

" P I C K W I C K "

A SERIES OF TWELVE PICTURES DIVIDED INTO THREE ACTS -
THE LIBRETTO ADAPTED FROM CHARLES DICKENS' "THE PICKWICK
PAPERS" BY ALBERT COATES.

ACT ONE:

SCENE ONE: A field day in Rochester. The annual military
maneuvers are in progress. It is a sunshiny day -- there is a
great crowd-- soldiers, the public with their basket lunches,
much gaiety.

We first meet Mr. Pickwick and his fellow members of the Pick-
wick Club when a gust of wind sends him scurrying after his hat.
Mr. Pickwick is the founder of the Pickwick Club, a fat little
man with a quick temper but a kind heart and a sense of justice
which people frequently abuse. We meet Mr. Winkle, Tupman and
Snodgrass (members of the Pickwick Club). We meet Mr. Wardle,
owner of Manor Farm, and his relatives-- his sister Rachel (The
spinster aunt,) his daughters Emily and Isabella and Joe, the
fat boy (manservant," who does nothing but sleep; also Arabella,
(afterwards Mrs. Winkle.) After the picnic lunch and military
maneuvers, Mr. Wardle invites all his newly made friends to his
Manor Farm for a long visit.

So we shift to Manor Farm Dingley Dell. In the living room of the
Manor Farm we meet an Old Lady, Wardle's mother, who sits surrounded
by daughters and granddaughters. There are also a number of male
guests present. Emily is playing an old fashioned piano and singing

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a duet with Arabella. It is a rather sad song of how the shepherd tried to woo the lass, and failed. Perhaps Rachel feels it reflects a lack in her own life. Wardle is waiting for his friends from the Pickwick club-- Pickwick, Tupman, Snodgrass and Winkle. They arrive-- the party plays cards and blind man's buff and goes rook shooting. In the midst of the party Mr. Tupman is shot in the arm by Winkle by mistake. Pickwick is engaged over the accident. As the others depart either to watch or take part in a cricket match, Rachel is left to look after Mr. Tupman.

A love scene and near proposal is interrupted by the entrance of Joe, the fat boy, who isn't asleep for once. They are most embarrassed.

In an interval scene we watch the guests enjoying the cricket match, as it was played then in white top hats and gloves. Supper follows. And now we meet Jingle, a strolling actor and shifty guy who lives by his wits.

At midnight when they get home all the gentlemen are tipsy and singing loudly, save for Mr. Jingle. The ladies are most shocked and think the men should be put to bed. The men refuse. They insist they are not drunk, it must be the salmon they ate. The men are finally put to bed by the yokels. All except Jingle who starts an outrageous flirtation with Rachel (Wardle's spinster sister). Tupman becomes furiously jealous. The following day Joe tells the tells the Old Lady he came across Tupman hugging and kissing not one of the servants, not one of her grandchildren-- but Aunt Rachel! The Old Lady is horrified. Without her permission Jingle has overheard this and makes a plan to get Rachel's money for himself. He

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proceeds to make violent love to her. But he messes things up for the others. First he tells Rachel that Tupman is only after her money and is secretly wooing Emily. He points them out at supper whispering to each other. This he has accomplished by telling Tupman that Mr. Wardle must be disarmed of thinking anything wrong about his friendship with Rachel, at the same time telling Rachel Tupman only wants her money, whereupon Rachel accepts Jingle out of jealousy when he suddenly proposes to elope with her to London to get married.

Then, round the fire the same evening as they all sit listening to the cleric singing a song of the ivy, a yokel comes in with a horrifying announcement. Jingle and Rachel have eloped in a coach! Tupman is the most infuriated. He's been swindled! He's actually loaned money to Jingle and he elopes with his Rachel!

After an exciting few moments Pickwick and Wardle climb into a gig to race after the elopers. The Old Lady faints away in the excitement.

✓ In the mad chase which follows, to orchestral accompaniment--- called the "Pickwick Scherzo" Pickwick's postchaise, due to bad jolty roads, loses a wheel and the coach is overturned. This "Scherzo" depicts the elopement of Aunt Rachel, the spinster aunt, with the sharp-witted Jingle. They are in a coach driven by six horses, and there are three postillions who keep shouting encouragement to the horses. This is one of the principal themes of the scherzo ("Ohye, hee.") The scherzo opens with wheels going round, rough roads, and the discomfort of a speeding coach, the jingle of the harness, the straining of horses, and the shouts of

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the postillions. The middle section - the slow part of the scherzo-- depicts Aunt Rachel and Jingle inside the coach. He is lovingly reassuring the rather highly-strung but eager lady; but under his breath he is saying, "Run, old girl!"

The third part of the scherzo begins with the pursuit of Pickwick and Wardle in another coach. They are doing their utmost to overtake the eloping pair; and a Fugate begins in the orchestra -- the two themes representing the two coaches. As the Pickwick coach gradually gains on the other, the music represents a fresh effort on the part of Jingle's coach to elude the pursuers; and Aunt Rachel already in her mind sees herself as a bride, and imagines the wedding ceremony and the pealing of the church bells. Her dream is broken by the sound of the other coach, the wild neighing of horses driven almost beyond control, and the yells of the postillions. It becomes a neck-and-neck race, when suddenly Pickwick's coach loses a wheel, and with a tremendous smashing-up of glass and woodwork its occupants are precipitated into the ditch amid the wreckage of the coach. Here the scherzo ends with a short reiteration of Aunt Rachel's motif (played piano on the violins) and at the last moment the shouts of the frustrated pursuers amid the debris of Pickwick's coach.

This leaves Rachel and Jingle free to reach the White Hart Inn in London safely. Early next morning Jingle goes for a wedding license. Rachel begs that they be married quickly as she fears the others will catch up with her. He tells her they can't possibly be married until the following day.

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Perker, Pickwick's lawyer, now comes into the picture. Pickwick and Wardle are endeavoring to trace Rachel. Perker bribes/boots of the White Hart Inn who happens to be the inimitable Sam Weller for information and the two are eventually discovered. Rachel gets hysterical, and refuses to leave. Pickwick and Perker decide the only way to get her out of the mess is to buy Jingle off, which they proceed to do. Rachel falls into hysterical weeping as the curtain falls, and Jingle throws the piceense in Pickwick's face, calling to him that "it will do for Tuppy!" Tableau.

ACT TWO

We now shift to Pickwick's apartment at Mrs. Bardell's. Mrs. Bardell is a widow with a son, and she is prone to be flirtatious. She is dusting the room---sings to herself, casts loving glances at Pickwick's picture. The man himself enters. She is obviously gone on him. He asks her questions which she, as a widow, should know-- does she believe two can live as cheaply as one-- wouldn't she like a father for her son, and a companion for herself? She misunderstands. When he talks about the qualities of the person he has in mind, she thinks he means herself. Actually he is trying to prepare her for the fact that she is about to have company. He is going to hire a houseman. She makes a pass at him and faints in his arms as the Pickwickians enter. They catch the scene and are pretty much taken aback. Which is not to suggest that Pickwick himself isn't pretty bewildered. He merely meant to suggest having a manservant and immediately this silly woman goes into a paroxysm.

We next move to the Square in Eatanswill, where an election is

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being held. This gives us a graphic picture of the slipshod and somewhat violent manner in which elections were conducted at that time. Slumsky is the Pickwickians' candidate. They urge him to kiss one of the children who are to shake hands with him in order to impress the crowd. He would pass the buck onto his promoter, but finally agrees, and ends up by kissing them all. The crowd goes hilarious with appreciation. During the balloting by voice that goes on, the candidates get into a fist fight----- the feeling grows, and there is almost a general riot, which is eventually smoothed out.

Sam Weller brings Pickwick a letter from the attorneys, Dodson and Fogg which tells him that Mrs. Bardwell is suing him for breach of promise. He is furious, decides it is a conspiracy to extract money from him, and determines to set his lawyer, Perker, on the case. However, he makes the mistake of deciding first to go to London and face the attorneys and clear himself.

He finds that even his close friends, who caught him supporting Mrs. Bardwell during her fainting scene, do not quite believe he is innocent, and kid him.

In London he is told by the attorneys that he faces a suit calling for 1500 pounds. He is so infuriated, that he calls them both rascals and cheats, which doesn't help his situation at the trial any. Sam Weller forcibly removes Pickwick from the Dodson and Fogg office, saying if he wants to blow anybody up he had better start on him, rather than risk it with very wily lawyers.

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Perker defends him, but in vain, for he is declared guilty by the jury. The crowd is all for Mrs. Bardwell-- so sweet, so innocent-- and curse Pickwick as a brute. Pickwick again loses his temper, says he will not pay a farthing, even if it means spending the rest of his days in debtors' prison. And that's just where they send him.

ACT THREE

Coates has told us that it was through Dickens' description of the appalling conditions in Debtors' Prisons that they were all eventually abolished.

Now we see the inside of the prison, watch the prisoners, broken up into groups-- the poverty stricken, and those who can pay a little. The upper brackets play cards, drink, and sing. The beggars rattle their alms boxes, say: "Remember the poor beggars, pray." Pickwick is horrified by the dungeons in which some of the beggars have to live. Sam Weller explains to him that some of the prisoners are happy-- they drink, smoke and roar-- it's a question of poor spirits as well as poverty that can send you to the dungeons. Pickwick is kidded by the drunks in the seven-bed cell and again loses his temper. The man apologizes, and the two of them who are the most scoundrelly, Mivens and Smangle, introduce themselves. He is told that money will buy you anything you want in prison, just as it will outside of it. So, for a pound a week, Pickwick gets himself a private room. Sam Weller also gets himself made prisoner in order to remain near his Governor.

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In his investigation of the gruesome sights among the poverty stricken in the prison, Pickwick comes across, of all people, the actor, Jingle. Pickwick talks to him sympathetically and finds he has pawned everything he owned. Pickwick gives some money to Job, Jingle's man, so that he can afford better conditions. He also sends money and food to the poor secretly.

At the end of a few month's imprisonment, there is a commotion at the great gates and Mrs. Bardell is ushered in by order of the attorneys Dodson and Fogg, because she can't pay even the percentage for having won the breach of promise suit. Mr. Pickwick and Mrs. Bardell meet. She falls in another faint. Weller, on the other hand, is overjoyed, and sees a chance of getting his "Governor" out of prison.

Perker, the lawyer, comes to persuade Pickwick to pay the small account for Mrs. Bardell. In the midst of their conference they are interrupted by Pickwickians. Young Winkle, who has just married Arrabella begs Pickwick to free himself from the prison in order to help them to get the consent of Winkle, Sr. Everybody appears in this scene and all add their most persuasive terms and he at last agrees.

The last scene takes place in his beautiful country home where there is a triple wedding. Everybody of any consequence in the entire book is present-- the last moment of the opera we see Pickwick alone leaning on the ever true-hearted Sam Weller and he speaks to the public simple, touching sentences with a God bless you all at the end.