THE PICKWICK PAPERS

CHARLES DICKENS

CHAPTER I

THE PICKWICKIANS

The first ray of light which illumines the gloom, and converts

into a dazzling brilliancy that obscurity in which the earlier

history of the public career of the immortal Pickwick would

appear to be involved, is derived from the perusal of the following

entry in the Transactions of the Pickwick Club, which the editor

of these papers feels the highest pleasure in laying before his

readers, as a proof of the careful attention, indefatigable assiduity,

and nice discrimination, with which his search among the multifarious

documents confided to him has been conducted.

'May 12, 1827. Joseph Smiggers, Esq., P.V.P.M.P.C. Perpetual

Vice-President - Member Pickwick Club , presiding. The following

resolutions unanimously agreed to: -

'That this Association has heard read, with feelings of unmingled

satisfaction, and unqualified approval, the paper communicated by Samuel

Pickwick, Esq., G.C.M.P.C. General Chairman - Member Pickwick Club ,

entitled "Speculations on the Source of the Hampstead Ponds, with some

Observations on the Theory of Tittlebats;" and that this Association

does hereby return its warmest thanks to the said Samuel

Pickwick, Esq., G.C.M.P.C., for the same.

'That while this Association is deeply sensible of the advantages

which must accrue to the cause of science, from the production

to which they have just adverted - no less than from the unwearied

researches of Samuel Pickwick, Esq., G.C.M.P.C., in Hornsey,

Highgate, Brixton, and Camberwell - they cannot but entertain

a lively sense of the inestimable benefits which must inevitably

result from carrying the speculations of that learned man into a

wider field, from extending his travels, and, consequently,

enlarging his sphere of observation, to the advancement of

knowledge, and the diffusion of learning.

'That, with the view just mentioned, this Association has taken

into its serious consideration a proposal, emanating from the

aforesaid, Samuel Pickwick, Esq., G.C.M.P.C., and three other

Pickwickians hereinafter named, for forming a new branch of

United Pickwickians, under the title of The Corresponding

Society of the Pickwick Club.

'That the said proposal has received the sanction and approval

of this Association.

'That the Corresponding Society of the Pickwick Club is

therefore hereby constituted; and that Samuel Pickwick, Esq.,

G.C.M.P.C., Tracy Tupman, Esq., M.P.C., Augustus Snodgrass,

Esq., M.P.C., and Nathaniel Winkle, Esq., M.P.C., are hereby

nominated and appointed members of the same; and that they

be requested to forward, from time to time, authenticated

accounts of their journeys and investigations, of their observations

of character and manners, and of the whole of their

adventures, together with all tales and papers to which local

scenery or associations may give rise, to the Pickwick Club,

stationed in London.

'That this Association cordially recognises the principle of

every member of the Corresponding Society defraying his own

travelling expenses; and that it sees no objection whatever to the

members of the said society pursuing their inquiries for any

length of time they please, upon the same terms.

'That the members of the aforesaid Corresponding Society be,

and are hereby informed, that their proposal to pay the postage

of their letters, and the carriage of their parcels, has been

deliberated upon by this Association: that this Association

considers such proposal worthy of the great minds from which it

emanated, and that it hereby signifies its perfect acquiescence

therein.'

A casual observer, adds the secretary, to whose notes we are

indebted for the following account - a casual observer might

possibly have remarked nothing extraordinary in the bald head,

and circular spectacles, which were intently turned towards his

the secretary's face, during the reading of the above resolutions:

to those who knew that the gigantic brain of Pickwick was

working beneath that forehead, and that the beaming eyes of

Pickwick were twinkling behind those glasses, the sight was

indeed an interesting one. There sat the man who had traced to

their source the mighty ponds of Hampstead, and agitated the

scientific world with his Theory of Tittlebats, as calm and

unmoved as the deep waters of the one on a frosty day, or as a

solitary specimen of the other in the inmost recesses of an earthen

jar. And how much more interesting did the spectacle become,

when, starting into full life and animation, as a simultaneous call

for 'Pickwick' burst from his followers, that illustrious man

slowly mounted into the Windsor chair, on which he had been

previously seated, and addressed the club himself had founded.

What a study for an artist did that exciting scene present! The

eloquent Pickwick, with one hand gracefully concealed behind

his coat tails, and the other waving in air to assist his glowing

declamation; his elevated position revealing those tights and

gaiters, which, had they clothed an ordinary man, might have

passed without observation, but which, when Pickwick clothed

them - if we may use the expression - inspired involuntary awe

and respect; surrounded by the men who had volunteered to

share the perils of his travels, and who were destined to participate

in the glories of his discoveries. On his right sat Mr. Tracy

Tupman - the too susceptible Tupman, who to the wisdom and

experience of maturer years superadded the enthusiasm and

ardour of a boy in the most interesting and pardonable of human

weaknesses - love. Time and feeding had expanded that once

romantic form; the black silk waistcoat had become more and

more developed; inch by inch had the gold watch-chain beneath

it disappeared from within the range of Tupman's vision; and

gradually had the capacious chin encroached upon the borders of

the white cravat: but the soul of Tupman had known no change

- admiration of the fair sex was still its ruling passion. On the

left of his great leader sat the poetic Snodgrass, and near him

again the sporting Winkle; the former poetically enveloped in a

mysterious blue cloak with a canine-skin collar, and the latter

communicating additional lustre to a new green shooting-coat,

plaid neckerchief, and closely-fitted drabs.

Mr. Pickwick's oration upon this occasion, together with the

debate thereon, is entered on the Transactions of the Club. Both

bear a strong affinity to the discussions of other celebrated

bodies; and, as it is always interesting to trace a resemblance

between the proceedings of great men, we transfer the entry to

these pages.

'Mr. Pickwick observed says the secretary that fame was dear

to the heart of every man. Poetic fame was dear to the heart of

his friend Snodgrass; the fame of conquest was equally dear to

his friend Tupman; and the desire of earning fame in the sports

of the field, the air, and the water was uppermost in the breast of

his friend Winkle. He Mr. Pickwick would not deny that he was

influenced by human passions and human feelings cheers -

possibly by human weaknesses loud cries of "No" ; but this he

would say, that if ever the fire of self-importance broke out in his

bosom, the desire to benefit the human race in preference

effectually quenched it. The praise of mankind was his swing;

philanthropy was his insurance office. Vehement cheering. He

had felt some pride - he acknowledged it freely, and let his

enemies make the most of it - he had felt some pride when he

presented his Tittlebatian Theory to the world; it might be

celebrated or it might not. A cry of "It is," and great cheering.

He would take the assertion of that honourable Pickwickian

whose voice he had just heard - it was celebrated; but if the fame

of that treatise were to extend to the farthest confines of the

known world, the pride with which he should reflect on the

authorship of that production would be as nothing compared

with the pride with which he looked around him, on this, the

proudest moment of his existence. Cheers. He was a humble

individual. "No, no." Still he could not but feel that they had

selected him for a service of great honour, and of some danger.

Travelling was in a troubled state, and the minds of coachmen

were unsettled. Let them look abroad and contemplate the scenes

which were enacting around them. Stage-coaches were upsetting

in all directions, horses were bolting, boats were overturning, and

boilers were bursting. Cheers - a voice "No." No! Cheers.

Let that honourable Pickwickian who cried "No" so loudly

come forward and deny it, if he could. Cheers. Who was it that

cried "No"? Enthusiastic cheering. Was it some vain and

disappointed man - he would not say haberdasher loud cheers

- who, jealous of the praise which had been - perhaps undeservedly -

bestowed on his Mr. Pickwick's researches, and smarting under

the censure which had been heaped upon his own feeble attempts at

rivalry, now took this vile and calumnious mode of - -

'Mr. BLOTTON of Aldgate rose to order. Did the honourable

Pickwickian allude to him? Cries of "Order," "Chair," "Yes,"

"No," "Go on," "Leave off," etc.

'Mr. PICKWICK would not put up to be put down by clamour.

He had alluded to the honourable gentleman. Great excitement.

'Mr. BLOTTON would only say then, that he repelled the hon.

gent.'s false and scurrilous accusation, with profound contempt.

Great cheering. The hon. gent. was a humbug. Immense confusion,

and loud cries of "Chair," and "Order."

'Mr. A. SNODGRASS rose to order. He threw himself upon the

chair. Hear. He wished to know whether this disgraceful

contest between two members of that club should be allowed to

continue. Hear, hear.

'The CHAIRMAN was quite sure the hon. Pickwickian would

withdraw the expression he had just made use of.

'Mr. BLOTTON, with all possible respect for the chair, was quite

sure he would not.

'The CHAIRMAN felt it his imperative duty to demand of the

honourable gentleman, whether he had used the expression which

had just escaped him in a common sense.

'Mr. BLOTTON had no hesitation in saying that he had not - he

had used the word in its Pickwickian sense. Hear, hear. He was

bound to acknowledge that, personally, he entertained the

highest regard and esteem for the honourable gentleman; he had

merely considered him a humbug in a Pickwickian point of view.

Hear, hear.

'Mr. PICKWICK felt much gratified by the fair, candid, and full

explanation of his honourable friend. He begged it to be at once

understood, that his own observations had been merely intended

to bear a Pickwickian construction. Cheers. '

Here the entry terminates, as we have no doubt the debate did

also, after arriving at such a highly satisfactory and intelligible

point. We have no official statement of the facts which the reader

will find recorded in the next chapter, but they have been carefully

collated from letters and other MS. authorities, so unquestionably

genuine as to justify their narration in a connected form.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST DAY'S JOURNEY, AND THE FIRST EVENING'S

ADVENTURES; WITH THEIR CONSEQUENCES

That punctual servant of all work, the sun, had just risen, and

begun to strike a light on the morning of the thirteenth of May,

one thousand eight hundred and twenty-seven, when Mr. Samuel

Pickwick burst like another sun from his slumbers, threw open his

chamber window, and looked out upon the world beneath. Goswell

Street was at his feet, Goswell Street was on his right hand - as

far as the eye could reach, Goswell Street extended on his left;

and the opposite side of Goswell Street was over the way. 'Such,'

thought Mr. Pickwick, 'are the narrow views of those philosophers

who, content with examining the things that lie before them, look

not to the truths which are hidden beyond. As well might I be

content to gaze on Goswell Street for ever, without one effort to

penetrate to the hidden countries which on every side surround

it.' And having given vent to this beautiful reflection, Mr.

Pickwick proceeded to put himself into his clothes, and his

clothes into his portmanteau. Great men are seldom over

scrupulous in the arrangement of their attire; the operation of

shaving, dressing, and coffee-imbibing was soon performed; and, in

another hour, Mr. Pickwick, with his portmanteau in his hand, his

telescope in his greatcoat pocket, and his note-book in his

waistcoat, ready for the reception of any discoveries worthy of

being noted down, had arrived at the coach-stand in

St. Martin's-le-Grand.

'Cab!' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Here you are, sir,' shouted a strange specimen of the human

race, in a sackcloth coat, and apron of the same, who, with a brass

label and number round his neck, looked as if he were catalogued

in some collection of rarities. This was the waterman. 'Here you

are, sir. Now, then, fust cab!' And the first cab having been

fetched from the public-house, where he had been smoking his

first pipe, Mr. Pickwick and his portmanteau were thrown into

the vehicle.

'Golden Cross,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Only a bob's vorth, Tommy,' cried the driver sulkily, for the

information of his friend the waterman, as the cab drove off.

'How old is that horse, my friend?' inquired Mr. Pickwick,

rubbing his nose with the shilling he had reserved for the fare.

'Forty-two,' replied the driver, eyeing him askant.

'What!' ejaculated Mr. Pickwick, laying his hand upon his

note-book. The driver reiterated his former statement. Mr.

Pickwick looked very hard at the man's face, but his features

were immovable, so he noted down the fact forthwith.

'And how long do you keep him out at a time?'inquired Mr.

Pickwick, searching for further information.

'Two or three veeks,' replied the man.

'Weeks!' said Mr. Pickwick in astonishment, and out came the

note-book again.

'He lives at Pentonwil when he's at home,' observed the driver

coolly, 'but we seldom takes him home, on account of his weakness.'

'On account of his weakness!' reiterated the perplexed Mr. Pickwick.

'He always falls down when he's took out o' the cab,' continued

the driver, 'but when he's in it, we bears him up werry

tight, and takes him in werry short, so as he can't werry well fall

down; and we've got a pair o' precious large wheels on, so ven he

does move, they run after him, and he must go on - he can't

help it.'

Mr. Pickwick entered every word of this statement in his note-

book, with the view of communicating it to the club, as a singular

instance of the tenacity of life in horses under trying circumstances.

The entry was scarcely completed when they reached the

Golden Cross. Down jumped the driver, and out got Mr. Pickwick.

Mr. Tupman, Mr. Snodgrass, and Mr. Winkle, who had

been anxiously waiting the arrival of their illustrious leader,

crowded to welcome him.

'Here's your fare,' said Mr. Pickwick, holding out the shilling

to the driver.

What was the learned man's astonishment, when that unaccountable

person flung the money on the pavement, and

requested in figurative terms to be allowed the pleasure of fighting

him Mr. Pickwick for the amount!

'You are mad,' said Mr. Snodgrass.

'Or drunk,' said Mr. Winkle.

'Or both,' said Mr. Tupman.

'Come on!' said the cab-driver, sparring away like clockwork.

'Come on - all four on you.'

'Here's a lark!' shouted half a dozen hackney coachmen. 'Go

to vork, Sam! - and they crowded with great glee round the

party.

'What's the row, Sam?' inquired one gentleman in black calico sleeves.

'Row!' replied the cabman, 'what did he want my number for?'

'I didn't want your number,' said the astonished Mr. Pickwick.

'What did you take it for, then?' inquired the cabman.

'I didn't take it,' said Mr. Pickwick indignantly.

'Would anybody believe,' continued the cab-driver, appealing

to the crowd, 'would anybody believe as an informer'ud go about

in a man's cab, not only takin' down his number, but ev'ry word

he says into the bargain' a light flashed upon Mr. Pickwick - it

was the note-book .

'Did he though?' inquired another cabman.

'Yes, did he,' replied the first; 'and then arter aggerawatin' me

to assault him, gets three witnesses here to prove it. But I'll give it

him, if I've six months for it. Come on!' and the cabman dashed

his hat upon the ground, with a reckless disregard of his own

private property, and knocked Mr. Pickwick's spectacles off, and

followed up the attack with a blow on Mr. Pickwick's nose, and

another on Mr. Pickwick's chest, and a third in Mr. Snodgrass's

eye, and a fourth, by way of variety, in Mr. Tupman's waistcoat,

and then danced into the road, and then back again to the pavement,

and finally dashed the whole temporary supply of breath

out of Mr. Winkle's body; and all in half a dozen seconds.

'Where's an officer?' said Mr. Snodgrass.

'Put 'em under the pump,' suggested a hot-pieman.

'You shall smart for this,' gasped Mr. Pickwick.

'Informers!' shouted the crowd.

'Come on,' cried the cabman, who had been sparring without

cessation the whole time.

The mob hitherto had been passive spectators of the scene, but

as the intelligence of the Pickwickians being informers was spread

among them, they began to canvass with considerable vivacity

the propriety of enforcing the heated pastry-vendor's proposition:

and there is no saying what acts of personal aggression they

might have committed, had not the affray been unexpectedly

terminated by the interposition of a new-comer.

'What's the fun?' said a rather tall, thin, young man, in a green

coat, emerging suddenly from the coach-yard.

'informers!' shouted the crowd again.

'We are not,' roared Mr. Pickwick, in a tone which, to any

dispassionate listener, carried conviction with it.

'Ain't you, though - ain't you?' said the young man, appealing

to Mr. Pickwick, and making his way through the crowd by the

infallible process of elbowing the countenances of its component members.

That learned man in a few hurried words explained the real

state of the case.

'Come along, then,' said he of the green coat, lugging Mr.

Pickwick after him by main force, and talking the whole way.

Here, No. 924, take your fare, and take yourself off - respectable

gentleman - know him well - none of your nonsense - this way,

sir - where's your friends? - all a mistake, I see - never mind -

accidents will happen - best regulated families - never say die -

down upon your luck - Pull him UP - Put that in his pipe - like

the flavour - damned rascals.'