

## CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

### CHITTERLOW.

#### § I.

THE hour of the class on the following Thursday found Kipps in a state of nearly incredible despondency. He was sitting with his eyes on the reading-room clock, his chin resting on his fists, and his elbows on the accumulated comic papers, that were comic, alas! in vain. He paid no heed to the little man in spectacles glaring opposite to him, famishing for *Fun*. In this place it was he had sat night after night, each night more blissful than the last, waiting until it should be time to go to Her! And then—bliss! And now the hour had come and there was no class! There would be no class now until next October. It might be there would never be a class, so far as he was concerned, again.

It might be there would never be a class again, for Shalford, taking exception at a certain absent-mindedness that led to mistakes, and more particularly to the ticketing of several articles in Kipps's Manchester window upside down, had been "on to" him for the past few days in an exceedingly onerous manner. . . .

He sighed profoundly, pushed the comic papers back—they were rent away from him instantly by the little man in spectacles—and tried the old engravings of Folkestone in the past that hung about the room. But these, too, failed to minister to his bruised heart. He wandered



about the corridors for a time and watched the Library Indicator for a while. Wonderful thing that! But it did not hold him for long. People came and laughed near him, and that jarred with him dreadfully. He went out of the building, and a beastly cheerful barrel-organ mocked him in the street. He was moved to a desperate resolve to go down to the beach. There, it might be, he would be alone. The sea might be rough—and attuned to him. It would certainly be dark.

“If I ’ad a penny I’m blest if I wouldn’t go and chuck myself off the end of the pier. . . . *She’d* never miss me. . . .”

He followed a deepening vein of thought.

“Penny, though! It’s tuppence,” he said, after a space.

He went down Dover Street in a state of profound melancholia—at the pace and mood as it were of his own funeral procession—and he crossed at the corner of Tontine Street, heedless of all mundane things. And there it was that Fortune came upon him, in disguise and with a loud shout, the shout of a person endowed with an unusually rich, full voice, followed immediately by a violent blow in the back.

His hat was over his eyes, and an enormous weight rested on his shoulders, and something kicked him in the back of his calf.

Then he was on all fours in some mud that Fortune, in conjunction with the Folkestone corporation and in the pursuit of equally mysterious ends, had heaped together even lavishly for his reception.

He remained in that position for some seconds, awaiting further developments, and believing almost anything broken before his heart. Gathering at last that this temporary violence of things in general was over, and being perhaps assisted by a clutching hand, he arose, and found himself confronting a figure holding a bicycle and thrusting forward a dark face in anxious scrutiny.



"You aren't hurt, Matey?" gasped the figure

"Was that *you* 'it me?" said Kipps.

"It's these handles, you know," said the figure, with an air of being a fellow-sufferer. "They're too *low*. And when I go to turn, if I don't remember, Bif!—and I'm *in* to something."

"Well, you give me a oner in the back, anyhow," said Kipps, taking stock of his damages.

"I was coming downhill, you know," explained the bicyclist. "These little Folkestone hills are a Fair Treat. It isn't as though I'd been on the level. I came rather a whop."

"You did *that*," said Kipps.

"I was back-peddalling for all I was worth, anyhow," said the bicyclist. "Not that I *am* worth much back-peddalling."

He glanced round and made a sudden movement almost as if to mount his machine. Then he turned as rapidly to Kipps again, who was now stooping down, pursuing the tale of his injuries.

"Here's the back of my trouser-leg all tore down," said Kipps, "and I believe I'm bleeding. You reely ought to be more careful——"

The stranger investigated the damage with a rapid movement. "Holy Smoke, so you are!" He laid a friendly hand on Kipps's arm. "I say—look here! Come up to my diggings and sew it up. I'm—— Of course I'm to blame, and I say——" His voice sank to a confidential friendliness. "Here's a slop. Don't let on I ran you down. Haven't a lamp, you know. Might be a bit awkward, for *me*."

Kipps looked up towards the advancing policeman. The appeal to his generosity was not misplaced. He immediately took sides with his assailant. He stood as the representative of the law drew nearer. He assumed an air which he considered highly suggestive of an accident not having happened.



"All right," he said; "go on!"

"Right you are," said the cyclist, promptly, and led the way; and then, apparently with some idea of deception, called over his shoulder, "I'm tremendous glad to have met you, old chap."

"It really isn't a hundred yards," he said, after they had passed the policeman; "it's just round the corner."

"Of course," said Kipps, limping slightly. "I don't want to get a chap into trouble. Accidents *will* happen. Still——"

"Oh, *rather!* I believe you. Accidents *will* happen—especially when you get *me* on a bicycle." He laughed. "You aren't the first I've run down, not by any manner of means! I don't think you can be hurt much either. It isn't as though I was scorching. You didn't see me coming. I was back-peddalling like anything. Only naturally it seems to you I must have been coming fast. And I did all I could to ease off the bump as I hit you. It was just the treadle, I think, came against your calf. But it was All Right of you about that policeman, you know. That was a Fair Bit of All Right. Under the Circs., if you'd told him I was riding, it might have been forty bob! Forty bob! I'd have had to tell 'em Time is Money just now for Mr. H. C."

"I shouldn't have blamed you either, you know. Most men, after a bump like that, might have been spiteful. The least I can do is to stand you a needle and thread—and a clothes' brush. It isn't every one who'd have taken it like you."

"Scorching! Why, if I'd been scorching you'd have—coming as we did—you'd have been knocked silly."

"But, I tell you, the way you caught on about that slop was something worth seeing. When I asked you—I didn't half expect it. Bif! Right off. Cool as a cucumber. Had your line at once. I tell you that there isn't many men would have acted as you have done, I *will* say that. You acted like a gentleman over that slop."



Kipps's first sense of injury disappeared. He limped along a pace or so behind, making depreciatory noises in response to these flattering remarks, and taking stock of the very appreciative person who uttered them.

As they passed the lamps he was visible as a figure with a slight anterior plumpness, progressing buoyantly on knickerbockered legs, with quite enormous calves—legs that, contrasting with Kipps's own narrow practice, were even exuberantly turned out at the knees and toes. A cycling cap was worn very much on one side, and from beneath it protruded carelessly straight wisps of dark-red hair, and ever and again an ample nose came into momentary view round the corner. The muscular cheeks of this person and a certain generosity of chin he possessed were blue shaven, and he had no moustache. His carriage was spacious and confident, his gestures up and down the narrow, deserted back street they traversed were irresistibly suggestive of ownership; a succession of broadly gesticulating shadows were born squatting on his feet, and grew and took possession of the road and reunited at last with the shadows of the infinite, as lamp after lamp was passed. Kipps saw by the flickering light of one of them that they were in Little Fenchurch Street, and then they came round a corner sharply into a dark court and stopped at the door of a particularly ramshackle-looking little house, held up between two larger ones, like a drunken man between policemen.

The cyclist propped his machine carefully against the window, produced a key and blew down it sharply. "The lock's a bit tricky," he said, and devoted himself for some moments to the task of opening the door. Some mechanical catastrophe ensued, and the door was open.

"You'd better wait here a bit while I get the lamp," he remarked to Kipps; "very likely it isn't filled," and vanished into the blackness of the passage. "Thank



God for matches!" he said; and Kipps had an impression of a passage in the transitory pink flare and the bicyclist disappearing into a further room. Kipps was so much interested by these things that for the time he forgot his injuries altogether.

An interval, and Kipps was dazzled by a pink-shaded kerosene lamp. "You go in," said the red-haired man, "and I'll bring in the bike," and for a moment Kipps was alone in the lamp-lit room. He took in rather vaguely the shabby ensemble of the little apartment, the round table covered with a torn, red, glass-stained cover on which the lamp stood, a mottled looking-glass over the fireplace reflecting this, a disused gas-bracket, an extinct fire, a number of dusty postcards and memoranda stuck round the glass, a dusty, crowded paper-rack on the mantel with a number of cabinet photographs, a table littered with papers and cigarette ash, and a siphon of soda-water. Then the cyclist reappeared, and Kipps saw his blue-shaved, rather animated face, and bright, reddish-brown eyes for the first time. He was a man perhaps ten years older than Kipps, but his beardless face made them in a way contemporary.

"You behaved all right about that policeman, anyhow," he repeated as he came forward.

"I don't see 'ow else I could 'ave done," said Kipps, quite modestly. The cyclist scanned his guest for the first time, and decided upon hospitable details.

"We'd better let that mud dry a bit before we brush it. Whisky there is, good old Methusaleh, Canadian Rye; and there's some brandy that's all right. Which'll you have?"

"I dunno," said Kipps, taken by surprise; and then seeing no other course but acceptance, "Well, whisky, then."

"Right you are, old boy; and if you'll take my advice you'll take it neat. I may not be a particular judge of this sort of thing, but I do know old Methu-



saleh pretty well. Old Methusaleh—four stars. That's me! Good old Harry Chitterlow and good old Methusaleh. Leave 'em together. Bif! He's gone!"

He laughed loudly, looked about him, hesitated, and retired, leaving Kipps in possession of the room, and free to make a more precise examination of its contents.

§ 2.

He particularly remarked the photographs that adorned the apartment. They were chiefly photographs of ladies, in one case in tights, which Kipps thought a "bit 'ot;" but one represented the bicyclist in the costume of some remote epoch. It did not take Kipps long to infer that the others were probably actresses and that his host was an actor, and the presence of the half of a large coloured playbill seemed to confirm this. A note in an Oxford frame that was a little too large for it he presently demeaned himself to read. "Dear Mr. Chitterlow," it ran its brief course, "if, after all, you will send the play you spoke of, I will endeavour to read it," followed by a stylish but absolutely illegible signature, and across this was written in pencil, "What price Harry now?" And in the shadow by the window was a rough and rather able sketch of the bicyclist in chalk on brown paper, calling particular attention to the curvature of the forward lines of his hull and calves and the jaunty carriage of his nose, and labelled unmistakably "Chitterlow." Kipps thought it "rather a take-off." The papers on the table by the siphon were in manuscript, Kipps observed—manuscript of a particularly convulsive and blottesque sort, and running obliquely across the page.

Presently he heard the metallic clamour as if of a series of irreparable breakages with which the lock of the front door discharged its function, and then Chitterlow reappeared, a little out of breath, and with a starry-labelled bottle in his large freckled hand.



"Sit down, old chap," he said, "sit down. I had to go out for it, after all. Wasn't a solitary bottle left. However, it's all right now we're here. No, don't sit on that chair; there's sheets of my play on that. That's the one—with the broken arm. I think this glass is clean, but, anyhow, wash it out with a squizz of siphon and shy it in the fireplace. Here, I'll do it! Lend it here!"

As he spoke Mr. Chitterlow produced a corkscrew from a table drawer, attacked and overcame good old Methusaleh's cork in a style a bar-tender might envy, washed out two tumblers in his simple, effectual manner, and poured a couple of inches of the ancient fluid into each. Kipps took his tumbler, said "Thenks" in an offhand way, and, after a momentary hesitation whether he should say "Here's to you!" or not, put it to his lips without that ceremony. For a space fire in his throat occupied his attention to the exclusion of other matters, and then he discovered Mr. Chitterlow with an intensely bulldog pipe alight, seated on the opposite side of the empty fireplace, and pouring himself out a second dose of whisky.

"After all," said Mr. Chitterlow, with his eye on the bottle and a little smile wandering to hide amidst his larger features, "this accident might have been worse. I wanted some one to talk to a bit, and I didn't want to go to a pub, leastways not a Folkestone pub, because, as a matter of fact, I'd promised Mrs. Chitterlow, who's away, not to, for various reasons, though of course if I'd wanted to, I'm just that sort, I should have all the same—and here we are! It's curious how one runs up against people out bicycling!"

"Isn't it!" said Kipps, feeling that the time had come for him to say something.

"Here we are, sitting and talking like old friends, and half an hour ago we didn't know we existed. Leastways we didn't know each other existed. I might have



passed you in the street perhaps, and you might have passed me, and how was I to tell that, put to the test, you would have behaved as decently as you have behaved. Only it happened otherwise, that's all. You're not smoking!" he said. "Have a cigarette?"

Kipps made a confused reply that took the form of not minding if he did, and drank another sip of old Methusaleh in his confusion. He was able to follow the subsequent course of that sip for quite a long way. It was as though the old gentleman was brandishing a burning torch through his vitals, lighting him here and lighting him there, until at last his whole being was in a glow. Chitterlow produced a tobacco-pouch and cigarette-papers, and, with an interesting parenthesis that was a little difficult to follow about some lady, named Kitty something or other, who had taught him the art when he was as yet only what you might call a nice boy, made Kipps a cigarette, and, with a consideration that won Kipps's gratitude, suggested that, after all, he might find a little soda-water an improvement with the whisky. "Some people like it that way," said Chitterlow; and then with voluminous emphasis, "*I don't.*"

Emboldened by the weakened state of his enemy, Kipps promptly swallowed the rest of him, and had his glass at once hospitably replenished. He began to feel he was of a firmer consistency than he commonly believed, and turned his mind to what Chitterlow was saying, with the resolve to play a larger part in the conversation than he had hitherto done. Also he smoked through his nose quite successfully—an art he had only very recently acquired.

Meanwhile, Chitterlow explained that he was a playwright, and the tongue of Kipps was unloosened to respond that he knew a chap, or rather one of their fellows knew a chap, or at least, to be perfectly correct, this fellow's brother did, who had written a play. In response to Chitterlow's inquiries, he could not recall the



title of the play, nor where it had appeared, nor the name of the manager who produced it, though he thought the title was something about "Love's Ransom," or something like that.

"He made five 'undred pounds by it, though," said Kipps. "I know that."

"That's nothing," said Chitterlow, with an air of experience that was extremely convincing—"noth-ing. May seem a big sum to *you*, but *I* can assure you it's just what one gets any day. There's any amount of money, an-ny amount, in a good play."

"I dessay," said Kipps, drinking.

"Any amount of money!"

Chitterlow began a series of illustrative instances. He was clearly a person of quite unequalled gift for monologue. It was as though some conversational dam had burst upon Kipps, and in a little while he was drifting along upon a copious rapid of talk about all sorts of theatrical things by one who knew all about them, and quite incapable of anticipating whither that rapid meant to carry him. Presently, somehow, they had got to anecdotes about well-known theatrical managers—little Teddy Bletherskite, artful old Chumps, and the magnificent Behemoth, "petted to death, you know, fair sickened, by all these society women." Chitterlow described various personal encounters with these personages, always with modest self-depreciation, and gave Kipps a very amusing imitation of old Chumps in a state of intoxication. Then he took two more stiff doses of old Methusaleh in rapid succession.

Kipps reduced the hither end of his cigarette to a pulp as he sat "dessaying" and "quite believing" Chitterlow in the sagest manner, and admiring the easy way in which he was getting on with this very novel and entertaining personage. He had another cigarette made for him, and then Chitterlow, assuming by insensible degrees more and more of the manner of a rich and



successful playwright being interviewed by a young admirer, set himself to answer questions which sometimes Kipps asked, and sometimes Chitterlow, about the particulars and methods of his career. He undertook this self-imposed task with great earnestness and vigour, treating the matter, indeed, with such fullness that at times it seemed lost altogether under a thicket of parentheses, footnotes, and episodes that branched and budded from its stem. But it always emerged again, usually by way of illustration, to its own digressions. Practically it was a mass of material for the biography of a man who had been everywhere and done everything (including the Hon. Thomas Norgate, which was a Record), and in particular had acted with great distinction and profit (he dated various anecdotes, "when I was getting thirty, or forty, or fifty dollars a week") throughout America and the entire civilized world.

And as he talked on and on in that full, rich, satisfying voice he had, and as old Methusaleh, indisputably a most drunken old reprobate of a whisky, busied himself throughout Kipps, lighting lamp after lamp until the entire framework of the little draper was illuminated and glowing like some public building on a festival, behold Chitterlow, and Kipps with him, and the room in which they sat were transfigured! Chitterlow became in very truth that ripe, full man of infinite experience and humour and genius, fellow of Shakespeare and Ibsen and Mæterlinck (three names he placed together quite modestly far above his own), and no longer ambiguously dressed in a sort of yachting costume with cycling knickerbockers, but elegantly if unconventionally attired, and the room ceased to be a small and shabby room in a Folkestone slum, and grew larger and more richly furnished, and the flyblown photographs were curious old pictures, and the rubbish on the walls the most rare and costly bric-à-brac, and the indisputable paraffin lamp a soft and splendid light. A certain youthful heat that to



many minds might have weakened old Methusaleh's starry claim to a ripe antiquity vanished in that glamour; two burnt holes and a claimant darn in the tablecloth, moreover, became no more than the pleasing contradictions natural in the house of genius; and as for Kipps—Kipps was a bright young man of promise, distinguished by recent quick, courageous proceedings not too definitely insisted upon, and he had been rewarded by admission to a sanctum and confidences for which the common prosperous, for which "society women" even, were notoriously sighing in vain. "Don't *want* them, my boy; they'd simply play old Harry with the Work, you know! Chaps outside, bank clerks and university fellows, think the life's all *that* sort of thing. Don't you believe 'em! don't you believe 'em."

And then——!

"Boom . . . Boom . . . Boom . . . Boom . . ." right in the middle of a most entertaining digression on flats who join touring companies under the impression that they are actors, Kipps much amused at their flatness as exposed by Chitterlow.

"Lor'!" said Kipps, like one who awakens, "that's not eleven!"

"Must be," said Chitterlow. "It was nearly ten when I got that whisky. It's early yet——"

"All the same, I must be going," said Kipps, and stood up. "Even now—may be. Fact is—I 'ad *no* idea. The 'ouse door shuts at 'arf-past ten, you know. I ought to 'ave thought before."

"Well, if you *must* go——! I tell you what. I'll come too. . . . Why! There's your leg, old man! Clean forgot it! You can't go through the streets like that. I'll sew up the tear. And meanwhile have another whisky."

"I ought to be getting on *now*," protested Kipps feebly; and then Chitterlow was showing him how to kneel on a chair in order that the rent trouser leg should



be attainable, and old Methusaleh on his third round was busy repairing the temporary eclipse of Kipps's arterial glow. Then suddenly Chitterlow was seized with laughter, and had to leave off sewing to tell Kipps that the scene wouldn't make a bad bit of business in a farcical comedy, and then he began to sketch out the farcical comedy, and that led him to a digression about another farcical comedy of which he had written a ripping opening scene which wouldn't take ten minutes to read. It had something in it that had never been done on the stage before, and was yet perfectly legitimate—namely, a man with a live beetle down the back of his neck trying to seem at his ease in a roomful of people. . . .

"*They* won't lock you out," he said, in a singularly reassuring tone, and began to read and act what he explained to be (not because he had written it, but simply because he knew it was so on account of his exceptional experience of the stage), and what Kipps also quite clearly saw to be, one of the best opening scenes that had ever been written.

When it was over, Kipps, who rarely swore, was inspired to say the scene was "damned fine" about six times over; whereupon, as if by way of recognition, Chitterlow took a simply enormous portion of the inspired antediluvian, declaring at the same time that he had rarely met a "*finer*" intelligence than Kipps's (stronger there might be; *that* he couldn't say with certainty as yet, seeing how little, after all, they had seen of each other, but a *finer never*), that it was a shame such a gallant and discriminating intelligence should be nightly either locked up or locked out at ten—well, ten-thirty, then—and that he had half a mind to recommend old somebody or other (apparently the editor of a London daily paper) to put on Kipps forthwith as a dramatic critic in the place of the current incapable.

"I don't think I've ever made up anything for print," said Kipps—"ever. I'd have a thundering good try,



though, if ever I got a chance. I would that! I've written window tickets orfen enough. Made 'em up and everything. But that's different."

"You'd come to it all the fresher for not having done it before. And the way you picked up every point in that scene, my boy, was a Fair Treat! I tell you, you'd knock William Archer into fits. Not so literary, of course, you'd be, but I don't believe in literary critics any more than in literary playwrights. Plays *aren't* literature—that's just the point they miss. Plays are plays. No! That won't hamper you, anyhow. You're wasted down here, I tell you; just as I was, before I took to acting. I'm hanged if I wouldn't like your opinion on these first two acts of that tragedy I'm on to. I haven't told you about that. It wouldn't take me more than an hour to read." . . .

### § 3.

Then, so far as he could subsequently remember, Kipps had "another," and then it would seem that, suddenly regardless of the tragedy, he insisted that he "really *must* be getting on," and from that point his memory became irregular. Certain things remained quite clearly, and as it is a matter of common knowledge that intoxicated people forget what happens to them, it follows that he was not intoxicated. Chitterlow came with him, partly to see him home and partly for a freshener before turning in. Kipps recalled afterwards very distinctly how in Little Fenchurch Street he discovered that he could not walk straight, and also that Chitterlow's needle and thread in his still unmended trouser leg was making an annoying little noise on the pavement behind him. He tried to pick up the needle suddenly by surprise, and somehow tripped and fell, and then Chitterlow, laughing uproariously, helped him up.



"It wasn't a bicycle this time, old boy," said Chitterlow, and that appeared to them both at the time as being a quite extraordinarily good joke indeed. They punched each other about on the strength of it.

For a time after that Kipps certainly pretended to be quite desperately drunk and unable to walk, and Chitterlow entered into the pretence and supported him. After that Kipps remembered being struck with the extremely laughable absurdity of going downhill to Tontine Street in order to go uphill again to the Emporium, and trying to get that idea into Chitterlow's head and being unable to do so on account of his own merriment and Chitterlow's evident intoxication; and his next memory after that was of the exterior of the Emporium, shut and darkened, and, as it were, frowning at him with all its stripes of yellow and green. The chilly way in which "SHALFORD" glittered in the moonlight printed itself with particular vividness on his mind. It appeared to Kipps that that establishment was closed to him for evermore. Those gilded letters, in spite of appearances, spelt FINIS for him and exile from Folkestone. He would never do woodcarving, never see Miss Walshingham again. Not that he had ever hoped to see her again. But this was the knife, this was final. He had stayed out, he had got drunk, there had been that row about the Manchester window dressing only three days ago. . . . In the retrospect he was quite sure that he was perfectly sober then and at bottom extremely unhappy, but he kept a brave face on the matter nevertheless, and declared stoutly he didn't care if he *was* locked out.

Whereupon Chitterlow slapped him on the back very hard and told him that was a "Bit of All-Right," and assured him that when he himself had been a clerk in Sheffield before he took to acting he had been locked out sometimes for six nights running.

"What's the result?" said Chitterlow. "I could go back to that place now, and they'd be glad to have me."



... Glad to have me," he repeated, and then added, "That is to say, if they remember me—which isn't very likely."

Kipps asked a little weakly, "What am I to do?"

"Keep out," said Chitterlow. "You can't knock 'em up now—that would give you Right away. You'd better try and sneak in in the morning with the Cat. That'll do you. You'll probably get in all right in the morning if nobody gives you away."

Then for a time—perhaps as the result of that slap on the back—Kipps felt decidedly queer, and, acting on Chitterlow's advice, went for a bit of a freshener upon the Leas. After a time he threw off the temporary queerness, and found Chitterlow patting him on the shoulder and telling him that he'd be all right now in a minute and all the better for it—which he was. And the wind having dropped and the night being now a really very beautiful moonlight night indeed, and all before Kipps to spend as he liked, and with only a very little tendency to spin round now and again to mar its splendour, they set out to walk the whole length of the Leas to the Sandgate lift and back, and as they walked Chitterlow spoke first of moonlight transfiguring the sea and then of moonlight transfiguring faces, and so at last he came to the topic of Love, and upon that he dwelt a great while, and with a wealth of experience and illustrative anecdote that seemed remarkably pungent and material to Kipps. He forgot his lost Miss Walsingham and his outraged employer again. He became, as it were, a desperado by reflection.

Chitterlow had had adventures, a quite astonishing variety of adventures, in this direction; he was a man with a past, a really opulent past, and he certainly seemed to like to look back and see himself amidst its opulence.

He made no consecutive history, but he gave Kipps vivid momentary pictures of relations and entangle-



ments. One moment he was in flight—only too worthily in flight—before the husband of a Malay woman in Cape Town. At the next he was having passionate complications with the daughter of a clergyman in York. Then he passed to a remarkable grouping at Seaford.

“They say you can’t love two women at once,” said Chitterlow. “But I tell you——” He gesticulated and raised his ample voice. “It’s *Rot! Rot!*”

“I know that,” said Kipps.

“Why, when I was in the smalls with Bessie Hopper’s company there were Three.” He laughed, and decided to add, “not counting Bessie, that is.”

He set out to reveal Life as it is lived in touring companies, a quite amazing jungle of interwoven “affairs” it appeared to be, a mere amorous winepress for the crushing of hearts.

“People say this sort of thing’s a nuisance and interferes with Work. I tell you it isn’t. The Work couldn’t go on without it. They *must* do it. They haven’t the Temperament if they don’t. If they hadn’t the Temperament they wouldn’t want to act; if they have—Bif!”

“You’re right,” said Kipps. “I see that.”

Chitterlow proceeded to a close criticism of certain historical indiscretions of Mr. Clement Scott respecting the morals of the stage. Speaking in confidence, and not as one who addresses the public, he admitted regretfully the general truth of these comments. He proceeded to examine various typical instances that had almost forced themselves upon him personally, and with especial regard to the contrast between his own character towards women and that of the Hon. Thomas Norgate, with whom it appeared he had once been on terms of great intimacy. . . .

Kipps listened with emotion to these extraordinary recollections. They were wonderful to him, they were incredibly credible. This tumultuous, passionate, irregular course was the way life ran—except in high-class



would presently accrue. Only patience and persistence were needful.

He went off at a tangent to hospitality. Kipps must come down home with him. They couldn't wander about all night, with a bottle of the right sort pining at home for them. "You can sleep on the sofa. You won't be worried by broken springs, anyhow, for I took 'em all out myself two or three weeks ago. I don't see what they ever put 'em in for. It's a point I know about. I took particular notice of it when I was with Bessie Hopper. Three months we were, and all over England, North Wales, and the Isle of Man, and I never struck a sofa in diggings anywhere that hadn't a broken spring. Not once—all the time."

He added, almost absently, "It happens like that at times."

They descended the slant road towards Harbour Street, and went on past the Pavilion Hotel.

#### § 4.

They came into the presence of old Methusaleh again, and that worthy, under Chitterlow's direction, at once resumed the illumination of Kipps's interior with the conscientious thoroughness that distinguished him. Chitterlow took a tall portion to himself with an air of asbestos, lit the bulldog pipe again, and lapsed for a space into meditation, from which Kipps roused him by remarking that he expected "a nacter 'as a lot of ups and downs like, now and then."

At which Chitterlow seemed to bestir himself. "Rather," he said. "And sometimes it's his own fault and sometimes it isn't. Usually it is. If it isn't one thing it's another. If it isn't the manager's wife it's bar-bragging. I tell you things happen at times. I'm a fatalist. The fact is, Character has you. You can't



establishments! Such things happened in novels, in plays—only he had been fool enough not to understand they happened. His share in the conversation was now, indeed, no more than faint writing in the margin; Chitterlow was talking quite continuously. He expanded his magnificent voice into huge guffaws, he drew it together into a confidential intensity, it became drawlingly reminiscent; he was frank—frank with the effect of a revelation, reticent also with the effect of a revelation, a stupendously gesticulating moonlit black figure, wallowing in itself, preaching Adventure and the Flesh to Kipps. Yet withal shot with something of sentiment, with a sort of sentimental refinement very coarsely and egotistically done. The Times he had had!—even before he was as old as Kipps he had had innumerable Times.

Well, he said with a sudden transition, he had sown his wild oats—one had to somewhen—and now, he fancied he had mentioned it earlier in the evening, he was happily married. She was, he indicated, a “born lady.” Her father was a prominent lawyer, a solicitor in Kentish Town, “done a lot of public-house business;” her mother was second cousin to the wife of Abel Jones, the fashionable portrait painter—“almost Society people in a way.” That didn’t count with Chitterlow. He was no snob. What *did* count was that she possessed what he ventured to assert, without much fear of contradiction, was the very finest completely untrained contralto voice in all the world. (“But to hear it properly,” said Chitterlow, “you want a Big Hall.”) He became rather vague, and jerked his head about to indicate when and how he had entered matrimony. She was, it seemed, “away with her people.” It was clear that Chitterlow did not get on with these people very well. It would seem they failed to appreciate his playwriting, regarding it as an unremunerative pursuit, whereas, as he and Kipps knew, wealth beyond the dreams of avarice



get away from it. You may think you do, but you don't."

He reflected for a moment. "It's that what makes tragedy. Psychology really. It's the Greek irony—Ibsen and—all that. Up to date."

He emitted this exhaustive summary of high-toned modern criticism as if he was repeating a lesson while thinking of something else; but it seemed to rouse him as it passed his lips, by including the name of Ibsen.

He became interested in telling Kipps—who was, indeed, open to any information whatever about this quite novel name, exactly where he thought Ibsen fell short, points where it happened that Ibsen was defective just where it chanced that he, Chitterlow, was strong. Of course he had no desire to place himself in any way on an equality with Ibsen, still the fact remained that his own experience in England and America and the colonies was altogether more extensive than Ibsen could have had. Ibsen had probably never seen "one decent bar scrap" in his life. That, of course, was not Ibsen's fault, or his own merit, but there the thing was. Genius, he knew, was supposed to be able to do anything or to do without anything; still, he was now inclined to doubt that. He had a play in hand that might perhaps not please William Archer—whose opinion, after all, he did not value as he valued Kipps's opinion—but which, he thought, was, at any rate, as well constructed as anything Ibsen ever did.

So with infinite deviousness Chitterlow came at last to his play. He decided he would not read it to Kipps, but tell him about it. This was the simpler, because much of it was still unwritten. He began to explain his plot. It was a complicated plot, and all about a nobleman who had seen everything and done everything and knew practically all that Chitterlow knew about women—that is to say, "all about women" and such-like matters. It warmed and excited Chitterlow. Pres-



ently he stood up to act a situation which could not be explained. It was an extremely vivid situation.

Kipps applauded the situation vehemently. "Tha's dam fine," said the new dramatic critic, quite familiar with his part now, striking the table with his fist and almost upsetting his third portion (in the second series) of old Methusaleh. "Tha's *dam* fine, Chit'low!"

"You see it?" said Chitterlow, with the last vestiges of that incidental gloom disappearing. "Good old boy! I thought you'd see it. But it's just the sort of thing the literary critic can't see. However, it's only a beginning——"

He replenished Kipps and proceeded with his exposition.

In a little while it was no longer necessary to give that over-advertised Ibsen the purely conventional precedence he had hitherto had. Kipps and Chitterlow were friends, and they could speak frankly and openly of things not usually admitted. "Any'ow," said Kipps, a little irrelevantly, and speaking over the brim of the replenishment, "what you read jus' now was dam fine. Nothing can't alter that."

He perceived a sort of faint buzzing vibration about things that was very nice and pleasant, and with a little care he had no difficulty whatever in putting his glass back on the table. Then he perceived Chitterlow was going on with the scenario, and then that old Methusaleh had almost entirely left his bottle. He was glad there was so little more Methusaleh to drink, because that would prevent his getting drunk. He knew that he was not now drunk, but he knew that he had had enough. He was one of those who always know when they have had enough. He tried to interrupt Chitterlow to tell him this, but he could not get a suitable opening. He doubted whether Chitterlow might not be one of those people who did not know when they had had enough. He discovered that he



disapproved of Chitterlow. Highly. It seemed to him that Chitterlow went on and on like a river. For a time he was inexplicably and quite unjustly cross with Chitterlow, and wanted to say to him, "you got the gift of the gab," but he only got so far as to say "the gift," and then Chitterlow thanked him, and said he was better than Archer any day. So he eyed Chitterlow with a baleful eye until it dawned upon him that a most extraordinary thing was taking place. Chitterlow kept mentioning some one named Kipps. This presently began to perplex Kipps very greatly. Dimly but decidedly he perceived this was wrong.

"Look 'ere," he said suddenly, "*what* Kipps?"

"This chap Kipps I'm telling you about."

"What chap Kipps you're telling which about?"

"I told you."

Kipps struggled with a difficulty in silence for a space. Then he reiterated firmly, "*What* chap Kipps?"

"This chap in my play—man who kisses the girl."

"Never kissed a girl," said Kipps, "leastways——" and subsided for a space. He could not remember whether he had kissed Ann or not—he knew he had meant to. Then suddenly, in a tone of great sadness, and addressing the hearth, he said, "*My name's* Kipps."

"Eh?" said Chitterlow.

"Kipps," said Kipps, smiling a little cynically.

"What about him?"

"He's me." He tapped his breastbone with his middle finger to indicate his essential self.

He leant forward very gravely towards Chitterlow. "Look 'ere, Chit'low," he said. "You haven't no business putting my name into play. You mustn't do things like that. You'd lose me my crib, right away." And they had a little argument—so far as Kipps could remember. Chitterlow entered upon a general explanation of how he got his names. These he had, for the most part, got out of a newspaper that



was still, he believed, "lying about." He even made to look for it, and while he was doing so Kipps went on with the argument, addressing himself more particularly to the photograph of the girl in tights. He said that at first her costume had not commended her to him, but now he perceived she had an extremely sensible face. He told her she would like Buggins if she met him, he could see she was just that sort. She would admit—all sensible people would admit—that using names in plays was wrong. You could, for example, have the law of him.

He became confidential. He explained that he was already in sufficient trouble for stopping out all night, without having his name put in plays. He was certain to be in the deuce of a row—the deuce of a row. Why had he done it? Why hadn't he gone at ten? Because one thing leads to another. One thing, he generalized, always does lead to another. . . .

He was trying to tell her that he was utterly unworthy of Miss Walshingham, when Chitterlow gave up the search, and suddenly accused him of being drunk and talking "Rot——"



## CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

“SWAPPED!”

### § I.

HE awoke on the thoroughly comfortable sofa that had had all its springs removed, and although he had certainly not been intoxicated, he awoke with what Chitterlow pronounced to be, quite indisputably, a Head and a Mouth. He had slept in his clothes, and he felt stiff and uncomfortable all over; but the head and mouth insisted that he must not bother over little things like that. In the head was one large angular idea that it was physically painful to have there. If he moved his head, the angular idea shifted about in the most agonizing way. This idea was that he had lost his situation and was utterly ruined, and that it really mattered very little. Shalford was certain to hear of his escapade, and that, coupled with that row about the Manchester window——!

He raised himself into a sitting position under Chitterlow's urgent encouragement.

He submitted apathetically to his host's attentions. Chitterlow, who admitted being a “bit off it” himself and in need of an egg-cupful of brandy—just an egg-cupful neat—dealt with that Head and Mouth as a mother might deal with the fall of an only child. He compared it with other Heads and Mouths that he had met, and in particular to certain experienced by the Hon.



Thomas Norgate. “ Right up to the last,” said Chitterlow, “ he couldn’t stand his liquor. It happens like that at times.” And after Chitterlow had pumped on the young beginner’s head and given him some anchovy paste piping hot on buttered toast, which he preferred to all the other remedies he had encountered, Kipps resumed his crumpled collar, brushed his clothes, tacked up his knee, and prepared to face Mr. Shalford and the reckoning for this wild, unprecedented night—the first “ night out ” that ever he had taken.

Acting on Chitterlow’s advice to have a bit of a freshener before returning to the Emporium, Kipps walked some way along the Leas and back, and then went down to a shop near the Harbour to get a cup of coffee. He found that extremely reinvigorating, and he went on up the High Street to face the inevitable terrors of the office, a faint touch of pride in his depravity tempering his extreme self-abasement. After all, it was not an unmanly headache ; he had been out all night, and he had been drinking, and his physical disorder was there to witness the fact. If it wasn’t for the thought of Shalford, he would have been even a proud man to discover himself at last in such a condition. But the thought of Shalford was very dreadful. He met two of the apprentices snatching a walk before shop began. At the sight of them he pulled his spirits together, put his hat back from his pallid brow, thrust his hands into his trousers pockets, and adopted an altogether more dissipated carriage ; he met their innocent faces with a wan smile. Just for a moment he was glad that his patch at the knee was, after all, visible, and that some at least of the mud on his clothes had refused to move at Chitterlow’s brushing. What wouldn’t they think he had been up to ? He passed them without speaking. He could imagine how they regarded his back. Then he recollected Mr. Shalford. . . .

The deuce of a row certainly, and perhaps——! He



tried to think of plausible versions of the affair. He could explain he had been run down by rather a wild sort of fellow who was riding a bicycle, almost stunned for the moment (even now he felt the effects of the concussion in his head), and had been given whisky to restore him, and "the fact is, Sir"—with an upward inflection of the voice, an upward inflection of the eyebrows, and an air of its being the last thing one would have expected whisky to do, the manifestation, indeed, of a practically unique physiological weakness—"it got into my 'ed!" . . .

Put like that it didn't look so bad.

He got to the Emporium a little before eight, and the housekeeper, with whom he was something of a favourite ("There's no harm in Mr. Kipps," she used to say), seemed to like him, if anything, better for having broken the rules, and gave him a piece of dry toast and a good hot cup of tea.

"I suppose the G. V.—" began Kipps.

"He knows," said the housekeeper.

He went down to shop a little before time, and presently Booch summoned him to the presence.

He emerged from the private office after an interval of ten minutes.

The junior clerk scrutinized his visage. Buggins put the frank question.

Kipps answered with one word.

"Swapped!" said Kipps.

## § 2.

Kipps leant against the fixtures with his hands in his pockets, and talked to the two apprentices under him.

"I don't care if I *am* swapped," said Kipps. "I been sick of Teddy and his System some time."



“I was a good mind to chuck it when my time was up,” said Kipps. “Wish I ’ad now.”

Afterwards Pearce came round, and Kipps repeated this.

“What’s it for?” said Pearce. “That row about the window tickets?”

“No fear!” said Kipps, and sought to convey a perspective of splendid depravity. “I wasn’t in las’ night,” he said, and made even Pearce—“man-about-town” Pearce—open his eyes.

“Why, where did you get to?” asked Pearce.

He conveyed that he had been “fair round the town.”

“With a Nactor chap I know.

“One can’t *always* be living like a curit,” he said.

“No fear,” said Pearce, trying to play up to him.

But Kipps had the top place in that conversation.

“My lor!” said Kipps, when Pearce had gone, “but wasn’t my mouth and ’ed bad this morning before I ’ad a pick-me-up!”

“Whad jer ’ave?”

“Anchovy on ’ot buttered toast. It’s the very best pick-me-up there is. You trust me, Rodgers. I never take no other, and I don’t advise you to. See?”

And when pressed for further particulars, he said again he had been “fair all *round* the town, with a Nactor chap” he knew. They asked curiously all he had done, and he said, “Well, what do *you* think?” And when they pressed for still further details, he said there were things little boys ought not to know, and laughed darkly, and found them some huckaback to roll.

And in this manner for a space did Kipps fend off the contemplation of the “key of the street” that Shalford had presented him.

§ 3.

This sort of thing was all very well when junior ap-



prentices were about, but when Kipps was alone with himself it served him not at all. He was uncomfortable inside, and his skin was uncomfortable, and the Head and Mouth, palliated, perhaps, but certainly not cured, were still with him. He felt, to tell the truth, nasty and dirty, and extremely disgusted with himself. To work was dreadful, and to stand still and think still more dreadful. His patched knee reproached him. These were the second best of his three pairs of trousers, and they had cost him thirteen and sixpence. Practically ruined they were. His dusting pair was unfit for shop, and he would have to degrade his best. When he was under inspection he affected the slouch of a desperado, but directly he found himself alone this passed insensibly into the droop.

The financial aspect of things grew large before him. His whole capital in the world was the sum of five pounds in the Post Office Savings Bank, and four and sixpence cash. Besides, there would be two months' "screw." His little tin box upstairs was no longer big enough for his belongings; he would have to buy another, let alone that it was not calculated to make a good impression in a new "crib." Then there would be paper and stamps needed in some abundance for answering advertisements and railway fares when he went "crib hunting." He would have to write letters, and he never wrote letters. There was spelling, for example, to consider. Probably if nothing turned up before his month was up he would have to go home to his Uncle and Aunt.

How would they take it? . . .

For the present, at any rate, he resolved not to write to them.

Such disagreeable things as this it was that lurked below the fair surface of Kipps's assertion, "I been wanting a change. If 'e 'adn't swapped me, I should very likely 'ave swapped 'im."

In the perplexed privacies of his own mind he could



not understand how everything had happened. He had been the Victim of Fate, or at least of one as inexorable—Chitterlow. He tried to recall the successive steps that had culminated so disastrously. They were difficult to recall. . . .

Buggins that night abounded in counsel and reminiscence.

“ Curious thing,” said Buggins, “ but every time I’ve had the swap I’ve never believed I should get another Crib—never. But I have,” said Buggins. “ Always. So don’t lose heart, whatever you do.

“ Whatever you do,” said Buggins, “ keep hold of your collars and cuffs—shirts if you can, but collars anyhow. Spout them last. And anyhow, it’s summer! you won’t want your coat. . . . You got a good umbrella. . . .

“ You’ll no more get a shop from New Romney than—anything. Go straight up to London, get the cheapest room you can find—and hang out. Don’t eat too much. Many a chap’s put his prospects in his stomach. Get a cup o’ coffee and a slice—egg if you like—but remember you got to turn up at the Warehouse tidy. The best places *now*, I believe, are the old cabmen’s eating-houses. Keep your watch and chain as long as you can. . . .

“ There’s lots of shops going,” said Buggins. “ Lots ! ”

And added reflectively, “ But not this time of year, perhaps.”

He began to recall his own researches. “ ’Stonishing lot of chaps you see,” he said. “ All sorts. Look like Dukes some of ’em. High hat. Patent boots. Frock-coat. All there. All right for a West End crib. Others—Lord! It’s a caution, Kipps. Boots been inked in some reading-rooms—I used to write in a Reading Room in Fleet Street, regular penny club—hat been wetted, collar frayed, tail-coat buttoned up, black chest-plaster tie—spread out. Shirt, you know, gone——” Buggins pointed upward with a pious expression.



"No shirt, I expect?"

"Eat it," said Buggins.

Kipps meditated. "I wonder where old Minton is," he said at last. "I often wondered about 'im."

#### § 4.

It was the morning following Kipps's notice of dismissal that Miss Walshingham came into the shop. She came in with a dark, slender lady, rather faded, rather tightly dressed, whom Kipps was to know some day as her mother. He discovered them in the main shop, at the counter of the ribbon department. He had come to the opposite glove counter with some goods enclosed in a parcel that he had unpacked in his own department. The two ladies were both bent over a box of black ribbon.

He had a moment of tumultuous hesitations. The etiquette of the situation was incomprehensible. He put down his goods very quietly and stood, hands on counter, staring at these two ladies. Then, as Miss Walshingham sat back, the instinct of flight seized him. . . .

He returned to his Manchester shop wildly agitated. Directly he was out of sight of her he wanted to see her. He fretted up and down the counter, and addressed some snappish remarks to the apprentice in the window. He fumbled for a moment with a parcel, untied it needlessly, began to tie it up again, and then bolted back again into the main shop. He could hear his own heart beating.

The two ladies were standing in the manner of those who have completed their purchases and are waiting for their change. Mrs. Walshingham regarded some remnants with impersonal interest; Helen's eyes searched the shop. They distinctly lit up when they discovered Kipps.



He dropped his hands to the counter by habit, and stood for a moment regarding her awkwardly. What would she do? Would she cut him? She came across the shop to him.

“ How are *you*, Mr. Kipps? ” she said, in her clear distinct tones, and she held out her hand.

“ Very well, thank you, ” said Kipps; “ how are you? ”

She said she had been buying some ribbon.

He became aware of Mrs. Walshingham very much surprised. This checked something allusive about the class, and he said instead that he supposed she was glad to be having her holidays now. She said she was; it gave her more time for reading and that sort of thing. He supposed that she would be going abroad, and she thought that perhaps they *would* go to Knocke or Bruges for a time.

Then came a pause, and Kipps's soul surged within him. He wanted to tell her he was leaving and would never see her again. He could find neither words nor voice to say it. The swift seconds passed. The girl in the ribbons was handing Mrs. Walshingham her change. “ Well, ” said Miss Walshingham, “ good-bye, ” and gave him her hand again.

Kipps bowed over her hand. His manners, his counter manners, were the easiest she had ever seen upon him. She turned to her mother. It was no good now, no good. Her mother! You couldn't say a thing like that before her mother! All was lost but politeness. Kipps rushed for the door. He stood at the door bowing with infinite gravity, and she smiled and nodded as she went out. She saw nothing of the struggle within him, nothing but a gratifying emotion. She smiled like a satisfied goddess as the incense ascends.

Mrs. Walshingham bowed stiffly and a little awkwardly.

He remained holding the door open for some seconds after they had passed out, then rushed suddenly to the back of the “ costume ” window to watch them go down



the street. His hands tightened on the window-rack as he stared. Her mother appeared to be asking discreet questions. Helen's bearing suggested the offhand replies of a person who found the world a satisfactory place to live in. "Really, Mumsie, you cannot expect me to cut my own students dead," she was, in fact, saying. . . .

They vanished round Henderson's corner.

Gone! And he would never see her again—never!

It was as though some one had struck his heart with a whip. Never! Never! Never! And she didn't know! He turned back from the window, and the department, with its two apprentices, was impossible. The whole glaring world was insupportable.

He hesitated, and made a rush, head down, for the cellar that was his Manchester warehouse. Rogers asked him a question that he pretended not to hear.

The Manchester warehouse was a small cellar apart from the general basement of the building, and dimly lit by a small gas flare. He did not turn that up, but rushed for the darkest corner, where, on the lowest shelf, the Sale window-tickets were stored. He drew out the box of these with trembling hands and upset them on the floor, and so having made himself a justifiable excuse for being on the ground with his head well in the dark, he could let his poor bursting little heart have its way with him for a space.

And there he remained until the cry of "Kipps! Forward!" summoned him once more to face the world.



## CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

### THE UNEXPECTED.

#### § I.

Now in the slack of that same day, after the midday dinner and before the coming of the afternoon customers, this disastrous Chitterlow descended upon Kipps with the most amazing coincidence in the world. He did not call formally, entering and demanding Kipps, but privately, in a confidential and mysterious manner.

Kipps was first aware of him as a dark object bobbing about excitedly outside the hosiery window. He was stooping and craning and peering in the endeavour to see into the interior between and over the socks and stockings. Then he transferred his attention to the door, and after a hovering scrutiny, tried the baby-linen display. His movements and gestures suggested a suppressed excitement.

Seen by daylight, Chitterlow was not nearly such a magnificent figure as he had been by the subdued nocturnal lightings and beneath the glamour of his own interpretation. The lines were the same, indeed, but the texture was different. There was a quality about the yachting cap, an indefinable finality of dustiness, a shiny finish on all the salient surfaces of the reefer coat. The red hair and the profile, though still forcible and fine, were less in the quality of Michael Angelo and more in that of the merely picturesque. But it was a bright



brown eye still that sought amidst the interstices of the baby-linen.

Kipps was by no means anxious to interview Chitterlow again. If he had felt sure that Chitterlow would not enter the shop, he would have hid in the warehouse until the danger was past, but he had no idea of Chitterlow's limitations. He decided to keep up the shop in the shadows until Chitterlow reached the side window of the Manchester department, and then to go outside as if to inspect the condition of the window and explain to him that things were unfavourable to immediate intercourse. He might tell him he had already lost his situation. . . .

"Ullo, Chit'low," he said, emerging.

"Very man I want to see," said Chitterlow, shaking with vigour. "Very man I want to see." He laid a hand on Kipps's arm. "How *old* are you, Kipps?"

"One-and-twenty," said Kipps. "Why?"

"Talk about coincidences! And your name, now? Wait a minute." He held out a finger. "Is it Arthur?"

"Yes," said Kipps.

"You're the man," said Chitterlow.

"What man?"

"It's about the thickest coincidence I ever struck," said Chitterlow, plunging his extensive hand into his breast-coat pocket. "Half a jiff and I'll tell you your mother's Christian name." He laughed and struggled with his coat for a space, produced a washing-book and two pencils, which he deposited in his side pocket, then, in one capacious handful, a bent but by no means finally disabled cigar, the rubber proboscis of a bicycle pump, some twine and a lady's purse, and finally a small pocket-book, and from this, after dropping and recovering several visiting-cards, he extracted a carelessly torn piece of newspaper. "Euphemia," he read, and brought his face close to Kipps's. "Eh?" He laughed noisily. "It's about as fair a Bit of All Right as any one *could*



have—outside a coincidence play. Don't say her name wasn't Euphemia, Kipps, and spoil the whole blessed show."

"Whose name—Euphemia?" asked Kipps.

"Your mother's."

"Lemme see what it says on the paper."

Chitterlow handed him the fragment and turned away.

"You may say what you like," he said, addressing a vast deep laugh to the street generally.

Kipps attempted to read. "WADDY or KIPPS. If Arthur Waddy or Arthur Kipps, the son of Margaret Euphemia Kipps, who——"

Chitterlow's finger swept over the print. "I went down the column, and every blessed name that seemed to fit my play I took. I don't believe in made-up names. As I told you. I'm all with Zola in that. Documents whenever you can. I like 'em hot and real. See? Who was Waddy?"

"Never heard his name."

"Not Waddy?"

"No!"

Kipps tried to read again, and abandoned the attempt. "What does it mean?" he said. "I don't understand."

"It means," said Chitterlow, with a momentary note of lucid exposition, "so far as I can make out, that you're going to strike it Rich. Never mind about the Waddy—that's a detail. What does it usually mean? You'll hear of something to your advantage—very well. I took that newspaper up to get my names by the merest chance. Directly I saw it again and read that—I knew it was you. I believe in coincidences. People say they don't happen. *I* say they do. Everything's a coincidence. Seen properly. Here you are. Here's one! Incredible? Not a bit of it! See? It's you! Kipps! Waddy be damned! It's a Mascot. There's luck in my play. Bif! You're there. *I'm* there. Fair *in* it!"



Snap!" And he discharged his fingers like a pistol. "Never you mind about the 'Waddy.'"

"Eh?" said Kipps, with a nervous eye on Chitterlow's fingers.

"You're all right," said Chitterlow; "you may bet the seat of your only breeches on that! Don't you worry about the Waddy—that's as clear as day. You're about as right side up as a billiard ball . . . whatever you do. Don't stand there gaping, man! Read the paper if you don't believe me. Read it!"

He shook it under Kipps's nose.

Kipps became aware of the second apprentice watching them from the shop. His air of perplexity gave place to a more confident bearing.

"—— 'who was born at East Grinstead.' I certainly was born there. I've heard my Aunt say——"

"I knew it," said Chitterlow, taking hold of one edge of the paper and bringing his face close alongside Kipps's.

"—— on September the first, eighteen hundred and seventy-eight——"

"*That's* all right," said Chitterlow. "It's all, all right, and all you have to do is to write to Watson and Bean and get it——"

"Get what?"

"Whatever it is."

Kipps sought his moustache. "You'd write?" he asked.

"Ra-ther."

"But what d'you think it is?"

"That's the fun of it!" said Chitterlow, taking three steps in some as yet uninvented dance. "That's where the joke comes in. It may be anything—it may be a million. If so! Where does little Harry come in? Eh?"

Kipps was trembling slightly. "But——" he said, and thought. "If you was me——" he began. "About that Waddy——?"

He glanced up, and saw the second apprentice dis-



appear with amazing swiftness from behind the goods in the window.

"*What?*" asked Chitterlow, but he never had an answer.

"Lor'! There's the guv'nor!" said Kipps, and made a prompt dive for the door.

He dashed in, only to discover that Shalford, with the junior apprentice in attendance, had come to mark off remnants of Kipps's cotton dresses, and was demanding him. "Hullo, Kipps," he said, "outside——"

"Seein' if the window was straight, Sir," said Kipps.

"Umph!" said Shalford.

For a space Kipps was too busily employed to think at all of Chitterlow or the crumpled bit of paper in his trouser pocket. He was, however, painfully aware of a suddenly disconnected excitement at large in the street. There came one awful moment when Chitterlow's nose loomed interrogatively over the ground glass of the department door, and his bright little red-brown eye sought for the reason of Kipps's disappearance, and then it became evident that he saw the high light of Shalford's baldness, and grasped the situation and went away. And then Kipps (with that advertisement in his pocket) was able to come back to the business in hand.

He became aware that Shalford had asked a question. "Yessir, nosir, rightsir. I'm sorting up zephyrs tomorrow, Sir," said Kipps.

Presently he had a moment to himself again, and, taking up a safe position behind a newly unpacked pile of summer lace curtains, he straightened out the piece of paper and re-perused it. It was a little perplexing. That "Arthur Waddy or Arthur Kipps"—did that imply two persons or one? He would ask Pearce or Buggins. Only——

It had always been impressed upon him that there was something demanding secrecy about his mother.

"Don't you answer no questions about your mother,"



his aunt had been wont to say. "Tell them you don't know, whatever it is they ask you."

"Now, this——?"

Kipps's face became portentously careful, and he tugged at his moustache, such as it was, hard.

He had always represented his father as being a "gentleman farmer." "It didn't pay," he used to say, with a picture in his own mind of a penny magazine aristocrat prematurely worn out by worry. "I'm a Norfan, both sides," he would explain, with the air of one who had seen trouble. He said he lived with his uncle and aunt, but he did not say that they kept a toy-shop, and to tell any one that his uncle had been a butler—a *servant!*—would have seemed the maddest of indiscretions. Almost all the assistants in the Emporium were equally reticent and vague, so great is their horror of "Lowness" of any sort. To ask about this "Waddy or Kipps" would upset all these little fictions. He was not, as a matter of fact, perfectly clear about his real status in the world (he was not, as a matter of fact, perfectly clear about anything), but he knew that there was a quality about his status that was—detrimental.

Under the circumstances——?

It occurred to him that it would save a lot of trouble to destroy the advertisement there and then.

In which case he would have to explain to Chitterlow!

"Eng!" said Mr. Kipps.

"Kipps!" cried Carshot, who was shopwalking.

"Kipps Forward!"

He thrust back the crumpled paper into his pocket, and sallied forth to the customer.

"I want," said the customer, looking vaguely about her through glasses, "a little bit of something to cover a little stool I have. Anything would do—a remnant or anything."

The matter of the advertisement remained in abeyance for half an hour, and at the end the little stool was



still a candidate for covering, and Kipps had a thoroughly representative collection of the textile fabrics in his department to clear away. He was so angry about the little stool that the crumpled advertisement lay for a space in his pocket, absolutely forgotten.

## § 2.

Kipps sat on his tin box under the gas-bracket that evening, and looked up the name Euphemia, and learnt what it meant in the "Inquire Within About Everything" that constituted Buggins's reference library. He hoped Buggins, according to his habit, would ask him what he was looking for; but Buggins was busy turning out his week's washing. "Two collars," said Buggins, "half pair socks, two dickeys. Shirt? . . . M'm. There ought to be another collar somewhere."

"Euphemia," said Kipps at last, unable altogether to keep to himself this suspicion of a high origin that floated so delightfully about him—"Eu-phemia; it isn't a name *common* people would give to a girl, is it?"

"It isn't the name any decent people would give to a girl," said Buggins, "common or not."

"Lor'!" said Kipps. "Why?"

"It's giving girls names like that," said Buggins, "that nine times out of ten makes 'em go wrong. It unsettles 'em. If ever I was to have a girl, if ever I was to have a dozen girls, I'd call 'em all Jane—every one of 'em. You couldn't have a better name than that. Euphemia indeed! What next? . . . Good Lord! . . . That isn't one of my collars there, is it, under your bed?"

Kipps got him the collar.

"I don't see no great 'arm in Euphemia," he said as he did so.

After that he became restless. "I'm a good mind



to write that letter," he said; and then, finding Buggins preoccupied wrapping his washing up in the " $\frac{1}{2}$  sox," added to himself, "a thundering good mind."

So he got his penny bottle of ink, borrowed the pen from Buggins, and with no very serious difficulty in spelling or composition, did as he had resolved.

He came back into the bedroom about an hour afterwards, a little out of breath and pale. "Where you been?" said Buggins, who was now reading the *Daily World Manager*, which came to him in rotation from Carshot.

"Out to post some letters," said Kipps, hanging up his hat.

"Crib-hunting?"

"Mostly," said Kipps.

"Rather," he added with a nervous laugh; "what else?"

Buggins went on reading. Kipps sat on his bed and regarded the back of the *Daily World Manager* thoughtfully.

"Buggins," he said at last.

Buggins lowered his paper and looked.

"I say, Buggins, what do these here advertisements mean that say so-and-so will hear of something greatly to his advantage?"

"Missin' people," said Buggins, making to resume reading.

"How d'yer mean?" asked Kipps. "Money left, and that sort of thing?"

Buggins shook his head. "Debts," he said, "more often than not."

"But that ain't to his advantage."

"They put that to get 'old of 'em," said Buggins. "Often it's wives."

"What you mean?"

"Deserted wives try and get their husbands back that way."



"I suppose it *is* legacies sometimes, eh? Perhaps, if some one was left a hundred pounds by some one——"

"Hardly ever," said Buggins.

"Well, 'ow——?" began Kipps, and hesitated.

Buggins resumed reading. He was very much excited by a leader on Indian affairs. "By Jove!" he said, "it won't do to give these here Blacks votes."

"No fear," said Kipps.

"They're different altogether," said Buggins. "They 'aven't the sound sense of Englishmen, and they 'aven't the character. There's a sort of tricky dishonesty about 'em—false witness and all that—of which an Englishman has no idea. Outside their courts of law—it's a pos'tive fact, Kipps—there's witnesses waitin' to be 'ired. Reg'lar trade. Touch their 'ats as you go in. Englishmen 'ave no idea, I tell you—not ord'nary Englishmen. It's in their blood. They're too timid to be honest—too slavish. They aren't used to being free like we are, and if you gave 'em freedom they wouldn't make a proper use of it. Now, *we*—— Oh, *Damn!*"

For the gas had suddenly gone out, and Buggins had the whole column of Society Club chat still to read.

Buggins could talk of nothing after that but Shalford's meanness in turning off the gas, and after being extremely satirical about their employer, undressed in the dark, hit his bare toe against a box, and subsided, after unseemly ejaculations, into silent ill-temper.

Though Kipps tried to get to sleep before the affair of the letter he had just posted resumed possession of his mind, he could not do so. He went over the whole thing again, quite exhaustively.

Now that his first terror was abating, he couldn't quite determine whether he was glad or sorry that he had posted that letter. If it *should* happen to be a hundred pounds!

It *must* be a hundred pounds!



If it was he could hold out for a year, for a couple of years even, before he got a Crib.

Even if it was fifty pounds——!

Buggins was already breathing regularly when Kipps spoke again. “*Bug-gins,*” he said.

Buggins pretended to be asleep, and thickened his regular breathing (a little too hastily) to a snore.

“I say, Buggins,” said Kipps, after an interval.

“*What’s up now?*” said Buggins unamiably.

“S’pose *you* saw an advertisement in a paper, with your name in it, see, asking you to come and see some one, like, so as to hear of something very much to your——”

“Hide,” said Buggins shortly.

“But——”

“I’d hide.”

“Er?”

“Goo’-night, o’ man,” said Buggins, with convincing earnestness. Kipps lay still for a long time, then blew profoundly, turned over and stared at the other side of the dark.

He had been a fool to post that letter!

Lord! *Hadn’t* he been a fool!

### § 3.

It was just five days and a half after the light had been turned out while Buggins was reading, that a young man with a white face, and eyes bright and wide open, emerged from a side road upon the Leas front. He was dressed in his best clothes, and although the weather was fine, he carried his umbrella, just as if he had been to church. He hesitated, and turned to the right. He scanned each house narrowly as he passed it, and presently came to an abrupt stop. “*Hughenden,*” said the gateposts in firm black letters, and the



fanlight in gold repeated "Hughenden." It was a stucco house, fit to take your breath away, and its balcony was painted a beautiful sea green, enlivened with gilding. He stood looking up at it.

"Gollys!" he said at last in an awe-stricken whisper.

It had rich-looking crimson curtains to all the lower windows, and brass-railed blinds above. There was a splendid tropical plant in a large artistic pot in the drawing-room window. There were a splendid bronzed knocker (ring also) and two bells—one marked "Servants."

"Gollys! *Servants*, eh?"

He walked past away from it with his eyes regarding it, and then turned and came back. He passed through a further indecision, and finally drifted away to the sea front, and sat down on a seat a little way along the Leas and put his arm over the back and regarded "Hughenden." He whistled an air very softly to himself, put his head first on one side and then on the other. Then for a space he scowled fixedly at it.

A very stout old gentleman with a very red face and very protuberant eyes sat down beside Kipps, removed a Panama hat of the most abandoned desperado cut, and mopped his brow and blew. Then he began mopping the inside of his hat. Kipps watched him for a space, wondering how much he might have a year, and where he bought his hat. Then "Hughenden" reasserted itself.

An impulse overwhelmed him. "I say" he said, leaning forward to the old gentleman.

The old gentleman started and stared.

"What did you say?" he asked fiercely.

"You wouldn't think," said Kipps, indicating with his forefinger, "that that 'ouse there belongs to me."

The old gentleman twisted his neck round to look at "Hughenden." Then he came back to Kipps, looked at his mean little garments with apoplectic intensity, and blew at him by way of reply.



"It does," said Kipps, a little less confidently.

"Don't be a Fool," said the old gentleman, and put his hat on and wiped out the corners of his eyes. "It's hot enough," panted the old gentleman indignantly, "without Fools." Kipps looked from the old gentleman to the house, and back to the old gentleman. The old gentleman looked at Kipps, and snorted and looked out to sea, and again, snorting very contemptuously, at Kipps.

"Mean to say it doesn't belong to me?" said Kipps.

The old gentleman just glanced over his shoulder at the house in dispute, and then fell to pretending Kipps didn't exist. "It's been lef' me this very morning," said Kipps. "It ain't the only one that's been lef' me, neither."

"Aw!" said the old gentleman, like one who is sorely tried. He seemed to expect the passers-by presently to remove Kipps.

"It 'as," said Kipps. He made no further remark to the old gentleman for a space, but looked with a little less certitude at the house. . . .

"I got——" he said, and stopped.

"It's no good telling you if you don't believe," he said.

The old gentleman, after a struggle with himself, decided not to have a fit. "Try that game on with me," he panted. "Give you in charge."

"What game?"

"Wasn't born yesterday," said the old gentleman, and blew. "Besides," he added, "*Look* at you!"

"I know you," said the old gentleman, and coughed shortly, and nodded to the horizon, and coughed again.

Kipps looked dubiously from the house to the old gentleman, and back to the house. Their conversation, he gathered, was over.

Presently he got up and went slowly across the grass to its stucco portal again. He stood, and his mouth shaped the precious word, "Hughenden." It was all *right!* He looked over his shoulder as if in appeal to



the old gentleman, then turned and went his way. The old gentleman was so evidently past all reason!

He hung for a moment some distance along the parade, as though some invisible string was pulling him back. When he could no longer see the house from the pavement he went out into the road. Then with an effort he snapped the string.

He went on down a quiet side street, unbuttoned his coat furtively, took out three bank-notes in an envelope, looked at them, and replaced them. Then he fished up five new sovereigns from his trouser pocket and examined them. To such a confidence had his exact resemblance to his dead mother's portrait carried Messrs. Watson and Bean.

It was right enough.

It really was *all* right.

He replaced the coins with grave precaution, and went his way with a sudden briskness. It was all right—he had it now—he was a rich man at large. He went up a street and round a corner and along another street, and started towards the Pavilion, and changed his mind and came round back, resolved to go straight to the Emporium and tell them all.

He was aware of some one crossing a road far off ahead of him, some one curiously relevant to his present extraordinary state of mind. It was Chitterlow. Of course, it was Chitterlow who had told him first of the whole thing! The playwright was marching buoyantly along a cross street. His nose was in the air, the yachting cap was on the back of his head, and the large freckled hand grasped two novels from the library, a morning newspaper, a new hat done up in paper, and a lady's net bag full of onions and tomatoes. . . .

He passed out of sight behind the wine-merchant's at the corner, as Kipps decided to hurry forward and tell him of the amazing change in the Order of the Universe that had just occurred.



Kipps uttered a feeble shout, arrested as it began, and waved his umbrella. Then he set off at a smart pace in pursuit. He came round the corner, and Chitterlow had gone; he hurried to the next, and there was no Chitterlow; he turned back unavailingly, and his eyes sought some other possible corner. His hand fluttered to his mouth, and he stood for a space on the pavement edge, staring about him. No good!

But the sight of Chitterlow was a wholesome thing: it connected events together, joined him on again to the past at a new point, and that was what he so badly needed. . . .

It was all right—all right.

He became suddenly very anxious to tell everybody at the Emporium, absolutely everybody, all about it. That was what wanted doing. He felt that telling was the thing to make this business real. He gripped his umbrella about the middle, and walked very eagerly.

He entered the Emporium through the Manchester department. He flung open the door (over whose ground glass he had so recently, in infinite apprehension, watched the nose of Chitterlow), and discovered the second apprentice and Pearce in conversation. Pearce was prodding his hollow tooth with a pin and talking in fragments about the distinctive characteristics of Good Style.

Kipps came up in front of the counter.

"I say," he said. "What d'yer think?"

"What?" said Pearce over the pin.

"Guess."

"You've slipped out because Teddy's in London."

"Something more."

"What?"

"Been left a fortune."

"Garn!"

"I've."

"Get out!"



“Straight. I been lef’ twelve ’undred pounds—twelve ’undred pounds a year!”

He moved towards the little door out of the department into the house, moving, as heralds say, *regardant passant*. Pearce stood with mouth wide open and pin poised in air. “No!” he said at last.

“It’s right,” said Kipps, “and I’m going.”

And he fell over the doormat into the house.

#### § 4.

It happened that Mr. Shalford was in London buying summer sale goods, and, no doubt, also interviewing aspirants to succeed Kipps.

So that there was positively nothing to hinder a wild rush of rumour from end to end of the Emporium. All the masculine members began their report with the same formula—“Heard about Kipps?”

The new girl in the cash desk had had it from Pearce, and had dashed out into the fancy shop to be the first with the news on the fancy side. Kipps had been left a thousand pounds a year—twelve thousand pounds a year. Kipps had been left twelve hundred thousand pounds. The figures were uncertain, but the essential facts they had correct. Kipps had gone upstairs. Kipps was packing his box. He said he wouldn’t stop another day in the old Emporium, not for a thousand pounds! It was said that he was singing ribaldry about old Shalford.

He had come down! He was in the counting-house. There was a general movement thither. (Poor old Buggins had a customer, and couldn’t make out what the deuce it was all about! Completely out of it was Buggins.)

There was a sound of running to and fro, and voices saying this, that, and the other thing about Kipps.



Ring-a-dinger, ring-a-dinger went the dinner-bell, all unheeded. The whole of the Emporium was suddenly bright-eyed, excited, hungry to tell somebody, to find at any cost somebody who didn't know, and be first to tell them, "Kipps has been left thirty—forty—fifty thousand pounds!"

"*What!*" cried the senior porter, "Him!" and ran up to the counting-house as eagerly as though Kipps had broken his neck.

"One of our chaps just been left sixty thousand pounds," said the first apprentice, returning after a great absence, to his customer.

"Unexpectedly?" said the customer.

"Quite," said the first apprentice. . . .

"I'm sure if Anyone deserves it, it's Mr. Kipps," said Miss Mergle; and her train rustled as she hurried to the counting-house.

There stood Kipps amidst a pelting shower of congratulations. His face was flushed, and his hair disordered. He still clutched his hat and best umbrella in his left hand. His right hand was any one's to shake rather than his own. (Ring-a-dinger, ring-a-dinger ding, ding, ding, dang you!" went the neglected dinner-bell.)

"Good old Kipps!" said Pearce, shaking. "Good old Kipps!"

Booch rubbed one anæmic hand upon the other. "You're sure it's all right, Mr. Kipps?" he said in the background.

"I'm sure we all congratulate him," said Miss Mergle.

"Great Scott!" said the new young lady in the glove department. "Twelve hundred a year! Great Scott! You aren't thinking of marrying any one, are you, Mr. Kipps?"

"Three pounds five and ninepence a day," said Mr. Booch, working in his head almost miraculously. . . .

Every one, it seemed, was saying how glad they were



it was Kipps, except the junior apprentice, upon whom—he being the only son of a widow, and used to having the best of everything as a right—an intolerable envy, a sense of unbearable wrong, had cast its gloomy shade. All the rest were quite honestly and simply glad—gladder, perhaps, at that time than Kipps, because they were not so overpowered. . . .

Kipps went downstairs to dinner, emitting fragmentary, disconnected statements. "Never expected anything of the sort. . . . When this here old Bean told me, you could have knocked me down with a feather. . . . He says, 'You ben lef' money.' Even then I didn't expect it'd be mor'n a hundred pounds, perhaps. Something like that."

With the sitting down to dinner and the handing of plates the excitement assumed a more orderly quality. The housekeeper emitted congratulations as she carved, and the maidservant became dangerous to clothes with the plates—she held them anyhow; one expected to see one upside-down even—she found Kipps so fascinating to look at. Every one was the brisker and hungrier for the news (except the junior apprentice), and the housekeeper carved with unusual liberality. It was High Old Times there under the gaslight, High Old Times. "I'm sure if Anyone deserves it," said Miss Mergle—"pass the salt, please—it's Mr. Kipps."

The babble died away a little as Carshot began barking across the table at Kipps. "You'll be a bit of a Swell, Kipps," he said. "You won't hardly know yourself."

"Quite the gentleman," said Miss Mergle.

"Many real gentlemen's families," said the housekeeper, "have to do with less."

"See you on the Leas," said Carshot. "My——!" He met the housekeeper's eye. She had spoken about that expression before. "My eye!" he said tamely, lest words should mar the day.



"You'll go to London, I reckon," said Pearce. "You'll be a man about town. We shall see you mashing 'em, with violets in your button-'ole, down the Burlington Arcade."

"One of these West End Flats. That'd be *my* style," said Pearce. "And a first-class club."

"Aren't these Clubs a bit 'ard to get into?" asked Kipps, open-eyed over a mouthful of potato.

"No fear. Not for Money," said Pearce. And the girl in the laces, who had acquired a cynical view of Modern Society from the fearless exposures of Miss Marie Corelli, said, "Money goes everywhere nowadays, Mr. Kipps."

But Carshot showed the true British strain.

"If I was Kipps," he said, pausing momentarily for a knifeful of gravy, "I should go to the Rockies and shoot bears."

"I'd certainly 'ave a run over to Boulogne," said Pearce, "and look about a bit. I'm going to do that next Easter myself, anyhow—see if I don't."

"Go to Oireland, Mr. Kipps," came the soft insistence of Biddy Murphy, who managed the big work-room, flushed and shining in the Irish way as she spoke—"go to Oireland. Ut's the loveliest country in the world. Outside currs. Fishin', shootin', huntin'. An' pretty gals! Eh! You should see the Lakes of Killarney, Mr. Kipps!" And she expressed ecstasy by a facial pantomime, and smacked her lips.

And presently they crowned the event.

It was Pearce who said, "Kipps, you ought to stand Sham!"

And it was Carshot who found the more poetical word "Champagne."

"Rather!" said Kipps hilariously; and the rest was a question of detail and willing emissaries. "Here it comes!" they said, as the apprentice came down the staircase. "How about the shop?" said some one.



“Oh, *hang* the shop!” said Carshot, and made gruntulous demands for a corkscrew with a thing to cut the wire. Pearce, the dog! had a wire-cutter in his pocket-knife. How Shalford would have stared at the gold-tipped bottles if he had chanced to take an early train! Bang went the corks, and bang! Gluck, gluck, gluck, and sizzle!

When Kipps found them all standing about him under the gas flare, saying almost solemnly, “Kipps!” with tumblers upheld—“Have it in tumblers,” Carshot had said, “have it in tumblers. It isn’t a wine like you have in glasses. Not like port and sherry. It cheers you up, but you don’t get drunk. It isn’t hardly stronger than lemonade. They drink it at dinner, some of ’em, every day.”

“What! At three and six a bottle!” said the housekeeper incredulously.

“*They* don’t stick at *that*,” said Carshot. “Not the champagne sort.”

The housekeeper pursed her lips and shook her head. . . .

When Kipps, I say, found them all standing up to toast him in that manner, there came such a feeling in his throat and face that for the life of him he scarcely knew for a moment whether he was not going to cry.

“Kipps!” they all said, with kindly eyes. It was very good of them, and hard there wasn’t a stroke of luck for them all!

But the sight of upturned chins and glasses pulled him together again. . . .

They did him honour. Unenviously and freely they did him honour.

For example, Carshot, being subsequently engaged in serving cretonne, and desiring to push a number of rejected blocks up the counter in order to have space for measuring, swept them by a powerful and ill-calculated movement of the arm, with a noise like thunder, partly on to the floor, and partly on to the foot of the



still gloomily preoccupied junior apprentice. And Bug-gins, whose place it was to shopwalk while Carshot served, shopwalked with quite unparalleled dignity, dangling a new season's sunshade with a crooked handle on one finger. He arrested each customer who came down the shop with a grave and penetrating look. "Showing very tractive line new sheasons shunshade," he would remark; and after a suitable pause, "'Markable thing, one our 'sistant leg'sy twelve 'undred a year. Very tractive. Nothing more to-day, mum? No!" And he would then go and hold the door open for them with perfect decorum, and with the sunshade dangling elegantly from his left hand. . . .

And the second apprentice, serving a customer with cheap ticking, and being asked suddenly if it was strong, answered remarkably,—

"Oo *no*, mum! Strong! Why, it ain't 'ardly stronger than lemonade." . . .

The head porter, moreover, was filled with a virtuous resolve to break the record as a lightning packer, and make up for lost time. Mr. Swaffenham of the Sandgate Riviera, for example, who was going out to dinner that night at seven, received at half-past six, instead of the urgently needed dress shirt he expected, a corset specially adapted to the needs of persons inclined to embonpoint. A parcel of summer underclothing selected by the elder Miss Waldershawe was somehow distributed in the form of gratis additions throughout a number of parcels of a less intimate nature, and a box of millinery on approval to Lady Pamshort (at Wampachs) was enriched by the addition of the junior porter's cap. . . .

These little things, slight in themselves, witness perhaps none the less eloquently to the unselfish exhilaration felt throughout the Emporium at the extraordinary and unexpected enrichment of Mr. Kipps.



## § 5.

The bus that plies between New Romney and Folkestone is painted a British red, and inscribed on either side with the word "Tip-top" in gold amidst voluptuous scrolls. It is a slow and portly bus; even as a young bus it must have been slow and portly. Below it swings a sort of hold, hung by chains between the wheels, and in the summer-time the top has garden seats. The front over those two dauntless unhurrying horses rises in tiers like a theatre: there is first a seat for the driver and his company, and above that a seat, and above that, unless my memory plays me false, a seat. You sit in a sort of composition by some Italian painter—a celestial group of you. There are days when this bus goes, and days when it doesn't go—you have to find out. And so you get to New Romney. So you will continue to get to New Romney for many years, for the light railway concession along the coast is happily in the South Eastern Railway Company's keeping, and the peace of the marsh is kept inviolate save for the bicycle bells of such as Kipps and I. This bus it was—this ruddy, venerable, and, under God's mercy, immortal bus—that came down the Folkestone hill with unflinching deliberation, and trundled through Sandgate and Hythe, and out into the windy spaces of the Marsh, with Kipps and all his fortunes on its brow.

You figure him there. He sat on the highest seat diametrically above the driver, and his head was spinning and spinning with champagne and this stupendous Tomfoolery of Luck; and his heart was swelling—swelling, indeed, at times as though it would burst him—and his face towards the sunlight was transfigured. He said never a word, but ever and again, as he thought of this or that, he laughed. He seemed full of chuckles for a time, detached and independent chuckles, chuckles that rose and burst on him like bubbles in a wine. . . .



He held a banjo sceptre fashion and resting on his knee. He had always wanted a banjo ; now he had got one at Melchior's, while he was waiting for the bus.

There sat beside him a young servant, who was sucking peppermint, and a little boy with a sniff whose flitting eyes showed him curious to know why ever and again Kipps laughed, and beside the driver were two young men in gaiters talking about "tegs." And there sat Kipps, all unsuspected, twelve hundred a year, as it were, except for the protrusion of the banjo, disguised as a common young man. And the young man in gaiters to the left of the driver eyed Kipps and his banjo, and especially his banjo, ever and again, as if he found it and him, with his rapt face, an insoluble enigma. And many a King has ridden into a conquered city with a lesser sense of splendour than Kipps.

Their shadows grew long behind them, and their faces were transfigured in gold as they rumbled on towards the splendid west. The sun set before they had passed Dymchurch, and as they came lumbering into New Romney, past the windmill, the dusk had come.

The driver handed down the banjo and the portmanteau, and Kipps having paid him, "That's aw right," he said to the change, as a gentleman should, turned about, and ran the portmanteau smartly into old Kipps, whom the sound of the stopping of the bus had brought to the door of the shop in an aggressive mood and with his mouth full of supper.

"'Ullo, uncle ; didn't see you," said Kipps.

"Blunderin' ninny," said old Kipps. "What's brought you here ? Ain't early closing, is it ? Not Toosday ?"

"Got some news for you, uncle," said Kipps, dropping the portmanteau.

"Ain't lost your situation, 'ave you ? What's that you got there ? I'm blowed if it ain't a banjo. Goo-lord ! Spendin' your money on banjoes ! Don't put down your portmanty there—anyhow. Right in the



way of everybody. I'm blowed if ever I saw such a boy as you've got lately. Here! Molly! And look here! What you got a portmanty for? Why! Goo-lord! You ain't *really* lost your place, 'ave you?"

"Somethin's happened," said Kipps, slightly dashed. "It's all right, Uncle. I'll tell you in a minute."

Old Kipps took the banjo as his nephew picked up the portmanteau again.

The living-room door opened quickly, showing a table equipped with elaborate simplicity for supper, and Mrs. Kipps appeared.

"If it ain't young Artie!" she said. "Why, whatever's brought *you* 'ome?"

"'Ullo, Aunt," said Artie. "I'm coming in. I got somethin' to tell you. I've 'ad a bit of luck."

He wouldn't tell them all at once. He staggered with the portmanteau round the corner of the counter, set a bundle of children's tin pails into clattering oscillation, and entered the little room. He deposited his luggage in the corner beside the tall clock, and turned to his Aunt and Uncle again. His aunt regarded him doubtfully; the yellow light from the little lamp on the table escaped above the shade, and lit her forehead and the tip of her nose. It would be all right in a minute. He wouldn't tell them all at once. Old Kipps stood in the shop door with the banjo in his hand, breathing noisily.

"The fact is, Aunt, I've 'ad a bit of Luck."

"You ain't been backin' gordless 'orses, Artie?" she asked.

"No fear."

"It's a draw he's been in," said old Kipps, still panting from the impact of the portmanteau—"it's a dratted draw. Jest look here, Molly. He's won this 'ere trashy banjer and throwd up his situation on the strength of it—that's what he's done. Goin' about singing. Dash and plunge. Jest the very fault poor Pheamy always 'ad. Blunder right in, and no one mustn't stop 'er!"



"You ain't thrown up your place, Artie, 'ave you?" said Mrs. Kipps.

Kipps perceived his opportunity. "I 'ave," he said; "I've throwed it up."

"What for?" said old Kipps.

"So's to learn the banjo!"

"Goo *Lord!*" said old Kipps, in horror to find himself verified.

"I'm going about playing," said Kipps with a giggle. "Goin' to black my face, Aunt, and sing on the beach. I'm going to 'ave a most tremenjous lark and earn any amount of money—you see. Twenty-six fousand pounds I'm going to earn just as easy as nothing!"

"Kipps," said Mrs. Kipps, "he's been drinking!"

They regarded their nephew across the supper-table with long faces. Kipps exploded with laughter, and broke out again when his aunt shook her head very sadly at him. Then suddenly he fell grave. He felt he could keep it up no longer. "It's all right, aunt—reely. I ain't mad, and I ain't been drinking. I been lef' money. I been left twenty-six fousand pounds."

Pause.

"And you thrown up your place?" said old Kipps.

"Yes," said Kipps, "Rather!"

"And bort this banjer, put on your best noo trousers, and come right on 'ere?"

"Well," said Mrs. Kipps, "I—never—did!"

"These ain't my noo trousers, aunt," said Kipps regretfully. "My noo trousers wasn't done."

"I shouldn't ha' thought that *even you* could ha' been such a fool as that," said old Kipps.

Pause.

"It's *all* right," said Kipps, a little disconcerted by their distrustful solemnity. "It's all right—reely! Twenny-six thousan' pounds. And a 'ouse."

Old Kipps pursed his lips and shook his head.

"A 'ouse on the Leas. I could have gone there.



Only I didn't. I didn't care to. I didn't know what to say. I wanted to come and tell you."

"How d'yer know the 'ouse——?"

"They told me."

"Well," said old Kipps, and nodded his head portentously towards his nephew, with the corners of his mouth pulled down in a strikingly discouraging way—"well, you *are* a young Gaby."

"I didn't *think* it of you, Artie!" said Mrs. Kipps.

"Wadjer mean?" asked Kipps faintly, looking from one to the other with a withered face.

Old Kipps closed the shop door. "They been 'avin' a lark with you," said old Kipps in a mournful undertone. "That's what I mean, my boy. They jest been seein' what a Gaby like you 'ud do."

"I dessay that young Quodling was in it," said Mrs. Kipps. "'E's jest that sort."

(For Quodling of the green-baize bag had grown up to be a fearful dog, the terror of New Romney.)

"It's somebody after your place, very likely," said old Kipps.

Kipps looked from one sceptical reproving face to the other, and round him at the familiar shabby little room, with his familiar cheap portmanteau on the mended chair, and that banjo amidst the supper things like some irrevocable deed. Could he be rich indeed? Could it be that these things had really happened? Or had some insane fancy whirled him hither?

Still—perhaps a hundred pounds——

"But," he said, "it's all right, reely, Uncle. You don't think——? I 'ad a letter."

"Got up," said old Kipps.

"But I answered it and went to a norfis."

Old Kipps felt staggered for a moment, but he shook his head and chins sagely from side to side. As the memory of old Bean and Shalford's revived, the confidence of Kipps came back to him.



"I saw a nold gent, Uncle—perfect gentleman. And 'e told me all about it. Mos' respectable 'e was. Said 'is name was Watson and Bean—leastways 'e was Bean. Said it was lef' me"—Kipps suddenly dived into his breast pocket—"by my grandfather——"

The old people started.

Old Kipps uttered an exclamation and wheeled round towards the mantel-shelf, above which the daguerreotype of his lost younger sister smiled its fading smile upon the world.

"Waddy 'is name was," said Kipps, with his hand still deep in his pocket. "It was 'is son was my father——"

"Waddy!" said old Kipps.

"Waddy!" said Mrs. Kipps.

"She'd never say," said old Kipps.

There was a long silence.

Kipps fumbled with a letter, a crumpled advertisement, and three bank-notes. He hesitated between these items.

"Why! That young chap what was arsting questions——" said old Kipps, and regarded his wife with an eye of amazement.

"Must 'ave been," said Mrs. Kipps.

"Must 'ave been," said old Kipps.

"James," said Mrs. Kipps, in an awe-stricken voice

"After all—perhaps—— It's true!"

"'Ow much did you say?" asked old Kipps. "'Ow much did you say 'e'd lef' you, me b'y?"

It was thrilling, though not quite in the way Kipps had expected. He answered almost meekly across the meagre supper things, with his documentary evidence in his hand.

"Twelve 'undred pounds. Proximately, he said. Twelve 'undred pounds a year. 'E made 'is will jest before 'e died—not more'n a month ago. When 'e was dying, 'e seemed to change like, Mr. Bean said.



'E'd never forgiven 'is son, never—not till then. 'Is son 'ad died in Australia, years and years ago, and *then* 'e 'adn't forgiven 'im. You know—'is son what was my father. But jest when 'e was ill and dying 'e seemed to get worried like, and longing for some one of 'is own. And 'e told Mr. Bean it was 'im that had prevented them marrying. So 'e thought. That's 'ow it all come about. . . ."

## § 6.

At last Kipps's flaring candle went up the narrow uncarpeted staircase to the little attic that had been his shelter and refuge during all the days of his childhood and youth. His head was whirling. He had been advised, he had been warned, he had been flattered and congratulated, he had been given whisky and hot water and lemon and sugar, and his health had been drunk in the same. He had also eaten two Welsh rarebits—an unusual supper. His uncle was chiefly for his going into Parliament, his aunt was consumed with a great anxiety. "I'm afraid he'll go and marry beneath 'im."

"Y'ought to 'ave a bit o' shootin' somewheer," said old Kipps.

"It's your *duty* to marry into a county family, Artie—remember that."

"There's lots of young noblemen'll be glad to 'eng on to you," said old Kipps—"you mark my words—and borry your money. And then good-day to ye."

"I got to be precious careful," said Kipps. "Mr. Bean said that."

"And you got to be precious careful of this old Bean," said old Kipps. "We may be out of the world in Noo Romney, but I've 'eard a bit about solicitors for all that. You keep your eye on old Bean, me b'y."

"'Ow do we know what 'e's up to, with your money,



even now?" said old Kipps, pursuing this uncomfortable topic.

"'E *looked* very respectable," said Kipps.

Kipps undressed with great deliberation and with vast gaps of pensive margin. Twenty-six thousand pounds!

His aunt's solicitude had brought back certain matters into the foreground that his "twelve 'undred a year" had for a time driven away altogether. His thoughts went back to the wood-carving class. Twelve Hundred a Year. He sat on the edge of the bed in profound meditation, and his boots fell "whop" and "whop" upon the floor, with a long interval between each "whop." Twenty-six thousand pounds. "By Gum!" He dropped the remainder of his costume about him on the floor, got into bed, pulled the patchwork quilt over him, and put his head on the pillow that had been first to hear of Ann Pornick's accession to his heart. But he did not think of Ann Pornick now.

It was about everything in the world except Ann Pornick that he seemed to be trying to think of—simultaneously. All the vivid happenings of the day came and went in his overtaxed brain—"that old Bean" explaining and explaining, the fat man who wouldn't believe, an overpowering smell of peppermint, the banjo, Miss Mergle saying he deserved it, Chitterlow vanishing round a corner, the wisdom and advice and warnings of his Aunt and Uncle. She was afraid he would marry beneath him, *was she?* She didn't know. . . .

His brain made an excursion into the wood-carving class, and presented Kipps with the picture of himself amazing that class by a modest yet clearly audible remark, "I been left twenty-six thousand pounds." Then he told them all, quietly but firmly, that he had always loved Miss Walshingham—always; and so he had brought all his twenty-six thousand pounds with



him, to give to her there and then. He wanted nothing in return. . . . Yes, he wanted nothing in return. He would give it to her all in an envelope and go. Of course he would keep the banjo—and a little present for his aunt and uncle—and a new suit perhaps—and one or two other things she would not miss. He went off at a tangent. He might buy a motor car; he might buy one of these here things that will play you a piano—that would make old Buggins sit up! He could pretend he had learnt to play; he might buy a bicycle and a cyclist suit. . . .

A terrific multitude of plans of what he might do, and in particular of what he might buy, came crowding into his brain, and he did not so much fall asleep as pass into a disorder of dreams in which he was driving a four-horse Tip-Top coach down Sandgate Hill ("I shall have to be precious careful"), wearing innumerable suits of clothes, and through some terrible accident wearing them all wrong. Consequently he was being laughed at. The coach vanished in the interest of the costume. He was wearing golfing suits and a silk hat. This passed into a nightmare that he was promenading on the Leas in a Highland costume, with a kilt that kept shrinking, and Shalford was following him with three policemen. "He's my assistant," Shalford kept repeating; "he's escaped. He's an escaped improver. Keep by him, and in a minute you'll have to run him in. I know 'em. We say they wash, but they won't." . . . He could feel the kilt creeping up his legs. He would have tugged at it to pull it down, only his arms were paralyzed. He had an impression of giddy crises. He uttered a shriek of despair. "*Now!*" said Shalford. He woke in horror—his quilt had slipped off the bed.

He had a fancy he had just been called, that he had somehow overslept himself and missed going down for dusting. Then he perceived it was still night, and light by reason of the moonlight, and that he was no



longer in the Emporium. He wondered where he could be. He had a curious fancy that the world had been swept and rolled up like a carpet, and that he was nowhere. It occurred to him that perhaps he was mad. "Buggins!" he said. There was no answer, not even the defensive snore. No room, no Buggins, nothing!

Then he remembered better. He sat on the edge of his bed for some time. Could any one have seen his face, they would have seen it white, and drawn with staring eyes. Then he groaned weakly. "Twenty-six thousand pounds!" he whispered.

Just then it presented itself in an almost horribly overwhelming mass.

He remade his bed and returned to it. He was still dreadfully wakeful. It was suddenly clear to him that he need never trouble to get up punctually at seven again. That fact shone out upon him like a star through clouds. He was free to lie in bed as long as he liked, get up when he liked, go where he liked; have eggs every morning for breakfast, or rashes, or bloater paste, or . . . Also he was going to astonish Miss Walshingham.

Astonish her and astonish her. . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

He was awakened by a thrush singing in the fresh dawn. The whole room was flooded with warm golden sunshine. "I say!" said the thrush. "I say! I say! Twelve 'undred a year! Twelve 'Undred a Year! Twelve 'UNDRED a Year! I say! I say! I say!"

He sat up in bed and rubbed the sleep from his eyes with his knuckles. Then he jumped out of bed and began dressing very eagerly. He did not want to lose any time in beginning the new life.



BOOK II.

MR. COOTE THE CHAPERON.



BOOK II.

MR. COOTE THE CHAPERON.



## CHAPTER THE FIRST.

### THE NEW CONDITIONS.

#### § I.

THERE comes a gentlemanly figure into these events, and for a space takes a leading part therein, a Good Influence, a refined and amiable figure, Mr. Chester Coote. You must figure him as about to enter our story, walking with a curious rectitude of bearing through the evening dusk towards the Public Library, erect, large-headed—he had a great big head, full of the suggestion of a powerful mind well under control—with a large official-looking envelope in his white and knuckly hand. In the other he carries a gold-handled cane. He wears a silken gray jacket suit, buttoned up, and anon he coughs behind the official envelope. He has a prominent nose, slaty gray eyes, and a certain heaviness about the mouth. His mouth hangs breathing open, with a slight protrusion of the lower jaw. His straw hat is pulled down a little in front, and he looks each person he passes in the eye, and, directly his look is answered, looks away.

Thus Mr. Chester Coote, as he was on the evening when he came upon Kipps. He was a local house-agent, and a most active and gentlemanly person, a conscious gentleman, equally aware of society and the serious side of life. From amateur theatricals of a nice refined sort to science classes, few things were able to



get along without him. He supplied a fine full bass, a little flat and quavery perhaps, but very abundant, to the St. Stylites's choir. . . .

He goes on towards the Public Library, lifts the envelope in salutation to a passing curate, smiles, and enters. . . .

It was in the Public Library that he came upon Kipps.

By that time Kipps had been rich a week or more, and the change in his circumstances was visible upon his person. He was wearing a new suit of drab flannels, a Panama hat, and a red tie for the first time, and he carried a silver-mounted stick with a tortoise-shell handle. He felt extraordinarily different, perhaps more different than he really was, from the meek improver of a week ago. He felt as he felt Dukes must feel, yet at bottom he was still modest. He was leaning on his stick and regarding the indicator with a respect that never palled. He faced round to meet Mr. Coote's overflowing smile.

"What are you doang hea?" asked Mr. Chester Coote.

Kipps was momentarily abashed. "Oh," he said slowly, and then, "Mooching round a bit."

That Coote should address him with this easy familiarity was a fresh reminder of his enhanced social position. "Jest mooching round," he said. "I been back in Folkestone free days now—at my 'ouse, you know."

"Ah!" said Mr. Coote. "I haven't yet had an opportunity of congratulating you on your good fortune."

Kipps held out his hand. "It was the cleanest surprise that ever was," he said. "When Mr. Bean told me of it, you could have knocked me down with a feather."

"It must mean a tremendous change for you."

"O-o. Rather. Change? Why, I'm like the chap in the song they sing: I don't 'ardly know where I are. You know."



“An extraordinary change,” said Mr. Coote. “I can quite believe it. Are you stopping in Folkestone?”

“For a bit. I got a ’ouse, you know. What my gran’father ’ad. I’m stopping there. His housekeeper was kep’ on. Fancy—being in the same town and everything!”

“Precisely,” said Mr. Coote. “That’s it,” and coughed like a sheep behind four straight fingers.

“Mr. Bean got me to come back to see to things. Else I was out in New Romney, where my Uncle and Aunt live. But it’s a Lark coming back, in a way . . .”

The conversation hung for a moment.

“Are you getting a book?” asked Coote.

“Well, I ’aven’t got a ticket yet. But I shall get one all right, and have a go in at reading. I’ve often wanted to. Rather. I was just ’aving a look at this indicator. First-class idea. Tells you all you want to know.”

“It’s simple,” said Coote, and coughed again, keeping his eyes fixed on Kipps. For a moment they hung, evidently disinclined to part. Then Kipps jumped at an idea he had cherished for a day or more—not particularly in relation to Coote, but in relation to any one.

“You doing anything?” he asked.

“Just called with a papah about the classes.”

“Because—— Would you care to come up and look at my ’ouse and ’ave a smoke and a chat—eh?” He made indicative back jerks of the head, and was smitten with a horrible doubt whether possibly this invitation might not be some hideous breach of etiquette. Was it, for example, the correct hour? “I’d be awfully glad if you would,” he added.

Mr. Coote begged for a moment while he handed the official-looking envelope to the librarian, and then declared himself quite at Kipps’s service. They muddled a moment over precedence at each door they went through, and so emerged to the street.



"It feels awful rum to me at first, all this," said Kipps. "'Aving a 'ouse of my own—and all that. It's strange, you know. 'Aving all day. Reely I don't 'ardly know what to do with my time."

"D'ju smoke?" he said suddenly, proffering a magnificent gold-decorated pigskin cigarette-case, which he produced from nothing, almost as though it was some sort of trick. Coote hesitated and declined, and then with great liberality, "Don't let me hinder you . . ."

They walked a little way in silence, Kipps being chiefly concerned to affect ease in his new clothes, and keeping a wary eye on Coote. "It's rather a big windfall," said Coote presently. "It yields you an income——?"

"Twelve 'undred a year," said Kipps. "Bit over—if anything."

"Do you think of living in Folkestone?"

"Don't know 'ardly yet. I *may*. Then again, I may not. I got a furnished 'ouse, but I may let it."

"Your plans are undecided?"

"That's jest it," said Kipps.

"Very beautiful sunset it was to-night," said Coote, and Kipps said, "Wasn't it?" and they began to talk of the merits of sunsets. Did Kipps paint? Not since he was a boy. He didn't believe he could now. Coote said his sister was a painter, and Kipps received this intimation with respect. Coote sometimes wished he could find time to paint himself, but one couldn't do everything, and Kipps said that was "jest it."

They came out presently upon the end of the Leas, and looked down to where the squat, dark masses of the harbour and harbour station, gemmed with pinpoint lights, crouched against the twilit gray of the sea. "If one could do *that*," said Coote; and Kipps was inspired to throw his head back, cock it on one side, regard the harbour with one eye shut, and say that it would take some doing. Then Coote said something about "Abend," which Kipps judged to be in a foreign lan-



guage, and got over by lighting another cigarette from his by no means completed first one. "You're right—*puff, puff.*"

He felt that so far he had held up his end of the conversation in a very creditable manner, but that extreme discretion was advisable.

They turned away, and Coote remarked that the sea was good for crossing, and asked Kipps if he had been over the water very much. Kipps said he hadn't been—"much," but he thought very likely he'd have a run over to Boulogne soon; and Coote proceeded to talk of the charms of foreign travel, mentioning quite a number of unheard-of places by name. He had been to them! Kipps remained on the defensive, but behind his defences his heart sank. It was all very well to pretend, but presently it was bound to come out. *He* didn't know anything of all this. . . .

So they drew near the house. At his own gate Kipps became extremely nervous. It was a fine impressive door. He knocked neither a single knock nor a double, but about one and a half—an apologetic half. They were admitted by an irreproachable housemaid with a steady eye, before which Kipps cringed dreadfully. He hung up his hat, and fell about over hall chairs and things. "There's a fire in the study, Mary?" he had the audacity to ask, though evidently he knew, and led the way upstairs panting. He tried to shut the door, and discovered the housemaid behind him coming to light his lamp. This enfeebled him further. He said nothing until the door closed behind her. Meanwhile, to show his *sang-froid*, he hummed and flitted towards the window and here and there.

Coote went to the big hearthrug and turned and surveyed his host. His hand went to the back of his head and patted his occiput—a gesture frequent with him.

"'Ere we are," said Kipps, hands in his pockets, and glancing round him.



It was a gaunt Victorian room, with a heavy, dirty cornice, and the ceiling enriched by the radiant plaster ornament of an obliterated gas chandelier. It held two large glass-fronted bookcases, one of which was surmounted by a stuffed terrier encased in glass. There was a mirror over the mantel, and hangings and curtains of magnificent crimson patternings. On the mantel were a huge black clock of classical design, vases in the Burslem Etruscan style, spills and toothpicks in large receptacles of carved rock, large lava ash-trays, and an exceptionally big box of matches. The fender was very great and brassy. In a favourable position under the window was a spacious rosewood writing-desk, and all the chairs and other furniture were of rosewood and well stuffed.

“This,” said Kipps, in something near an undertone, “was the o’ gentleman’s study—my grandfather that was. ’E used to sit at that desk and write.”

“Books?”

“No. Letters to the *Times* and things like that. ’E’s got ’em all cut out—stuck in a book. . . . Leastways he ’ad. It’s in that bookcase. . . . Won’t you sit down?”

Coote did, blowing very slightly, and Kipps secured his vacated position on the extensive black-skin rug. He spread out his legs compass fashion, and tried to appear at his ease. The rug, the fender, the mantel and mirror, conspired with great success to make him look a trivial and intrusive little creature amidst their commonplace hauteur, and his own shadow on the opposite wall seemed to think everything a great lark, and mocked and made tremendous fun of him. . .

## § 2.

For a space Kipps played a defensive game, and Coote drew the lines of the conversation. They kept



away from the theme of Kipps's change of fortune, and Coote made remarks upon local and social affairs. "You must take an interest in these things now," was as much as he said in the way of personalities. But it speedily became evident that he was a person of wide and commanding social relationships. He spoke of "society" being mixed in the neighbourhood, and of the difficulty of getting people to work together and "do" things; they were cliquish. Incidentally he alluded quite familiarly to men with military titles, and once even to some one with a title, a Lady Punnet. Not snobbishly, you understand, nor deliberately, but quite in passing. He had, it appeared, talked to Lady Punnet about private theatricals—in connection with the Hospitals. She had been unreasonable, and he had put her right—gently, of course, but firmly. "If you stand up to these people," said Coote, "they like you all the better." It was also very evident he was at his ease with the clergy; "my friend Mr. Densemores—a curate, you know, and rather curious, the Reverend *and* Honourable." Coote grew visibly in Kipps's eyes as he said these things; he became not only the exponent of "Vagner or Vargner," the man whose sister had painted a picture to be exhibited at the Royal Academy, the type of the hidden thing called culture, but a delegate, as it were, or at least an intermediary from that great world "up there," where there were men-servants, where there were titles, where people dressed for dinner, drank wine at meals, wine costing very often as much as three and sixpence the bottle, and followed through a maze of etiquette the most stupendous practices. . . .

Coote sat back in the armchair smoking luxuriously and expanding pleasantly with the delightful sense of *savoir faire*; Kipps sat forward, his elbows on his chair arm, alert, and his head a little on one side. You figure him as looking little and cheap, and feeling smaller and cheaper amidst his new surroundings. But it was a



most stimulating and interesting conversation. And soon it became less general, and more serious and intimate. Coote spoke of people who had got on, and of people who hadn't; of people who seemed to be in everything, and people who seemed to be out of everything; and then he came round to Kipps.

"You'll have a good time," he said abruptly, with a smile that would have interested a dentist.

"I dunno," said Kipps.

"There's mistakes, of course."

"That's jest it."

Coote lit a new cigarette. "One can't help being interested in what you will do," he remarked. "Of course—for a young man of spirit, come suddenly into wealth—there's temptations."

"I got to go careful," said Kipps. "O' Bean told me that at the very first."

Coote went on to speak of pitfalls, of Betting, of Bad Companions. "I know," said Kipps, "I know." "There's Doubt again," said Coote. "I know a young fellow—a solicitor—handsome, gifted. And yet, you know, utterly sceptical. Practically altogether a sceptic."

"Lor'!" said Kipps, "not a Natheist?"

"I fear so," said Coote. "Really, you know, an awfully fine young fellow—Gifted! But full of this dreadful Modern Spirit—Cynical! All this Overman stuff. Nietzsche and all that. . . . I wish I could do something for him."

"Ah!" said Kipps, and knocked the ash off his cigarette. "I know a chap—one of our apprentices he was—once. Always scoffing. . . . He lef'."

He paused. "Never wrote for his refs," he said, in the deep tone proper to a moral tragedy; and then, after a pause, "Enlisted!"

"Ah!" said Coote.

"And often," he said after a pause, "it's just the



most spirited chaps, just the chaps one likes best, who Go Wrong."

"It's temptation," Kipps remarked.

He glanced at Coote, leant forward, knocked the ash from his cigarette into the mighty fender. "That's jest it," he said; "you get tempted, before you know where you are."

"Modern life," said Coote, "is so—complex. It isn't every one is Strong. Half the young fellows who go wrong aren't really bad."

"That's jest it," said Kipps.

"One gets tone from one's surroundings——"

"That's exactly it," said Kipps.

He meditated. "I picked up with a chap," he said. "A Nacter. Leastways, he writes plays. Clever feller. But——"

He implied extensive moral obloquy by a movement of his head. "Of course it's seeing life," he added.

Coote pretended to understand the full implications of Kipps's remark. "Is it *worth* it?" he asked.

"That's jest it," said Kipps.

He decided to give some more. "One gets talking," he said. "Then it's 'Ave a drink?' Old Methusaleh three stars—and where *are* you? *I* been drunk," he said, in a tone of profound humility, and added, "Lots of times."

"Tt—tt," said Coote.

"Dozens of times," said Kipps, smiling sadly; and added, "Lately."

His imagination became active and seductive. "One thing leads to another. Cards, p'raps. Girls——"

"I know," said Coote, "I know."

Kipps regarded the fire, and flushed slightly. He borrowed a sentence that Chitterlow had recently used.

"One can't tell tales out of school," he said.

"I can imagine it," said Coote.

Kipps looked with a confidential expression into



Coote's face. "It was bad enough when money was limited," he remarked. "But now"—he spoke with raised eyebrows—"I got to steady down."

"You *must*," said Coote, protruding his lips into a sort of whistling concern for a moment.

"I must," said Kipps, nodding his head slowly, with raised eyebrows. He looked at his cigarette end and threw it into the fender. He was beginning to think he was holding his own in this conversation rather well after all.

Kipps was never a good liar. He was the first to break silence. "I don't mean to say I been reely bad or reely bad drunk. A 'eadache, perhaps—three or four times, say. But there it is!"

"I have never tasted alcohol in my life," said Coote with an immense frankness—"never!"

"No?"

"Never. I don't feel *I* should be likely to get drunk at all—it isn't that. And I don't go so far as to say even that in small quantities—at meals—it does one harm. But if I take it, some one else who doesn't know where to stop—you see?"

"That's jest it," said Kipps, with admiring eyes.

"I smoke," admitted Coote. "One doesn't want to be a Pharisee."

It struck Kipps what a tremendously Good chap this Coote was, not only tremendously clever, and educated, and a gentleman, and one knowing Lady Punnet, but Good. He seemed to be giving all his time and thought to doing good things to other people. A great desire to confide certain things to him arose. At first Kipps hesitated whether he should confide an equal desire for Benevolent activities or for further Depravity—either was in his mind. He rather affected the pose of the Good Intentioned Dog. Then suddenly his impulses took quite a different turn—fell, indeed, into what was a far more serious rut in his mind. It seemed to him



Coote might be able to do for him something he very much wanted done.

"Companionship accounts for so much," said Coote.

"That's jest it," said Kipps. "Of course you know, in my new position—— That's just the difficulty."

He plunged boldly at his most secret trouble. He knew that he wanted refinement—culture. It was all very well—but he knew. But how was one to get it? He knew no one, knew no people—— He rested on the broken sentence. The shop chaps were all very well, very good chaps and all that, but not what one wanted. "I feel be'ind," said Kipps. "I feel out of it. And consequently I feel it's no good. And then if temptation comes along——"

"Exactly," said Coote.

Kipps spoke of his respect for Miss Walshingham and her freckled friend. He contrived not to look too self-conscious. "You know, I'd like to talk to people like that, but I can't. A chap's afraid of giving himself away."

"Of course," said Coote, "of course."

"I went to a middle-class school, you know. You mustn't fancy I'm one of these here board-school chaps, but you know it reely wasn't a first-class affair. Leastways he didn't take pains with us. If you didn't want to learn, you needn't—I don't believe it was *much* better than one of these here national schools. We wore mortar-boards, o' course. But what's *that*?"

"I'm a regular fish out of water with this money. When I got it—it's a week ago—reely I thought I'd got everything I wanted. But I dunno what to *do*."

His voice went up into a squeak. "Practically," he said, "it's no good shuttin' my eyes to things—I'm a gentleman."

Coote indicated a serious assent.

"And there's the responsibilities of a gentleman," he remarked.



“That’s jest it,” said Kipps.

“There’s calling on people,” said Kipps. “If you want to go on knowing Someone you knew before, like. People that’s refined.” He laughed nervously. “I’m a regular fish out of water,” he said, with expectant eyes on Coote.

But Coote only nodded for him to go on.

“This actor chap,” he meditated, “is a good sort of chap. But ’e isn’t what *I* call a gentleman. I got to ’old myself in with ’im. ’E’d make me go it wild in no time. ’E’s pretty near the on’y chap I know. Except the shop chaps. They’ve come round to ’ave supper once already and a bit of a sing-song afterwards. I sang. I got a banjo, you know, and I vamp a bit. Vamping—you know. Haven’t got far in the book—’Ow to Vamp—but still I’m getting on. Jolly, of course, in a way, but what does it *lead* to? . . . Besides that, there’s my Aunt and Uncle. *They’re* very good old people—very—jest a bit interfering p’r’aps and thinking one isn’t grown up, but Right enough. Only—— It isn’t what I *want*. I feel I’ve got be’ind with everything. I want to make it up again. I want to get with educated people who know ’ow to do things—in the regular proper way.”

His beautiful modesty awakened nothing but benevolence in the mind of Chester Coote.

“If I had some one like you,” said Kipps, “that I knew regular like——”

From that point their course ran swift and easy.

“If I *could* be of any use to you,” said Coote. . . .

“But you’re so busy, and all that.”

“Not *too* busy. You know, your case is a very interesting one. It was partly that made me speak to you and draw you out. Here you are with all this money and no experience, a spirited young chap——”

“That’s jest it,” said Kipps.

“I thought I’d see what you were made of, and I



must confess I've rarely talked to any one that I've found quite so interesting as you have been——"

"I seem able to say things to you, like, somehow," said Kipps.

"I'm glad. I'm tremendously glad."

"I want a Friend. That's it—straight."

"My dear chap, if I——"

"Yes; but——"

"I want a Friend too."

"Reely?"

"Yes. You know, my dear Kipps—if I may call you that."

"Go on," said Kipps.

"I'm rather a lonely dog myself. *This* to-night—— I've not had any one I've spoken to so freely of my Work for months."

"No?"

"Yes. And, my dear chap, if I can do anything to guide or help you——"

Coote displayed all his teeth in a kindly tremulous smile, and his eyes were shiny. "Shake 'ands," said Kipps, deeply moved; and he and Coote rose and clasped with mutual emotion.

"It's reely too good of you," said Kipps.

"Whatever I can do I will," said Coote.

And so their compact was made. From that moment they were Friends—intimate, confidential, high-thinking, *sotto-voce* friends. All the rest of their talk (and it inclined to be interminable) was an expansion of that. For that night Kipps wallowed in self-abandonment, and Coote behaved as one who had received a great trust. That sinister passion for pedagogy to which the Good-Intentioned are so fatally liable, that passion of infinite presumption that permits one weak human being to arrogate the direction of another weak human being's affairs, had Coote in its grip. He was to be a sort of lay confessor and director of Kipps; he was to help



Kipps in a thousand ways ; he was, in fact, to chaperon Kipps into the higher and better sort of English life. He was to tell him his faults, advise him about the right thing to do——

“ It’s all these things I don’t know,” said Kipps. “ I don’t know, for instance, what’s the right sort of dress to wear—I don’t even know if I’m dressed right now——”

“ All these things ”—Coote stuck out his lips and nodded rapidly to show he understood—“ trust me for that,” he said ; “ trust me.”

As the evening wore on Coote’s manner changed, became more and more the manner of a proprietor. He began to take up his *rôle*, to survey Kipps with a new, with a critical affection. It was evident the thing fell in with his ideas. “ It will be awfully interesting,” he said. “ You know, Kipps, you’re really good stuff.” (Every sentence now he said “ Kipps ” or “ my dear Kipps,” with a curiously authoritative intonation.)

“ I know,” said Kipps, “ only there’s such a lot of things I don’t seem to be up to some’ow. That’s where the trouble comes in.”

They talked and talked, and now Kipps was talking freely. They rambled over all sorts of things. Among others Kipps’s character was dealt with at length. Kipps gave valuable lights on it. “ When I’m reely excited,” he said, “ I don’t seem to care *what* I do. I’m like that.” And again, “ I don’t like to do anything under’and. I *must* speak out. . . .”

He picked a piece of cotton from his knee, the fire grimaced behind his back, and his shadow on the wall and ceiling was disrespectfully convulsed.

### § 3.

Kipps went to bed at last with an impression of important things settled, and he lay awake for quite a



long time. He felt he was lucky. He had known—in fact Buggins and Carshot and Pearce had made it very clear indeed—that his status in life had changed, and that stupendous adaptations had to be achieved; but how they were to be effected had driven that adaptation into the incredible. Here in the simplest, easiest way was the adapter. The thing had become possible. Not, of course, easy, but possible.

There was much to learn, sheer intellectual toil, methods of address, bowing, an enormous complexity of laws. One broken, you are an outcast. How, for example, would one encounter Lady Punnet? It was quite possible some day he might really have to do that. Coote might introduce him. "Lord!" he said aloud to the darkness between grinning and dismay. He figured himself going into the Emporium—to buy a tie, for example, and there in the face of Buggins, Carshot, Pearce, and the rest of them, meeting "my friend, Lady Punnet!" It might not end with Lady Punnet! His imagination plunged and bolted with him, galloped, took wings and soared to romantic, to poetical altitudes. . . .

Suppose some day one met Royalty. By accident, say! He soared to that! After all—twelve hundred a year is a lift, a tremendous lift. How did one address Royalty? "Your Majesty's Goodness" it would be, no doubt—something like that—and on the knees. He became impersonal. Over a thousand a year made him an Esquire, didn't it? He thought that was it. In which case, wouldn't he have to be presented at court? Velvet breeches, like you wear cycling, and a sword! What a curious place a court must be! Kneeling and bowing; and what was it Miss Mergle used to talk about? Of course!—ladies with long trains walking about backward. Everybody walked about backward at court, he knew, when not actually on their knees. Perhaps, though, some people regular stood up to the King!



Talked to him, just as one might talk to Buggins, say. Cheek, of course! Dukes, it might be, did that—by permission? Millionaires? . . .

From such thoughts this free citizen of our Crowned Republic passed insensibly into dreams—turgid dreams of that vast ascent which constitutes the true-born Briton's social scheme, which terminates with retrogressive progression and a bending back.

#### § 4.

The next morning he came down to breakfast looking grave—a man with much before him in the world.

Kipps made a very special thing of his breakfast. Daily once hopeless dreams came true then. It had been customary in the Emporium to supplement Shalford's generous, indeed unlimited, supply of bread and butter-substitute by private purchases, and this had given Kipps very broad artistic conceptions of what the meal might be. Now there would be a cutlet or so or a mutton chop—this splendour Buggins had reported from the great London clubs—haddock, kipper, whiting or fish-balls, eggs, boiled or scrambled, or eggs and bacon, kidney also frequently, and sometimes liver. Amidst a garland of such themes, sausages, black and white puddings, bubble-and-squeak, fried cabbage and scallops, came and went. Always as camp followers came potted meat in all varieties, cold bacon, German sausage, brawn, marmalade, and two sorts of jam; and when he had finished these he would sit among his plates and smoke a cigarette, and look at all these dishes crowded round him with beatific approval. It was his principal meal. He was sitting with his cigarette regarding his apartment with the complacency begotten of a generous plan of feeding successfully realized, when newspapers and post arrived.



There were several things by the post, tradesmen's circulars and cards, and two pathetic begging letters—his luck had got into the papers—and there was a letter from a literary man and a book to enforce his request for 10s. to put down Socialism. The book made it very clear that prompt action on the part of property owners was becoming urgent, if property was to last out the year. Kipps dipped in it, and was seriously perturbed. And there was a letter from old Kipps saying it was difficult to leave the shop and come over and see him again just yet, but that he had been to a sale at Lydd the previous day, and bought a few good old books and things it would be difficult to find the equal of in Folkestone. "They don't know the value of these things out here," wrote old Kipps, "but you may depend upon it they are valuable," and a brief financial statement followed. "There is an engraving some one might come along and offer you a lot of money for one of these days. Depend upon it, these old things are about the best investment you could make. . . ."

Old Kipps had long been addicted to sales, and his nephew's good fortune had converted what had once been but a looking and a craving—he had rarely even bid for anything in the old days, except the garden tools or the kitchen gallipots or things like that, things one gets for sixpence and finds a use for—into a very active pleasure. Sage and penetrating inspection, a certain mystery of bearing, tactical bids and Purchase—Purchase!—the old man had had a good time.

While Kipps was rereading the begging letters, and wishing he had the sound, clear common sense of Buggins to help him a little, the Parcels Post brought along the box from his uncle. It was a large, insecure-looking case, held together by a few still loyal nails, and by what the British War Office would have recognized at once as an Army Corps of string—rags, and