GREAT EXPECTATIONS.
BY CHARLES DICKENS.

CHAPTER XVI.

With my head full of George Barnwell, I was at first disposed to believe that I must have had some hand in the attack upon my sister, or at all events that as her near relation, popularly known to be under obligations to her, I was a more legitimate object of suspicion than any one else. But when, in the clearer light of next morning, I began to reconsider the matter and to hear it discussed around me on all sides, I took another view of the case, which was more reasonable.

Joe had been at the Three Jolly Bargeemen, smoking his pipe, from a quarter after eight o'clock to a quarter before ten. While he was there, my sister had been seen standing at the kitchen door, and had exchanged Good Night with a farm-labourer going home. The man could not be more particular as to the time at which he saw her (he got into dense confusion when he tried to tell), than that it must have been before nine. When Joe went home at five minutes before ten, he found her struck down on the floor, and promptly called in assistance. The fire had not then burnt unusually low, nor was the smell of the candle very strong; the candle, however, had been blown out.

Nothing had been taken from any part of the house. Neither, beyond the blowing out of the candle—which stood on a table between the door and my sister, and was behind her when she stood facing the fire and was struck—was there any disarrangement of the kitchen, excepting such as she herself had made in falling and bleeding. But, there was one remarkable piece of evidence on the spot. She had been struck with something blunt and heavy on the head and spine; after the blows were dealt, something heavy had been thrown down at her with considerable violence as she lay on her face. And on the ground beside her, when Joe picked her up, was a convict's leg-iron which had been filed asunder.

Now, Joe, examining this iron with a smith's eye, declared it to have been filed asunder some time ago. The house had been going off to the Hulks, and people coming thence to examine the iron, Joe's opinion was corroborated. They did not undertake to say when it had left the prison-ships to which it undoubtedly had once belonged; but they claimed to know for certain that that particular manacle had not been on by either of two convicts who had escaped last night. Further, one of those two was already retaken, and had not used himself of his iron.

Knowing what I knew, I set up an inference of my own here. I believed the iron to be my convict's iron—the iron I had seen and heard him filing at, on the mangles—but my mind did not accuse him of having put it to its latest use. For, I believed one or two other persons to have become possessed of it, and to have turned it to this cruel account. Either Orlick, or the strange man who had shown me the file.

Now, as to Orlick; he had gone to town exactly as he told us when we picked him up at the turnpike, he had been seen about town all the evening, he had been in divers companies in several public-houses, and he had come back with myself and Mr. Wopsle. There was nothing against him, save the quarrel; and my sister had quarrelled with him, and with everybody else about her, ten thousand times. As to the strange man, if he had come back for his two bank notes there could have been no dispute about them, because my sister was fully prepared to restore them. Besides, there had been no alteration; the assiduous had come in so silently and suddenly that she had been felled before she could look round.

It was horrible to think that I had provided the weapon, however undesignedly, but I could hardly think otherwise. I suffered unspeakable trouble while I considered and reconsidered whether I should at last disclose that secret of my childhood, and tell Joe all the story. For months afterwards, I every day settled the question finally in the negative, and resolved and re-argued it next morning. The solicitation came, after all; to this—the secret was such an old one now, had so grown into me and become a part of myself, that I could not bear it away. In addition to the dread that, having led up to so much misery, it would be now more likely than ever to alienate Joe from me if he believed it, I had the further restraining dread that he would not believe it, but would ascribe it with the fabulous dogs and real culprits as a monstrous invention. However, I marched myself, of course—fool, was I not wavering between right and wrong, when the thing was always done—and resolved to make a full disclosure if I should see any such
new occasion as a new chance of helping in the
discovery of the assailant.

The Constables, and the Bow-street men from
London—for, this happened in the days of the
exact red whiskered policemen—were about the
house for a week or two, and did pretty much
what I have heard and read of like authorities
doing in other such cases. They took up several
obviously wrong people, and they ran their heads
very hard against wrong ideas, and persisted in
trying to fit the circumstances to the ideas, in-
stead of trying to extract ideas from the cir-
stances. Also, they stood about the door of the
Jolly Bargemen, with knowing and reserved
looks that filled the whole neighbourhood with
admiration; and they had a mysterious manner of
taking their drink, that was almost as good as
taking the culprit. But not quite, for they
never did it.

Long after these constitutional powers had
disposed, my sister lay very ill in bed. Her
sight was disturbed, so that she saw objects
multiplied, and grasped at visionary teacups
and wine-glasses instead of the realities; her
hearing was greatly impaired; her memory
also; and her speech was unintelligible. When,
that last, she came round so far as to be helped
down stairs, it was still necessary to keep my
slave always by her, that she might indicate in
writing what she could not indicate in speech.
As she was (very bad handwriting apart) a more
than indifferent speller, and as Joe was a more
than indifferent reader, extraordinary complica-
tions arose between them, which I was always
called to solve. The administration of mutton
instead of medicine, the substitution of Tea for
and vine-glasses instead of the realities; her
writing what she could not indicate in speech.
tions appeared between them, which I
had written, I had tried hard at it, but I had made
it necessary to keep my
slave always by her, that she might indicate in
writing what she could not indicate in speech.

When my sister found that Biddy was very
quick to understand her, this mystifying sign
reappeared on the slate. Biddy looked thought-
fully at it, heard my explanation, looked thought-
fully at my sister, looked thoughtfully at Joe
(who was always represented on the slate by
his initial letter), and ran into the forge, fol-
lowed by Joe and me.

"Why, of course!" cried Biddy, with an
excellent face. "Don't you see? It's true!"

"Orlick, without a doubt! She had lost his
name, and could only signify him by his ham-
mer. We told him why we wanted him to come
into the kitchen, and he slowly laid down his
hammer, wiped his brow with his arm, took
another wipe at it with his apron, and came
looking out, with a curious, loose vagabond
hand in the knives that strongly distinguished
him.

I confess that I expected to see my sister
discourse him, and that I was disappointed by
the different result. She manifested the greatest
anxiety to be on good terms with him, was
evidently much pleased by his being at length
produced, and motioned that she would have
him given something to drink. She watched
his countenance as if she were particularly
wished to be assured that he took kindly to his
receipt, she showed every possible desire to
conciliate him, and there was an air of humble
prostration in all she did, such as I have seen
pervade the bearing of a child towards a hard
master. After that day, a day rarely passed
without her drawing the hammer on her slate,
and without Orlick's slouching in and standing
doggedly before her, as if he knew to more than
I did what to make of it.
CHAPTER XVII.

So unchanging was the dull old house, the yellow light in the darkness room, the faded spectre in the chair by the dressing-table glass, that I felt as if the stepping of the clock had stopped Time in that mysterious place, and, while I and everything else outside it grew older, it stood still. Daylight never entered the house as to my thoughts and remembrances of it, any more than as to the actual fact. It bewildered me, and under its influence I continued at heart to hate my trade, and to be glistening of a tear as it bopped on her.

"Biddy," said I, "who make the most of every chance. You never had a chance before you came here, and see how improved you are!"

Biddy looked at me for an instant, and ment.

"Biddy!" I exclaimed, in amazement. "Why, you are crying!"

"No I am not," said Biddy, looking up and laughing. "What put that in your head?"

What could have put it in my head, but the glistening of a tear as it dropped on her work? I sat silent, recalling what a drudge she had been until Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt successfully overcame that habit of living, so highly desirable to be got rid of by some people. I recalled the hopeless circumstances by which she had been surrounded in the miserable little shop and the miserable little noisy evening school, with that miserable hand of incompetence always to be dragged and shouldered. I reflected that even in those untoward times there must have been latent in Biddy what was now developing, and, in my first unaccustomed and discontent I had turned to her for help, as a matter of course. Biddy sat quietly sewing, shedding no more tears, and while I looked at her and thought about it all, it occurred to me that perhaps I had not been sufficiently grateful to Biddy. I might have been too reserved, and should have patronized her more (though I did not use that precise word in my meditations), with my confidence.

"Yes, Biddy," I observed, when I had done turning it over, "you were my first teacher, and that at a time when we little thought of ever being together like this, in this kitchen."

"Ah, poor thing!" replied Biddy. It was like her self-forgetfulness, to transfer the remark to my sister, and to get up and be busy about her, making her more comfortable; "that's sadly true!"

"Well!" said I, "we must talk together a little more, as we used to. And I must consult you a little more, as I used to. Let us have a quiet walk on the marshes next Sunday, Biddy, and a long chat."

My sister was never left alone now; but Joe
more than readily undertook the care of her on
that Sunday afternoon, and Biddy and I went
out together. It was summer time and lovely
weather. When we had passed the village and
the church and the churchyard, and were out on
the marshes and began to see the sails of the
ships as they sailed off, I began to combine Miss
Havisham and Estella with the prospect, in my
usual way. When we came to the river-side
and sat down on the bank, with the water
rippling at our feet, making it all more quiet
than it would have been without that sound, I
resolved that it was a good time and place for
the admission of Biddy into my inner con-
dence.

"Biddy," said I, after binding her to secrecy,
"I want to be a gentleman."

"Oh, I wouldn't, if I was you!" she returned.
"I don't think it would answer."

"Biddy," said I, with some severity, "I have
particular reasons for wanting to be a gentle-
man."

"You know best, Pip; but don't you think
you are happier as you are?"

"Biddy," I exclaimed, impatiently, "I am not
at all happy as I am. I am disgusted with
my calling and with my life. I have never
taken to either, since I was bound. Don't be
alarmed."

"Was I absurd?" said Biddy, quietly raising
her eyebrows: "I am sorry for that; I didn't
mean to be. I only want you to do well,
and to be comfortable."

"Well then, understand once for all that
I never shall or can be comfortable—or anything
but miserable—there, Biddy!—unless I can
lead a very different sort of life from the life I
lead now."

"That's a pity!" said Biddy, shaking her
head with a sorrowful air.

Now, I too had so often thought it a pity,
that, in the singular kind of quarantine with
which I was always carrying on, I was half
inclined to shed tears of vexation and distress
when Biddy gave utterance to her sentiment
and my own. I told her she was right, and I
knew it was much to be regretted, but still it
was not to be helped.

"If I could have settled down," I said to
Biddy, plunging up the short grass within reach,
much as I had once upon a time pulled my feel-
ings out of my hair and kicked them into the
brewery wall: "if I could have settled down and
been half as fond of the forge as I was
when I was little, I know it would have been
much better for me. You and Joe would
have wanted nothing then, and Joe and I would
perhaps have gone partners when I was out of
my time, and I might even have grown up to
keep company with you, and we might have sat
on this very bank on a fine Sunday, quite dif-
f'erent people. I should have been good enough
for you; shouldn't I, Biddy?"

Biddy sighed as she looked at the ships sail-
ing on, and returned for answer, "Yes; I am
very much attached to you. It seemed so
natural bating, but I know she meant well.
The present time, she thinks she knows what lesson she would set. But it would be a hard one to learn, much too far beyond her, and it's of no use now." So, with a quiet sigh for me, she rose from the bank, and said, with a fresh and pleasant change of voice, "Shall we walk a little further, or go home?"

"Biddy," I cried, getting up, putting my arm round her neck, and giving her a kiss, "I shall always tell you everything."

"You know I never shall be, so that's always. Not that I have any occasion to tell you anything, for you know everything I know— as I told you at home the other night."

"Ah!" said Biddy, quite in a whisper, as she looked away at the slips. And then repeated, with her former pleasant change; "shall we walk a little further, or go home?"

I said to Biddy we would walk a little further, and we did so, and the summer evening touched down into the summer evening, and it was very beautiful. I began to consider whether I was not more naturally and wholesomely situated, after all, in these circumstances, than playing before the gate; but I didn't like it in the room with the stopped clocks, and being despised by Estella. I thought it would be very good for me if I could get her out of my head, with all the rest of those remembrances and fancies, and could go to work determined to rely what I had to do, and stick to it, and make the best of it. I asked myself the question whether I did not surely know that if Estella were beside me at that moment instead of Biddy, she would make me miserable? I was obliged to admit that I did know it for a certainty, and I said to myself, "Pip, what a fool you are!"

"We walked a good deal as we walked, and all that Biddy said seemed right. Biddy was never insulting, or capricious, or Biddy-to-day and somebody else to-morrow; she would have derived only pain, and no pleasure, from giving me pain; she would far rather have wounded her own heart than mine. How could it be then, that I did not like her much the better of the two?"

"Biddy," said I, when we were walking home-ward, "I wish I could put you right."

"I wish I could," said Biddy.

"If I could only get myself to fall in love with you—you don't mind my speaking so openly to such an old acquaintance?

"Oh don't, not at all," said Biddy. "Don't mind me.

"If I could only get myself to do it, that would be the thing for me.

"But you never will, you see," said Biddy.

"If I couldn't, you could give me your gladness, and I am glad of another giver you know you are going for it, and always my best teacher (char.) in need of love, your teacher.
better than Estella, and that the plain honest working life to which I was born, had nothing in it to be ashamed of, but offered me sufficient means of self-respect and happiness. At those times, I would decide conclusively that my disinclination to bear old Joe and the forge was gone, and that I was growing up in a fair way to be partners with Joe and to keep company with Biddy—when all in a moment some confounding remembrance of the Havisham days would fall upon me, like a destructive missile, and scatter my wits again. Scattered wits take a long time picking up; and often, before I had got them well together, they would be dispersed in all directions by one stray thought, that perhaps after all Miss Havisham was going to make my fortune when my time was out.

If my time had run out, it would have left me still at the height of my perplexities; I dare say. It never did run out, however, but was brought to a premature end, as I proceed to relate.

**IN PRAISE OF BEARS.**

"Why do your dogs bark so? Be there bears in the town?" asks simple Sinder of sweet Anne Page; and the damsel, with a sly glance, replies, "I think they are, sir; I heard them talk of." Upon which, Master Shallow's shallow cousin dilates on the sport of bear-taking, and, when he thinks he has sufficiently terrified his fair listener by the boastful avowal of having taken Saokerson by the chain, he apologises for woman's fear by saying that bears are "very ill-favoured rough things," and that her sex, indeed, "cannot abide'em." Master Sinder's statement is not altogether true. Rough they are—there is no doubt of it; ill-favoured—well, that is a matter of opinion, for there are many ugly creatures that ladies admire; and as for being held by womankind in such extreme aversion, it will be shown, by-and-by, that, at all events, the rule has its exceptions.

We will first exhibit our Bear in a state of nature; and, although we shall have many things to record of him which seem to indicate an inborn ferocity, it will nevertheless be found that if he gets fair play—he is, indeed, a rather pleasing animal than any other irritable gentleman of your acquaintance. Keep an alderman on bread-and-water for a week, and then preg him frequently with a poacher, and you will see better how the Bear will be but a mild epithet by which to characterise him. All the authorities agree in declaring that nearly the whole of the Ursidae—in fact, the Grizzly Bear ("Gres force," and, therefore, well named) is the only exception—refrains from attacking man, or even the lower animals, unless impelled to do so by excess of hunger, to show fight when provoked being quite anothermatter. The Brown Bear, says the Rev. Mr. Wood, "is not so formidable a foe to cattle and flocks as might be supposed from the strength, courage, and voracity of the animal, as it has been frequently known to live for years in the near vicinity of farms without making any inroads upon the live stock. Fortunately for the farmers and cattle owners of Northern Europe, the Brown Bear is chiefly indebted for his food to roots and vegetable substances, or to the sheds and folds would soon be depopulated. As a general fact, the Bear does not trouble itself to pursue the cattle, and in many cases over its taste for blood to the abaward conduct of the cattle, which are apt to beellow and charge at the Bear as soon as it makes its appearance." (Who amongst ourselves submit to be belowed at, except a candidate on the hustings? Who likes to be charged—or over-charged?) "The Bear is then provoked to retaliation, and in so doing, learns a taste for blood, which never afterwards deserts it." So that, you see, it is not naturally the inclination of the Bear to eat even beef, much less to behave like a cannibals; whereas, we mankind hunt up and devour everything that is edible, without the slightest provocation on the part of the food, and Bears themselves are included amongst our articles of diet; witness the following, one of many statements of the same kind illustrative of the fact:

"The flesh of the Bear is held in high esteem among the colonists and native hunters, and when properly prepared is considered a great delicacy by the denizens of civilised localities. The hams, when cured after the approved recipe, are greatly esteemed by epicures. The Brown Bear of Europe is also famed for the excellent quality of the meat which it furnishes. To show the voracity of man, as a set-off against that of the Bear, no time nor season avails with the former to keep him from bear's flesh, if he be so minded. Hearne, in his Journey to the Northern Ocean (1769-1772), says that the flesh of the Brown bear is "abominable" during the winter, when it is scarce; and they are obliged to feed on insects; yet, even though it taste like carrion, men are found to relish it. Hearne, who evidently spoke from personal experience, immediately adds, that "in the middle of July, when the fruit is ripe, they are excellent eating." And in another place he remarks of the Polar Bear, who, at the worst, is only a fish-eater, having no choice but to be one, that their flesh "is not unpleasant eating, and the young cubs in the spring are rather delicate than otherwise." Of the Black Bear, too, he learns from another northern traveller, that "the liver is said to be a peculiar luxury when dried on skewers, kibob fashion, with alternate slices of fat." Bear's liver, however, though it may rival in flavour the liver of Strasburg geese, cannot always be eaten with impunity. One of the old Arctic voyagers relates: "Having killed a Bear we dress her liver and eat it, which in the taste liked us well, but it made us all sick, specially those that were exceedingly sick, and we very thought we should have lost them, for all their skins came off, from the feet to the head, but yet they recovered again." Bears, then,