fac-
ing the sea, I think you'll hear of her. My opinion is, she won't stand anything,
so here's a penny for you."

I accepted the gift thankfully, and bought a loaf with it. Dispatching this
refreshment by the way, I went in the direction my friend had indicated, and
walked on a good distance without coming to the houses he had mentioned.
At length I saw some before me; and approaching them, went into a little
shop (it was what we used to call a general shop, at home), and inquired
if they could have the goodness to tell me where Miss Trotwood lived.
I addressed myself to a man behind the counter, who was weighing some rice
for a young woman; but the latter, taking the inquiry to herself, turned round
quickly.
“My mistress?” she said. “What do you want with her, boy?”

“I want,” I replied, “to speak to her, if you please.”

“To beg of her, you mean,” retorted the damsel.

“No,” I said, “indeed.” But suddenly remembering that in truth I came for no other purpose, I held my peace in confusion, and felt my face burn.

My aunt’s handmaid, as I supposed she was from what she had said, put her rice in a little basket and walked out of the shop; telling me that I could follow her, if I wanted to know where Miss Trotwood lived. I needed no second permission; though I was by this time in such a state of consternation and agitation, that my legs shook under me. I followed the young woman, and we soon came to a very neat little cottage with cheerful bow-windows; in front of it, a small square gravelled court or garden full of flowers, carefully tended, and smelling deliciously.

“This is Miss Trotwood’s,” said the young woman. “Now you know; and that’s all I have got to say.” With which words she hurried into the house, as if to shake off the responsibility of my appearance; and left me standing at the garden-gate, looking disconsolately over the top of it towards the parlor-window, where a muslin curtain partly undrawn in the middle, a large round green screen or fan fastened on to the window-sill, a small table, and a great chair, suggested to me that my aunt might be at that moment seated in awful state.

My shoes were by this time in a woeful condition. The soles had shed themselves bit by bit, and the upper leathers had broken and burst until the very shape and form of shoes had departed from them. My hat (which had served me for a night-cap, too) was so crushed and bent, that no old battered handleless saucepan on a dunghill need have been ashamed to vie with it. My shirt and trousers, stained with heat, dew, grass, and the Kentish soil on which I had slept—and torn besides—might have frightened the birds from my aunt’s garden, as I stood at the gate. My hair had known no comb or brush since I left London. My face, neck, and hands, from unaccustomed exposure to the air and sun, were burnt to a berry-brown. From head to foot I was powdered almost as white with chalk and dust, as if I had come out of a lime-kiln. In this plight, and with a strong consciousness of it, I waited to introduce myself to, and make my first impression on, my formidable aunt.

The unbroken stillness of the parlor-window leading me to infer, after a while, that she was not there, I lifted up my eyes to the window above it, where I saw a florid, pleasant-looking gentleman, with a grey head, who shut up one eye in a grotesque manner, nodded his head at me several times, shook it as often, laughed, and went away.

I had been discomposed enough before; but I was so much the more discomposed by this unexpected behavior, that I was on the point of slinking off, to think how I had best proceed, when there came out of the house a lady with her handkerchief tied over her cap, and a pair of gardening gloves on her hands, wearing a gardening pocket like a toll-man’s apron, and carrying a great knife. I knew her immediately to be Miss Betsey, for she came stalking out of the house exactly as my poor mother had so often described her stalking up our garden at Blunderstone Rookery.

“Go away!” said Miss Betsey, shaking her head, and making a distant chop in the air with her knife. “Go along! No boys here!”

I watched her, with my heart at my lips, as she marched to a corner of her garden, and stooped to dig up some little root there. Then, without a scrap of
courage, but with a great deal of desperation, I went softly in and stood beside her, touching her with my finger.
“If you please, ma’am,” I began.
She started and looked up.
“If you please, aunt.”
“Eh?” exclaimed Miss Betsey, in a tone of amazement I have never heard approached.
“If you please, aunt, I am your nephew.”
“Oh, Lord!” said my aunt. And sat flat down in the garden-path.
“I am David Copperfield, of Blunderstone, in Suffolk—where you came, on the night when I was born, and saw my dear mama. I have been very unhappy since she died. I have been slighted, and taught nothing, and thrown upon myself and put to work not fit for me. It made me run away to you. I was robbed at first setting out, and have walked all the way, and have never slept in a bed since I began the journey.” Here my self-support gave way all at once; and with a movement of my hands, intended to show her my ragged state, and call it to witness that I had suffered something, I broke into a passion of crying, which I suppose had been pent up within me all the week.
My aunt, with every sort of expression but wonder discharged from her countenance, sat on the gravel, staring at me, until I began to cry; when she got up in a great hurry, collared me, and took me into the parlor. Her first proceeding there was to unlock a tall press; bring out several bottles, and pour some of the contents of each into my mouth. I think they must have been taken out at random, for I am sure I tasted aniseed water, anchovy sauce, and salad dressing. When she had administered these restoratives, as I was still quite hysterical, and unable to control my sobs, she put me on the sofa, with a shawl under my head, and the handkerchief from her own head under my feet, lest I should sully the cover; and then, sitting herself down behind the green fan or screen I have already mentioned, so that I could not see her face, ejaculated at intervals, “Mercy on us!” letting those exclamations off like minute guns.
After a time she rang the bell. “Janet,” said my aunt, when her servant came in. “Go upstairs, give my compliments to Mr. Dick, and say I wish to speak to him.”
Janet looked a little surprised to see me lying stiffly on the sofa (I was afraid to move lest it should be displeasing to my aunt), but went on her errand. My aunt, with her hands behind her, walked up and down the room, until the gentleman who had squinted at me from the upper window came in laughing.
“Mr. Dick,” said my aunt, “don’t be a fool, because nobody can be more discreet than you can, when you choose. We all know that. So don’t be a fool, whatever you are.”

The gentleman was serious immediately, and looked at me, I thought, as if he would entreat me to say nothing about the window.
“Mr. Dick,” said my aunt, “you have heard me mention David Copperfield? Now don’t pretend not to have a memory, because you and I know better.”
“David Copperfield?” said Mr. Dick, who did not appear to me to remember much about it. “David Copperfield? Oh yes, to be sure. David, certainly.”
“Well,” said my aunt, “this is his boy, his son. He would be as like his father as it’s possible to be, if he was not so like his mother, too.”
“His son?” said Mr. Dick. “David’s son? Indeed!”
“Yes,” pursued my aunt, “and he has done a pretty piece of business. He has run away. Ah! His sister, Betsey Trotwood, never would have run away.” My
aunt shook her head firmly, confident in the character and behavior of the girl who never was born.

“Oh! you think she wouldn’t have run away?” said Mr. Dick.

“Bless and save the man,” exclaimed my aunt, sharply, “how he talks! Don’t I know she wouldn’t? She would have lived with her godmother, and we should have been devoted to one another. Where, in the name of wonder, should his sister, Betsey Trotwood, have run from, or to?”

“Nowhere,” said Mr. Dick.

“Well then,” returned my aunt, softened by the reply, “how can you pretend to be wool-gathering, Dick, when you are as sharp as a surgeon’s lancet? Now, here you see young David Copperfield, and the question I put to you is, what shall I do with him?”

“What shall you do with him?” said Mr. Dick, feebly, scratching his head. “Oh! do with him?”

“Yes,” said my aunt, with a grave look, and her forefinger held up. “Come! I want some very sound advice.”

“Why, if I was you,” said Mr. Dick, considering, and looking vacantly at me, “I should—” The contemplation of me seemed to inspire him with a sudden idea, and he added, briskly, “I should wash him!”

“Janet,” said my aunt, turning round with a quiet triumph, which I did not then understand, “Mr. Dick sets us all right. Heat the bath!”

Janet reporting it [the bed] to be quite ready, I was taken up to it; kindly, but in some sort like a prisoner; my aunt going in front, and Janet bringing up the rear. The only circumstance which gave me any new hope, was my aunt’s stopping on the stairs to inquire about a smell of fire that was prevalent there; and Janet’s replying that she had been making tinder down in the kitchen, of my old shirt. But there were no other clothes in my room than the odd heap of things I wore; and when I was left there, with a little taper which my aunt forewarned me would burn exactly five minutes, I heard them lock my door on the outside. Turning these things over in my mind, I deemed it possible that my aunt, who could know nothing of me, might suspect I had a habit of running away, and took precautions, on that account, to have me in safe keeping.

The room was a pleasant one, at the top of the house, overlooking the sea, on which the moon was shining brilliantly. After I had said my prayers, and the candle had burned out, I remember how I still sat looking at the moonlight on the water, as if I could hope to read my fortune in it, as in a bright book; or to see my mother with her child, coming from Heaven, along that shining path, to look upon me as she had looked when I last saw her sweet face. I remember how the solemn feeling with which at length I turned my eyes away, yielded to the sensation of gratitude and rest which the sight of the white-curtained bed—and how much more the lying softly down upon it, nestling in the snow-white sheets!—inspired. I remember how I thought of all the solitary places under the night sky where I had slept, and how I prayed that I never might be houseless any more, and never might forget the houseless. I remember how I seemed to float, then, down the melancholy glory of that track upon the sea, away into the world of dreams.

1849–50

2. The day passes with David being bathed, rested, and fed, and by nightfall taken to bed.
London. Michaelmas Term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln’s Inn Hall.² Implacable November weather. As much mud in the streets, as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth, and it would not be wonderful to meet a Megalosaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephantine lizard up Holborn Hill. Smoke lowering down from chimney-pots, making a soft black drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full-grown snowflakes—gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun. Dogs, undistinguishable in mire. Horses, scarcely better; splashed to their very blinkers. Foot passengers, jostling one another’s umbrellas, in a general infection of ill temper, and losing their foothold at street corners, where tens of thousands of other foot passengers have been slipping and sliding since the day broke (if the day ever broke), adding new deposits to the crust upon crust of mud, sticking at those points tenaciously to the pavement, and accumulating at compound interest.

Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits³ and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping, and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs, fog lying out on the yards, and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog dropping on the gunwales of barges and small boats. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners⁴ wheezing by the firesides of their wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little ‘prentice boy on deck. Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all around them, as if they were up in a balloon, and hanging in the misty clouds.

Gas looming through the fog in divers places in the streets, much as the sun may, from the spongey fields, be seen to loom by husbandman and plowboy. Most of the shops lighted two hours before their time—as the gas seems to know, for it has a haggard and unwilling look.

The raw afternoon is rawest, and the dense fog is densest, and the muddy streets are muddiest, near that leaden-headed old obstruction, appropriate ornament for the threshold of a leaden-headed old corporation: Temple Bar.⁵ And hard by Temple Bar, in Lincoln’s Inn Hall, at the very heart of the fog, sits the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery.

Never can there come fog too thick, never can there come mud and mire too deep, to assort with the groping and floundering condition which this High Court of Chancery, most pestilent of hoary sinners, holds, this day, in the sight of heaven and earth.

1. Bleak House (1852–53) is the first of Dickens’ so-called “dark period” novels. In Bleak House the institution of law, as represented by the inept practices of the Court of Chancery, is shown to have withering effects on the lives of a galaxy of characters. The opening chapter, by its linking of the dirty fog of a modern city to the obfuscation of legal procedures embodied in the case of Jarndyce and Jarndyce, provides a striking overture for the life-stories that follow it.
2. During regular terms (such as Michaelmas term, November 2–25) the Court of Chancery held its sessions in Westminster Hall. Between terms it moved to Lincoln’s Inn Hall.
4. Retired sailors in the River Thames above London.
5. This barrier-archway, spanning a street that led to the old walled City of London, was adjacent to the Middle Temple, a “corporation” for the training of lawyers. Being an “obstruction” to traffic, the archway was removed in 1878.
On such an afternoon, if ever, the Lord High Chancellor ought to be sitting here—as here he is—with a foggy glory round his head, softly fenced in with crimson cloth and curtains, addressed by a large advocate with great whiskers, a little voice, and an interminable brief, and outwardly directing his contemplation to the lantern\(^6\) in the roof, where he can see nothing but fog. On such an afternoon, some score of members of the High Court of Chancery bar ought to be—as here they are—mistily engaged in one of ten thousand stages of an endless cause, tripping one another up on slippery precedents, groping knee-deep in technicalities, running their goat-hair and horse-hair warded\(^7\) heads against walls of words, and making a pretense of equity with serious faces, as players might. On such an afternoon, the various solicitors in the cause, some two or three of whom have inherited it from their fathers, who made a fortune by it, ought to be—as are they not?—ranged in a line, in a long matted well\(^8\) (but you might look in vain for Truth at the bottom of it), between the registrar’s red table and the silk gowns, with bills, cross-bills, answers, rejoinders, injunctions, affidavits, issues, references to masters\(^9\), masters’ reports, mountains of costly nonsense, piled before them. Well may the court be dim, with wasting candles here and there; well may the fog hang heavy in it, as if it would never get out; well may the stained glass windows lose their color, and admit no light of day into the place; well may the uninitiated from the streets, who peep in through the glass panes in the door, be deterred from entrance by its owlish aspect, and by the drawl languidly echoing to the roof from the padded dais where the Lord High Chancellor looks into the lantern that has no light in it, and where the attendant wigs are all stuck in a fog bank! This is the Court of Chancery; which has its decaying houses and its blighted lands in every shire; which has its worn-out lunatic in every madhouse,\(^1\) and its dead in every churchyard; which has its ruined suitor, with his slipshod heels and threadbare dress, borrowing and begging through the round of every man’s acquaintance; which gives to monied might, the means abundantly of wearying out the right; which so exhausts finances, patience, courage, hope; so overthrows the brain and breaks the heart; that there is not an honorable man among its practitioners who would not give—who does not often give—the warning, “Suffer any wrong that can be done you, rather than come here!”

Who happen to be in the Lord Chancellor’s court this murky afternoon besides the Lord Chancellor, the counsel in the cause, two or three counsel who are never in any cause, and the well of solicitors before mentioned? There is the registrar below the Judge, in wig and gown; and there are two or three maces, or petty-bags, or privy purses,\(^2\) or whatever they may be, in legal court suits. These are all yawning; for no crumb of amusement ever falls from Jarndyce and Jarndyce (the cause in hand), which was squeezed dry years upon years ago. The shorthand writers, the reporters of the court, and the reporters of the newspapers, invariably decamp with the rest of the regulars when Jarndyce and Jarnysce comes on. Their places are a blank. Standing on

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6. Lantern-shaped structure surmounting the roof, designed to provide ventilation.
7. Protected by wigs of goat-hair (worn by judges) or horse-hair (worn by ordinary lawyers).
9. Court officers who prepared reports for the Lord Chancellor on cases that might be brought before the court. Because all evidence in Chancery cases had to be gathered in written form as “bills, cross bills,” etc., the quantity of documentation could reach staggering proportions, especially in long-standing cases involving some disputed point about a legacy, as in Jarndyce and Jarndyce.
1. Chancery jurisdiction included decisions about the sanity of contestants in law cases and also the assignment of insane persons to asylums.
2. Courtroom officials.
a seat at the side of the hall, the better to peer into the curtained sanctuary, is a little mad old woman in a squeezed bonnet, who is always in court, from its sitting to its rising, and always expecting some incomprehensible judgment to be given in her favor. Some say she really is, or was, a party to a suit; but no one knows for certain, because no one cares. She carries some small litter in her reticule which she calls her documents; principally consisting of paper matches and dry lavender. A sallow prisoner has come up, in custody, for the half-dozen time, to make a personal application “to purge himself of his contempt”; which, being a solitary surviving executor who has fallen into a state of conglomeration about accounts of which it is not pretended that he had ever any knowledge, he is not at all likely ever to do. In the meantime his prospects in life are ended. Another ruined suitor, who periodically appears from Shropshire, and breaks out into efforts to address the Chancellor at the close of the day’s business, and who can by no means be made to understand that the Chancellor is legally ignorant of his existence after making it desolate for a quarter of a century, plants himself in a good place and keeps an eye on the Judge, ready to call out “My Lord!” in a voice of sonorous complaint, on the instant of his rising. A few lawyers’ clerks and others who know this suitor by sight, linger, on the chance of his furnishing some fun, and enlivening the dismal weather a little.

Jarndyce and Jarndyce drones on. This scarecrow of a suit has, in course of time, become so complicated that no man alive knows what it means. The parties to it understand it least; but it has been observed that no two Chancery lawyers can talk about it for five minutes, without coming to a total disagreement as to all the premises. Innumerable children have been born into the cause; innumerable young people have married into it; innumerable old people have died out of it. Scores of persons have deliriously found themselves made parties in Jarndyce and Jarndyce, without knowing how or why; whole families have inherited legendary hatreds with the suit. The little plaintiff or defendant, who was promised a new rocking-horse when Jarndyce and Jarndyce should be settled, has grown up, possessed himself of a real horse, and trotted away into the other world. Fair wards of court3 have faded into mothers and grandmothers; a long procession of Chancellors has come in and gone out; the legion of bills in the suit have been transformed into mere bills of mortality; there are not three Jarndyces left upon the earth perhaps, since old Tom Jarndyce in despair blew his brains out at a coffee-house in Chancery Lane; but Jarndyce and Jarndyce still drags its dreary length before the Court, perennially hopeless.

Jarndyce and Jarndyce has passed into a joke. That is the only good that has ever come of it. It has been death to many, but it is a joke in the profession. Every master in Chancery has had a reference out of it. Every Chancellor was “in it,” for somebody or other, when he was counsel at the bar. Good things have been said about it by blue-nosed, bulbous-shoed old benchers,4 in select port-wine committee after dinner in hall. Articled clerks5 have been in the habit of fleshing their legal wit upon it. The last Lord Chancellor handled it neatly when, correcting Mr. Blowers, the eminent silk gown who said that such a thing might happen when the sky rained potatoes, he observed, “or when we get through Jarndyce and Jarndyce, Mr. Blowers”; — a pleasantry that particularly tickled the maces, bags, and purses.

3. Minors, for whom guardians were appointed by the Court of Chancery.
4. Senior officers in one of the colleges of law, the Inns of Court.
5. Trainees for the legal profession who have made contracts (articles) as apprentices with their employers.
How many people out of the suit, Jarndyce and Jarndyce has stretched forth its unwholesome hand to spoil and corrupt, would be a very wide question. From the master, upon whose impaling files reams of dusty warrants in Jarndyce and Jarndyce have grimly writhed into many shapes; down to the copying-clerk in the Six Clerks’ Office, who has copied his tens of thousands of Chancery folio pages under that eternal heading; no man’s nature has been made better by it. In trickery, evasion, procrastination, spoliation, botheration, under false pretenses of all sorts, there are influences that can never come to good. The very solicitors’ boys who have kept the wretched suitors at bay, by protesting time out of mind that Mr. Chizzle, Mizzle, or otherwise, was particularly engaged and had appointments until dinner, may have got an extra moral twist and shuffle into themselves out of Jarndyce and Jarndyce. The receiver in the cause has acquired a goodly sum of money by it, but has acquired too a distrust of his own mother, and a contempt for his own kind. Chizzle, Mizzle, and otherwise, have lapsed into a habit of vaguely promising themselves that they will look into that outstanding little matter, and see what can be done for Drizzle—who was not well used—when Jarndyce and Jarndyce shall be got out of the office. Shirking and sharking, in all their many varieties, have been sown broadcast by the ill-fated cause; and even those who have contemplated its history from the outermost circle of such evil have been insensibly tempted into a loose way of letting bad things alone to take their own bad course, and a loose belief that if the world go wrong, it was, in some off-hand manner, never meant to go right.

Thus, in the midst of the mud and at the heart of the fog, sits the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery.

“Mr. Tangle,” says the Lord High Chancellor, latterly something restless under the eloquence of that learned gentleman.

“Mlud,” says Mr. Tangle. Mr. Tangle knows more of Jarndyce and Jarndyce than anybody. He is famous for it—supposed never to have read anything else since he left school.

“Have you nearly concluded your argument?”

“Mlud, no—variety of points—feel it my duty tsubmit—ludship,” is the reply that slides out of Mr. Tangle.

“Several members of the bar are still to be heard, I believe?” says the Chancellor, with a slight smile.

Eighteen of Mr. Tangle’s learned friends, each armed with a little summary of eighteen hundred sheets, bob up like eighteen hammers in a piano-forte, make eighteen bows, and drop into their eighteen places of obscurity.

“We will proceed with the hearing on Wednesday fortnight,” says the Chancellor. For the question at issue is only a question of costs, a mere bud on the forest tree of the parent suit, and really will come to a settlement one of these days.

The Chancellor rises; the bar rises; the prisoner is brought forward in a hurry; the man from Shropshire cries, “My lord!” Maces, bags, and purses indignantly proclaim silence, and frown at the man from Shropshire.

“In reference,” proceeds the Chancellor, still on Jarndyce and Jarndyce, “to the young girl——”

“Begludship’s pardon—boy,” says Mr. Tangle, prematurely.

“In reference,” proceeds the Chancellor, with extra distinctness, “to the young girl and boy, the two young people,”
(Mr. Tangle crushed.)

"Whom I directed to be in attendance to-day, and who are now in my private room, I will see them and satisfy myself as to the expediency of making the order for their residing with their uncle."

Mr. Tangle on his legs again.

"Begludship's pardon—dead."

"With their," Chancellor looking through his double eyeglass at the papers on his desk, "grandfather."

"Begludship's pardon—victim of rash action—brains."

Suddenly a very little counsel, with a terrific bass voice, arises, fully inflated, in the back settlements of the fog, and says, "Will your lordship allow me? I appear for him. He is a cousin, several times removed. I am not at the moment prepared to inform the Court in what exact remove he is a cousin; but he is a cousin."

Leaving this address (delivered like a sepulchral message) ringing in the rafters of the roof, the very little counsel drops, and the fog knows him no more. Everybody looks for him. Nobody can see him.

"I will speak with both the young people," says the Chancellor anew, "and satisfy myself on the subject of their residing with their cousin. I will mention the matter tomorrow morning when I take my seat."

The Chancellor is about to bow to the bar, when the prisoner is presented. Nothing can possibly come of the prisoner's conglomeration, but his being sent back to prison; which is soon done. The man from Shropshire ventures another demonstrative "My lord!" but the Chancellor, being aware of him, has dexterously vanished. Everybody else quickly vanishes too. A battery of blue bags is loaded with heavy charges of papers and carried off by clerks; the little mad old woman marches off with her documents; the empty court is locked up. If all the injustice it has committed, and all the misery it has caused, could only be locked up with it, and the whole burned away in a great funeral pyre—why so much the better for other parties than the parties in Jarndyce and Jarndyce!

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1852–53

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From Hard Times

The One Thing Needful

"Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts; nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own

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1. Hard Times appeared as a serial in short weekly installments in 1854. The novel is set in a manufacturing town in the English midlands, Coketown, in which the leading citizens, Mr. Gradgrind and Mr. Bounderby, represent the philosophy of Utilitarianism, at least in one of its phases. Gradgrind, in particular, considers that imaginative pursuits such as poetry, or fanciful entertainments such as a circus, divert the mind from its proper concern with fact and analysis. According to these principles he has brought up his own family, and to inculcate them further he has established a school. The teacher, Mr. M'Choakumchild, is pictured as representative of the teachers being turned out by training colleges in the 1850's, whose training had stressed the acquisition of factual knowledge—as Philip Collins has shown in his Dickens and Education. Our selections are from Book I, Chapters One, Two, and Five.
children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir!"
The scene was a plain, bare, monotonous vault of a schoolroom, and the speaker's square forefinger emphasized his observations by underscoring every sentence with a line on the schoolmaster's sleeve. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's square wall of a forehead, which had his eyebrows for its base, while his eyes found commodious cellarage in two dark caves, overshadowed by the wall. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's mouth, which was wide, thin, and hard set. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's voice, which was inflexible, dry, and dictatorial. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's hair, which bristled on the skirts of his bald head, a plantation of firs to keep the wind from its shining surface, all covered with knobs, like the crust of a plum pie, as if the head had scarcely warehouse-room for the hard facts stored inside. The speaker's obstinate carriage, square coat, square legs, square shoulders—nay, his very neckcloth, trained to take him by the throat with an unaccommodating grasp, like a stubborn fact, as it was—all helped the emphasis.

“In this life, we want nothing but Facts, sir; nothing but Facts!”
The speaker, and the schoolmaster, and the third grown person present, all backed a little, and swept with their eyes the inclined plane of little vessels then and there arranged in order, ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim.

Murdering the Innocents

Thomas Gradgrind, sir. A man of realities. A man of facts and calculations. A man who proceeds upon the principle that two and two are four, and nothing over, and who is not to be talked into allowing for anything over. Thomas Gradgrind, sir—peremptorily Thomas—Thomas Gradgrind. With a rule and a pair of scales, and the multiplication table always in his pocket, sir, ready to weigh and measure any parcel of human nature, and tell you exactly what it comes to. It is a mere question of figures, a case of simple arithmetic. You might hope to get some other nonsensical belief into the head of George Gradgrind, or Augustus Gradgrind, or John Gradgrind, or Joseph Gradgrind (all supposititious, nonexistent persons), but into the head of Thomas Gradgrind—no, sir!

In such terms Mr. Gradgrind always mentally introduced himself, whether to his private circle of acquaintance, or to the public in general. In such terms, no doubt, substituting the words “boys and girls” for “sir,” Thomas Gradgrind now presented Thomas Gradgrind to the little pitchers before him, who were to be filled so full of facts.

Indeed, as he eagerly sparkled at them from the cellarage before mentioned, he seemed a kind of cannon loaded to the muzzle with facts, and prepared to blow them clean out of the regions of childhood at one discharge. He seemed a galvanizing apparatus, too, charged with a grim mechanical substitute for the tender young imaginations that were to be stormed away.

“Girl number twenty,” said Mr. Gradgrind, squarely pointing with his square forefinger, “I don’t know that girl. Who is that girl?”

“Sissy Jupe, sir,” explained number twenty, blushing, standing up, and curtseying.

“Sissy is not a name,” said Mr. Gradgrind. “Don’t call yourself Sissy. Call yourself Cecilia.”
“It’s father as calls me Sissy, sir,” returned the young girl in a trembling voice, and with another curtsey.

“Then he has no business to do it,” said Mr. Gradgrind. “Tell him he mustn’t. Cecilia Jupe. Let me see. What is your father?”

“He belongs to the horse-riding, if you please, sir.”

Mr. Gradgrind frowned, and waved off the objectionable calling with his hand.

“We don’t want to know anything about that, here. You mustn’t tell us about that, here. Your father breaks horses, don’t he?”

“If you please, sir, when they can get any to break, they do break horses in the ring, sir.”

“You mustn’t tell us about the ring here. Very well, then. Describe your father as a horsebreaker. He doctors sick horses, I dare say?”

“Oh, yes, sir.”

“Very well, then. He is a veterinary surgeon, a farrier, and horsebreaker. Give me your definition of a horse.”

(Sissy Jupe thrown into the greatest alarm by this demand.)

“Girl number twenty unable to define a horse!” said Mr. Gradgrind, for the general behoof of all the little pitchers. “Girl number twenty possessed of no facts in reference to one of the commonest of animals! Some boy’s definition of a horse. Bitzer, yours.”

The square finger, moving here and there, lighted suddenly on Bitzer, perhaps because he chanced to sit in the same ray of sunlight which, darting in at one of the bare windows of the intensely whitewashed room, irradiated Sissy. For, the boys and girls sat on the face of the inclined plane in two compact bodies, divided up the center by a narrow interval; and Sissy, being at the corner of a row on the sunny side, came in for the beginning of a sunbeam, of which Bitzer, being at the corner of a row on the other side, a few rows in advance, caught the end. But, whereas the girl was so dark-eyed and dark-haired that she seemed to receive a deeper and more lustrous color from the sun, when it shone upon her, the boy was so light-eyed and light-haired that the self-same rays appeared to draw out of him what little color he ever possessed. His cold eyes would hardly have been eyes, but for the short ends of lashes which, by bringing them into immediate contrast with something paler than themselves, expressed their form. His short-cropped hair might have been a mere continuation of the sandy freckles on his forehead and face. His skin was so unwholesomely deficient in the natural tinge, that he looked as though, if he were cut, he would bleed white.

“Bitzer,” said Thomas Gradgrind. “Your definition of a horse.”

“Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries, sheds hoofs, too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth.” Thus (and much more) Bitzer.

“Now, girl number twenty,” said Mr. Gradgrind, “you know what a horse is.”

She curtseyed again, and would have blushed deeper, if she could have blushed deeper than she had blushed all this time. Bitzer, after rapidly blinking at Thomas Gradgrind with both eyes at once, and so catching the light upon his quivering ends of lashes that they looked like the antennae of busy insects, put his knuckles to his freckled forehead, and sat down again.

The third gentleman now stepped forth. A mighty man at cutting and drying, he was; a government officer; in his way (and in most other people’s too),
a professed pugilist; always in training, always with a system to force down the
general throat like a bolus,\(^2\) always to be heard of at the bar of his little Public-
office, ready to fight all England. To continue in the fistic phraseology, he had
a genius for coming up to the scratch,\(^3\) wherever and whatever it was, and prov-
ing himself an ugly customer. He would go in and damage any subject what-
ever with his right, follow up with his left, stop, exchange, counter, bore his
opponent (he always fought All England)\(^4\) to the ropes, and fall upon him
neatly. He was certain to knock the wind out of common sense, and render that
unlucky adversary deaf to the call of time. And he had it in charge from high
authority to bring about the great Public-office Millennium, when Commis-
sioners\(^5\) should reign upon earth.

"Very well," said this gentleman, briskly smiling, and folding his arms.
"That's a horse. Now, let me ask you, girls and boys, Would you paper a room
with representations of horses?"

After a pause, one half of the children cried in chorus, “Yes, sir!” Upon which
the other half, seeing in the gentleman’s face that Yes was wrong, cried out in
chorus, “No, sir!”—as the custom is, in these examinations.

“Of course, No. Why wouldn’t you?”

A pause. One corpulent slow boy, with a wheezy manner of breathing, ven-
tured the answer, Because he wouldn’t paper a room at all, but would paint it.

“You must paper it,” said the gentleman, rather warmly.

“You must paper it,” said Thomas Gradgrind, “whether you like it or not.
Don’t tell us you wouldn’t paper it. What do you mean, boy?”

“I’ll explain to you, then,” said the gentleman, after another and a dismal
pause, ‘why you wouldn’t paper a room with representations of horses. Do you
ever see horses walking up and down the sides of rooms in reality—in fact? Do
you?”

“Yes, sir!” from one half. “No, sir!” from the other.

“Of course, No,” said the gentleman, with an indignant look at the wrong
half. “Why, then, you are not to see anywhere what you don’t see in fact; you
are not to have anywhere what you don’t have in fact. What is called Taste, is
only another name for Fact.”

Thomas Gradgrind nodded his approbation.

“This is a new principle, a discovery, a great discovery,” said the gentleman.

“Now I’ll try you again. Suppose you were going to carpet a room. Would you
use a carpet having a representation of flowers upon it?”

There being a general conviction by this time that “No, sir!” was always the
right answer to this gentleman, the chorus of No was very strong. Only a few
feeble stragglers said Yes; among them Sissy Jupe.

“Girl number twenty,” said the gentleman, smiling in the calm strength of
knowledge.

Sissy blushed, and stood up.

“So you would carpet your room—or your husband’s room, if you were a
grown woman, and had a husband—with representations of flowers, would
you,” said the gentleman. “Why would you?”

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2. A large pill.
3. A line drawn across the center of the ring in the
early days of prize fighting. Contestants would
begin a match by stepping up to opposite sides of
this line, and the match would end when one of the
two could no longer come up to the scratch line at
the beginning of a new round.
4. Fighting according to a national code of rules
for the prize ring—one of the codes superseded by
the adoption of the Marquis of Queensbury’s rules
in 1866.
5. Administrative officials in various departments
of government such as Customs or Income Taxes.
“If you please, sir, I am very fond of flowers,” returned the girl.

“And is that why you would put tables and chairs upon them, and have people walking over them with heavy boots?”

“It wouldn’t hurt them, sir. They wouldn’t crush and wither if you please, sir. They would be the pictures of what was very pretty and pleasant, and I would fancy”—

“Ay, ay, ay! But you mustn’t fancy,” cried the gentleman, quite elated by coming so happily to his point. “That’s it! You are never to fancy.”

“You are not, Cecilia Jupe,” Thomas Gradgrind solemnly repeated, “to do anything of that kind.”


“You are to be in all things regulated and governed,” said the gentleman, “by fact. We hope to have before long, a board of fact, composed of commissioners of fact, who will force the people to be a people of fact, and of nothing but fact. You must discard the word Fancy altogether. You have nothing to do with it. You are not to have, in any object of use or ornament, what would be a contradiction in fact. You don’t walk upon flowers in fact; you cannot be allowed to walk upon flowers in carpets. You don’t find that foreign birds and butterflies come and perch upon your crockery; you cannot be permitted to paint foreign birds and butterflies upon your crockery. You never meet with quadrupeds going up and down walls; you must not have quadrupeds represented upon walls. You must use,” said the gentleman, “for all these purposes, combinations and modifications (in primary colors) of mathematical figures which are susceptible of proof and demonstration. This is the new discovery. This is Fact. This is taste.”

The girl curtseyed and sat down. She was very young, and she looked as if she were frightened by the matter of fact prospect the world afforded.

“Now, if Mr. M’Choakumchild,” said the gentleman, “will proceed to give his first lesson here, Mr. Gradgrind, I shall be happy, at your request, to observe his mode of procedure.”

Mr. Gradgrind was much obliged. “Mr. M’Choakumchild, we only wait for you.”

So, Mr. M’Choakumchild began in his best manner. He and some one hundred and forty other schoolmasters had been lately turned at the same time, in the same factory, on the same principles, like so many piano-forte legs. He had been put through an immense variety of paces, and had answered volumes of head-breaking questions. Orthography, etymology, syntax, and prosody, biography, astronomy, geography, and general cosmography, the sciences of compound proportion, algebra, land-surveying and leveling, vocal music and drawing from models, were all at the ends of his ten chilled fingers. He had worked his stony way into Her Majesty’s most Honourable Privy Council’s Schedule B,6 and had taken the bloom off the higher branches of mathematics and physical science, French, German, Latin, and Greek. He knew all about all the Water Sheds of all the world (whatever they are), and all the histories of all the peoples, and all the names of all the rivers and mountains, and all the productions, manners, and customs of all the countries, and all their boundaries and bearings on the two-and-thirty points of the compass. Ah, rather

6. A syllabus established in 1846 specifying what subjects were to be mastered by candidates training to become teachers. Schedule B was drawn up by a subcommittee of the Privy Council.
overdone, M’Choakumchild. If he had only learned a little less, how infinitely better he might have taught much more!

He went to work, in this preparatory lesson, not unlike Morgiana7 in the Forty Thieves; looking into all the vessels ranged before him, one after another, to see what they contained. Say, good M’Choakumchild. When from thy boiling store thou shalt fill each jar brimful by-and-by, dost thou think that thou wilt always kill outright the robber Fancy lurking within—or sometimes only maim him and distort him?

* * *

[Coketown]

Coketown, to which Messrs. Bounderby and Gradgrind now walked, was a triumph of fact; it had no greater taint of fancy in it than Mrs. Gradgrind herself.8 Let us strike the keynote, Coketown, before pursuing our tune.

It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves forever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of buildings full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness. It contained several large streets all very like one another, and many small streets still more like one another, inhabited by people equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work, and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and tomorrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next.

These attributes of Coketown were in the main inseparable from the work by which it was sustained; against them were to be set off, comforts of life which found their way all over the world, and elegancies of life which made, we will not ask how much of the fine lady, who could scarcely bear to hear the place mentioned. The rest of its features were voluntary, and they were these.

You saw nothing in Coketown but what was severely workful. If the members of a religious persuasion built a chapel there—as the members of eighteen religious persuasions had done—they made it a pious warehouse of red brick, with sometimes (but this is only in highly ornamented examples) a bell in a birdcage on the top of it. The solitary exception was the New Church; a stuccoed edifice with a square steeple over the door, terminating in four short pinnacles like florid wooden legs. All the public inscriptions in the town were painted alike, in severe characters of black and white. The jail might have been the infirmary, the infirmary might have been the jail, the town hall might have been either, or both, or anything else, for anything that appeared to the contrary in the graces of their construction. Fact, fact, fact, everywhere in the material aspect of the town; fact, fact, fact, everywhere in the immaterial. The M’Choakumchild school was all fact, and the school of design was all fact, and

7. Ali Baba’s slave in the Arabian Nights’ Entertainments who killed forty thieves by pouring boiling oil into the jars in which they were hiding.
8. As Chapter 4 indicated, Mr. Gradgrind’s choice of wife had been guided by seeking someone unimaginative. “She had ‘no nonsense’ about her. By nonsense he meant fancy.”
the relations between master and man were all fact, and everything was fact
between the lying-in hospital and the cemetery; and what you couldn’t state in
figures, or show to be purchasable in the cheapest market and salable in the
deepest, was not, and never should be, world without end, Amen.

A town so sacred to fact, and so triumphant in its assertion, of course got on
well? Why no, not quite well. No? Dear me!

No. Coketown did not come out of its own furnaces, in all respects like gold
that had stood the fire. First, the perplexing mystery of the place was, Who
belonged to the eighteen denominations? Because, whoever did, the laboring
people did not. It was very strange to walk through the streets on a Sunday
morning, and note how few of them the barbarous jangling of bells that was
driving the sick and nervous mad, called away from their own quarter, from
their own close rooms, from the corners of their own streets, where they
lounged listlessly, gazing at all the church and chapel going, as at a thing with
which they had no manner of concern. Nor was it merely the stranger who
noticed this, because there was a native organization in Coketown itself, whose
members were to be heard of in the House of Commons every session, indign-
antly petitioning for acts of parliament that should make these people reli-
gious by main force. Then came the Teetotal Society, who complained that
these same people would get drunk, and showed in tabular statements that they
did get drunk, and proved at tea parties that no inducement, human or Divine
(except a medal), would induce them to forego their custom of getting drunk.
Then came the chemist and druggist, with other tabular statements, showing
that when they didn’t get drunk, they took opium. Then came the experienced
chaplain of the jail, with more tabular statements, outdoing all the previous
tabular statements, and showing that the same people would resort to low
haunts, hidden from the public eye, where they heard low singing and saw low
dancing, and mayhap joined in it; where A. B., aged twenty-four next birthday,
and committed for eighteen months’ solitary, had himself said (not that he had
ever shown himself particularly worthy of belief) his ruin began, as he was per-
fectly sure and confident that otherwise he would have been a tip-top moral
specimen. Then came Mr. Gradgrind and Mr. Bounderby, the two gentlemen
at this present moment walking through Coketown, and both eminently prac-
tical, who could, on occasion, furnish more tabular statements derived from
their own personal experience, and illustrated by cases they had known and
seen, from which it clearly appeared—in short, it was the only clear thing in
the case—that these same people were a bad lot altogether, gentlemen; that do
what you would for them they were never thankful for it, gentlemen; that they
were restless, gentlemen; that they never knew what they wanted; that they
lived upon the best, and bought fresh butter; and insisted on Mocha coffee,
and rejected all but prime parts of meat, and yet were eternally dissatisfied and
unmanageable. In short, it was the moral of the old nursery fable:

There was an old woman, and what do you think?
She lived upon nothing but victuals and drink;
Victuals and drink were the whole of her diet,
And yet this old woman would NEVER be quiet.

Is it possible, I wonder, that there was any analogy between the case of the
Coketown population and the case of the little Gradgrinds? Surely, none of us
in our sober senses and acquainted with figures, are to be told at this time of
day, that one of the foremost elements in the existence of the Coketown
working-people had been for scores of years deliberately set at naught? That there was any Fancy in them demanding to be brought into healthy existence instead of struggling on in convulsions? That exactly in the ratio as they worked long and monotonously, the craving grew within them for some physical relief—some relaxation, encouraging good humor and good spirits, and giving them a vent—some recognized holiday, though it were but for an honest dance to a stirring band of music—some occasional light pie in which even M’Choakumchild had no finger—which craving must and would be satisfied aright, or must and would inevitably go wrong, until the laws of the Creation were repealed?

1854

From Our Mutual Friend¹

Podsnappery

Mr. Podsnap was well to do, and stood very high in Mr. Podsnap’s opinion. Beginning with a good inheritance, he had married a good inheritance, and had thriven exceedingly in the Marine Insurance way, and was quite satisfied. He never could make out why everybody was not quite satisfied, and he felt conscious that he set a brilliant social example in being particularly well satisfied with most things, and, above all other things, with himself.

Thus happily acquainted with his own merit and importance, Mr. Podsnap settled that whatever he put behind him he put out of existence. There was a dignified conclusiveness—not to add a grand convenience—in this way of getting rid of disagreeables which had done much towards establishing Mr. Podsnap in his lofty place in Mr. Podsnap’s satisfaction. “I don’t want to know about it; I don’t choose to discuss it; I don’t admit it!” Mr. Podsnap had even acquired a peculiar flourish of his right arm in often clearing the world of its most difficult problems, by sweeping them behind him (and consequently sheer away) with those words and a flushed face. For they affronted him.

Mr. Podsnap’s world was not a very large world, morally; no, nor even geographically; seeing that although his business was sustained upon commerce with other countries, he considered other countries, with that important reservation, a mistake, and of their manners and customs would conclusively observe, “Not English!” when, PRESTO! with a flourish of the arm, and a flush of the face, they were swept away. Elsewhere, the world got up at eight, shaved close at a quarter-past, breakfasted at nine, went to the City at ten, came home at half-past five, and dined at seven. Mr. Podsnap’s notions of the Arts in their integrity might have been stated thus. Literature; large print, respectfully descriptive of getting up at eight, shaving close at a quarter-past, breakfasting at nine, going to the City at ten, coming home at half-past five, and dining at seven. Painting and Sculpture; models and portraits representing Professors of getting up at eight, shaving close at a quarter-past, breakfasting at nine, going to the City at ten, coming home at half-past five, and dining at seven. Music;

¹. Dickens’ last completed novel, published in 1864–65, portrays a large-scale cross-section of Victorian society in which the amassing and displaying of wealth are obsessive preoccupations of various classes of characters. These include the solidly established middle class represented by Mr. and Mrs. Podsnap, and the newly rich represented by Mr. and Mrs. Veneering (who appear as guests at the Podsnap dinner party). Our selection is from Chapter 11.
a respectable performance (without variations) on stringed and wind instruments, sedately expressive of getting up at eight, shaving close at a quarter-past, breakfasting at nine, going to the City at ten, coming home at half-past five, and dining at seven. Nothing else to be permitted to those same vagrants the Arts, on pain of excommunication. Nothing else To Be—anywhere!

As a so eminently respectable man, Mr. Podsnap was sensible of its being required of him to take Providence under his protection. Consequently he always knew exactly what Providence meant. Inferior and less respectable men might fall short of that mark, but Mr. Podsnap was always up to it. And it was very remarkable (and must have been very comfortable) that what Providence meant, was invariably what Mr. Podsnap meant.

These may be said to have been the articles of a faith and school which the present chapter takes the liberty of calling, after its representative man, Podsnappery. They were confined within close bounds, as Mr. Podsnap’s own head was confined by his shirtcollar; and they were enunciated with a sounding pomp that smacked of the creaking of Mr. Podsnap’s own boots.

There was a Miss Podsnap. And this young rocking-horse was being trained in her mother’s art of prancing in a stately manner without ever getting on. But the high parental action was not yet imparted to her, and in truth she was but an undersized damsel, with high shoulders, low spirits, chilled elbows, and a rasped surface of nose, who seemed to take occasional frosty peeps out of childhood into womanhood, and to shrink back again, overcome by her mother’s head-dress and her father from head to foot—crushed by the mere dead weight of Podsnappery.

A certain institution in Mr. Podsnap’s mind which he called “the young person” may be considered to have been embodied in Miss Podsnap, his daughter. It was an inconvenient and exacting institution, as requiring everything in the universe to be filed down and fitted to it. The question about everything was, would it bring a blush into the cheek of the young person? And the inconvenience of the young person was, that, according to Mr. Podsnap, she seemed always liable to burst into blushes when there was no need at all. There appeared to be no line of demarcation between the young person’s excessive innocence, and another person’s guiltiest knowledge. Take Mr. Podsnap’s word for it, and the soberest tints of drab, white, lilac, and gray were all flaming red to the troublesome Bull of a young person.

The Podsnaps lived in a shady angle adjoining Portman Square. They were a kind of people certain to dwell in the shade, wherever they dwelled. Miss Podsnap’s life had been, from her first appearance on this planet, altogether of a shady order; for, Mr. Podsnap’s young person was likely to get little good out of association with other young persons, and had therefore been restricted to companionship with not very congenial older persons, and with massive furniture. Miss Podsnap’s early views of life being principally derived from the reflections of it in her father’s boots, and in the walnut and rosewood tables of the dim drawing rooms, and in their swarthy giants of looking-glasses, were of a somber cast; and it was not wonderful that now, when she was on most days solemnly tooled through the Park by the side of her mother in a great tall custard-colored phaeton, she showed above the apron of that vehicle like a dejected young person sitting up in bed to take a startled look at things in general, and very strongly desiring to get her head under the counterpane again.

2. Driven.
Said Mr. Podsnap to Mrs. Podsnap, “Georgiana is almost eighteen.”
Said Mrs. Podsnap to Mr. Podsnap, assenting, “Almost eighteen.”
Said Mr. Podsnap then to Mrs. Podsnap, “Really I think we should have some people on Georgiana’s birthday.”
Said Mrs. Podsnap then to Mr. Podsnap, “Which will enable us to clear off all those people who are due.”

So it came to pass that Mr. and Mrs. Podsnap requested the honor of the company of seventeen friends of their souls at dinner; and that they substituted other friends of their souls for such of the seventeen original friends of their souls as deeply regretted that a prior engagement prevented their having the honor of dining with Mr. and Mrs. Podsnap, in pursuance of their kind invitation; and that Mrs. Podsnap said of all these inconsolable personages, as she checked them off with a pencil in her list, “Asked, at any rate, and got rid of”; and that they successfully disposed of a good many friends of their souls in this way, and felt their consciences much lightened.

There were still other friends of their souls who were not entitled to be asked to dinner, but had a claim to be invited to come and take a haunch of mutton vapor-bath 3 at half-past nine. For the clearing off of these worthies, Mrs. Podsnap added a small and early evening to the dinner, and looked in at the music shop to bespeak a well-conducted automaton to come and play quadrilles for a carpet dance.

Mr. and Mrs. Veneering, and Mr. and Mrs. Veneering’s brand new bride and bridgroom, were of the dinner company; but the Podsnap establishment had nothing else in common with the Veneerings. Mr. Podsnap could tolerate taste in a mushroom man 4 who stood in need of that sort of thing, but was far above it himself. Hideous solidity was the characteristic of the Podsnap plate. Everything was made to look as heavy as it could, and to take up as much room as possible. Everything said boastfully, “Here you have as much of me in my ugliness as if I were only lead; but I am so many ounces of precious metal worth so much an ounce;—wouldn’t you like to melt me down?” A corpulent straddling epergne, blotched all over as if it had broken out in an eruption rather than been ornamented, delivered this address from an unsightly silver platform in the center of the table. Four silver wine-coolers, each furnished with four staring heads, each head obtrusively carrying a big silver ring in each of its ears, conveyed the sentiment up and down the table, and handed it on to the pot-bellied silver salt-cellars. All the big silver spoons and forks widened the mouths of the company expressly for the purpose of thrusting the sentiment down their throats with every morsel they ate.

The majority of the guests were like the plate, and included several heavy articles weighing ever so much. But there was a foreign gentleman among them: whom Mr. Podsnap had invited after much debate with himself—believing the whole European continent to be in mortal alliance against the young person—and there was a droll disposition, not only on the part of Mr. Podsnap but of everybody else, to treat him as if he were a child who was hard of hearing.

As a delicate concession to this unfortunately born foreigner, Mr. Podsnap, in receiving him, had presented his wife as “Madame Podsnap”; also his daughter as “Mademoiselle Podsnap,” with some inclination to add “ma fille,” in which

3. The second-class guests get no dinner at the reception. Instead they will be immersed in the pervading smells of the dinner that had been served earlier to the first-class guests, in particular the steamy smell of a dish of mutton, in which they will figuratively bathe.
4. A parvenu, one whose wealth and social position has suddenly and recently shot into prominence. Of the Veneerings it was said earlier: “All their furniture was new . . . their plate was new.”
bold venture, however, he checked himself. The Veneerings being at that time
the only other arrivals, he had added (in a condescendingly explanatory man-
ner), “Monsieur Vey-nair-reeng,” and had then subsided into English.

“How Do You Like London?” Mr. Podsnap now inquired from his station of
host, as if he were administering something in the nature of a powder or por-
tion to the deaf child; “London, Londres, London?”

The foreign gentleman admired it.
“You find itVeryLarge?” said Mr. Podsnap, spacially.
The foreign gentleman found it very large.
“AndVeryRich?”
The foreign gentleman found it, without doubt, énormément riche.
“Enormously Rich, We say,” returned Mr. Podsnap, in a condescending man-
ner. “Our English adverbs do Not terminate in Mong, and We Pronounce the
‘ch’ as if there were a ‘t’ before it. We say Ritch.”
“Reetch,” remarked the foreign gentleman.
“And Do You Find, Sir,” pursued Mr. Podsnap, with dignity, “Many Evidences
that Strike You, of our British Constitution in the Streets Of The World’s
Metropolis, London, Londres, London?”
The foreign gentleman begged to be pardoned, but did not altogether under-
stand.

“The Constitution Britannique,” Mr. Podsnap explained, as if he were teaching
in an infant school. “We Say British, But You Say Britannique, You Know”
(forgivingly, as if that were not his fault). “The Constitution, Sir.”
The foreign gentleman said, “Mais, yees; I know eem.”
A youngish sallowish gentleman in spectacles, with a lumpy forehead, seated
in a supplementary chair at a corner of the table, here caused a profound sen-
sation by saying in a raised voice “Esker,” and then stopping dead.

Mais oui,” said the foreign gentleman, turning towards him. “Est-ce que?
Quoi donc?”
But the gentleman with the lumpy forehead having for the time delivered
himself of all that he found behind his lumps, spake for the time no more.

“I Was Inquiring,” said Mr. Podsnap, resuming the thread of his discourse,
“Whether You Have Observed in our Streets as We should say, Upon our Pavvy
as You would say, any Tokens—”
The foreign gentleman, with patient courtesy entreated pardon; “But what
was tokenz?”
“Marks,” said Mr. Podsnap; “Signs, you know, Appearances—Traces.”
“Ah! Of a Orse?” inquired the foreign gentleman.
“We call it Horse,” said Mr. Podsnap, with forbearance. “In England,
Angleterre, England, We Aspirate the ‘H,’ and We Say ‘Horse.’ Only our Lower
Classes Say ‘Orse!’ ”
“Pardon,” said the foreign gentleman; “I am alwiz wrong!”
“Our Language,” said Mr. Podsnap, with a gracious consciousness of being
always right, “is Difficult. Ours is a Copious Language, and Trying to Strangers.
I will not Pursue my Question.”
But the lumpy gentleman, unwilling to give it up, again madly said, “Esker,”
and again spake no more.
“It merely referred,” Mr. Podsnap explained, with a sense of meritorious pro-
prietorship, “to Our Constitution, Sir. We Englishmen are Very Proud of our

5. “Is it that . . . ? What, then?”
Constitution, Sir. It Was Bestowed Upon Us By Providence. No Other Country is so Favored as This Country."

“And ozer countries?—” the foreign gentleman was beginning, when Mr. Podsnap put him right again.

“We do not say Ozer; we say Other: the letters are ‘T’ and ‘H’; You say Tay and Aish, You Know; (still with clemency). The sound is ‘th’—‘th!’”

“And other countries,” said the foreign gentleman. “They do how?”

“They do, Sir,” returned Mr. Podsnap, gravely shaking his head; “they do—I am sorry to be obliged to say it—as they do.”

“It was a little particular of Providence,” said the foreign gentleman, laughing; “for the frontier is not large.”

* * *

1864–65