Ririro
READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Going into Society

Charles Dickens

At one period of its reverses, the House to Let fell into the occupation of a showman. He was found registered as its occupier, on the parish books of the time when he rented the house, and there was therefore no need of any clew to his name. But he himself was less easy to be found; for he had led a wanderings life, and settled people had lost sight of him, and people who plumed themselves on being respectable were shy of admitting that they had ever known anything of him. At last, among the marsh lands near the river's level, that he about Deptford and the neighboring market-gardens, a grizzled personage in velveteen, with a face so cut up by varieties of weather that he looked as if he had been tattooed, was found smoking a pipe at the door of a wooden house on wheels. The wooden house was laid up in ordinary for the winter near the mouth of a muddy creek; and everything near it, the foggy river, the misty marshes, and the steaming market-gardens, smoked in company with the grizzled man. In the midst of this smoking party, the funnel-chimney of the wooden house on wheels was not remiss, but took its pipe with the rest in a companionable manner.

On being asked if it were lie who had once rented the house to let. Grizzled Velveteen looked surprised, and said yes. Then his name was Magsman? That was it, Toby Magsman—which lawfully christened Robert; but called in the line from a infant, Toby. There was nothing agin Toby Magsman, he believed? If there was suspicion of such, mention it!

There was no suspicion of such, he might rest assured. But some inquiries were making about that house, and would he object to say why he left it;

Not at all; why should he? He left it along of a dwarf.

Along of a dwarf?

Mr. Magsman repeated, deliberately and emphatically, Along of a dwarf.

Might it be compatible with Mr. Magsman's inclination and convenience to enter, as a favor, into a few particulars?

Mr. Magsman entered into the following particulars. It was a long time ago, to begin with;—afore lotteries and a deal more was done away with. Mr. Magsman was looking about for a good pitch, and he see that house, and he says to

himself, "I'll have you if you're to be had. If money'll get you, I'll have you."

The neighbors cut up rough, and made complaints; but Mr. Magsman don't know what they *would* have had. It was a lovely thing. First of all, there was the canvas representin' the picter of the giant, in Spanish trunks and a ruff, who was himself half the height of the house, and was run up with a line and pulley to a pole on the roof, so that his 'ed was coeval with the parapet. Then there was the canvas representin' the picter of the Albina lady, showin' her white 'air to the army and navy in correct uniform. Then there was the canvas representin' the picter of the wild Indian a-scalpin' a member of some foreign nation. Then there was the canvas representin' the picter of the child of a British planter, seized by two boa constrictors—not that *we* never had no child, nor no constrictors neither. Similarly there was the canvas representin' the picter of the wild ass of the prairies—not that *we* never had no wild asses, nor wouldn't have had 'em at a gift. Last there was the canvas representin' the picter of the dwarf, and like him too (considerin'), with George the Fourth in such a state of astonishment at him as his majesty couldn't with his utmost politeness and stoutness express. The front of the house was so covered with canvas, that there wasn't a spark of daylight ever visible on that side. "Magsman's Amusements," fifteen foot long by two foot high, ran over the front door and parlor winders. The passage was a arbor of green baize and garden stuff. A barrel-organ performed there unceasing. And as to respectability—if threepence ain't respectable, what is?

But the dwarf is the principal article at present, and he was worth the money. He was wrote up as Major Tpschoffki, of the Imperial Bulgraderin Brigade. Nobody couldn't pronounce the name, and it never was intended anybody should. The public always turned it, as a regular rule, into Chopski. In the line he was called Chops; partly on that account, and partly because his real name, if he ever had a real name (which was very dubious), was Stakes.

He was an uncommon small man, he really was. Certainly not so small as he was made out to be, but where *is* your dwarf as is? He was a most uncommon small man with a most uncommon large'ed; and what he had inside that'ed, nobody never knowed but himself; even supposin' himself to have ever took stock of it, which it would have been a stiff job for even him to do.

The kindest little man as never growed! Spirited, but not proud. When he travelled with the spotted baby, though he knowed himself to be a nat'ral dwarf, and knowed the baby's spots to be put upon him artificial, he nursed the baby like a mother. You never heerd him give a ill-name to a giant. He *did* allow himself to break out into strong language respecting the fat lady from Norfolk; but that was an affair of the 'art; and when a man's 'art has been trifled with by a lady, and the preference give to a Indian, he ain't master of his actions.

He was always in love, of course; every human nat'ral phenomenon is. And he

was always in love with a large woman; *I* never knowed the dwarf as could be got to love a small one. Which helps to keep 'em the curiosities they are.

One singular idea he had in that'ed of his, which must have meant something, or it wouldn't have been there. It was always his opinion that he was entitled to property. He never would but his name to anything. He had been taught to write, by the young man without arms, who got his living with his toes (quite a writing-master he was, and taught scores in the line), but Chops would have starved to death afore he'd have gained a bit of bread by putting his hand to a paper. This is the more curious to bear in mind, because *HE* had no property, nor hope of property, except his house and a sarser. When I say his house, I mean the box, painted and got up outside like a regular six-roomer, that he used to creep into, with a diamond ring (or quite as good to look at) on his forefinger, and ring a little bell out of what the public believed to be the drawing-room winder. And when I say sarser, I mean a chaney sarser in which he made a collection for himself at the end of every entertainment. His cue for that, he took from me: "Ladies and gentlemen, the little man will now walk three times round the cairawan, and retire behind the curtain." When he said anything important, in private life, he mostly wound it up with this form of words, and they was generally the last thing he said to me at night afore he went to bed.

He had what I consider a fine mind—a poetic mind. His ideas respectin' his property never come upon him so strong as when he sat upon a barrel-organ and had the handle turned. After the wibiation had run through him a little time, he would screech out: "Toby, I feel my property coming—grind away! I'm counting my guineas by thousands, Toby—grind away! Toby, I shall be a man of fortun! I feel the mint a jingling in me, Toby, and I'm swelling out into the Bank of England!" Such is the influence of music on a poetic mind. Not that he was partial to any other music but a barrel-organ; on the contrary, hated it.

He had a kind of a everlasting grudge agin the public; which is a thing you may notice in many phenomenons that get their living out of it. What riled him most in the nater of his occupation was that it kep' him out of society. He was continiually sayin': " Toby, my ambition is to go into society. The curse of my position toward the public is that it keeps me hout of society. This don't signify to a low beast of a Indian; he ain't formed for society. This don't signify to a spotted baby; *he* ain't formed for society—I am."

Nobody never could make out what Chops done with his money. He had a good salary, down on the drum every Saturday as the day come round, besides having the run of his teeth—and he was a woodpecker to eat—but all dwarfs are. The sarser was a little income, bringing him in so many half-pence that he'd carry 'em, for a week together, tied up in a pocket-handkerchief. And yet he never had money. And it couldn't be the fat lady from Norfolk, as was once supposed;

because it stands to reason that when you have a animosity toward a Indian which makes you grind your teeth at him to his face, and which can hardly hold you from goosing him audible when he's going through his war-dance—it stands to reason you wouldn't under them circumstances deprive yourself to support that Indian in the lap of luxury.

Most unexpected, the mystery come out one day at Egham Races. The public was shy of bein' pulled in, and Chops was ringin' his little bell out of his drawing-room winder, and was snarlin' to me over his shoulder as he kneeled down with his legs out at the back door—for he couldn't be shoved into his house without kneeling down, and the premises wouldn't accommodate his legs—was snarlin, "Here's a precious public for you; why the devil don't they tumble up?" when a man in the crowd holds up a carrier-pigeon, and cries out: "If there is any person here as has got a ticket, the lottery's just drawed, and the number as has come up for the great prize is three, seven, forty-two! Three, seven, forty-two!" I was givin' the man to the furies myself, for calling off the public's attention—for the public will turn away, at any time, to look at anything in preference to the thing showed 'em: and if you doubt it, get 'em together for any indiwidual purpose on the face of the earth, and send only two people in late, and see if the whole company ain't far more interested in takin' particular notice of them two than of you—I say, I wasn't best pleased with the man for callin' out, and wasn't blessin' him in my own mind, when I see Chops's liitle bell fly out of winder at a old lady, and he gets up and kicks his box over, exposin' the whole secret, and he catches hold of the calves of my legs and he says to me, "Carry me into the wan, Toby, and throw a pail of water over me or I'm a dead man, for I've come into my property!"

Twelve thousand odd hundred jwund, was Chops's winnins. He had bought a half-ticket for the twenty-five thousand prize, and it had come up. The first use he made of his property was to offer to fight the wild Indian for five hundred pound a side, him with a poisoned darnin'-needle and the Indian with a club; but the Indian bein' in want of backers to that amount, it went no further.

After he had been mad for a week—in a state of mind, in short, in which, if I had let him sit on the organ for only two minutes, I believe he would have burst—but we kep' the organ from him—Mr. Chops come round, and behaved liberal and beautiful to all. He then sent for a young man he knowed, as had a very genteel appearance and was a Bonnet at a gaming-booth (most respectable brought up, father having been imminent in the livery-stable line but unfortunate in a commercial crisis through paintin' a old gray, ginger-bay, and sellin' him with a pedigree), and Mr. Chops said to this Bonnet, who said his name was Normandy, which it wasn't:—

"Normandy, I'm a going into society. Will you go with me?"

Says Normandy: "Do I understand you, Mr. Chops, to hintimate that the 'ole of the expenses of that move will be borne by yourself?"

"Correct," says Mr. Chops. "And you shall have a princely allowance too."

The Bonnet lifted Mr. Chops upon a chair to shake hands with him, and replied in poetry, with his eyes seemingly full of tears:—

"My boat is on the shore.
And my bark is on the sea,
And I do not ask for more,
But I'll go;—along with thee."

They went into society, in a chay and four grays with silk jackets. They took lodgings in Pall Mall, London, and they blazed away.

In consequence of a note that was brought to Bartlemy Fair in the aiUumn of next year by a servant, most wonderful got up in milk-white cords and tops, I cleaned myself and went to Tall Mall, one evenin' appinted. The gentlemen was at their wine arter dinner, and Mr. Chops's eyes was more fixed in that'ed of his than I thought good for him. There was three of 'em (in company, I mean), and I knowed the third well. When last met, he had on a white Roman shirt, and a bishop's-mitre covered with leopard-skin, and played the clarionet all wrong, in a band at a wild beast show.

This gent took on not to know me, and Mr. Chops said: "Gentlemen, this is an old friend of former days;" and Normandy looked at me through a eyeglass, and said, " Magsman, glad to see you!"—which I'll take my oath he wasn't. Mr. Chops, to git him convenient to the table, had his chair on a throne (much of the form of George the Fourth's in the canvas), but he hardly appeared to me to be king there in any other pint of view, for his two gentlemen ordered about like emperors. They was all dressed like May-day—gorgeous!—and as to wine, they swam in all sorts.

I made the round of the bottles, first separate (to say I had done it), and then mixed 'em all together (to say I had done it), and then tried two of 'em as half-and half, and then t'other two. Altogether, I passed a pleasin' even'n', but with a tendency to feel muddled, until I considered it good manners to get up and say: "Mr. Chops, the best of friends must part, I thank you for the wariety of foreign drains you have stood so 'ansome, I looks toward you in red wine, and I takes my leave." Mr. Chops replied: "If you'll just hitch me out of this over your right arm, Magsman, and carry me downstairs, I'll see you out." I said I couldn't think of such a thing, but he would have it, so I lifted him off his throne. lie smelt strong of maideary, and I couldn't help thinking as I carried him down that it was like carrying a large little full of wine, with a raythеr ugly stopper, a good deal out of proportion.

When I sat him on the door mat in the hall, he kep' me close to him by holding on to my coat-collar, and he whispers,—

"I ain't 'appy, Magsman."

"What's on your mind, Mr. Chops?"

"They don't use me well. They ain't grateful to me.

They puts me on the mantle-piece when I won't have in more champagne-wine, and they locks me in the sideboard when I won't give up my property."

"Get rid of 'em, Mr. Chops."

"I can't. We're in society together, and what would society say?"

"Come out of society," says I.

"I can't. You don't know what you're talking about. When you have once gone into society, you mustn't come out of it."

"Then if you'll excuse the freedom, Mr. Chops," were my remark, shaking my head grave, "I think it's a pity you ever went in."

Mr. Chops shook that deep 'ed of his to a surprisin' extent, and slapped it half a dozen times with his hand, and with more wice than I thought were in him. Then he says: "You're a good feller, but you don't understand. Good-night, go along, Magsman, the little man will now walk three times round the cairawan, and retire behind the curtain." The last I see of him on that occasion was his tryin', on the extremest verge of insensibility, to climb up the stairs, one by one, with his hands and knees. They'd have been much too steep for him, if he had been sober; but he wouldn't be helped.

It warn't long after that, that I read in the newspaper of Mr. Chops's being presented at court. It was printed:

"It will be recollected"—and I've noticed in my life, that it is sure to be printed that it *will* be recollected whenever it won't—"that Mr. Chops is the individual of small stature whose brilliant success in the last state lottery attracted so much attention." Well, I says to myself, such is life! He has been and done it in earnest at last! He has astonished George the Fourth!

(On account of which, I had that canvas new-painted, him with a bag of money in his hand, a presentin' it to George the Fourth, and a lady in ostrich feathers falling in love with him in a bag-wig, sword, and buckles correct.)

I took the house as is the subject of present inquiries—though not the honor of bein' acquainted—and I run Magsman's Amusements in it thirteen months—sometimes one thing, sometimes another, sometimes nothin'

particular, but always all the canvases outside. One night, when we had played the last company out, which was a shy company through its raining heavens hard, I was takin' a pipe in the one pair back along with the young man with the toes, which I had taken on for a month (though he never drawed—except on paper), and I heard a kickin' at the street door. "Halloa!" I says to the young man, " what's up!" he rubs his eyebrows with his toes, and he says, "I can't imagine, Mr. Magsman,"—which he never could imagine nothin', and was monotonous company.

The noise not leavin' off, I laid down my pipe, and I took up a candle, and I went down and opened the door. I looked out into the street; but nothin' could I see, and nothin' was I aware of, until I turned round quick, because some creetur run between my legs into the passage. There was Mr. Chops!

"Magsman," he says, " take me on the hold terms, and you've got me; if it's done, say done!"



I was all of a maze, but I said, "Done, sir."

"Done to your done, and double done I" says he.

"Have you got a bit of supper in the house?"

Bearin' in mind them sparklin' warieties of foreign drains as we'd guzzled away at in Pall Mall, I was ashamed to offer him cold sassages and gin-and-water; but he took 'em both and took 'em free; havin' a chair for his table, and sittin' down at it on a stool, like hold times. I all of a maze all the while.

It was arter he had made a clean sweep of the sassages (beef, and to the best of my calculations two pounds and a quarter), that the wisdom as was in that liitle man began to come out of him like perspiration.

"Magsman," he Gays, "look upon me I You see afore you one as has both gone in society and come out."

"Oh, you *are* out of it, Mr. Chops? How did you get out, sir?"

"Sold out!" says he. You never saw the like of the wisdom as his 'ed expressed, when he made use of them two words.

"My friend Magsman, I'll impart a discovery to you I've made. It's wallable; it's cost twelve thousand five hundred pound; it may do you good in life.—The secret of this matter is, that it ain't so much that a person goes into society, as that society goes into a person."

Not exactly keeping; up with his meain'n' I shook my head, put on a deep look, and said, "You're right there, Mr. Chops."

"Magsman," he says, twitchin' mo by the leg, "society has gone into me, to the tune of every penny of my property."

I felt that I went pale, and, though nat'rally a bold speaker, I couldn't hardly say, "Where's Normandy?"

"Bolted. With the plate," says Mr. Chops.

"And t'other one?"—meaning him as formerly wore the bishop's mitre.

"Bolted with the jewels," says Mr. Chops.

I sat down and looked at him, and he stood up and looked at me. "Magsman," he says, and he seemed to myself to get wiser as he got hoarser. " Society, taken in the lump, is all dwarfs. At the court of Saint James's they was all a-doin' my hold bisness—all a-goin' three times round the cairawan in the hold court-suits and properties. Elsewheres, they was most of 'em ringing their little bells out of make-believers. Everywheres the sarser was a-goin' round. Magsman, the sarser is the uniwersal institution!"

I perceived, you understand, that he was soured by his misfortunes, and I felt for Mr. Chops.

"As to fat ladies," says he, giving his 'ed a tremendious one agin the wall, "there's lots of *them* in society, and worse than the original. *Hers* was a outrage upon taste—simply a outrage upon taste—awakenin' contempt—carryin' its own punishment in the form of a Indian!" Here he giv' himself another tremendious one. "But theirs, Magsman, theirs is mercenary outrages. Lay in Cashmeer shawls, buy bracelets, strew 'em and a lot of 'andsome fans and things about your rooms, let it be known that you give away like water to all as come to admire, and the fat ladies that don't exhibit for so much down upon the drum will come from all pints of the compass to flock about you, whatever you are. They'll drill holes in your 'art, Magsman, like a cullender. And when you've no more left to give, they'll laugh at you to your face, and leave you to have your bones picked dry by wulturs, like the dead wild ass of the prairies that you deserve to be! "Here he giv' himself the most tremendious one of all, and dropped.

I thought he was gone. His 'ed was so heavy, and he knocked it so hard, and he fell so stony, and the sassagerial disturbance in him must have been so immense, that I thought he was gone. But he soon come round with care, and he sat up on the floor, and he said to me, with wisdom comin' out of his eyes, if ever it come:—

"Magsman! The most material difference between the two states of existence

through which your unhappy friend has passed,"—he reached out his poor little hand, and his tears dropped down on the mustachio which it was credit to him to have done his best to grow, but it is not in mortals to command success—"the difference is this. When I was out of society, I was paid light for being seen. When I went into society, I paid heavy for being seen. I prefer the former, even if I wasn't forced upon it. Give me out through the trumpet, in the hold way to-morrow."

After that, he slid into the line again as easy as if he had been iled all over. But the organ was kep' from him, and no allusions was ever made, when a company was in, to his property. He got wiser every day; his views of society and the public was luminous, bewilderiir, awful: and his 'ed got bigger and bigger as his wisdom expanded it.

He took well, and pulled 'em in most excellent for nine weeks. At the expiration of that period, when his 'ed was a sight, he expressed one evenin', the last company havin' been turned out, and the door shut, a wish to have a little music.

"Mr. Chops," I said (I never dropped the "Mr." with him; the world might do it, but not me)—"Mr. Chops, are you sure as you are in a state of mind and body to sit upon the organ?"

His answer was this: "Toby, when next met with on the tramp, I forgive her and the Indian. And I am."

It was with fear and trembling that I began to turn the handle ; but he sat like a lamb. It will be my belief to my dying day, that I see his 'ed expand as he sat; you may therefore judge how great his thoughts was. He sat out all the changes, and then he come off.

"Toby," he says with a quiet smile, "the little man will now walk three times round the cairawan, and retire behind the curtain."

When we called him in the morning, we found him gone into a much better society than mine or Pall Mali's. I giv' Mr. Chops as comfortable a funeral as lay in my power, followed myself as chief, and had the George the Fourth canvas carried first, in the form of a banner. But the house was so dismal afterward that I giv' it up, and took to the wan again.

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