

THE JUNIOR PICKWICKIANS

AND THEIR MEMORABLE TRIP TO NORTH AMERICA.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CODDLEBY no sooner perceived the dilemma of his friend than he rushed to the edge of the wharf, and cried, "Be calm, Bramley, be calm, I implore you; for my sake endeavor to keep your head above water, and—*and*—don't open your mouth on any account," as Bramley, gasping like a flounder on the shore at low tide, swallowed an immense mouthful of water.

It might have struck a casual spectator that Mr. Bramley would probably see the desirability of following this advice, if not for his friend's sake, at any rate for his own. He was, accordingly, making strenuous efforts to grasp one of the piers of the wharf, in which he finally succeeded, though he was by this time nearly black in the face from the effects of the slow process of strangulation to which he was subjected by the parasol handle and his tie. Chambers now ran to the rescue, and laying himself flat on the wharf, reached down and seized Bramley by the collar, and one of the crew, jumping on board the yacht, managed to boost (as he termed the operation) the principal actor in the scene up, so that those on the wharf were enabled to drag him high, though not dry, on to *terra firma*, if such an expression is applicable to a wooden wharf.

"I am extremely obliged to you, Miss Douglas," were the first words Bramley uttered, as he sat gasping for breath, "for your valuable assistance: Mr. Douglas, your daughter is a heroine, a perfect heroine, sir."

"Yes, yes, never mind that just now," returned that genial gentleman, "but get on board again, and let us see what we can do in the way of rigging you out, as we did Mr. Yubbits. Upon my word you gentlemen seem very partial to Lake Ontario to-day. It's Mr. Coddleby's turn next, and doubtless he will gratify us on our return trip, with an exhibition of his nautatorial skill; but come, Bramley, come with me," and the two, boarding the schooner, disappeared into the cabin, whence they presently emerged, the Pickwickian being fully equipped in a white flannel suit belonging to Mr. Douglas, which, however, approached nearer to being a fit, on account of its present wearer's corpulency, than the garments sported, for the nonce, by Mr. Yubbits.

"Now," exclaimed Mr. Douglas, as the whole party, followed by two of the crew bearing the hamper, wended their way towards a clump of trees on the lake shore, "the sooner we get luncheon, the better; look alive boys," he shouted to the hamper bearers, "and get that basket unpacked, over there under those trees: and you, Elsie, kindly superintend the laying out of the contents. Mr. Bramley, here, looks as if a diet of Ontario water had not half satisfied him."

"Oh! I'm perfectly satisfied with what I've had as far as that is concerned," replied Bramley, smiling, "though I fancy there is not much nourishment in it."

"Ha, ha," laughed Mr. Douglas, "we'll soon have something in which there *is* nourishment, then I'm as hungry as a hunter: and you, Mr. Yubbits, you certainly require something to take the superfluous folds out of those garments."

"Well, they *are* rather baggy, I must admit," said Yubbits, "And I feel like doing my best to make them less so: wonderfully appetizing air, this."

The grateful shade of the trees pointed out was by this time reached, and in a very short space of time the lid was

off the hamper and a tablecloth spread on the grass, upon which Miss Douglas' nimble fingers soon arranged an array of edibles that would have almost sufficed for an entire school feast. Cold rabbit pies, a ham, bread and butter and libitum, pastry, salad, and so forth, were displayed in most tempting profusion, and Summers having been dispatched to the village in quest of ice, returned in a short time with the object of his search, which was broken up into pails into which the bottles of champagne were plunged.

"Here, Chambers," said Mr. Douglas, handing him a rabbit pie and a huge plate of sandwiches, together with a pail containing a couple of bottles of wine, "call your fellows together and do what you think fit with these things: sing out when the supply runs short: I fancy we can keep you going. Ha! this is jolly," he exclaimed, sitting down, and commencing a vigorous attack on the edibles. "Couldn't have found a better place if we'd hunted for a week. Splendid breeze. Your healths gentlemen," and the jovial host nodded round the table and drank off a glass of champagne. "Now, Elsie, don't let Mr. Bramley starve. Do give him something to counteract the effects of the enormous quantity of water he has swallowed. I declare the lake has fallen, visibly, several inches," and so he ran on, joking and laughing without a moment's intermission, save when compelled to pause by the nature of his occupation.

And now it may be as well to leave our friends for a short time, enjoying the pleasant breeze which came to them across the rippling lake, whilst they satisfied the cravings of appetites sharpened by a morning spent in the pure open air, and listening to the jolly utterances of Mr. Douglas, which were invariably followed by ringing peels of laughter, amongst which could be plainly detected the silvery notes of Miss Elsie's voice, and which, to hear, was in itself a treat of no mean order to a well balanced mind, a most desirable thing, and which, it is to be hoped, all those under the trees possessed in common with the intelligent reader of these pages.

(To be continued.)



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