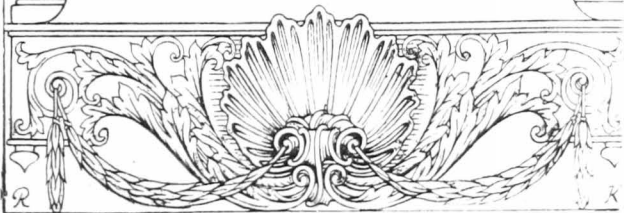




PA'S LODGER AND PA'S DAUGHTER



OUR
MUTUAL
FRIEND

BY
CHARLES DICKENS



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CHARACTERS

YOUNG BLIGHT, a dismal office-boy and clerk.

NICODEMUS BOFFIN (*called "Noddy," also "The Golden Dustman"*), an odd-looking old fellow, formerly confidential servant to the elder Mr. Harmon.

MR. CLEAVER ("Mr. Dolls"), a weak, wretched, drunken man.

MR. FLEDGEBY ("Fascination Fledgeby"), a doltish dandy.

BOB GLIDDERY, potboy at The Six Jolly Fellowship-Porters.

JOHN HARMON, *alias* **JULIUS HANDFORD**, *alias* **JOHN ROKESMITH**, heir to the Harmon estate.

BRADLEY HEADSTONE, a master in a school.

JESSE HEXAM ("Gaffer"), a Thames waterside man.

CHARLEY HEXAM, his son; a selfish and hard-hearted youth.

MR. INSPECTOR, a police-officer.

JOHNNY, an orphan grandson of Betty Higden.

ALFRED LAMMLE, an adventurer and a fortune-hunter.

MORTIMER LIGHTWOOD, a young solicitor and attorney.

The Rev. Frank Milvey, a curate with a large family.

MR. JOHN PODSNAP, a member of "society," and a pompous, self-satisfied man.

JOB POTTERSON, the steward of a ship.

MR. RIAH, a venerable Jew, of noble and generous nature.

ROGER RIDERHOOD ("Rogue"), a desperate waterside character.

GEORGE SAMPSON, a young man, intimate with the Wilfer family.

SLOPPY, a foundling, adopted by Betty Higden.

MR. MELVIN TWEMLOW, one of the poorer members of "society," and a friend of the Veneerings.

MR. HAMILTON VENEERING, a parvenu, tolerated by "society" on account of his wealth.

MR. VENUS, a preserver of animals and birds.

SILAS WEGG, a balladmonger, and keeper of a fruit-stall.

REGINALD WILFER ("The Cherub"), a poor henpecked clerk.

EUGENE WRAYBURN, a briefless barrister, of a gloomy, indolent, unambitious nature.

- MISS SOPHRONIA AKERSHEM, a fast young lady of "society," afterwards married to Mr. Alfred Lamble.
- MRS. HENRIETTA BOFFIN, the cheerful wife of Mr. Nicodemus Boffin.
- FANNY CLEAVER ("Jenny Wren"), a dolls' dressmaker.
- LIZZIE HEXAM, the brave devoted daughter of Jesse Hexam.
- MRS. BETTY HIGDEN, the keeper of a mangle and a "minding-school."
- MRS. MARGARETTA MILVEY, a pretty, bright little woman; wife of the Rev. Frank Milvey.
- MISS EMMA PEECHER, a teacher in a school.
- MRS. PODSNAP, the majestic wife of Mr. John Podsnap.
- MISS GEORGIANA PODSNAP, her daughter; a shy, foolish, affectionate girl.
- MISS ABBEY POTTERSON, landlady of The Six Jolly Fellowship-Porters.
- PLEASANT RIDERHOOD, an unlicensed pawnbroker, and daughter of Roger Riderhood.
- LADY TIPPINS, a member of "society," and a friend of the Veneerings.
- MRS. ANASTATIA VENEERING, wife of Mr. Hamilton Veneering.
- MRS. WILFER, the tall, angular, stately wife of Reginald Wilfer.
- MISS BELLA WILFER, her daughter; a *protégée* of the Boffins.
- MISS LAVINIA WILFER, youngest daughter of Mrs. Wilfer; a sharp, saucy, irrepressible girl.

In my social experiences since Mrs. Betty Higden came upon the scene and left it, I have found Circumlocutional champions disposed to be warm with me on the subject of my view of the Poor Law. My friend Mr. Bounderby could never see any difference between leaving the Coketown "hands" exactly as they were, and requiring them to be fed with turtle soup and venison out of gold spoons. Idiotic propositions of a parallel nature have been freely offered for my acceptance, and I have been called upon to admit that I would give Poor Law relief to anybody, anywhere, anyhow. Putting this nonsense aside, I have observed a suspicious tendency in the champions to divide into two parties; the one contending that there are no deserving Poor who prefer death by slow starvation and bitter weather, to the mercies of some Relieving Officers and some Union Houses; the other admitting that there are such Poor, but denying that they have any cause or reason for what they do. The records in our newspapers, the late exposure by THE LANCET, and the common sense and senses of common people, furnish too abundant evidence against both defences. But, that my view of the Poor Law may not be mistaken or misrepresented, I will state it. I believe there has been in England, since the days of the STUARTS, no law so often infamously administered, no law so often openly violated, no law habitually so ill-supervised. In the majority of the shameful cases of disease and death from destitution that shock the Public and disgrace the country, the illegality is quite equal to the inhumanity—and known language could say no more of their lawlessness.

On Friday the Ninth of June in the present year, Mr. and Mrs. Boffin (in their manuscript dress of receiving Mr. and Mrs. Lammle at breakfast) were on the South-Eastern Railway with me, in a terribly destructive accident. When I had done what I could to help others, I climbed back into my carriage—nearly turned over a viaduct, and caught aslant upon the turn—to extricate the worthy couple. They were much soiled, but otherwise unhurt. The same happy result attended Miss Bella Wilfer on her wedding day, and Mr. Riderhood inspecting Bradley Headstone's red neckerchief as he lay asleep. I remember with devout thankfulness that I can never be much nearer parting company with my readers for ever than I was then, until there shall be written against my life, the two words with which I have this day closed this book:—THE END.

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