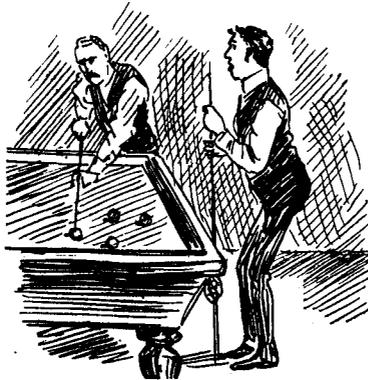


"Ah! indeed," said the other, "a regular admirable Crichton; there he goes again, by Jove, six more, that makes it nineteen to four; look out Vi—ahem," and he checked himself, for as yet no sign of recognition had passed between himself and Yubbitts' opponent.

As far as appearances went, Mr. Yubbitts, though in reality a miserable player, was superior to his antagonist. The game was for five dollars, or as Yubbitts styled it "a quid," and there seemed every probability that he would come out victorious, for though the ex-lieutenant was gradually creeping up to him, Mr. Yubbitts only required five to make to win, whilst Mr. Viner lacked ten of the requisite number of points.

"By Jove, sir," exclaimed the penguin-looking gentleman, "this is becoming interesting," as Viner scored eight before he missed, whilst Yubbitts still wanted two to go out; but it was his turn to play.



The excitement of Coddleby and Crinkle was intense as they, bending forward, watched their friend prepare to make his stroke; and at this moment Viner darted a quick glance towards the military-looking gentleman in the chair, and his nose worked more rapidly than ever. The elderly gentleman, however, merely shook his

head, as Yubbitts made his stroke and missed, leaving his opponent two to make to win. Mr. Viner, chalking his cue with great care and preparing to play with seemingly the utmost caution, now took his position. The shot was, apparently an easy one, but it was missed, and Mr. Viner, stamping with vexation, exclaimed with an oath, "Never saw such luck; couldn't have missed that if I'd tried," and Yubbitts, victoriously made a cannon and rolled his ball into the pocket, and won.

Loud was the applause from his two friends, who really seemed proud of his victory.

"You must give me my revenge," exclaimed Mr. Viner, handing over a five dollar note, and to all seemingly much chagrined. "You must indeed, my luck was against me, though I cannot but admit that you are an admirable player. You must teach me a few of those strokes, sir."

Mr. Yubbitts was delighted, and expressed his perfect willingness to try another tussle.

"What shall it be this time?" asked Mr. Viner, "double or quits?"

"Oh! I'm not particular," answered Yubbitts elated by his success, "say a 'fiver' on the game."

"By a 'fiver' do I understand you to mean dollars or pounds?" enquired Viner.

"Sovs., of course," replied Yubbitts, "dem dollars. But let us have something to drink; I am as dry as a demd fish; here, waiter," and he knocked on the floor.

The various potations having been brought, and the military gentleman having accepted a tumbler of brandy and soda at Mr. Yubbitts' invitation, the second game commenced, Mr. Viner having agreed to make it five pounds or twenty-five dollars as the result.

This contest was closer than the preceding one, for though Mr. Viner led from the very start, he never obtained more than three or four of a lead, all the way through, and at one time Mr. Yubbitts was seven ahead. At this

point, when Messrs Coddleby and Crinkle seemed perfectly confident of the ultimate success of their comrade, the military gentleman turned to the former, who was now seated on his left and offered to bet twenty dollars that Mr. Viner would win. Mr. Coddleby though by no means a betting or gambling man, was so carried away by his excitement that he immediately closed with the offer, and Mr. Crinkle, infected by this example, made a similar wager with the military penguin.

"Now, Yubbitts, be cautious," whispered Crinkle, whilst Coddleby uttered the same precaution to their champion.

A sharp glance, unobserved by all save the individual for whom it was intended, was darted from Viner to the personage on the chair, who returned the look by the very faintest nod imaginable.

And now the game became one of intense interest and excitement, and several spectators gathered around.

Mr. Yubbitts' lead of seven was rapidly reduced to no lead at all, and in a very brief space of time he was again a few points behind, which position he occupied till the end of the game, which closed in favor of Mr. Viner, much to the Pickwickian's dismay, not to say disgust.

"By jingo, sir," he exclaimed, "I gave you your revenge; you must give me mine; if I hadn't been so confoundedly nervous I'm sure I should have won."

"As you please, sir," replied Viner, "though I think we've had enough for to-night. It's late and I'm sleepy."

"No, not by any means," vociferated Yubbitts, "there's time for another game. What do you say, gentlemen?" He appealed to his friends and the military gentleman.

"By all means." "Have another." "You'll win, sir," and so on, from all sides, and Mr. Viner, apparently unwillingly, prepared for the final struggle, the stakes being as before, twenty-five dollars. The struggle proved to be a short one. Mr. Yubbitts had scored seven points when his antagonist having run out in three breaks, replaced his cue in the rack, and having received the amount of his winnings, nearly fifty dollars, and expressing a hope that he should meet his newly acquired friends on the morrow, left the room with a very polite bow which seemed to include the military gentleman in its sweep. The warrior, in turn, having received the amount of his winnings from Crinkle and Coddleby, just forty dollars, also sauntered stiffly out.

Both might have been seen shortly afterwards in the bar-room, apparently enjoying some extra good joke with their refreshments.



"Well," said Coddleby, somewhat crestfallen, as he and his friends met in the reading room, which was now deserted, no one occupying it with the exception of a gentleman who was writing a letter, and a large man who appeared to be dozing in a far corner. "What do you think of that? I wonder what Bramley will say when he hears of it."

"I think," Yubbitts remarked, "that the less we say about the matter to Bramley, the better. If I hadn't had such demd bad luck I should have won in