

MRS. BARDELL : Yes sir, of course, sir. (*Commences dusting.*)

PICKWICK : He's a very long time gone.

MRS. BARDELL : Why, it's a good long way to the Borough, sir, ain't it, sir ?

(*Mrs. B. resumes dusting.*)

PICKWICK : Ah, very true, so it is. (*After thoughtfully consulting his note-book*) Mrs. Bardell !

MRS. BARDELL : Sir ?

PICKWICK (*taking seat at table*) : Do you think it's a much greater expense to keep two people than to keep one ?

MRS. BARDELL : La, Mr. Pickwick, what a question !

PICKWICK : Well, but *do* you !

MRS. BARDELL (*approaching the duster very near to Mr. P's elbow*) : That depends a good deal upon the person, Mr. Pickwick, you know, and whether it's a careful and saving person, sir.

PICKWICK : That's very true, but the person I have in my eye (*looks hard at Mrs. B.*) I think possesses these qualities, and has, moreover, a considerable knowledge of the world, and a great deal of sharpness, Mrs. Bardell, which may be of material use to me——

MRS. BARDELL : La, Mr. Pickwick——

PICKWICK : And to tell the truth, Mrs. Bardell, I have made up my mind.

MRS. BARDELL : Dear me, sir. (*Dropping into chair.*)

PICKWICK : You'll think it very strange, now, that I have never consulted you about this matter; and never even mentioned it, till I sent your little boy out this morning——eh ?

MRS. BARDELL : Oh, Mr. Pickwick, sir.

PICKWICK : Well, what do you think ? The expense won't be much greater, will it ?

MRS. BARDELL : Oh, Mr. Pickwick, you're very kind, sir.

PICKWICK : Yes; kind to myself, but it'll save you a good deal of trouble too, won't it ?

MRS. BARDELL : Oh, I never thought anything of the trouble, sir, and of course I should take more trouble to please you than that ever; but it's so kind of you, Mr. Pickwick, to have so much consideration for my loneliness. (*Overcome with emotion.*)

PICKWICK (*Rising*) : Ah, to be sure; I never thought of that. When I'm in town, you'll always have somebody to sit with you. To be sure, so you will.

MRS. BARDELL : I'm sure I hought to be a very 'appy woman.

PICKWICK : And your little boy——

MRS. BARDELL (*with a sob*) : Bless his 'art !