GREAT EXPECTATIONS.

BY CHARLES DICKENS.

CHAPTER LX.

WHAT purpose I had in view when I was hot on tracing out and proving Estella's parentage, the question was not before me in a distinct shape, until it was put before me by a wiser head than my own.

But when Herbert and I had had our momentous conversation, I was seized with a feverish conviction that I ought to hunt out the disaster, and I hastened to give him all I knew; and the speciality of the occasion arrived in town, I had to give him all I knew; and the speciality of the occasion arrived in town, I had to give him all I knew.

My narrative finished, and their questions exhausted, I then produced Miss Havisham's authority to receive the nine hundred pounds for Herbert. Mr. Jaggers's eyes retired a little deeper into his head when I handed him the tablets, but he presently handed them over to Wemmick, with instructions to draw the cheque for his signature. While that was in course of being done, I looked on at Wemmick as he wrote, and Mr. Jaggers, peering over his glasses, sitting in his armchair, staring at me, with his hands in the pockets of his trousers, and his pen put horizontally into the post. The two brutal casts, always inseparable in my mind from the official proceedings, seemed to be considertlessly considering whether they didn't smell fire at the present moment.

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"I know more of the history of Miss Havisham's adopted child, than Miss Havisham herself does, sir. I know her mother."

Mr. Jaggers looked at me inquiringly, and repeated, "Mother?"

"I have seen her mother within these three days."

"Yes?" said Mr. Jaggers.

"And so have you, sir. And you have seen her still more recently."

"Yes?" said Mr. Jaggers.

"Perhaps I know more of Estella's history than you do," said I. "I know her father too."

A certain stop that Mr. Jaggers came to in his manner—he was too self-possessed to change his manner, but he could not help his being brought to an indescribably silent stop—assured me that he did not know who her father was. This I had strongly suspected from Provis's account (as Herbert had delivered it) of his having kept himself dark; but I received on to the fact that he had seen Mr. Jaggers's client until some four years later, and when he could have no reason for claiming his identity. But I could not be sure of this unconsciousness on Mr. Jaggers's part before, though I was quite sure of it now.

"So! You know the young lady's father, Pip?" said Mr. Jaggers.

"Yes," I replied. "And his name is Provis—"

Even Mr. Jaggers started when I said those words. It was the slightest start that could escape a man, the most carefully repressed and the soonest checked, but he did start, though he made it a part of the action of taking out his pocket-handkerchief. How Wemmick received the announcement I am unable to say, for I was afraid to look at him just then, lest Mr. Jaggers's sharpness should detect that there had been some communication unknown to him between us.

"And on what evidence, Pip?" asked Mr. Jaggers.

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"And on what evidence, Pip?" asked Mr. Jaggers.

"He does not make it," said I, "and has never made it, and has no knowledge or belief that his daughter is in existence."

For once, the powerful pocket-handkerchief failed. My reply was so unexpected that Mr. Jaggers put the handkerchief back into his pocket without completing the usual performance, folded his arms, and looked with stern attention at me, though with an immovable face.

Then I told him all I knew, and how I knew it, with the one reservation that I left him to infer that I knew from Miss Havisham what I in fact knew from Wemmick. I was very careful indeed as to that. Nor did I look towards Wemmick until I had finished all I had to tell, and had been for some time silently meeting Mr. Jaggers's look. When I did at last turn my eyes in Wemmick's direction, I found that he had unbuttoned his coat, and was intent upon the table before him.

"Ha!" said Mr. Jaggers at last, as he moved towards the papers on the table. "What was it you were at, Wemmick, when Mr. Pip came in?"

But I could not submit to be thrown off in that way, and I made a passionate, almost an ignominious, appeal to him to be more frank and manly with me. I reminded him of the false hopes to which I had been led, the length of time they had lasted, and the discovery I had made; and I hinted at the danger that weighed upon my spirits. I represented myself as being surely worthy of some little confidence from him, in return for the confidence I had just imparted. I said that I did not blame him, or suspect him, or mistrust him, but I wanted assurance of the truth from him. And if he asked me why I wanted it and why I thought I had any right to it, I would tell him, little as he cared for such poor dreams, that I had loved Estella dearly and long, and that, although I had lost her and must live a bereaved life, whatever concerned him was still nearer and dearer to me than anything else in the world. And seeing that Mr. Jaggers stood quite still and silent, and apparently quite obdurate, under this appeal, I turned to Wemmick, and said, "Wemmick, I know you to be a man with a gentle heart. I have seen you pleasant born, and your old father, and all the innocent, cheerful, playful mays with which you refresh your business life. And I entreat you to say a word for me to Mr. Jaggers, and to represent to him that, all circumstances considered, he ought to be more open with me!"

I have never seen two men look more oddly at one another than Mr. Jaggers and Wemmick did after this apostrophe. At first, a misgiving crossed me that Wemmick would be instantly dismissed from his employment; but if I saw Mr. Jaggers relax into something like a smile, and Wemmick become bolder.

"What's all this?" said Mr. Jaggers. "You with an old father, and you with pleasant and playful ways?"

"Well! I'll return Wemmick, "If I don't bring 'em here, what does it matter?"

"Pip," said Mr. Jaggers, laying his hand upon my arm, and smiling openly, "this man must be the most cunning impostor in all London."

"Not a bit of it," returned Wemmick, growing bolder and bolder. "I think you're another."

Again they exchanged their former odd looks, each apparently still distrustful that the other was taking him in. "You with a pleasant home?" said Mr. Jaggers.

"Since it don't interfere with business," returned Wemmick, "let it be so. Now, I look at you, sir, I shouldn't wonder if you might be planning and contriving to have a pleasant home of your own, one of these days, when you're tired of this work."

Mr. Jaggers nodded his head retrospectively two or three times, and actually drew a sigh. "Pip," said he, "we won't talk about 'poor
GREAT EXPECTATIONS.

"Put the case that the child grew up, and
was married for money. That the mother was
still living. That the father was still living.
That the mother and father unknown to one
another, were dwelling within so many miles,
furlongs, yards if you like, of one another. That
the secret was still a secret, except that you
had got wind of it. Put that last case to your-
self very carefully."

"I do."

"I ask Wemmick to put it to himself very
carefully."

And Wemmick said, "I do."

"For whose sake would you reveal the se-
cret? For the father's? I think he would not
be much the better for the mother. For the
mother's? I think if she had done such a deed
she would be safer where she was. For the
daughter's? I think it would hardly serve her.

I looked at Wemmick, whose face was very
grave. He gravely touched his lips with
his forefinger. I did the same. Mr. Jaggers
did the same. "Now, Wemmick," said the
latter then, resuming his usual manner, "what
item was it you were at, when Mr. Pip came in?"

Standing by for a little, while they were at
work, I observed that the odd looks they had
cast at one another were repeated several times:
with this difference now, that each of them
seemed suspicious, not to say conscious, of
having shown himself in a weak and unprofes-
sional light to the other. For this reason, I
suppose, they were now inexorable with one
another; Mr. Jaggers being highly dictatorial,
and Wemmick obstinately justifying himself
whenever there was the smallest point in abey-
ance for a moment. I had never seen them
on such ill terms; for generally they got on very
well indeed together.

But they were both happily relieved by the
opportunity of an appearance of Mike, the client
with the fur cap and the habit of wiping his nose
on his sleeve, whom I had seen on the very first
day of my appearance within those walls. This
individual, who, either in his own person or in
that of some member of his family, seemed to
be always in trouble (which in that place meant
Newgate), called to announce that his eldest
daughter was taken up on suspicion of shop-
lifting. As he imparted this melancholy cir-
dumstance to Wemmick, Mr. Jaggers standing
magnificently before the fire and taking no share
in the proceedings, Mike's eye happened to
 twinkle with a tear.
"What are you about?" demanded Wemmick, with the utmost indignation. "What do you come screeching here for?"

"I didn't go to do it, Mr. Wemmick."

"You did," said Wemmick, "How dare you? You've not in a fit state to come here, if you can't come here without spluttering like a bad pen. What do you mean by it?"

"A man can't help his feelings, Mr. Wemmick," pleaded Mike.

"Hiss what?" demanded Wemmick, quite severely. "Say that again!

"Now, look here, my man," said Mr. Jaggers, advancing a step, and pointing to the door. "Get out of this office. I'll have no feelings here. Get out!"

"It serves you right," said Wemmick. "Get out."

So the unfortunate Mike very humbly withdrew, and Mr. Jaggers and Wemmick appeared to have re-established their good understanding, and went to work again with an air of refreshment upon them as if they had just had lunch.

CHAPTER III.

From Little Britain I went, with my cheque in my pocket, to Miss Skifflin's brother, the accountant; and Miss Skifflin's brother, the accountant, going straight to Clarriker's and bringing Clarriker to tea, I had the greatest satisfaction of completing that arrangement. It was the only good thing I had done, and the only completed thing I had done, since I was first sported of my great expectations.

Clarriker informing me on that occasion that the affairs of the House were steadily progressing, that he would now be able to establish a small branch-house in the East which was much wanted for the extension of the business, and that Herbert in his new partnership capacity would go out and take charge of it, I found that I must have prepared for a separation from my friend, even though my own affairs had been more settled. And now indeed I felt as if my last anchor were leisureing its hold, and I should soon be driving with the winds and waves.

But there was recompense in the joy with which Herbert came home of a night and told me of these changes, little imagining that he told me no news, and sketched only pictures of himself conducting Charley Bates to the land of the Arabian Nights, and of me going out to join them (with a caravan of camels, I believe), and of our all going up the Nile and seeing wonders. Without being avaricious as to my own part in these bright plans, I felt that Herbert's way was clearing fast, and that old Bill Bailey laid but to stick to his pepper and rum, and his daughter would soon be happily provided for.

We had now got into the month of March. My left arm, though it presented no bad symptoms, took in the natural course so long to heal that I was still unable to get a coat on. My right hand was tolerably restored—disfigured, but fairly servicable.

On a Monday morning, when Herbert and I were at breakfast, I received the following letter from Wemmick by the post.

"Walworth. Burn this as soon as read. Early in the week, or my Wednesday, you might do what you know of if you feel disposed to try it. Now burn."

When I had shown this to Herbert and had put it in the fire—but not before we had both got it by heart—I had considered what to do. For, of course my being disabled could now be no longer kept out of view.

"I have thought it over, again and again," said Herbert, "and I think I know a better course than taking a Thames waterman. Mike Startop. A good fellow, a skilled hand, fond of us, and enthusiastic and honourable."

I had thought of him, more than once.

"But how much would you tell him, Herbert?"

"It is necessary to tell him very little. Let him suppose it a mere freak, but a secret one, until the morning comes; then let him know that there is urgent reason for your getting Provoc away and away. You go with him!"

"No doubt."

"Where?"

It had seemed to me, in the many anxious considerations I had given the point, almost indifferent what port we made for—Hamburg, Rotterdam, Antwerp—the place signified so little, so that he was got out of England. Any foreign steamer that fell in our way and would take us up, would do. I had always proposed to myself to get him well down the river in the boat: certainly well beyond Gravesend which was a critical place for search or inquiry if suspicious were afoot. As foreign steamer would leave London at about the time of high-water, our plan would be to get down the river by a previous ebb-tide, and lie by in some quiet spot until we could pull off to one. The time when one would be due where we lay, wherever that might be, could be calculated pretty nearly, if we made inquiries beforehand.

Herbert assented to all this, and we went out immediately after breakfast to pursue our investigations. We found that a steamer for Hamburg was likely to suit our purpose best, and we directed our thoughts chiefly to that vessel. But we noted down what other foreign steamer would leave London with the same tides, and we satisfied ourselves that we knew the build and colour of each. We then separated for a few hours; I, to get at once such passports as were necessary; Herbert, to see Startop at his lodgings. We both did what we had to do without any hindrance, and when we met again at one o'clock reported it done. I, for my part, was prepared with passports; Herbert had seen Startop, and he was more than ready to join.

These two should pull a pair of oars, we settled; and I would steer; our charge would be a/siter, and keep quiet; as speed was not our object, we should make way enough. We arranged that Herbert should not come home to
dinner before going to Mill Pond Bank that evening; that he should not go there at all to-morrow evening, Tuesday; that he should prepare Provis to come down to some Stairs hard by the house, on Wednesday, when he saw us approach, and not sooner; that all the arrangements with him should be concluded that Monday night; and that he should be communicated with no more in any way, until we took him on board.

These precautions well understood by both of us, I went home.

On opening the outer door of our chambers with my key, I found a letter in the box, directed to me, a very dirty letter, though not ill-written. It had been delivered by hand (of course since I left home), and its contents were these:

"If you are not afraid to come to the old marshes to-night to-morrow night at Nine, and to come to the little latter-house by the lincoln, you had better come. If you want information regarding your uncle Provis, you had much better come and tell me no one and lose no time. You must come alone. Bring this with you."

I had had load enough upon my mind before the receipt of this strange letter. What to do now, I could not tell. And the worst was, that I must decide quickly, or I should miss the afternoon coach, which would take me down in time for to-night. To-morrow night I could not think of going, for it would be too close upon the time of the flight. And again, for anything I knew, the proffered information might have some important bearing on the flight itself.

If I had had ample time for consideration, I believe I should still have gone. Having hardly any time for consideration—my watch showing me that the coach started within half an hour—I resolved to go. I should certainly not have gone, but for the reference to my Uncle Provis; that, coming on Wemmick's letter and the morning's busy preparation, turned the scale.

It is so difficult to become clearly possessed of the contents of almost any letter, in a violent hurry, that I had to read this mysterious epistle equally twice, before its injunction to me to be secret got medially into my mind. Yielding to it in the same mechanical kind of way, I left a note in pencil for Herbert, telling him that I should be so soon going away, I knew not for how long, I had decided to hurry down and back, to ascertain for myself how Miss Havisham was faring. I had then barely time to get my great-coat, lock up the chambers, and make for the coach-office by the short by-ways. If I had taken a hackney-chariot and gone by the streets, I should have missed my aim; going as I did, I caught the coach just as it came out of the yard. I was the only inside passenger, joining away knee-deep in straw, when I came to myself.

For, I really had not been myself since the receipt of the letter; it had so bewildered me ensuing on the hurry of the morning. The morrow hurry and flutter had been great, for, long and anxiously as I had waited for Wemmick, his hint had come like a surprise at last. And now I began to wonder at myself for being in the coach, and to doubt whether I had sufficient reason for being there, and to consider whether I should get out presently and go back, and to argue against ever heeding an anonymous communication, and, in short, to pass through all those phases of contradiction and indecision to which I suppose very few hurried people are strangers. Still, the reference to Provis by name, mastered everything. I reasoned as I had reasoned already without knowing it—if that be reasoning—in case any harm should befal him through my not going, how could I ever forgive myself?

It was dark before we got down, and the journey seemed long and dreary to me, who could see little of it outside, and who could not go outside in my disabled state. Avoiding the Blue Boar, I put up at an inn of minor reputation down the town, and ordered some dinner. While it was preparing, I went to Satis House and inquired for Miss Havisham; she was still very ill, though considered something better.

My inn had once been a part of an ancient ecclesiastical house, and I dined in a little octagonal common-room, like a font. As I was not able to eat my dinner, the old landlord with a shining bald head did it for me. This bringing us into conversation, he was so good as to entertain me with my own story—of course with the popular feature that Pumblechook was my earliest benefactor and the founder of my fortunes.

"Do you know the young man?" said I. "Know him! repeated the landlord. "Ever since he was no height at all."

"Does he ever come back to this neighbourhood?"

"Ay, he comes back," said the landlord, "to his great friends now and again, and gives the cold shoulder to the man who made him."

"What man is that?"

"His that I speak of," said the landlord. "Mr. Pumblechook."

"Is he ungrateful to no one else?"

"No doubt he would be, if he could," returned the landlord, "but he can't. And why? Because Pumblechook does everything for him."

"Does Pumblechook say so?"

"Say so!" replied the landlord. "He hasn't no call to say so."

"But does he say so?"

"It would turn a man's blood to white wine winegar to hear him tell of it, sir," said the landlord.

I thought, "Yet Joe, dear Joe, you never tell of it. Long-suffering and loving Joe, you never complain. Nor you, sweet-tempered Biddsey?"

"Your appetite's been touched like, by your accident," said the landlord, glancing at the
banded arm under my coat. "Try a tenderer bit."

"No, thank you," I replied, turning from the table to brood over the fire. "I can eat no more. Please take it away."

I had never been struck at so keenly, for my thanklessness to Joe, as through the brazen influence of society, and keeping alive, to some extent, a habit of observation. But at that time the habit of watching nature and studying the appearances of natural things with a view to learn their causes was altogether dormant. There were no naturalists, no experimenters, and no inquirers after physical truths. The few men who studied were chemists, and school divinity was the only subject taught. Even the Greek language, in which alone could be fittedly studied the works of Aristotle himself, was entirely neglected, and formal logic was the only means and the only object of education; the Latin language being everywhere in use for teaching and for all literature.

To rouse Europe from this deep sleep, it was necessary to discover and point out the way to conduct the minds of cultivated men out of the tangled maze in which they had been wandering. No one could move the mighty engine that was to complete the task of improvement, but the time had come when one man would be rendered capable of guiding and influencing ten thousand. When once, by the discovery of printing, a way had been opened for this result, it became comparatively easy to awaken a spirit that would again react on the masses, and lead ultimately to important results little anticipated even by those to whom these results were chiefly due. Men's minds were then ready to be excited, and listened greedily to the voice that addressed them. Thus it was, that out of an obscure corner of England proceeded the germ of a philosophy which in time altogether replaced and overturned the so-called philosophy of the middle ages.

It is now six hundred years ago that there was born in our island the very remarkable man who performed this work, and first lighted the torch of modern science. The name of this man was Francis Bacon.

Bacon is said to have come of good and ancient family, at Leicester, in the county of Somerset, and was certainly brought up amongst, and became the associate of, all the most eminent men of his day. Like almost all men of learning at that time, he was an ecclesiastic, and at an early age he became a Franciscan monk.

In the thirteenth century the University of Paris had the reputation of being the principal seat of knowledge, and to this place Bacon repaired, after completing a course of studies at Oxford. Education at that time at Oxford included chiefly instruction in languages and logic, departments which have always been there regarded as of primary importance. At Paris, Bacon found that "though there never was so great..."