

the end of an hour's wading my wife asked how far it was to Providence Grange? 'To wheer?' 'Providence Grange! 'Mean wheer Gomple lives, I s'pose? It's another ten minutes, I dessay.'

'We got there at the end of a quarter of an hour. It was quite dark, so we couldn't see the exterior of the house. The interior which an old woman showed us over with a candle, smelt like a churchyard and my wife wept. I sat down in one of three chairs in the dining room and two of its legs broke. 'We can't sleep in any of those bedrooms,' said my wife, 'and the servants say they won't.' 'Very well,' I said, 'you'd better get out the rugs and camp here for to-night. It's about eleven o'clock now.'

'The old woman had gone, but there was plenty of rats to keep us company. At 2 a.m. the cook and my wife's maid came into the drawing room in hysterics and gave notice. Our youngest child passed the night on my knees for fear it should be carried off by the rodents. I need not prolong the horrors of that night. Dawn came at last and revealed some of the gaps made by the Roundhead artillery during the Civil War; they had never been repaired. We hurried into the grounds; they consisted of a potato-patch the size of this room, three gooseberry bushes, which the birds had cleared long since, and a rim of scorched grass. The south lawn, in fact; the west border must be a recent addition. Our hopes of fruit and vegetables gone, we turned our atten-

tion to the tables. Four goats could not have roosted in the rained outhouse we discovered.

'Do you wish to examine the church or the post office?' I inquired of my wife.

'I want to go home,' she said. (I forgot to mention that Providence Grange stands on the dreariest waste you can imagine, and the man who drove us had mentioned that the sea was three miles away). 'This is the most horrible hole I have ever seen.'

'Very well,' I said. 'I will go and ask for the farm-cart to return. There is a train at eleven o'clock.'

'I understood that Henry Gomple, Esq., lived at a cottage in the neighbourhood; and, having provided myself with a stout sapling from the nearest hedge, I visited the cottage en route to the station.'

A smile of pleasant recollection played about the lips of the Man Opposite at this stage of his narrative. 'It's no good going to law in this kind of fraud, you know,' he wound up. 'But I'm surprised, I confess, that he has advertised Providence Grange again. He promised not to before I left.'

'And I suppose,' I said 'there wasn't even excellent fishing in the neighbourhood.'

'There's always excellent trout-fishing in the neighborhood,' said the Man Opposite. 'But it's usually strictly preserved, you know. I didn't stop to see, as a matter of fact, I thought I might be had up for manslaughter if I missed the train.'

