GREAT EXPECTATIONS.
BY CHARLES DICKENS.

CHAPTER LV.

He was taken to the Police Court next day, and would have been immediately committed for trial, but that it was necessary to send down for an old officer of the prison-ship from which he had once escaped, to speak to his identity. Nobody doubted it; but, Compson, who had meant to depose to it, was still trembling on the tides, dead and if happened that there was not at that time any prison officer in London who could give the required evidence. I had gone direct to Mr. Jaggers at his private house, on my arrival over night, to retain his assistance, and Mr. Jaggers on the prisoner's behalf would admit nothing. It was the sole resource, for he told me that the case must be over in five minutes when the witness was there, and that no power on earth could prevent its going against us.

I imparted to Mr. Jaggers my design of keeping him in ignorance of the fact of his wealth. Mr. Jaggers was curious and anxious with me for having "let it slip through my fingers," and said we must memorise by-and-by, and try at all events for some of it. But, he did not conceal from me that although there might be many cases in which the forfeit would not be exacted, there were no circumstances in this case to make it one of them. I understood that, very well. I was not related to the outlaw, or connected with him by any recognisable tie; he had put his hand to no writing or settlement in my favour before his apprehension, and to do so now would be idio. I had no claim, and I finally resolved, and ever afterwards abided by the resolution, that my heart should never be elenched with the hope of taking to attempting to establish one.

There appeared to be reason for supposing that the drowned informer had hoped for a reward out of this forfeiture, and had obtained some accurate knowledge of Magwitch's affairs. When his body was found, many miles from the scene of his death, and so horribly disfigured that he was only recognisable by the contents of his pockets, notes were still legible, folded in a case he carried. Among these, were the name of a banking-house in New South Wales where a sum of money was, and the designation of certain lands of considerable value. Both these heads of information were in a list that Magwitch, while in prison, gave to Mr. Jaggers, of the possessions he supposed I should inherit. His ignorance, poor fellow, at last served him; he never mistrusted that my inheritance was quite safe, with Mr. Jaggers's aid.

After three days' delay, during which the crown prosecution stood over for the production of the witnesses from the prison-ship, the witness came, and completed the easy case. He was committed to take his trial at the next Sessions, which would come on in a month.

It was at this dark time of my life that Herbert returned home one evening, a good deal cast down, and said:

"My dear Handel, I fear I shall soon have to leave you."

His partner having prepared me for that, I was less surprised than he thought.

"We shall lose a fine opportunity if I put off going to Cairo, and I am very much afraid I must go, Handel, when you must need me."

"Herbert, I shall always need you, because I shall always love you; but my need is greater now, than at another time."

"You will be so lonely."

"I have not leisure to think of that," said I.

"You know that I am always with him to the full extent of the time allowed, and that I should do with him all day long, if I could. And when I come away from him, you know that my thoughts are with him."

The dreary condition to which he was brought, was so appalling to both of us, that we could not refer to it in pleasant words.

"My dear fellow," said Herbert, "let the near prospect of our separation—for, it is very near—be my justification for troubling you about yourself. Have you thought of your future?"

"No, for I have been afraid to think of any future."

"But, yours cannot be dismissed; indeed, my dear dear Handel, it must not be dismissed. I wish you would enter on it now, as far as a few friendly words go, with me."

"I will," said I.

"In this branch house of ours, Handel, we must have a—"

I saw that his delicacy was avoiding the word, so I said, "A clerk."
"A clerk. And I hope it is not at all unlikely
that he may expand (as a clerk of your acquaintance
has expanded) into a partner. Now, Handel, in short, my dear boy, you will come to see me?"
There was something charmingly cordial and
engaging in the manner in which after saying
"Now, Handel," as if it were the grave begin-
ing of a portentous business exordium, he had suddenly given up that tone, stretched
out his honest hand, and spoken like a school-
boy.
"Clara and I have talked about it again and
again," he said in a tone that made me only this evening, with tears
in her eyes, to say to you that if you will live
with us when we come together, she will do her best to make you happy, and to convince her
husband's friend that he is her friend too. We
should get on so well, Handel!
I thanked her heartily, and I thanked him
heartily, but said I could not yet make sure of
joining him as he so kindly offered. Firstly,
my mind was too preoccupied to be able to
take in the subject clearly. Secondly—Yes! Secon-
dly, there was a vague something linger-
ing in my thoughts that will come out very near
the end of this slight narrative.
"But if you thought, Herbert, that you could,
without doing any injury to your business, leave
the question open for a little while—"
"For any while," cried Herbert. "Six
months, a year?"
"Not so long as that," said I. "Two or
three months at most."
Herbert was highly delighted when we shook
hands on this arrangement, and said he could
now take courage to tell me that he believed he
must go away at the end of the week.
"And Clara?" said I.
"The dear little thing," returned Herbert,
"holds dutifully to her father as long as he
lars; but he won't last long. Mrs. Whimple
confides to me that he is certainly going."
"Not to say an unfeeling thing," said I, "he
cannot do better than go."
"I am afraid that must be admitted," said
Herbert: "and then I shall come back for the
dear little thing, and the dear little thing and I
will walk quietly into the nearest church. Re-
member! The blessed darling comes of no
family, my dear Handel, and never locked into
the red book, and hasn't a notion about her
grandpapa. What a fortune for the son of my
mother!"
On the Saturday in that same week, I took
my leave of Herbert—full of bright hope, but
sad and sorry to leave me—as he sat on one of
the escritoire mail coaches. I went into a coffee-
house to write a little note to Clara, telling her
he had gone off sending his love to her over and
over again, and then went to my lonely home—
it preserved the name, for it was now no home
in me, and I had no home anywhere.
On the stairs I encountered Wemmick, who
was coming down, after an unsuccessful applica-
tion of his knuckles to my door. I had not seen
him alone, since the disastrous issue of the at-
tempted flight; and he had come, in his private
and personal capacity, to say a few words of ex-
planation in reference to that failure.
"The late Compeyson," said Wemmick, "had
by little and little got at the bottom of half of
the regular business now transacted, and it was
from the talk of some of his people in trouble
(some of his people being always in trouble)
that I heard what I saw. I kept my ears open,
seeming to leave them shut, until I heard that he
was absent, and that thought would be the
best time for making the attempt. I can only
suppose now, that it was part of his policy, as a
very clever man, habitually to deceive his own
instruments. You don't blame me, I hope, Mr.
Fip? I am sure I tried to serve you, with all
my heart.
"I am as sure of that, Wemmick, as you can
be, and I thank you most earnestly for all your
interest and friendship."
"Thank you, thank you very much. It's a
bad job," said Wemmick, scratching his head,
"and I assure you I haven't been so cut up for
a long time. What I look at is, the sacrifice of
so much portable property. Dear me!"
"What I think of Wemmick, is the poor
owner of the property."
"Yes, I'm sure," said Wemmick. "Of
course there can be no objection to your being
sorry for him, and I'd put it down as long
attempts to get him out of it. But what
I look at is, the late Compeyson having
been beforehand with him in intelligence of
his return, and being determined to bring him
to book. I don't think he could have been
saved. Whereas, the portable property certainly
could have been saved. That's the difference
between the property and the owner, don't you
see?"
I invited Wemmick to come up-stairs, and re-
fresh himself with a glass of grog before walking
to Walmorth. He accepted the invitation. While
he was drinking his moderate allowance, he
said, with nothing to lead up to it, and after
having appeared rather fidgety:
"What do you think of my meaning to take
a holiday on Monday, Mr. Fip?"
"Why, I suppose you have not done such a
thing these twelve months."
"These twelve years, more likely," said
Wemmick. "Yes, I'm going to take a holiday.
More than that; I'm going to take a
walk. More than that; I'm going to ask you
to take a walk with me."
I was about to excuse myself, as being but a
bad companion just then, when Wemmick antici-
pated me.
"I know your engagements," said he, "and I
know you are out of sorts, Mr. Fip. But if you
would oblige me, I should take it as a kindness.
It isn't a long walk, and it's an early one. Say
it might occupy you (including breakfast on the
walk) from eight to twelve. Couldn't you stretch
a point and manage it?"
He had done so much for me at various times,
that this was very little to do for him. I said
could manage it—would manage it—and he was so very much pleased by my acquiescence, that I was pleased too. At his particular request, I appointed to call for him at the Castle at half-past eight on Monday morning, and so we parted for the time.

Punctual to my appointment, I rang at the Castle gate on the Monday morning, and was received by Wemmick himself; who struck me as looking a little less young than usual, and having a slight hat on. Within, there were two glasses of rum-and-milk prepared, and two biscuits. The aged must have been stirring with the lark, for, glancing into the perspective of his bedroom, I observed that his bed was empty.

When we had fortified ourselves with the rum-and-milk and biscuits, and were going out for the walk with that training preparation on us, I was considerably surprised to see Wemmick take up a fishing-rod, and put it over his shoulder.

"Why, we are not going fishing!" said I.

"No," returned Wemmick, "but I like to walk with one."

I thought this odd; however, I said nothing, and we set off. We went towards Camberwell Green, and when we were thereabouts, Wemmick said suddenly:

"Hallo! Here's a church!"

There was nothing very surprising in that; but again, I was rather surprised, when he said, as if he were animated by a brilliant idea:

"Let's go in!"

We went in, Wemmick leaving his fishing-rod in the porch, and looked all round. In the mean time, Wemmick was diving into his coat-pockets, and getting something out of paper there.

"Hallo!" said he. "Here's a couple of pair of gloves! Let's put 'em on!"

As the gloves were white kid gloves, and as the post-cobble was widened to its utmost extent, I now began to have my strong suspicions. They were strengthened into certainty when I beheld the aged enter at a side door, escorting a lady.

"Hallo!" said Wemmick. "Here's Miss Skiffins! Let's have a wedding!"

Tint discreet damsel was attired as usual, except that she was now engaged in substituting for her green kid gloves, a pair of white. The Aged was likewise engaged in preparing a similar sacrifice for the altar of Hymen. The old gentleman, however, experienced so much difficulty in getting his gloves on, that Wemmick found it necessary to put him with his back against the pillar, and then to get behind the pillar himself, and pull away at them, while I for my part held the old gentleman round the waist, that he might present an equal and safe resistance. By dint of this ingenious scheme, his gloves were got on to perfection.

The clerk and clergyman then appeared, we were ranged in order at those fatal rails. True to his notion of seeming to do it all without preparation, I heard Wemmick say to himself as he took something out of his waistcoat-pocket before the service began, "Hallo! Here's a ring!"

I acted in the capacity of backer, or best-man, to the bridegroom; while a little limpet opener in a soft bonnet like a baby's, made a faint of being the bosom friend of Miss Skiffins. The responsibility of giving the lady away, devolved upon the Aged, who led to the clergyman's being unintentionally scandalised, and it happened thus. When he said, "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" the old gentleman, not in the least knowing what point of the ceremony we had arrived at, stood most amably beaming at the ten commandments.

Upon which, the clergyman said again, "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?"

The old gentleman being still in a state of most estimable unconsciousness, the bridegroom cried out in his accustomed voice, "Now, Aged P., you know, who giveth?" To which the Aged replied with great briskness, before saying that he gave, "All right, John, all right, my boy!"

And the clergyman came to so gloomy a pause upon it, that I had doubts for the moment whether we should get completely married that day.

It was completely done, however, and when we were going out of church, Wemmick took the cover off the font, and put his white gloves in it, and put the cover on again. Mrs. Wemmick, more heedful of the future, put her white gloves in her pocket and assumed her green. "Now, Mr. Pip," said Wemmick, triumphantly shouldering the fishing-rod as we came out, "let me ask you whether anybody would suppose this to be a wedding party!"

Breakfast had been ordered at a pleasant little tavern, a mile or so away upon the rising ground beyond the Green; and there was a tessellated board in the room, in case we should desire to unbend our minds after the solemnity. It was pleasant to observe that Mrs. Wemmick no longer anxiouly wished Wemmick's arm when it adapted itself to her figure, but sat in a high-backed chair against the wall, like a violoncello in its case, and submitted to be embraced as that melodious instrument might have done.

We had an excellent breakfast, and when any one declined anything on table, Wemmick said, "Provided by contract, you know, don't be afraid of it!"

I drank to the new couple, drank to the Aged, drank to the Castle, saluted the bride at parting, and made myself as agreeable as I could.

Wemmick came down to the door with me, and I again shook hands with him, and wished him joy.

"Thank's," said Wemmick, rubbing his hands.

"She's such a manager of fowls, you have no idea. You shall have some eggs, and judge for yourself. I say, Mr. Pip!" calling me back, and speaking low, "This is altogether a Walworth sentiment, please!"

"I understand. Not to be mentioned in Little Britain," said I.

Wemmick nodded. "After what you let out the other day, Mr. Jaggers may as well not..."
know of it. He might think my brain was softening, or something of the kind."

CHAPTER LV.

He lay in prison very ill, during the whole interval between his commitment for trial, and the coming round of the Sessions. He had broken two ribs, they had wounded one of his lungs, and though the intervals between his commencements for trial, and the coming round of the Sessions, he had broken an old, sprained joint, or something of the kind; which increased daily. It was a consequence of his hurt, that he spoke so low as was ever ready to listen the first duty of my life to say to him, and read audible tendance on him.

Alluded to by one or other of the people in attendance, that his desperate reputation was not to be trusted, that he knew not what I knew he ought to hear.

The trial came on at once, and, when the sun was making its way through the windows of the court, glittering in the rays of April sun. Peaked in the dock, as I again stood beside him at the corner of his hand in mine, were the two-and-thirty men and women; some defiant, some stricken with terror, some sobbing and weeping, some covering their faces, some staring gloomily about. There had been能力s from among the women convicts, but they had been stilled, and a hush had succeeded. The shrieks with their great chains and nosegays, other civic members and monsters, fathers, tatlers, a great gallery full of people—a large theatrical audience—looked on, as the two-and-thirty and the Judge were solemnly confronted. The sun was shining in at the great windows, glittering drops of rain upon the glass, and it made a broad shaft of light between the two-and-thirty and the Judge, bending both together, and perhaps reminding some among the audience, how both were passing on, with absolute equity, to the greater Judgment.
that knoweth all things and cannot err. Rising for a moment, to a distant spot in this way of light, the prisoner said, "My Lord, I have received my sentence of Death from the Almighty, but I bow to yours," and sat down again. There was some hushing, and the Judge went on with what he had to say to the rest. Then, they were all formally doomed, and some of them were supported out, and some of them sauntered out with a haggard look of bravery, and a few nodded to the gallery, and two or three shook hands, and others went out chewing the fragments of herb they had taken from the sweet herbs lying about. He went last of all, because of having to be helped from his chair and to go very slowly; and he held my hand while all the others were removed, and while the audience got up (putting their dresses right, as they might at church or elsewhere) and pointed down at this criminal or at that, and most of all at him and me.

I earnestly hoped and prayed that he might die before the Recorder's Report was made, but, in the dread of his lingering on, I began that night to write out a petition to the Home Secretary of State, setting forth my knowledge of him, and how it was that he had come back for my sake. I wrote it as fervently and pathetically as I could, and when I had finished it and sent it in, I wrote out other petitions to such persons in authority as I hoped were the most merciful, and drew up one to the Crown itself. For several days and nights after he was sentenced, I took no rest except when I fell asleep in my chair, but was wholly absorbed in these appeals. And after I had sent them in, I could not keep away from the places where they were, but felt as if they were more hopeful and less desperate when I was near them. In this unreasonable restless and pain of mind, I would roam the streets of an evening, wandering by those offices and houses where I had let the petitions. To the present hour, the weary western streets of London on a cold dusty spring night, with their ranges of stern shut-up mansions and their long rows of lamps, are melancholy to me from this association.

The daily visits I could make him were shortened now, and he was more strictly kept. Seeing, or supposing, that I was suspected of an intention of carrying poison to him, I asked to be searched before I sat down at his bedside, and told the officer who was always there, that I was willing to do anything that would assure him of the wisdomlessness of my designs. Nobody was hard with him, or with me. There was duty to be done, and it was done, but not harshly. The officer always gave me the assurance that he was not, and some other sick prisoners in the room, and some other prisoners who attended on them as sick nurses (malefactorers, but not incapable of kindness, God be thanked!) always joined in the same report.

As the days went on, I noticed more and more that he would lie placidly looking at the white ceiling, with an absence of light in his face, until some word of mine brightened it for an instant, and then it would subside again. Sometimes he was almost, or quite, unable to speak; then, he would answer me with slight pressures on my hand, and I grew to understand his meaning very well. The number of the days had risen to ten, when I saw a greater change in him than I had seen yet. His eyes were turned towards the door, and lighted up as I entered.

"Dear boy," he said, as I sat down by his bed: "I thought you were late. But I knew you couldn't be that."

"It is just the time," said I. "I waited for it at the gate."

"You always wait at the gate; don't you, dear boy?"

"Yes. Not to lose a moment of the time."

"Thank ye, dear boy, thank ye. God bless you! You've never deserted me, dear boy."

I pressed his hand in silence, for I could not forget that I had once meant to desert him.

"And what's best of all," he said, "you've been more comfortable along with me, since I was under a dark cloud, than when the sun shone. That's best of all."

He lay on his back, breathing with great difficulty. Do what he would, and love me though he did, the light left his face over and over again, and a film came over the placid look at the white ceiling.

"Are you in much pain to-day?"

"I don't complain of none, dear boy."

"You never do complain."

He had spoken his last words. He smiled, and I understood his touch to mean that he wished to lift my hand, and lay it on his breast. I laid it there, and he smiled again, and put both his hands upon it.

The allotted time ran out while we were thus; but, looking round, I found the governor of the prison standing near me, and he whispered, "You needn't go yet." I thanked him gratefully, and asked, "Might I speak to him, if he can hear me?"

The governor stepped aside, and beckoned the officer away. The change, though it was made without noise, drew back the film from the placid look at the white ceiling, and he looked most affectionately at me.

"Dear Magwitch, I must tell you, now at last, what I meant to say to you."

A gentle pressure on my hand.

"You had a child once, whom you loved and lost."

A stronger pressure on my hand.

She lived and found powerful friends. She is living now. She is a lady and very beautiful.

And I love her!"

With a last faint effort, which would have been powerless but for my yielding to it and assisting it, he raised my hand to his lips. Then, he gently let it sink upon his breast again, with his own hands lying on it. The placid look at the white ceiling came back, and passed away, and his head dropped quietly on his breast.

Mindful, then, of what we had read together, I thought of the two men who went up into the
Temple to pray, and I knew there were no better words that I could say beside his bed, than "O Lord, be merciful to him, a sinner!"

UNDERGROUND LONDON.

There are more ways than one of looking at sewers, especially at old London sewers. There is a highly romantic point of view from which they are regarded as accessible, pleasant, and convivial hiding-places for criminals flying from justice, but black and dangerous labyrinths for the innocent stranger. Even now, in these days of new police and information for the people, it would not be difficult to find many thousands who look upon them as secret caverns full of metropolitan banditti. When the shades of evening fall upon the City, mysterious whispered "Open sesame" are heard in imagination near the trap-door side-entrances, and many London Hesperides or Abdallahs, in lace-boots and velvet jackets, seem to sink through the pavement into the arms of their faithful comrades. Romance, as full of startling incidents as an egg is full of meat, has been built upon this underground foundation, and dramas belonging to the class which are now known as "sensation" pieces, have been placed upon the stage to feed this appetite for the wonderful in connection with sewage. I have some recollection of a drama of this kind that I saw some years ago at one of the East-end theatres, in which nearly all the action took place underground, and in which virtue was represented in a good strong serviceable shape by an heroic sewer-cleaner. Much was made of floods and flooding, which the flusher, who played the villain of the piece, seemed to have completely under his control; and it was not considered at all singular by the audience, that a dozen men and women should be found walking high and dry under these mysterious arcades, as if in some place of public resort.

Imagination generally loves to run wild about underground London, or the sub-ways of any great city. Take away the catacombs of Paris—the closed, magnified, mysterious catacombes—and the keystones of a mass of French fiction falls to the ground. The dark arches of our own dear river-side Adelphi—familiarised, not to say vulgarised, as they have been by being turned into thoroughfares to coal-warehouses and half-penny steam-boats—are still looked upon as the favourite haunts of the wild tribes of London or City Arabs, whatever these may be.

The popular notion exists that those few sloping tunnels are a vast free lodging-house for hundreds of night wanderers; and that to those who have the watchdog, they form a passage leading to some hidden haunt of vice. This belief prevails very largely amongst very quiet, respectable people; the class who live in the suburbs, and feed upon "serious" literature, and shudder when the metropolis, the modern Nineveh, is mentioned in conversation, and who, by no chance, ever heard the chances at midnight, or were caught wandering about the streets after nine p.m.

This passion, however, is not entirely confined to people who are totally ignorant of the existing out-door world. Hundreds of traditions are cherished about secret passages said to have extended from St. Saviour's, Southwark, under the river Thames, or from Old Canoebury House to the Friary at Smithfield. The people who cherish these traditions are not easily deceived by any fancy stories about life in London as it is now; they are too knowing for that; but they like to have their little dream of wonder about life in the middle ages. In vain does Mr. Roach Smith write, or do Archæological Societies lecture, upon these fragments of old masonry, laid bare during the building of city warehouses or suburban settlements. The poor old monks are not to be saved so easily from a few damaging theories regarding their presumed habits; and the vestiges of ancient conduit heads, or covered ways to protect water-pipes, are always thought to be the remains of murder-caverns, or cells for the unhappy victims of religious hatred. A piece of ordinary rust, a pipe, or a drain, is transformed into the traces of blood; and those who do not take this singular view of these unearthed sub-ways, are always ready to regard them as cellars full of buried gold.

Next to the romantic way of regarding sewers, there is the scientific or half scientific way, which is not always wanting in the imaginative element. I remember attending an exhibition about four years ago, at the Society of Arts, which, although it consisted only of engineering plans for the improvement of London sub-ways, was amusing from the unpractical character of the schemes proposed.

A number of designs were submitted to the Metropolitan Board of Works for the total sub-surface re-construction of the metropolitan streets, and these designs—about forty in number—were referred to a committee of eminent engineers, whose task it was to give away certain money prizes. Nearly all the designs, as far as I recollect, exhibited the same features: a centre tunnel under the roadway, accessible by traps from the street, and containing the different pipes for gas, water, telegraphic wires, and sewage. The plan that got a prize of one hundred guineas, proposed to have arched brick vaults extending from the houses on each side of the tunnel, giving a solidity to the roadway, and increasing to a great extent the cellar accommodation of houses and warehouses. Another plan, of fifty guineas, had no central tunnel under the roadway, but provided for the same purposes two side tunnels running parallel to each other, and connected with the houses on either side. The difference in the estimate of cost of the

* The water-pipes used in old times were not always embedded in the earth as they are now, but enclosed within a capacious arch of brickwork, into which workmen could descend to repair any decay or accident.—Wilkes's History of Shoreditch.