GREAT EXPECTATIONS.

BY CHARLES DICKENS.

CHAPTER LVIII.

The tidings of my high fortunes having had a heavy fall, had got down to my native place and its neighbourhood, before I got there. I found the Bock Boar in possession of the intelligence, and I found that it made a great change in the Boar's demeanour. Whereas the Boar had cultivated my good opinion with warm assiduity when I was coming into property, the Boar was exceedingly cool on the subject now that I was going out of property.

It was evening when I arrived, much fatigued by the journey. I had so often made so easily. The Boar could not put me into my usual bedroom, which was engaged (probably by some one who had expectations), and could only assign me a very indifferent chamber among the pigeons and post-chaises up the yard. But, I had as sound a sleep in that lodging as in the most superior accommodation the Boar could have given me, and the quality of my dreams was about the same as in the best bedroom.

Early in the morning while my breakfast was getting ready, I strolled round by Satis House. There were printed bills on the gate, and on bits of carpet hanging out of the windows, announcing a sale by auction of the Household Furniture and Effects, next week. The House itself was to be sold as old building materials and pulled down. Lot 1 was marked in white-washed knock-kneed letters on the broughouse; Lot 2 on that part of the main building which had been so long shut up. Other lots were marked off on other parts of the structure, and the ivy had been torn down to make room for the inscriptions, and much of it trailed low in the dust I had withered already. Stepping in for a moment at the open gate and looking around me with the uncomfortable air of a stranger who had no business there, I saw the auctioneer's clerk walking on the oaks and telling them off for the information of a catalogue-compositor, pen in hand, who made a temporary desk of the wheeled chair I had so often pulled along to the tune of Old Clem. When I got back to the breakfast in the Boar's coffee-room, I found Mr. Pumblechook conversing with the landlord, Mr. Pumblechook (not improved in appearance by his late nocturnal adventure) was waiting for me, and addressed me in the following terms.

"Young man, I am sorry to see you brought low. But what else could be expected! What else could be expected!"

As he extended his hand with a magnificently forgiving air, and as I was broken by illness and unfit to quarrel, I took it.

"William," said Mr. Pumblechook to the waiter, "just a muffin on table. And has it come to this! Has it come to this!"

I frowningly sat down to my breakfast. Mr. Pumblechook stood over me, and poured out my tea—before I could touch the teapot—with the air of a benefactor who was resolved to be true to the last.

"William," said Mr. Pumblechook, mournfully, "put the salt on. In happier times," addressing me, "I think you took sugar? And did you take milk? You did. Sugar and milk. William, bring a watercress."

"Thank you," said I, shortly, "but I don't eat watercresses."

"You don't eat 'em," returned Mr. Pumblechook, "sighting and nodding his head several times, as if he might have expected that, and as if abstinence from watercresses were consistent with my downfall. "True. The simple fruits of the earth. No. You wouldn't bring any, William."

I went on with my breakfast, and Mr. Pumblechook continued to stand over me, staring wildly and breathing noisily, as lie always did.

"Little more than skin and bone!" must Mr. Pumblechook, aloud. "And yet when he went away from here (I may say with my blessing), and I spread afore him my flimsy store, he was as plump as a Peach!"

This reminded me of the wonderful difference between the servile manner in which he had offered his hand in my new prosperity, saying, "May I?" and the ostentatious dandiness with which he had just now exhibited the same fat five fingers.

"Rah!" he went on, landing me the broad- and-butter. "And air you a going to Joseph?"

"In Heaven's name," said I, springing, "what does it matter to you where I am going? Leave that teapot alone!"

It was the worst course I could have taken, because it gave Pumblechook the opportunity he wanted.

"Yes, young man," said he, releasing the
handle of the article in question, retiring a step
or two from my table, and speaking for the be-
hood of the landlord and waiter at the door.
"I will leave that tepot alone. You are right,
young man. For once, you are right. I forgot
myself when I take such an interest in your
breakfast, as to wish your frame, exhausted by
the debilitating effects of prodigality, to be
stimulated by the wholesome nourishment of your
forefathers. And yet," said Pumblechook, turn-
ing to the landlord and waiter, and pointing me
out at arm's length, "this is him, as I ever
saw, I never saw with my eyes, he and I now are
married. Tell me not it cannot be; I tell you this is him."

A low murmur from the two replied. The
waiter appeared to be particularly affected.

"This is him," said Pumblechook, "as I
have rode in my shay-cart. This is him as I
have seen brought up by hand. This is him
unto the sister of which I was uncle by mar-
rriage, as her name was Georgiana Maria from
her own mother, let him deny it if he can."
The waiter seemed convinced that I could not
deny it, and that it gave him a black look.

"Young man," said Pumblechook, screwing
his head at me in the old fashion, "you air
a-going to Joseph. What does it matter to Big-
dy and Joseph, whose great benefactor
more brightly than before, if that could
be, contrasted with this brazen pretender. I
went towards them slowly, for my limbs
were weak, but with a sense of increasing relief as I
 approached nearer to them, and a sense of leaving
gnarl and untouchfulness farther and far-
ther behind.

The June weather was delicious. The sky
was blue, the larks were soaring high over the
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But, the forge was a very short distance off, and I went towards it under the sweet green lines, listening for the clink of Joe's hammer.

Long after I ought to have heard it, and long after I had fancied I heard it and found it but a fancy, all was still. The lines were there, and the white thorns were there, and the chestnut-trees were there, and their leaves rustled harmoniously when I stopped to listen; but, the clink of Joe's hammer was not in the midsummer wind.

Almost fearing, without knowing why, to come in view of the forge, I saw it at last, and saw that it was closed. No glimmer of fire, no glittering shower of sparks, no roar of bellows; all shut up, and still.

But the house was not deserted, and the best parlour seemed to be in use, for there were white curtains fluttering in its window, and the window was open and gay with flowers. I went softly towards it, meaning to peep over the flowers, when Joe and Biddy stood before me, arm in arm.

At first Biddy gave a sob, as if she thought it was my apparition, but in another moment she was in my embrace. I wept to see her, and she wept to see me; because she looked so fresh in my mind. It was my apparition, but in another moment she was my bride, arm in arm.

They had taken me into the kitchen, and I had laid my head down on the old deal table. Biddy held one of my hands to her lips, and Joe's restoring touch was on my shoulder.

"Which he won't strong enough, my dear, for to be surprised," said Joe. And Biddy said, "I ought to have thought of it, dear Joe, but I was too happy." They were both so overjoyed to see me, so proud to see me, so touched by my coming to them, so delighted that I should have come to help to make their day complete! My first thought was one of great thankfulness that I had never breathed this last balmy hope to Joe. How often, while he was with me in my illness, had it come to my lips, how improbable would have been his knowledge of it, if he had remained with me but another hour!

"Dear Biddy," said I, "you have the best husband in the whole world, and if you could have seen him by my bed you would have—-But no, you couldn't love him better than you do."

"No, I couldn't, indeed," said Biddy.

"And, dear Joe, you have the best wife in the whole world, and she will make you as happy as even you deserve to be, you dear, good, noble Joe!"

Joe looked at me with a quivering lip, and fairly put his sleeve before his eyes.

"And Joe and Biddy both, as you have been to church to-day, and are in charity and love with all mankind, receive my humble thanks for all you have done for me, and all I have so ill repaid! And when I say that I am going away within the hour, for I am soon going abroad, and that I shall never rest until I have worked for the money with which you have kept me out of prison, and have sent it to you, don't think, dear Joe and Biddy, that if I could repay it a thousand times over, I suppose I could cancel a farthing of the debt I owe you, or that I would do so if I could!"

They were both melted by these words, and both entreated me to say no more.

"But I must say more. Dear Joe, I hope you will have children to love, and that some little fellow will sit in this chimney corner of a winter night, who may remind you of another little fellow gone out of it for ever. Don't tell him, Joe, that I was thankless; don't tell him, Biddy, that I was ungracious and unjust; only tell him that I honoured you both, because you were both so good and true, and that, as your child, I said it would be natural to him to grow up a much better man than I did."

"I ain't going," said Joe, from behind his sleeve, "to tell him nothing o' that nature Pip. Nor Biddy ain't. Nor yet no one ain't."

"And now, though I know you have already done it in your own kind hearts, pray tell me, both, that you forgive me! Pray let me hear you say the words, that I may carry the sound of them away with me, and then I shall be able to believe that you can trust me, and think better of me, in the time to come?"

"O dear old Pip, old chap," said Joe. "God knows as I forgive you, if I have anythink to forgive!"

"Amen! And God knows I do!" echoed Biddy.

"Now let me go up and look at my old little room, and rest there a few minutes by myself, and then when I have eaten and drunk with you, go with me as far as the finger-post, dear Joe and Biddy, before we say good-by!"

I told all I had, and I put aside as much as I could, for a composition with my creditors—who gave me ample time to pay them in full—and I went out and joined Herbert. Within a month, I had quitted England, and within two months I was clerk to Claraker and Co, and within four months I assumed my first undivided responsibility. For, the beam across the parlour ceiling at Mill Pond Bank, had then ceased to tremble under old Bill Bailey's grows and was at peace, and Herbert had gone away to marry Clar, and I was left in sole charge of the Eastern Branch until he brought her back.

Many a year went round, before I was a partner in the House; but, I lived happily with Herbert and his wife, and lived frugally, and paid my debts, and maintained a constant correspondence with Biddy and Joe. It was not until I became third in the Firm, that Claraker...
...and little that ever had any place there. But that poor dream, as I once used to call it, has all gone by, Biddy, all gone by!"

Nevertheless, I knew while I said those words that I secretly intended to revisit the site of the old house that evening alone, for her sake. Yes, even so. For Estella's sake.

I had heard of her, as leading a most unhappy life, and, as being separated from her husband, who had used her with great cruelty, and who had become quite renowned as a compound of pride, avarice, brutality, and meanness. And I had heard of the details of her husband, from an accident consequent on his ill-treatment of a horse. This release had befallen her some two years before; for anything I knew, she was married again.

The early dinner hour at Joe's, left me abundance of time, without hurrying my walk with Biddy, to walk over to the old spot before dark. But, what with loitering on the way, to look at old objects and to think of old times, the day had quite declined when I came to the place.

There was no house now, no brewery, no building whatever left, but the wall of the old garden. The cleared space had been enclosed with a rough fence, and, looking over it, I saw that some of the old ivy had struck root anew, and was growing green on low quiet mounds of ruin. A gate in the fence standing ajar, I pushed it open, and went in.

A cold silver mist had veiled the afternoon, and the moon was not yet up to scatter it. But, the stars were shining beyond the mist, and the moon was coming, and the evening was not dark. I could trace out where every part of the old house had been, and where the brewery had been, and where the gates, and where the casks. I had done so, and was looking along the desolate garden-walk, when I beheld a solitary figure in it.

The figure showed itself aware of me, as I advanced. It had been moving towards me, but it stood still. As I drew nearer, I saw it to be the figure of a woman. As I drew nearer yet, it was almost to turn away, when it stopped, and let me come up with it. Then, it faltered as if much surprised, and uttered my name, and I cried out:

"Biddy!"

"I am greatly changed. I wonder you know me."

The freshness of her beauty was indeed gone, but its indescribable majesty and its indescribable charm remained. Those attractions in it, I had seen before; what I had never seen before, was the saddened softened light of the once proud eyes; what I had never felt before, was the friendly touch of the once insensible hand.

We sat down on a bench that was near, and I said, "After so many years, it is strange that we should thus meet again, Estella, here where our first meeting was! Do you often come back?"

"I have never been here since."

"Nor I."

The moon began to rise, and I thought of the..."
place a look at the white ceiling, which had passed away. The moon began to rise, and I thought of the pressure on my hand when I had spoken the last words he had heard on earth.

Estella was the next to break the silence that ensued between us.

"I have very often hoped and intended to come back, but have been prevented by many circumstances. Poor, poor old place!"

The silvery mist was touched with the first rays of the moonlight, and the same rays touched the tears that dropped from her eyes.

"Were you wondering, as you walked along, how it came to be left in this condition?"

"Yes, Estella."

"The ground belongs to me. It is the only possession I have not relinquished. Everything else has gone from me, little by little, but I have kept this. It was the subject of the only determination I made in all the wretched years."

"Is it to be built on?"

"At last it is. I came here to take leave of it before its change. And you," she said, in a voice of touching interest to a wanderer, "you live abroad still?"

"Still."

"And do well, I am sure?"

"I work pretty hard for a sufficient living, and therefore—Yes, I do well."

"I have often thought of you," said Estella.

"Have you?"

"Of late, very often. There was a long hindrance when I kept far from me, the remembrance of what I had thrown away when I was quite ignorant of its worth. But, since my duty has not been incompatible with the admission of that remembrance, I have given it a place in my heart.

"You have always held your place in my heart," I answered. And we were silent again, until she spoke.

"I little thought," said Estella, "that I should take leave of you in taking leave of this spot. I am very glad to do so."

"Glad to part again, Estella? To me, parting is a painful thing. To me, the remembrance of our last parting has been even more painful and painful."

"But you said to me," returned Estella, very earnestly, "'God bless you, God forgive you!' And if you could say that to me then, you will not hesitate to say that to me now—now, when suffering has been stronger than all other teaching, and has taught me to understand what your heart used to be. I have been bent and broken, but—I hope—into a better shape. Be as considerate and good to me as you were, and tell me we are friends."

"We are friends," said I, rising and bending over her, as she rose from the bench.

"And will continue friends apart," said Estella.

I took her hand in mine, and we went out of the ruined place; and, as the morning mists had risen long ago when I first left the forge, so the evening mists were rising now, and in all the broad expanse of tranquil light they showed to me, I saw the shadow of no parting from her.

THE END OF GREAT EXPECTATIONS.

Our readers already know that the next number of this Journal will contain the first portion of a new romance by Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, which will be continued from week to week for six months. On its completion, it will be succeeded by a new serial story by Mr. Wilkie Collins, to be continued from week to week for nine months.

The repeal of the Duty on Paper will enable us greatly to improve the quality of the material on which ALL THE YEAR ROUND is printed, and therefore to enhance the mechanical clearness and legibility of these pages. Of the Literature to which we have a new encouragement to devote them, it becomes us to say no more than that we believe it would have been simply impossible, when paper was taxed, to make the present announcement.

ADVENTURES OF MONSIEUR MIRES.

It was in the ancient city of Bordeaux, and in the month of December, 1806, that Jules Isane Mires, the offspring of Jewish parentage, first saw the light. His father, a money-changer and watchmaker, kept one of those little shops which line the Exchanges of Bordeaux; but the proverbial success of his nation does not seem to have accompanied his operations, as he left nothing to his son when he died, but the charge of supporting three penniless sisters. When six years old young Mires was sent as a day-school to pick up what education he might at the feet of a learned professor named Jolly. This Gamaliel, however, did not give himself much trouble with his pupil, or his pupil took little pains to learn; for Monsieur Mires tells us that when he left school, at the ripe age of twelve, he had acquired but a very imperfect knowledge of the French language. It is most likely that the elder Mires had never heard of Dugiberry's theory, that "reading and writing come by nature;" but he acted as if he had no great faith in tuition, removing Jules at the age aforesaid from Professor Jolly's care, and placing him in the shop of Monsieur Beret, a dealer in glass. It is not on record that, like Alnascaur, Jules Mires kicked down his fortunes in a fit of presumptuous castle-building, but he admits that visions of future greatness made the details of the glass-trade distasteful to him, and dreaming