

the force of this reasoning, or the justice of this conclusion; but without troubling himself to question it, he took down the address, and resolved to wait upon Mr. Gregsby without delay.

"I don't know what the number is," said Tom; "but Manchester Buildings isn't a large place; and if the worst comes to the worst, it won't take you very long to knock at all the doors on both sides of the way 'till you find him out. I say, what a good-looking gal that was, wasn't she?"

"What girl, Sir," demanded Nicholas, sternly.

"Oh yes. I know—what gal, eh?" whispered Tom, shutting one eye, and cocking his chin in the air. "You didn't see her, you didn't—I say, don't you wish you was me, when she comes to-morrow morning?"

Nicholas looked at the ugly clerk, as if he had a mind to reward his admiration of the young lady by beating the ledger about his ears, but he refrained, and strode laughingly out of the office; setting at defiance, in his indignation, those ancient laws of chivalry, which not only made it proper and lawful for all good knights to hear the praise of the ladies to whom they were devoted, but rendered it incumbent upon them to roam about the world, and knock at head all such matter-of-fact and unpoetical characters, as declined to exalt, above all the earth, damsels whom they had never chanced to look upon or hear of—as if that were any excuse.

Thinking no longer of his own misfortunes, but wondering what could be those of the beautiful girl he had seen, Nicholas, with many wrong turns, and many inquiries, and almost as many misdirections, bent his steps towards the place whither he had been directed.

Within the precincts of the ancient city of Westminster, and within half a quarter of a mile of its ancient sanctuary, is a narrow and dirty region, the sanctuary of the smaller members of parliament in modern days. It is all comprised in one street of gloomy lodging-houses, from whose windows in vacation time there frown long melancholy rows of bills, which say as plainly as did the countenances of their occupiers, ranged on ministerial and opposition benches in the session which slumbers with its fathers, "To Let"—"To Let." In busier periods of the year these bills disappear, and the houses swarm with legislators. There are legislators in the parlours, in the first floor, in the second, in the third, in the garrets; the small apartments reek with the breath of deputations and delegates. In damp weather the place is rendered close by the steams of moist acts of parliament and frowzy petitions; general postmen grow faint as they enter its infected limits, and shabby figures in quest of franks, sit restlessly to and fro like the troubled ghosts of Complete Letter-writers departed. This is Manchester Buildings; and here, at all hours of the night, may be heard the rattling of latch-keys in their respective keyholes, with now and then—when a gust of wind sweeping across the water which washes the Buildings' feet, impels the sound towards its entrance—the weak, shrill voice of some young member practising the morrow's speech. All the live-long day there is a grinding of organs and clashing and changing of little boxes of music, for Manchester Buildings is an eel-pot, which has no outlet but its awkward mouth—a case-bottle which has no thoroughfare, and a short and narrow neck—and in this respect it may be typical of the fate of some few among its more adventurous residents, who, after wriggling themselves into Parliament by violent efforts and contortions, find that it too is no thoroughfare for them; that, like Manchester buildings, it leads to nothing beyond itself; and that they are fain at last to back out, no wiser, no richer, not one whit more famous, than they went in.

Into Manchester Buildings Nicholas turned, with the address of the great Mr. Gregsby in his hand; and as there was a stream of people pouring into a shabby house not far from the entrance, he waited until they had made their way in, and then making up to the servant, ventured to inquire if he knew where Mr. Gregsby lived.

The servant was a very pale, shabby boy, who looked as if he had slept under ground from his infancy, as very likely he had. "Mr. Gregsby?" said he; "Mr. Gregsby lodges here. Its all right. Come in."

Nicholas thought he might as well get in while he could, so in he walked; and he had no sooner done so, than the boy shut the door and made off.

This was odd enough, but what was more embarrassing was, that all along the narrow passage, and all along the narrow stairs, blocking up the window, and making the dark entry darker still, was a confused crowd of persons with great importance depicted in their looks; who were, to all appearance, waiting in silent expectation of some coming event; from time to time one man would whisper his neighbour, or a little group would whisper together, and then the whisperers would nod fiercely to each other, or give their heads a relentless shake, as if they were bent upon doing something very desperate, and were determined not to be put off, whatever happened.

As a few minutes elapsed without anything occurring to explain this phenomenon, and as he felt his own position a peculiarly uncomfortable one, Nicholas was on the point of seeking some in-

formation from the man next him, when a sudden move was visible on the stairs, and a voice was heard to cry, "Now, gentlemen, have the goodness to walk up."

So far from walking up, the gentlemen on the stairs began to walk down with great alacrity, and to entreat, with extraordinary politeness, that the gentlemen nearest the street would go first; the gentlemen nearest the street retorted, with equal courtesy, that they couldn't think of such a thing on any account; but they did it without thinking of it, inasmuch as the other gentlemen pressing some half-dozen (among whom was Nicholas) forward, and closing up behind, pushed them, not merely up the stairs, but into the very sitting-room of Mr. Gregsby, which they were thus compelled to enter with most unseemly precipitation, and without the means of retreat; the press behind them more than filling the apartment.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Gregsby, "you are welcome. I am rejoiced to see you."

For a gentleman who was rejoiced to see a body of visitors, Mr. Gregsby looked as uncomfortable as might be; but perhaps this was occasioned by senatorial gravity, and a statesmanlike habit of keeping his feelings under control. He was a tough, burly, thick-headed gentleman, with a loud voice, a pompous manner, a tolerable command of sentences with no meaning in them, and in short every requisite for a very good member indeed.

"Now, gentlemen," said Mr. Gregsby, tossing a great bundle of papers into a wicker basket at his feet, and throwing himself back in his chair with his arms over the elbows, "you are dissatisfied with my conduct, I see by the newspapers."

"Yes, Mr. Gregsby, we are," said a plump old gentleman in a violent heat, bursting out of the throng, and planting himself in the front.

"Do my eyes deceive me," said Mr. Gregsby, looking towards the speaker, "is that my old friend Pugstyles?"

"I am that man, and no other, Sir," replied the plump old gentleman.

"Give me your hand, my worthy friend," said Mr. Gregsby. "Pugstyles, my dear friend, I am very sorry to see you here."

"I am very sorry to be here, Sir," said Mr. Pugstyles; "but your conduct, Mr. Gregsby, has rendered this deputation from your constituents imperatively necessary."

"My conduct, Pugstyles," said Mr. Gregsby, looking round upon the deputation with gracious magnanimity—"My conduct has been, and ever will be, regulated by a sincere regard for the true and real interests of this great and happy country. Whether I look at home or abroad, whether I behold the peaceful, industrious communities of our island home, her rivers covered with steamboats, her roads with locomotives, her streets with cabs, her skies with balloons of a power and magnitude hitherto unknown in the history of aeronautics in this or any other nation—I say, whether I look merely at home, or stretching my eyes further, contemplate the boundless prospect of conquest and possession—achieved by British perseverance and British valour—which is outspread before me, I clasp my hands, and turning my eyes to the broad expanse above my head, exclaim, 'Thank Heaven, I am a Britain!'"

The time had been when this burst of enthusiasm would have been cheered to the very echo; but now the deputation received it with chilling coldness. The general impression seemed to be, that as an explanation of Mr. Gregsby's political conduct, it did not enter quite enough into detail, and one gentleman in the rear did not scruple to remark aloud, that for his purpose it savoured rather too much of a "gammon" tendency.

"The meaning of that term—gammon," said Mr. Gregsby, "is unknown to me. If it means that I grow a little too servid, or perhaps even hyperbolic, in extolling my native land, I admit the full justice of the remark. I am proud of this free and happy country. My form dilates, my eye glistens, my breast heaves, my heart swells, my bosom burns, when I call to mind her greatness and her glory."

"We wish, Sir," remarked Mr. Pugstyles, calmly, "to ask you a few questions."

"If you please, gentlemen; my time is yours—and my country's—and my country's—" said Mr. Gregsby.

This permission being conceded, Mr. Pugstyles put on his spectacles, and referred to a written paper which he drew from his pocket, whereupon nearly every other member of the deputation pulled a written paper from his pocket, to check Mr. Pugstyles off, as he read the questions.

This done, Mr. Pugstyles proceeded to business.

"Question number one.—Whether, Sir, you did not give a voluntary pledge previous to your election, that in the event of your being returned you would immediately put down the practice of coughing and groaning in the House of Commons. And whether you did not submit to be coughed and groaned down in the very first debate of the session, and have since made no effort to effect a reform in this respect! Whether you did not also pledge yourself to astonish this government, and make them shrink in their shoes. And whether you have astonished them and made them shrink in their shoes, or not?"

"Go on to the next one, my dear Pugstyles," said Mr. Gregsby.

"Have you any explanation to offer with reference to that question, Sir?" asked Mr. Pugstyles.

"Certainly not," said Mr. Gregsby.

The members of the deputation looked fiercely at each other, and afterwards at the member, and "dear Pugstyles" having taken a very long stare at Mr. Gregsby over the tops of his spectacles, resumed his list of inquiries.

"Question number two.—Whether, Sir, you did not likewise give a voluntary pledge that you would support your colleague on every occasion; and whether you did not, the night before last, desert him and vote upon the other side, because the wife of a leader on that other side had invited Mrs. Gregsby to an evening party?"

"Go on," said Mr. Gregsby.

"Nothing to say on that, either, Sir?" asked the spokesman.

"Nothing whatever," replied Mr. Gregsby. The deputation, who had only seen him at canvassing or election time, were struck dumb by his coolness. He didn't appear like the same man; then he was all milk and honey—now he was all starch and vinegar. But men are so different at different times!

"Question number three—and last—" said Mr. Pugstyles, emphatically. "Whether, Sir, you did not state upon the hustings, that it was your firm and determined intention to oppose everything proposed; to divide the house upon every question, to move for returns on every subject, to place a motion on the books every day, and, in short, in your own memorable words, to play the devil with everything and everybody?" With this comprehensive inquiry Mr. Pugstyles folded up his list of questions, as did all his backers.

Mr. Gregsby reflected, blew his nose, threw himself further back in his chair, came forward again, leaning his elbows on the table, made a triangle with his two thumbs and his two forefingers, and tapping his nose with the apex thereof, replied (smiling as he said it), "I deny everything."

At this unexpected answer a hoarse murmur arose from the deputation; and the same gentleman who had expressed an opinion relative to the gammoning nature of the introductory speech, again made a monosyllabic demonstration, by growling out "Resign;" which growl being taken up by his fellows, swelled into a very earnest and general remonstrance.

"I am requested, Sir, to express a hope," said Mr. Pugstyles, with a distant bow, "that on receiving a requisition to that effect from a great majority of your constituents, you will not object at once to resign your seat in favour of some candidate whom they think they can better trust."

To which Mr. Gregsby read the following reply, which, anticipating the request, he had composed in the form of a letter, whereof copies had been made to send round to the newspapers.

"MY DEAR PUGSTYLES,

"Next to the welfare of our beloved island—this great and free and happy country, whose powers and resources are, I sincerely believe, illimitable—I value that noble independence which is an Englishman's proudest boast, and which I fondly hope to bequeath to my children untarnished and unsullied. Actuated by no personal motives, but moved only by high and constitutional considerations which I will not attempt to explain, for they are really beneath the comprehension of those who have not made themselves masters, as I have, of the intricate and arduous study of politics, I would rather keep my seat, and intend doing so.

"Will you do me the favour to present my compliments to the constituent body, and acquaint them with this circumstance?"

"With great esteem,  
"My dear Pugstyles,  
"etc. etc."

"Then you will not resign, under any circumstances?" asked the spokesman.

Mr. Gregsby smiled, and shook his head.

"Then good morning, Sir," said Pugstyles, angrily.

"God bless you," said Mr. Gregsby. And the deputation, with many growls and scowls, filed off as quickly as the narrowness of the staircase would allow of their getting down.

Concluded next week.

#### INVENTIONS OF THE ARABIANS.

A GREAT number of the inventions which, at the present day, add to the comforts of life, and without which literature could never have flourished, are due to the Arabians. Thus paper, now so necessary to the progress of the intellect, the want of which plunged Europe, from the seventh to the tenth century, into such a state of ignorance and barbarism, is an Arabic invention. In China, indeed, from all antiquity, it had been manufactured from silk; but about the year 30 of the Hegira, A.D. 649, this invention was introduced at Samarcand; and when that flourishing city was conquered by the Arabians, in the year 35 of the Hegira, an Arabian, of the name of Joseph Amton, carried the process by which paper was made to Mecca, his native city. He employed cotton in the manufacture; and the first paper, nearly resembling that which we now use, was made in