

Mrs. Sanders' testimony on this point that Mr. Pickwick must have proposed because "she always said and thought 'e would"—is not conclusive. You must treat such testimony with caution.

One word as to the documentary evidence. A number of letters, alleged to be of a compromising character, have been put in. It is for you to decide, in the first place, the delicate literary question whether these documents *are* love letters or luncheon orders; whether they are in their nature amatory or gustatory; whether they spring from the heart or the stomach of the writer; whether they are to be taken in their obvious meaning or are to be regarded as artful cryptograms in the nature of secret cyphers?

"Chops and tomato sauce—yours, Pickwick."

It is for you, gentlemen, not for me, to frizzle and fry over the meaning of this. Does "chops" mean lamb or—Mrs. Bardell?

And "tomato sauce." Is this an allusion to the piquancy of the fair plaintiff or does it mean a literal table condiment? Is it a poetic expression put up by Pickwick as a lover, or a relish put up by Crosse & Blackwell as purveyors by special appointment to the royal family?

Then there is another letter containing the expression "Don't trouble yourself about the warming-pan." Does this bear the honest meaning that naturally attaches to the words, or is it—as has been suggested, a mere cover for hidden fire? It is not for me to decide. You will take the warming-pan with you when you retire, gentlemen, and decide what there is in it.

I will not detain you longer. If you find that there was no promise, you may safely conclude there has been no breach. But if Mrs. Bardell is right, Mr. Pickwick is wrong; and if you are satisfied that he *did* make a promise and *did* fracture, smash and bust it, then you will bring in a verdict for the plaintiff, with such damages as to you may seem right. You may now retire.

(The jury retires.)

SERJT. SNUBBIN: M'lord, my client craves permission to say a few words, now that the case is in the hands of the jury.

Will your lordship permit him?

JUDGE: It is a most unusual proceeding.

SNUBBIN: Yes, m'lord, but I fear the gentleman will explode unless he is permitted to speak.

JUDGE: It is a departure from precedent, but we will permit a very few words.