

"My dear sir," said that gentleman as I rose to receive him, "pray be seated. Pray sit down. Now, do not stand on my account. I must insist upon it, really." With these words Mr. Pickwick gently pressed me down into my seat, and taking my hand in his, shook it again and again with a warmth of manner perfectly irresistible. I endeavoured to express in my welcome, something of that heartiness and pleasure which the sight of him awakened, and made him sit down beside me. All this time he kept alternately releasing my hand, and grasping it again, and surveying me through his spectacles with such a beaming countenance as I never beheld.

"You knew me directly!" said Mr. Pickwick. "What a pleasure it is to think that you knew me directly!"

I remarked that I had read his adventures very often, and that his features were quite familiar to me from the published portraits. As I thought it a good opportunity of adverting to the circumstance, I condoled with him upon the various libels on his character which had found their way into print. Mr. Pickwick shook his head, and for a moment looked very indignant, but smiling again directly, added that no doubt I was acquainted with Cervantes' introduction to the second part of Don Quixote, and that it fully expressed his sentiments on the subject.

"But, now," said Mr. Pickwick, "don't you wonder how I found you out?"

"I will never wonder, and with your good leave, never know," said I, smiling in my turn. "It is enough for me that you give me this gratification. I have not the least desire that you should tell me by what means I have obtained it."

"You are very kind," returned Mr. Pickwick, shaking me by the hand again, "you are exactly what I expected! But for what particular purpose do you think I have sought you out, my dear sir? Now, what do you think I come for?"

Mr. Pickwick put this question as though he were persuaded that it was morally impossible that I could by any means divine the deep purpose of his visit, and that it must be hidden from all human ken. Therefore, although I was rejoiced to think that I anticipated his drift, I feigned to be ignorant of it, and after a brief consideration shook my head despairingly.

"What should you say," said Mr. Pickwick, laying the forefinger of his left hand upon my coat-sleeve, and looking at me with his head thrown back, and a little on one side, "what should you say if I confessed that, after reading your account of yourself and your little society, I had come here, a humble candidate for one of those empty chairs?"

"I should say," I returned, "that I know of only one circumstance which could still further endear that little society to me, and that would be the associating with it my old friend—for you must let me call you so—my old friend, Mr. Pickwick."

As I made him this answer, every feature of Mr. Pickwick's face fused itself in one all-pervading expression of delight. After shaking me heartily by both hands at once, he patted me gently on the back, and then—I well understood why—coloured up to the eyes, and hoped with great earnestness of manner that he had not hurt me.

If he had, I would have been content that he should have repeated the offence a hundred times rather than suppose so, but as he had not, I had no difficulty in changing the subject by making an enquiry which had been on my lips twenty times already.

"And this," said Mr. Pickwick, stopping short, "is the old clock! Dear me!"

I thought he would never have come away from it. After advancing to it softly, and laying his hand upon it with as much respect and as many smiling looks as if it were alive, he sat himself to consider it in every possible direction, now mounting on a chair to look at the top, now going down upon his knees to examine the bottom, now surveying the sides with his spectacles almost touching the case, and now trying to peep between it and the wall to get a slight view of the back. Then, he would retire a pace or two to look up at the dial to see it go, and then draw near again and stand with his head on one side to hear it tick—never failing to glance towards me at intervals of a few seconds each, and nod his head with such complacent gratification as I am quite unable to describe. His admiration was not confined to the clock either, but extended itself to every article in the room, and, really, when he had gone through them every one, and at last sat himself down in all the six chairs one after another, to try how they felt, I never saw such a picture of good humour and happiness as he presented, from the top of his shining head down to the very bottom of his gaiters.

I should have been well pleased, and should have had the utmost enjoyment of his company, if he had remained with me all day, but my favourite striking the hour, reminded him that he must take his leave. I could not forbear telling him once more how glad he had made me, and we shook hands all the way down stairs.

We had no sooner arrived in the hall than my housekeeper, gliding out of her little room, (she had changed her gown and cap I observed) greeted Mr. Pickwick with her best smile and courtesy, and the barber, feigning to be accidentally passing his way out, made him a vast number of bows. When the housekeeper curtseyed, Mr. Pickwick bowed with the utmost politeness, and when he bowed the housekeeper curtseyed again. Between the house-

keeper and the barber, I should say that Mr. Pickwick faced and bowed with undiminished affability, fifty times at least.

LITTLE NELL.

We had scarcely begun our repast when there was a knock at the door by which I had entered, and Nell, bursting into a hearty laugh, which I was rejoiced to hear, for it was child-like, and full of hilarity, said it was no doubt dear old Kit come back at last.

"Foolish Nell!" said the old man, fondling with her hair. "She always laughs at poor Kit."

The child laughed again more heartily than before, and I could not help smiling from pure sympathy. The little old man took up a candle and went to open the door. When he came back, Kit was at his heels.

Kit was a shock-headed shambling awkward lad, with an uncommonly wide mouth, very red cheeks, a turned-up nose, and certainly the most comical expression of face I ever saw. He stopped short at the door on seeing a stranger, twirled in his hand a perfectly round old hat without any vestige of a brim, and resting himself now on one leg and now on the other, and changing them constantly, stood in the door-way, looking into the parlour with the most extraordinary leer I ever beheld. He retained a grateful feeling towards the boy from that minute, for I felt that he was the comedy of the child's life.

"A long way, wasn't it, Kit?" said the little old man.

"Why, then, it was a goodish stretch, master," returned Kit.

"Do you find the house easily?"

"Why, then, not over and above easy, master," said Kit.

"Of course you have come back hungry."

"Why, then, I do consider myself rather so, master," was the answer.

The lad had a remarkable way of standing sideways as respects and thrusting his head forward over his shoulder, as if he could not get at his voice without that accompanying action. I think he would have amused one any where, but the child's exquisite enjoyment of his oddity, and the relief it was to find that there was something she associated with merriment in a place that appeared so unsuited to her, were quite irresistible. It was a great point, too that Kit himself was flattered by the sensation he created, and after several efforts to preserve his gravity, burst into a loud roar, and so stood with his mouth wide open and his eyes nearly shut, laughing violently.

The old man had again relapsed into his former abstraction, and took no notice of what passed, but I remarked when the laugh was over, the child's bright eyes were dimmed with tears, called forth by the fullness of heart with which she welcomed her uncouth favourite after the little misery of the night. As for Kit, himself (whose laugh had been all the time one of that sort which very little would change into a cry) he carried a large slice of bread and meat and a mug of beer into a corner, and applied himself to disposing of them with great voracity.

JOHN PODGERS.

John Podgers was broad, sturdy, Dutch-built, short, and a very hard eater, as men of his figure often are. Being a hard sleeper likewise, he divided his time pretty equally between these two recreations, always falling asleep when he had done eating, and always taking another turn at the trencher when he had done sleeping, by which means he grew more corpulent and more drowsy every day of his life. Indeed, it used to be currently reported that when he sauntered up and down the sunny side of the street before dinner, (as he never failed to do in fair weather,) he enjoyed his soundest nap; but many people held this to be a fiction, as he had several times been seen to look after fat oxen on market days, and had even been heard by persons of good credit and reputation to chuckle at the sight, and say to himself with great glee, "Live beef, live beef!" It was upon this evidence that the wisest people in Windsor (beginning with the local authorities of course) held that John Podgers was a man of strong sound sense—not what is called smart, perhaps, and it might be of a rather lazy and apoplectic turn, but still a man of solid parts, and one who meant much more than he cared to show. This impression was confirmed by a very dignified way he had of shaking his head, and imparting at the same time a pendulous motion to his double chin; in short, he passed for one of those people who, being plunged into the Thames, would make no vain effort to set it a fire, but would straightway flop down to the bottom with a deal of gravity, and be highly respected in consequence by all good men.

Being well to do in the world, and a peaceful widower—having a great appetite, which, as he could afford to gratify it, was a luxury and no inconvenience, and a power of going to sleep, which, as he had no need to keep awake, was a most enviable faculty—you will readily suppose that John Podgers was a happy man. But appearances are often deceptive when they least seem so, and the truth is, that notwithstanding his extreme slickness, he was rendered uneasy in his mind and exceedingly uncomfortable, by a constant apprehension that beset him night and day.

"Every man has some chain with a clog, only it is lighter to one than another, and he that takes it up has more ease than he that drags it."

THE RIVERS ASSAN AND SOANY, INDIA.

The Assan takes its rise, as nearly as possible, in the centre of the valley of the Dhun, and meanders in a westerly direction, for a distance of about twenty-six miles. For the last eight or ten miles of its course, it is a fine body of water, clear as crystal, hurrying along in a succession of rapids and races, with intervals of from 100 to 200 yards of deep and comparatively smooth water; it joins the Jamna, a little below Raj Ghat, in the Dhun.

The Soany rises nearly in the same spot, but runs in the opposite direction, almost due east, is joined in its course through the valley by several streams, some of them very large, and empties itself into the Ganges, close to Karak, about ten miles above Hurdwar, and twenty-eight from its source. Of the two streams, the Soany is to be preferred; there is a much larger body of water, and heavier fish are found in it: the river, altogether, would have distracted sober Isaak Walton. The bed of the Soany is formed of large stones, throughout the whole of its course; so large, in some parts of the centre of a rapid, as to obstruct the rushing of the stream, as it roars and hurries on its way, four or five feet deep, and causes the water either to roll in huge waves, or to leap into the air in a shower of spray. With all possible veneration for honest Isaak, the imagination cannot picture him rattling along the shore of such a tumultuous river, with a twenty-five pound fish; or scudding down one of its rapids, at the rate of twelve miles an hour, obliged to give the monster all the line it chooses to take, stopping him being out of the question. There is nothing peaceful in such a pastime; and the surrounding scenery is the most savage and wild imaginable. Impervious forests stretch down, in many places, to the water's edge, thickly matted with cane and various underwood, or reeds twenty feet high, under the shade of which the tiger and wild elephant slumber undisturbed. Many a time has the angler been startled by the roar of the former, or the shrill tramp of the latter, whilst whipping the waters of this mountain river. In most parts, however, there is, on one side or the other, a bed of shingle, thirty or forty yards broad, which is covered with water in the rains only, so that a tiger cannot steal on the sportsman unobserved. Still, it is not agreeable to have fresh paddings, of all sizes and shapes, staring you in the face every twenty paces. The forest absolutely swarms with tigers; and there is no possibility of hunting them, owing to the impervious nature of the jungle. Deer are very abundant, so that the forest of the Dhun will form a preserve for many years to come; and tiger-hunters need not despair of sport during the present generation; for, even in these days of improvement, nothing but European enterprise and industry will fell these forests for the next century.

The first time I tried the fish, during the cold season, was on the 20th January. I pitched my tent at Karak, about three miles from the Ganges, and fished down the Soany to its junction with the magnificent Ganga. On that occasion the Soany emptied itself by three mouths, the centre one being the main body of the stream, and one of the others merely a brook, not more than ten feet wide, but extremely rapid. There is no depending on the localities of the streams for two successive seasons; for the torrent, when swollen by the rains, sweeps away every thing in its course, and opens fresh channels for itself; so that it is impossible to calculate whether the stream will run, after the rains, under the right or left bank; and, consequently, all the well-remembered objects of the preceding year disappear. The arrowy rapid below which I once hooked a monster, is now a dry, stony bed, glittering in the sunshine; and the huge uprooted tree, whose giant trunk checked the foaming stream, as it wheeled round that corner, "rejoicing in its strength," leaving a calm, deep pool under its lee, has been whirled by the flood a couple of miles farther down, and left high and dry on a bank, in the centre of the shingle. There is this advantage, however, that, at each successive season, the angler enjoys the charm of novelty as much as if he had never thrown a fly on the stream before.

CHILDREN'S BALLS.—Parties and balls given to children, are a triple conspiracy against their innocence, their health, and their happiness. Thus by factitious amusements to rob them of a relish for the simple joys, the unbought delights which naturally belong to their blooming seasons, is like blotting out spring from the year. While childhood preserves its natural simplicity, every little change is interesting—every gratification a luxury. A ride or walk will be a delightful recreation to a child in its natural state, but it will be dull and tasteless to a sophisticated little being, spoiled by these forced, costly, and vapid amusements. Alas! that we should throw away this first grand opportunity of working into a practical habit, the moral of this important truth, that the chief source of human discontent is to be looked for, not in our real, but in our factitious wants—not in the demands of nature, but in the artificial cravings of desire. To behold Lilliputian coquettes projecting dresses, studying colours, assorting ribands and feathers—their little hearts beating with hope about partners and fears of rivals; and to see their fresh cheeks pale after the midnight revel—their aching heads and unbraced nerves disqualifying the little languid beings for the next day's task, and to hear the grave apology, "that it is owing to the cordial, the sweetmeats, the crowd, and the heated room of the last night's ball or party, all this," I say, would really be as ridiculous, if the mischief of the thing did not take off from the merriment of it, as any of the ludicrous disproportions of the diverting travels of captain Lemuel Gulliver.