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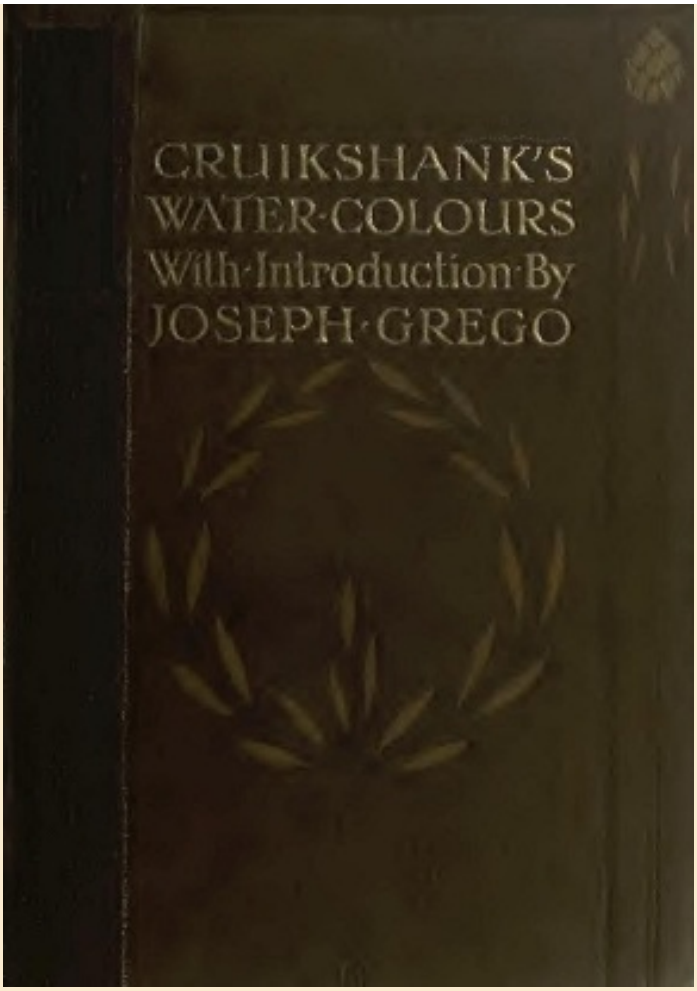
CRUIKSHANK'S WATER COLOURS

By George Cruikshank

With Introduction By Joseph Grego

1903



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WATER COLOURS
WITH INTRODUCTION BY
JOSEPH GREGO · PUBLISHED
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INTRODUCTION

It is fair to characterise the three *suites* of original water-colour drawings, as executed by our artist, as *unique* examples of the great George Cruikshank's special individual proficiency as an exponent of this branch of technical dexterity. Moreover, it may be regarded as a fortunate circumstance that the three works, here reproduced with amazing fidelity in *facsimile*, represent happily the very *chefs d'oeuvre* of his wonderful productions; in their respective categories, preserving the best examples of his remarkable genius as an imaginative creator of vivid pictures, alike stirring and animated, and representing at one glance his vast dramatic powers, his mastery of the humorous side of life, and the intensity he was consistently able to infuse into terrible and tragic scenes.

It is noteworthy that the inimitable artist George Cruikshank but rarely produced finished water-colour drawings; the bulk of his prolific and familiarly recognised designs for book illustrations were mostly dainty pencil sketches, occasionally finished in pen and ink. It is a problem difficult to solve satisfactorily whether, beyond the three memorable instances of the works here reproduced in *facsimile*, there are in existence any other *complete suites* of original illustrations by George Cruikshank—that is to say, fully executed by his master hand as *finished water-colour drawings*. Tinted sketches may be found in the prized possessions of Cruikshank collectors, and spirited studies for many of his favourite and most successful subjects have been cleverly touched in with watercolours; for instance, such as certain of his original drawings as designed for the illustrations of Harrison Ainsworth's *Tower of London*, and the clever historical and picturesque series of *Windsor Castle* designs; these are, however, to be regarded as exceptional cases, for the bulk of these most successful and popular designs were carefully executed in pencil, or occasionally outlined with the pen, and highly finished with washes of warm sepia. It is worthy of recollection that Cruikshank was a most dexterous artist in this monochrome branch, his earlier artistic experiences having been almost exclusively in the walk of aqua-tinted etchings; all his early book illustrations, his caricatures, and satirical plates—social or political—were uniformly etched by his hand in the most spirited fashion, after his ready sketches and rough studies, and when the outline etching was bitten in, Cruikshank elaborately worked out his colour suggestions, for light and shade, with a brush over the first-etched outline, in tones of sepia or Indian ink, for the guidance of the professional 'aquatinters'—the school of artists to whose trained skill was entrusted the task of completing these plates to produce the effect of highly finished washed drawings in monochrome. By this, his youthful practice, George Cruikshank had acquired remarkable dexterity, his original pen-and-ink designs, and the outline etchings, after his earlier book illustrations, being worked up in monochrome to the dainty finish of delicate miniatures, in which art both his father Isaac and his brother Isaac Robert were first-class proficients, as he himself has recorded with pride in describing the special gifts and qualifications which distinguished the Cruikshank family.

The present series includes the inimitable *suite* of designs, pictorially unfolding the progress and subsequent dramatic experiences of a parish boy, as graphically related by the great literary genius of CHARLES DICKENS in the realistic romance, universally appreciated as—'THE ADVENTURES OF OLIVER TWIST,' with the truly interesting series of characteristic pictures, so vividly delineating 'Life in London' in the Hogarthian time, at the date of the abortive Jacobite rising in 1745. A realistic panoramic *suite*, introducing marvellously faithful pictures of antique localities of the old City of Westminster, with life-like studies, reproducing the contemporary aspects of the past, both topographically and socially, of the time-renowned pleasure resorts of the era, when these amusements were at the height of their vogue, and the entertainments which then attracted the crowd. The Mall, St. James's Park, with the world of fashion which formed its attraction; 'The Folly,' a floating place of entertainment, opposite Somerset House; Marylebone Gardens and Vauxhall Gardens at their palmiest date; the gayest souvenirs of Ranelagh Gardens, with crowds of fashionable frequenters, and rounds of enjoyable amusements. Spirited materials, crowded with literary suggestions, which the artist, from his vast experiences of the past, rejoiced to thus graphically and realistically furnish to the author to further the creation of the sympathetic and brilliant romance, subsequently written, embodying the diversified phases of life in antique London, as suggested by George Cruikshank's *suite* of graphic and life-like pictures of a brilliant past, which lent their special attractions and interest to the most successful and popular novel by HARRISON AINSWORTH, 'THE MISER'S DAUGHTER,' illustrated with Twenty of George Cruikshank's happiest pictures.

To the two foregoing and most noteworthy productions are added the third *suite* of original water-colour drawings, the most tragically terrible of all George Cruikshank's graphic productions, illustrating in the unmistakably realistic manner characteristic of the artist's genius for delineating terrifying episodes, exhibiting with all tragic intensity and the vigorous force of his imagination the lurid horrors of revolution, as disclosed in the horrifying revelations of the sanguinary atrocities which ensanguined with floods of gore the chronicles of 'THE IRISH REBELLION OF 1798,' as disclosed in the actually terrific and terrifying narrative—MAXWELL'S 'HISTORY.'

George Cruikshank was too candidly honest an artist to conceal his appreciative sense of the popular success which these xiii generally familiar works had happily secured. The artist himself scorned to disguise his pride in 'these creatures of his brain,' as he esteemed them, with paternal admiration! On the strength of these famous dramatic *suites*, with the designs so well known as constituting the pictorial skeleton or framework of *Oliver Twist*, the designer extended his claim for fuller recognition, to the point of feeling it a deep personal grievance that the respective 'gifted authors' had wilfully adopted all his best ideas, without the formality of acknowledging their literary obligations and indebtedness to the artist himself. To do him full justice, it must be acknowledged that from the date of their first appearance in monthly parts, Cruikshank

made these claims persistently amongst friends and in the presence of mutual acquaintances.

The story of the injury, fanciful or real, was lengthy and vexatious, and for the most part rather filled the minds of the artist's best-wishers with dismay; but as there had never been offered during Dickens's lifetime any sort of disproof that the 'Parish Boy's Progress,' as a pictorial *suite*, was one of George Cruikshank's numerous fruitful original suggestions, and *The Miser's Daughter* scheme was obviously completely his own as regards the main idea of representing fashionable 'Life in London' in the days of Hogarth, just as 'Life in London' of his jaunty youth had been by his hand portrayed in the 'Corinthian epoch' of the sportive 'Tom and Jerry' doings under the Regency era, the question in some degree resolved itself into the distinctions between inspiration and clever hack-work, the art of making the best possible use of suggested materials, wherein the faculty of imagination makes the workman. The artist demonstrated that his genius invented both series graphically, that the drawings, in the first instance designed to simply tell the story on his own lines, later suggested the development of their ideas to his literary collaborateurs, at least as concerns the projection of *Oliver Twist* and *The Miser's Daughter* alike, both series strongly characteristic of Cruikshank's own peculiar genius; and confessedly the evidences of the drawings completely justify his not unreasonable contention.

These original designs, executed as water-colour drawings, are all in existence, and are here reproduced in *facsimile*.

Dickens never denied that the artist had in the first instance designed the *suite* of illustrations portraying a parish boy's progress, in advance of Boz's undertaking to write *Oliver Twist*. Nor could Ainsworth for an instant assume to claim the first idea of the scheme of eighteenth century fashionable 'Life in London,' as it might have unfolded itself panoramically to the observation of William Hogarth himself—the effective *scenario* of *The Miser's Daughter*, in a word.

Moreover, subsequent *suites*—of correspondingly graphic and melodramatic character—also similarly dramatised on their publication, confirm the *bona fides* of the artist's somewhat startling theory, which proved so disconcerting to the minds of George Cruikshank's actual literary collaborateurs.

In his monograph—'A Critico-Biographical Essay upon George Cruikshank'—Professor William Bates, B.A., has elucidated the controversial aspects of these trying questions from his personal impressions: 'In viewing the representation of *The Bottle*, as produced on the stage, an adaptation from Cruikshank's famous series, one was much more struck with the artist's talent for seizing upon the most dramatic situations of the story for the exercise of the pencil.'

Moncrieff, so the tale goes (*Every Night Booky or Life after Dark*, 1827), when he dramatised for the Adelphi 'Tom and Jerry' (*Life in London*), 'wrote his piece from Cruikshank's plates,' and 'boiled his kettle with Pierce Egan's letterpress.'

Half a century later, Andrew Halliday, adapting *The Miser's Daughter* for the same theatre, made up his most effective scenes from the designs of the artist.

It was on witnessing the performance of this latter, and finding his part in its production was totally ignored—always a sensitive subject with the combative veteran—that George Cruikshank was incited to make that public vindication of his claim to a share in the authorship of this and other works—notably *Oliver Twist*—illustrated by his hand, and involving the candour and sense of justice of Ainsworth, Dickens, and himself.

The aggrieved humorist, who had a fairly founded opinion of his own gifts and reputation, and whose imaginative faculties were always abnormally fervid, was still full of fight. Dickens had been at rest for two years, but his biographer, John Forster, was in the flesh; as was W. Harrison Ainsworth, Cruikshank's colleague and partner of the 'thirties' and 'forties,' so that it is not surprising to find the artist in 1872—then an octogenarian veteran—entering fiercely upon a seemingly Quixotic campaign against the before-time literary colleagues of his prime era of artistic production, the period when his picturesquely dramatic fancy evolved *The Parish Boys Progress, The Miser's Daughter*, and similarly popularly endorsed emanations of his hand and brain.

It was ever the 'great George's' grievance that in his later years the public assumed him to be his own descendant of the first or even second generation. It was avowedly as a protest against this fairly natural assumption that G. Cruikshank had carried out his famous and successful '*Exeter Hall Exhibition*' in 1863. Under the circumstances related, finding his well-recognised name and strongly-marked personality steadily ignored or obscured, and smarting under intolerable injustices and accumulated grievances—alike real and imaginary—the vigorous genius of the opening of the eighteenth century, fighting hero as he was constitutionally, re-entered the lists to vindicate his name and fame; and, as he might well have foreseen, had not the burning sense of unmerited wrongs obscured his perceptions, quickly had 'a pretty quarrel' on his hands, his powers of onslaught hampered from the circumstance that his present weapon was the pen, whereas his accustomed arm for offence and defence was the etching-point, the weapon he had been accustomed to wield with fine incisive spirit in earlier conflicts. In the present tourney G. C. was confessedly under the manifest disqualification of being 'out of his element.'

Open as daylight, 'a knight *sans peur et sans reproche*'—he gallantly sought to unhorse his wily antagonist. The quarrel has left its record in print, in pamphlet form, now reckoned *rarissime*:—

THE ARTIST AND THE AUTHOR

A statement of facts by the Artist, George Cruikshank, proving that the Distinguished Author, Mr. W. Harrison Ainsworth, is *labouring under a singular delusion* with respect to the origin of The Miser's Daughter, *The Tower of London*, etc.

In the following letter, which appeared in The Times of the 8th of April 1872, it will be seen that I therein claimed to be the Originator of a tale or romance entitled 'The Miser's Daughter,' which was *written* by Mr. Ainsworth and illustrated by me. G. C.

To the Editor of 'The Times''

Sir—Under the heading of 'Easter Amusements' in *The Times* of the 2nd inst. it is stated that Mr. W. Harrison Ainsworth's novel of *The Miser's Daughter* had been dramatized by Mr. Andrew Halliday, and produced at the Adelphi Theatre, and as my name is not mentioned in any way in connection with the novel—

not even as the illustrator—I shall feel greatly obliged if you will allow me to inform the public through the medium of your columns of the fact (which all my private friends are aware of) that this tale of *The Miser's Daughter* originated from me, and not from Mr. Ainsworth.

My idea suggested to that gentleman was to write a story in which the principal character should be a miser, who had a daughter, and that the struggles of feelings between the love for his child and his love of money should produce certain effects and results; and as all my ancestors were mixed up in the Rebellion of '45, I suggested that the story should be of that date, in order that I might introduce some scenes and circumstances connected with that great party struggle; and also wishing to let the public of the present day have a peep at the places of amusement of that period, I took considerable pains to give correct views and descriptions of those places, which are now copied and produced upon the stage; and I take this opportunity of complimenting my friend Halliday for the very excellent and effective manner in which he has dramatized the story.

I do not mean to say that Mr. Ainsworth when writing this novel did not introduce some of his own ideas; but as the first idea and all the principal points and characters emanated from me, I think it will be allowed that the title of *originator* of *The Miser's Daughter* should be conferred upon, Sir, your obedient servant,

George Cruikshank.

263 Hampstead Road,

6th April 1872.

This letter brought forth the following reply from the *writer* of this romance:—

To the Editor of 'The Times''

Sir—In a letter from Mr. George Cruikshank which appeared in *The Times* of to-day, that distinguished artist claims to be the originator of *The Miser's Daughter*. I content myself with giving the statement a positive contradiction.

Mr. Cruikshank appears to labour under a singular delusion in regard to novels he has illustrated; it is not long since he claimed to be the originator of Mr. Dickens's *Oliver Twist*.—Your faithful servant,

W. Harrison Ainsworth.

8th April 1872.

Upon seeing this 'positive contradiction,' I wrote a second letter to *The Times*, which the Editor kindly inserted:—

'THE MISER'S DAUGHTER'

To the Editor of 'The Times'

Sir—I am fully aware that you will not allow any controversy to be carried on in *The Times* upon such a trifling matter as this; but as Mr. W. Harrison Ainsworth gives a positive contradiction to my statement which appeared in *The Times* on the 8th inst., I have to beg that you will permit me to express my very great surprise at this denial, and also to express my regret that his memory should be in such a defective state, that he should have forgotten the circumstances and facts as to the origin of *Oliver Twist* and of *The Miser's Daughter*; and I regret also that this contradiction of his will compel me, in justice to myself, to give, in a work I am preparing for the press, a full, true, and particular account of all the professional transactions between Mr. Ainsworth and myself, in which I shall prove, beyond all fear of contradiction, that I am the sole originator of what is called Ainsworth's *Tower of London*, as well as another work bearing his name, but the ideas and suggestions of which were given to him by, Sir, your obedient servant, George Cruikshank.

10th April 1872.

P.S.—Allow me to add that it ought to be understood that it is one thing for an artist to illustrate an author's own ideas, and quite a different matter when a literary man adopts and writes out the ideas of another person.

This second letter brought forth another *contradiction* (a *flat* one) from Mr. W. H. A.:—

To the Editor of 'The Times'

Sir—I disdain to reply to Mr. Cruikshank's preposterous assertions, except to give them, as before, a flat contradiction.—Your faithful servant, W. Harrison Ainsworth.

11th April 1872.

To this the Editor added:—'We can publish no more letters on this subject.'

It will be seen in my second letter that I intended to give an explanation of this affair in a work I am preparing for the press, but, as 'delays are dangerous,' it occurred to me that I had better bring forward my statement without *delay*.

As Mr. Ainsworth's *positive and flat contradictions* and his contemptible insinuation as to my *labouring under a singular delusion* have led some persons to form erroneous ideas and to draw false conclusions upon this question, I feel placed in a very serious position as regards my *character for truthfulness* and the *condition of my intellect*; and I am therefore *compelled in self-defence* to place certain facts before the public to prove beyond the fear of *contradiction* that what I have asserted is the truth, and that it is Mr. Ainsworth who is *labouring under a delusion*, or has unfortunately lost his memory.

And in order that this question may be clearly understood, I now proceed to give a full and particular account of all the professional transactions between myself and Mr. W. Harrison Ainsworth when we were both on the most friendly terms and both working together to amuse the public; and also to show how it was that this friendship and joint labour ceased, now some twenty-eight years ago; and although I feel it a positive duty to myself to make these statements, it is, nevertheless, to me rather a painful task, well knowing that it will place Mr. Ainsworth in a very awkward position as regards his conduct towards me, the explanation of which he will feel bitterly, but which he has brought upon himself, for had he, in common justice, acknowledged that *I was the originator of certain ideas and characters up to which he had written*, the facts which I am now about to state would never have been placed before the public.

A question has been asked *publicly*, and which I grant is rather an important one in this case, and that is, Why *have I not until lately claimed to be the originator of 'Oliver Twist'?* To this I reply that ever since these works were published, and even when they were in progress, I have in private society, when conversing upon such matters, always explained that the *original ideas and characters of these works emanated from me*, and the reason why I *publicly* claimed to be the originator of *Oliver Twist* was to defend Dr. K. Shelton Mackenzie, who was charged by Mr. John Forster, in his *Life of Mr. Charles Dickens*, with publishing a *falsehood* (or a word of *three letters* as he describes it; Mr. Forster in a marginal note puts it thus: 'Falsehood ascribed to a distinguished artist'), whereas the Doctor was only repeating what I had told him at the time *Oliver Twist* was in progress. Mr. Forster designates Dr. Mackenzie's statement as 'a wonderful story,' or 'a marvellous fable,' and in a letter from the Doctor to the *Philadelphia Press*, December 19, 1871, he says: 'My *wonderful story was printed in an American periodical years before Mr. Dickens died*.' And then asks, 'Why did not Mr. Forster inquire into this matter, for surely he must have known it?' And I presume Mr. Dickens must also have heard of this 'wonderful story,' the truth of which he *did not deny, for this reason—because he could not!* And with respect to Mr. Ainsworth's insinuation as to *my* 'labouring under a delusion' upon this point, all my literary friends at that time knew that I was the originator of *Oliver Twist*, and as Mr. A. and I were at that time upon such intimate terms, and both working together on *Bentley's Miscellany*, is it at all likely that I should have concealed such a fact from him? No! no! he knew this as well as I did, and, therefore, in this matter at any rate, it is *he* who is 'labouring under a delusion.'

And I will here refer to a part of my letter, which was published in *The Times*, December 30, 1871, upon the origin of *Oliver Twist*, wherein I state that Mr. Ainsworth and Mr. Dickens came together one day to my house, upon which occasion it so happened that I then and there *described and performed* the character of 'Fagin' for Mr. Dickens to introduce into the work as a 'receiver of stolen goods,' and that some time after this, upon seeing Mr. Ainsworth again, he said to me, 'I was so much struck with your description of that Jew to Mr. Dickens that I think you and I could do something together.' Now I do not know whether Mr. Ainsworth has ever made any allusion to this; perhaps he *disdains* to do so; but perhaps he may give this also a 'positive contradiction'; and, if he does, then all I have to say is that his memory is gone!

I will now explain the reason why I have *publicly* asserted my right as the originator of *The Miser's Daughter*.

On the 1st of December 1871 there appeared in No. 28 of *The Illustrated Review* a short Biographical Sketch of Mr. W. Harrison Ainsworth, with a portrait of that gentleman; and in the list of the many and various works written by him the following are placed in chronological order: *No. 1, Rookwood; 2, Jack Shepherd; 3, Guy Fawkes; 4, The Tower of London; 5, Old St. Pau's; 6, The Miser s Daughter; 7, Windsor Castle; 8, St. James's; or, The Court of Queen Anne.*

Now, six of these works were illustrated entirely by me, and one—Windsor Castle—partly so, numbering altogether One Hundred and Forty-Four of the very best designs and etchings which I have ever produced; and yet in this Biographical Sketch *my name* is not mentioned in any way as connected with these works, which omission, I thought, was not only very ungenerous but also very unjust. For, if Mr. W. H. Ainsworth did not himself sketch out this 'Biographical Sketch' of himself, he must have known full well what the writer was stating; and he might as well have said to that gentleman, 'Just mention that Mr. George Cruikshank illustrated *several* of the novels written by me,' and have given the titles, and also have acknowledged that I *had* given him the original ideas of *three* of the tales, and assisted him with suggestions when these works were being produced; and, had he done this, I should have been satisfied. But to be thus ignored altogether not only created a feeling of surprise but also of dissatisfaction. And when it was announced that Mr. Andrew Halliday had dramatised Ainsworth's *Miser's Daughter*, I went to see the performance; and when I saw represented on the stage *scenes and characters which had emanated from me* and my name not mentioned, I then publicly claimed to to be the *originator* of that romance, and to have suggested the original idea and the characters to Mr. Ainsworth.

No. 2, *Jack Shepherd*, illustrated by me, and published in monthly parts in *Bentley's Miscellany*. This story *originated from Mr. Ainsworth*, and, when preparing it for publication, he showed me about two or three pages of manuscript on 'post paper'; and *I beg that it may be observed that this was the only bit of manuscript written by this author that I ever saw in the whole course of my life!*

No. 4, *The Tower of London*, the Original Idea of which was suggested by me to Mr. Ainsworth, and also *illustrated* by me and published in monthly numbers. In this work Mr. Ainsworth and I were *partners* holding equal shares.

And now comes the question of how it should so happen, as Mr. W. H. Ainsworth and I were such friends and fellow-workers and partners in the work of *The Tower of London*, that he should have got another artist to illustrate *Old St. Paul's* ('one of my pet subjects, which I had nursed in my brains for years, and which I had long intended to have placed before the public with my own hands,' as G. C. relates in another charge)? And, after that was finished, to have employed a French artist to illustrate *Windsor Castle*. Ay, *that is the question!* And now comes the answer and the reason for this most extraordinary proceeding. I must here first state that as large sums of money had been realised from my ideas and suggestions for the work of *Oliver Twist*, it occurred to me one day that I would try and get a little of the same material from the same source; and as Mr. Ainsworth and I were at that time upon the most friendly—I may say brotherly—terms, I suggested to him that we should jointly produce a work on our own account and publish it in monthly numbers, and get Mr. Bentley to join us as the publisher. Mr. Ainsworth was delighted with the idea of such a partnership, and at once acceded to the proposition; and when I told him that I had a capital subject for the first work he inquired what it was, and upon my telling him it was *The Tower of London*, with some incidents in the life of Lady Jane Grey, he was still more delighted; and I then told him that I had long since seen the room in 'the Tower' where that beautiful and accomplished dear lady was imprisoned, and other parts of that fortress to which the public were not admitted, and if he would go with me to the Tower I would show these places to him. He at once accepted my offer, and off we went to 'Hungerford Stairs,' now the site of the Charing Cross Railway Station, and whilst waiting on the beach for a boat to go to London Bridge, we there met my dear friend the late W. Jordan, the well-known editor and part-proprietor of *The Literary Gazette*, who inquired

where we were going to. My reply was that I was taking Mr. Ainsworth a prisoner to the Tower! With this joke we parted. I then took Mr. Ainsworth to the royal prison, and when we arrived there I introduced him to my friend Mr. Stacey, the storekeeper, in whose department were these 'Chambers of Horrors'; and then and there did Mr. Ainsworth, for the first time, see the apartment in which the dear Lady Jane was placed until the day she was beheaded, or, in other words, the day on which she was murdered, and which place I had long before made sketches of for the purpose of introducing them in a *Life of Lady Jane Grey*, and which for many years I had intended to place before the public.

I have now most distinctly to state that Mr. Ainsworth *wrote up to most of my suggestions and designs*, although some of the subjects we *jointly* arranged to introduce into the work; and I used every month to send him the *tracings or outlines of the sketches or drawings* from which I was making the etchings to illustrate the work, *in order that he might write up to them*, and that they should be *accurately described*. And I beg the reader to understand that all these *etchings or plates were printed and ready for publication before the letterpress was printed*, and sometimes even before the Author *had written his manuscript*; and I assert that I never saw a page of this work *until after it was published*, and then hardly ever read a line of it. It is a curious coincidence, but clearly proves what I have just stated with respect to these *outlines or tracings*—that Mr. Ainsworth in January last was applied to for *these and other tracings or outlines*, and his reply was, that '*he would be very happy to send the tracings mentioned, but he had no idea what had become of them, as he had not seen them since 'The Tower of London' was published*. This letter I have in my possession.

This *Tower of London* became so very popular, that before it was finished, a bookseller came to me and said if we brought out another work similar in style and interest, that he would take 20,000 a month to begin with, and pay ready money for them; and another bookseller offered to take 25,000 or 30,000 a month upon the same terms.

When this work was completed, I told Mr. Ainsworth that I had another capital subject for our next work. 'Ah! what is it?' said he; to which I replied, 'The Plague and the Fire of London.'

'Oh!' he exclaimed, 'that *is* first-rate!'

[The aggrieved Artist proceeded to state at length his sense of injury at the hands of the Author, who, on the facts set forth, had not considered Cruikshank's rights in several instances, notably *Old Saint Paul's* and *Windsor Castle*. This first break between the partners was bridged over, owing to the peace-making overtures of a mutual friend, and Cruikshank's publication of The *Omnibus* was suspended and finally abandoned in favour of that artist consenting to collaborate (as in *Bentley's Miscellany*) in a new venture, namely *Ainsworth's Magazine*.]

The Artist's statement is thus continued:—

Before *Ainsworth's Magazine* was published, advertisements were put forth that I, George Cruikshank, was to be the illustrator thereof; and *the Artist and the Author* then held a consultation as to what tale or romance we were to commence with, and which I was to *illustrate*; and, well knowing the importance of having *an attractive subject for the first number of a work, I then suggested to Mr. Ainsworth my idea of 'The Miser's Daughter''* (the plot of which will be seen in my first letter to *The Times* upon this subject, and which I had originally intended to have had written by some literary friend, and published it in my 'Omnibus'). This romance (as I expected), *with my illustrations, did attract* the public attention, and did to some extent make this magazine a success.

There was published in *Ainsworth's Magazine*, No. 2, March 1842, a woodcut of a drawing made by me, *at Mr. Ainsworth's suggestion, of the Author and the Artist*, seated 'in council,' or conversing together in his library. And surely this looks as if he then considered me something more than a *mere illustrator* of his magazine.

[Then follows a statement of the final break up of the friendly collaboration of these old colleagues, explaining the Artist's grievances in connection with *Windsor Castle*—also contributed to *Ainsworth's Magazine*—and the fatal ending of these long associations, when the Author, unaccountably disregarding Cruikshank's joint interests, elected to sell his magazine to the publishers; this seems to have fairly disgusted the Artist.] Here is his indignant protest:—

So it really appears as if all this gentleman's promises, like pie-crust, were made to be broken; and as, in this instance, also, there was not any *written agreement*, the *arrangements* which he had made, and the *engagements* he had entered into with me, when I agreed to work with him in his magazine, all broke down, and I, as it were, again 'thrown overboard' or 'left in the lurch.' And thus ended the second edition of this Author's extraordinary conduct towards the *Artist*.

I will not go into the details of how I assisted this *Author* with head and hand work in these novels, but I did my best to design and suggest.

The foregoing statements will, I think, clearly explain why I have never, since that time (written 1872)—now some twenty-eight years back—given any more *original ideas, suggestions, and characters* for any other tales or romances for Mr. Ainsworth *to write up to*; and also why I have never, from that time, illustrated any of this Author's writings.

I now feel it necessary to inform the public that the usual or ordinary way of producing illustrated novels or romances is, for an Author either to write out, *from his own ideas*, the whole of the tale, or in parts; the *manuscript or letterpress* of which is then handed to an Artist to *read and select subjects from* for his illustrations, or sometimes *for the Author to suggest to the Artist* such subjects, scenes, or parts as he might wish to be illustrated. And I, being known generally only as an Artist, or illustrator, it would therefore very naturally be supposed that, *in all cases*, I have merely worked out *other men's ideas*. But, if I have the opportunity, I shall be able to show that *other men have sometimes worked out my ideas*—but this will be for another occasion. And I will now explain that *Oliver Twist, The Tower of London, The Miser's Daughter*, etc., were produced in an entirely different manner from what would be considered the usual course; for *I, the Artist, suggested to the Authors of these works the original idea or subject*—for them to write out—furnishing, at the same time, *the principal characters and the scenes*; and then, as the tale had to be produced in monthly parts, *the Writer or Author, and the Artist* had every month to arrange and settle what

scenes or subjects and characters were to be introduced; and the *Author* had to *weave in* such scenes as I wished to represent, and sometimes I had to work out his suggestions.

And as to Mr. W. Harrison Ainsworth's 'singular delusion' of an artist claiming to be the originator of works which he had merely illustrated, no more absurd or contemptible and rubbishing nonsense could ever be conceived; for no artist could possibly be in his right mind who would make such a claim, and it becomes a serious question as to whether any one who brings forth such nonsense can be in *his* right mind, and if this *Author* has really lost his memory, and, as an invalid, is suffering under '*singular delusions*,' he has my pity and commiseration.

I lay no claim to anything that has *originated* from the mind of Mr. Ainsworth, or any other man, but where *the original idea has emanated from my own mind*, that I feel I have a right to claim, and by that right I will stand firm, and I trust that at no distant date I may be able to publish what I have already stated, to show the world how these ideas originated in my mind, and why I wished to place them before the public.

Amongst the many friends who were acquainted with the facts of this case, I may mention the names of T. J. Pettigrew (the eminent surgeon), the Rev. Canon Barham (author of the *Ingoldsby Legends*), Laman Blanchard, Douglas Jerrold, Albert Smith, Mark Lemon, Gilbert A'Becket, John Leech, Messrs. Bradbury and Evans, Richard Bentley, the publisher of the *Miscellany*, and many other dear friends, now, to my sorrow, passed away; but there are a few still living who are ready to substantiate my statements one a clergyman of the City of London, an old member of the Society of Antiquaries; another who is a literary man, a member of the Conservative Club; and also a dear and valued friend, who is a member of the Athenæum Club and Deputy Lord Lieutenant of one of our counties. This friend sent a letter to several of the newspapers—one of which was forwarded to me—a copy of which I here insert:—

Origin of the Work entitled 'The Tower of London'

To the Editor of the 'Liverpool Post''

Sir—I hope you will allow me to say that it is half a century since George Cruikshank has been my intimate and valued friend.

I have a vivid recollection of his drawings of the Tower, and of having been frequently in company with the artist while these sketches were in progress; the strong impression on my mind *was*, and *is*, that the interesting tale called *The Tower of London* was mainly written up to George Cruikshank's drawings, and that they, in a great measure, suggested the story to Mr. Ainsworth.

I think it therefore only right that justice should be done in this matter to the veteran artist who for so many years has amused the world, and striven to raise its moral tone. I enclose my card, and have the honour to be, yours, etc., A. B.

Athenæum Club, London,

22nd April 1872. I

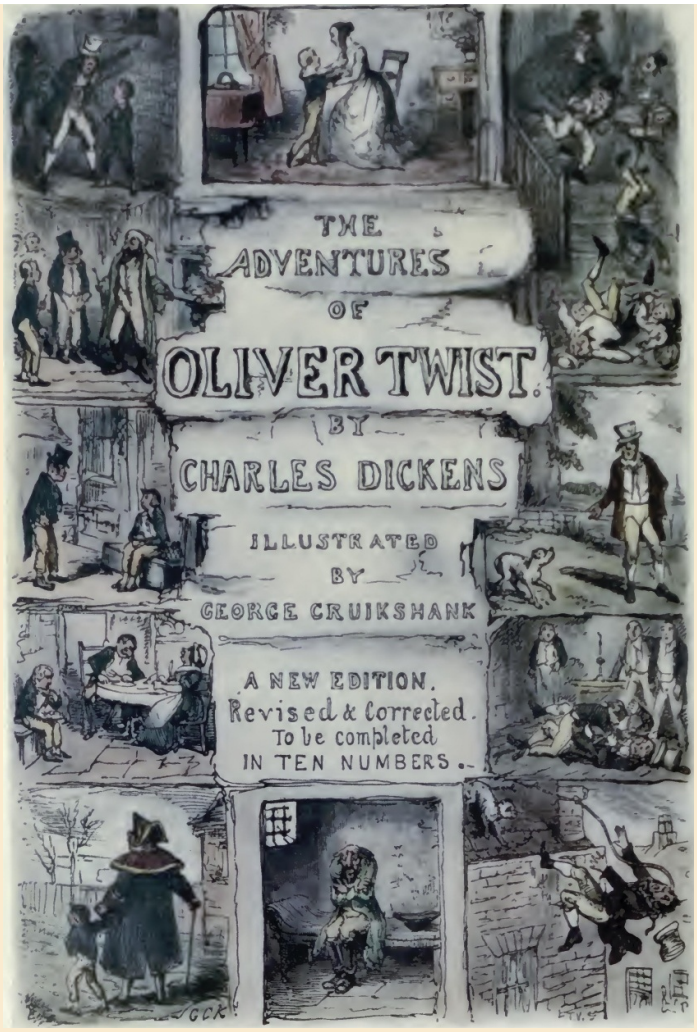
I must add a postscript to say that respecting *The Miser's Daughter* I know nothing, as I was living on the Continent at the time it was written; but this I do know, that George Cruikshank is a man of honour, and would not assert anything he did not believe to be true.

OLIVER TWIST

THE ADVENTURES OF A PARISH ORPHAN BY CHARLES DICKENS

ILLUSTRATED WITH 27 WATER COLOUR DRAWINGS BY GEORGE CRUIKSHANK

The illustrations in this volume have been engraved and printed by the Carl Hentschel Colourtype Process.


THE
ADVENTURES
OF
OLIVER TWIST.
BY
CHARLES DICKENS
ILLUSTRATED
BY
GEORGE CRUIKSHANK
A NEW EDITION.
Revised & Corrected.
To be completed
IN TEN NUMBERS.
GCK


This Sketch
is intended as a sort of
Title page
to the
Twenty four Water Colour
Sketches, copied by me -
George Cruikshank
from my illustrations of
OLIVER TWIST
and made especially for
my friend,
F. W. Cosens
September 27th 1866

CHAPTER I — TREATS OF THE PLACE WHERE OLIVER TWIST WAS BORN AND OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES ATTENDING HIS BIRTH

Among other public buildings in a certain town, which for many reasons it will be prudent to refrain from mentioning, and to which I will assign no fictitious name, there is one anciently common to most towns, great or small: to wit, a workhouse; and in this workhouse was born; on a day and date which I need not trouble myself to repeat, inasmuch as it can be of no possible consequence to the reader, in this stage of the business at all events; the item of mortality whose name is prefixed to the head of this chapter.

For a long time after it was ushered into this world of sorrow and trouble, by the parish surgeon, it remained a matter of considerable doubt whether the child would survive to bear any name at all; in which case it is somewhat more than probable that these memoirs would never have appeared; or, if they had, that being comprised within a couple of pages, they would have possessed the inestimable merit of being the most concise and faithful specimen of biography, extant in the literature of any age or country.

Although I am not disposed to maintain that the being born in a workhouse, is in itself the most fortunate and enviable circumstance that can possibly befall a human being, I do mean to say that in this particular instance, it was the best thing for Oliver Twist that could by possibility have occurred. The fact is, that there was considerable difficulty in inducing Oliver to take upon himself the office of respiration,—a troublesome practice, but one which custom has rendered necessary to our easy existence; and for some time he lay gasping on a little flock mattress, rather unequally poised between this world and the next: the balance being decidedly in favour of the latter. Now, if, during this brief period, Oliver had been surrounded by careful grandmothers, anxious aunts, experienced nurses, and doctors of profound wisdom, he would most inevitably and indubitably have been killed in no time. There being nobody by, however, but a pauper old woman, who was rendered rather misty by an unwonted allowance of beer; and a parish surgeon who did such matters by contract; Oliver and Nature fought out the point between them. The result was, that, after a few struggles, Oliver breathed, sneezed, and proceeded to advertise to the inmates of the workhouse the fact of a new burden having been imposed upon the parish, by setting up as loud a cry as could reasonably have been expected from a male infant who had not been possessed of that very useful appendage, a voice, for a much longer space of time than three minutes and a quarter.

As Oliver gave this first proof of the free and proper action of his lungs, the patchwork coverlet which was carelessly flung over the iron bedstead, rustled; the pale face of a young woman was raised feebly from the pillow; and a faint voice imperfectly articulated the words, ‘Let me see the child, and die.’

The surgeon had been sitting with his face turned towards the fire: giving the palms of his hands a warm and a rub alternately. As the young woman spoke, he rose, and advancing to the bed’s head, said, with more kindness than might have been expected of him:

‘Oh, you must not talk about dying yet.’

‘Lor bless her dear heart, no!’ interposed the nurse, hastily depositing in her pocket a green glass bottle, the contents of which she had been tasting in a corner with evident satisfaction.

‘Lor bless her dear heart, when she has lived as long as I have, sir, and had thirteen children of her own, and all on ‘em dead except two, and them in the wurkus with me, she’ll know better than to take on in that way, bless her dear heart! Think what it is to be a mother, there’s a dear young lamb do.’

Apparently this consolatory perspective of a mother’s prospects failed in producing its due effect. The patient shook her head, and stretched out her hand towards the child.

The surgeon deposited it in her arms. She imprinted her cold white lips passionately on its forehead; passed her hands over her face; gazed wildly round; shuddered; fell back—and died. They chafed her breast, hands, and temples; but the blood had stopped forever. They talked of hope and comfort. They had been strangers too long.

‘It’s all over, Mrs. Thingummy!’ said the surgeon at last.

‘Ah, poor dear, so it is!’ said the nurse, picking up the cork of the green bottle, which had fallen out on the pillow, as she stooped to take up the child. ‘Poor dear!’

‘You needn’t mind sending up to me, if the child cries, nurse,’ said the surgeon, putting on his gloves with great deliberation. ‘It’s very likely it *will* be troublesome. Give it a little gruel if it is.’ He put on his hat, and, pausing by the bed-side on his way to the door, added, ‘She was a good-looking girl, too; where did she come from?’

‘She was brought here last night,’ replied the old woman, ‘by the overseer’s order. She was found lying in the street. She had walked some distance, for her shoes were worn to pieces; but where she came from, or where she was going to, nobody knows.’

The surgeon leaned over the body, and raised the left hand. ‘The old story,’ he said, shaking his head: ‘no wedding-ring, I see. Ah! Good-night!’

The medical gentleman walked away to dinner; and the nurse, having once more applied herself to the green bottle, sat down on a low chair before the fire, and proceeded to dress the infant.

What an excellent example of the power of dress, young Oliver Twist was! Wrapped in the blanket which had hitherto formed his only covering, he might have been the child of a nobleman or a beggar; it would have been hard for the haughtiest stranger to have assigned him his proper station in society. But now that he was enveloped in the old calico robes which had grown yellow in the same service, he was badged and ticketed, and fell into his place at once—a parish child—the orphan of a workhouse—the humble, half-starved drudge—to be cuffed and buffeted through the world—despised by all, and pitied by none.

Oliver cried lustily. If he could have known that he was an orphan, left to the tender mercies of church-wardens and overseers, perhaps he would have cried the louder.

CHAPTER II — TREATS OF OLIVER TWIST'S GROWTH, EDUCATION, AND BOARD

For the next eight or ten months, Oliver was the victim of a systematic course of treachery and deception. He was brought up by hand. The hungry and destitute situation of the infant orphan was duly reported by the workhouse authorities to the parish authorities. The parish authorities inquired with dignity of the workhouse authorities, whether there was no female then domiciled in 'the house' who was in a situation to impart to Oliver Twist, the consolation and nourishment of which he stood in need. The workhouse authorities replied with humility, that there was not. Upon this, the parish authorities magnanimously and humanely resolved, that Oliver should be 'farmed,' or, in other words, that he should be dispatched to a branch-workhouse some three miles off, where twenty or thirty other juvenile offenders against the poor-laws, rolled about the floor all day, without the inconvenience of too much food or too much clothing, under the parental superintendence of an elderly female, who received the culprits at and for the consideration of sevenpence-halfpenny per small head per week. Sevenpence-halfpenny's worth per week is a good round diet for a child; a great deal may be got for sevenpence-halfpenny, quite enough to overload its stomach, and make it uncomfortable. The elderly female was a woman of wisdom and experience; she knew what was good for children; and she had a very accurate perception of what was good for herself. So, she appropriated the greater part of the weekly stipend to her own use, and consigned the rising parochial generation to even a shorter allowance than was originally provided for them. Thereby finding in the lowest depth a deeper still; and proving herself a very great experimental philosopher.

Everybody knows the story of another experimental philosopher who had a great theory about a horse being able to live without eating, and who demonstrated it so well, that he had got his own horse down to a straw a day, and would unquestionably have rendered him a very spirited and rampacious animal on nothing at all, if he had not died, four-and-twenty hours before he was to have had his first comfortable bait of air. Unfortunately for, the experimental philosophy of the female to whose protecting care Oliver Twist was delivered over, a similar result usually attended the operation of *her* system; for at the very moment when the child had contrived to exist upon the smallest possible portion of the weakest possible food, it did perversely happen in eight and a half cases out of ten, either that it sickened from want and cold, or fell into the fire from neglect, or got half-smothered by accident; in any one of which cases, the miserable little being was usually summoned into another world, and there gathered to the fathers it had never known in this.

Occasionally, when there was some more than usually interesting inquest upon a parish child who had been overlooked in turning up a bedstead, or inadvertently scalded to death when there happened to be a washing—though the latter accident was very scarce, anything approaching to a washing being of rare occurrence in the farm—the jury would take it into their heads to ask troublesome questions, or the parishioners would rebelliously affix their signatures to a remonstrance. But these impertinences were speedily checked by the evidence of the surgeon, and the testimony of the beadle; the former of whom had always opened the body and found nothing inside (which was very probable indeed), and the latter of whom invariably swore whatever the parish wanted; which was very self-devotional. Besides, the board made periodical pilgrimages to the farm, and always sent the beadle the day before, to say they were going. The children were neat and clean to behold, when *they* went; and what more would the people have!

It cannot be expected that this system of farming would produce any very extraordinary or luxuriant crop. Oliver Twist's ninth birthday found him a pale thin child, somewhat diminutive in stature, and decidedly small in circumference. But nature or inheritance had implanted a good sturdy spirit in Oliver's breast. It had had plenty of room to expand, thanks to the spare diet of the establishment; and perhaps to this circumstance may be attributed his having any ninth birth-day at all. Be this as it may, however, it was his ninth birthday; and he was keeping it in the coal-cellar with a select party of two other young gentleman, who, after participating with him in a sound thrashing, had been locked up for atrociously presuming to be hungry, when Mrs. Mann, the good lady of the house, was unexpectedly startled by the apparition of Mr. Bumble, the beadle, striving to undo the wicket of the garden-gate.

'Goodness gracious! Is that you, Mr. Bumble, sir?' said Mrs. Mann, thrusting her head out of the window in well-affected ecstasies of joy. '(Susan, take Oliver and them two brats upstairs, and wash 'em directly.)—My heart alive! Mr. Bumble, how glad I am to see you, sure-ly!'

Now, Mr. Bumble was a fat man, and a choleric; so, instead of responding to this open-hearted salutation in a kindred spirit, he gave the little wicket a tremendous shake, and then bestowed upon it a kick which could have emanated from no leg but a beadle's.

'Lor, only think,' said Mrs. Mann, running out,—for the three boys had been removed by this time,—'only

think of that! That I should have forgotten that the gate was bolted on the inside, on account of them dear children! Walk in sir; walk in, pray, Mr. Bumble, do, sir.'

Although this invitation was accompanied with a curtsey that might have softened the heart of a church-warden, it by no means mollified the beadle.

'Do you think this respectful or proper conduct, Mrs. Mann,' inquired Mr. Bumble, grasping his cane, 'to keep the parish officers a waiting at your garden-gate, when they come here upon porochial business with the porochial orphans? Are you aweer, Mrs. Mann, that you are, as I may say, a porochial delegate, and a stipendiary?'

'I'm sure Mr. Bumble, that I was only a telling one or two of the dear children as is so fond of you, that it was you a coming,' replied Mrs. Mann with great humility.

Mr. Bumble had a great idea of his oratorical powers and his importance. He had displayed the one, and vindicated the other. He relaxed.

'Well, well, Mrs. Mann,' he replied in a calmer tone; 'it may be as you say; it may be. Lead the way in, Mrs. Mann, for I come on business, and have something to say.'

Mrs. Mann ushered the beadle into a small parlour with a brick floor; placed a seat for him; and officiously deposited his cocked hat and cane on the table before him. Mr. Bumble wiped from his forehead the perspiration which his walk had engendered, glanced complacently at the cocked hat, and smiled. Yes, he smiled. Beadles are but men: and Mr. Bumble smiled.

'Now don't you be offended at what I'm a going to say,' observed Mrs. Mann, with captivating sweetness. 'You've had a long walk, you know, or I wouldn't mention it. Now, will you take a little drop of somethink, Mr. Bumble?'

'Not a drop. Nor a drop,' said Mr. Bumble, waving his right hand in a dignified, but placid manner.

'I think you will,' said Mrs. Mann, who had noticed the tone of the refusal, and the gesture that had accompanied it. 'Just a leetle drop, with a little cold water, and a lump of sugar.'

Mr. Bumble coughed.

'Now, just a leetle drop,' said Mrs. Mann persuasively.

'What is it?' inquired the beadle.

'Why, it's what I'm obliged to keep a little of in the house, to put into the blessed infants' Daffy, when they ain't well, Mr. Bumble,' replied Mrs. Mann as she opened a corner cupboard, and took down a bottle and glass. 'It's gin. I'll not deceive you, Mr. B. It's gin.'

'Do you give the children Daffy, Mrs. Mann?' inquired Bumble, following with his eyes the interesting process of mixing.

'Ah, bless 'em, that I do, dear as it is,' replied the nurse. 'I couldn't see 'em suffer before my very eyes, you know sir.'

'No'; said Mr. Bumble approvingly; 'no, you could not. You are a humane woman, Mrs. Mann.' (Here she set down the glass.) 'I shall take a early opportunity of mentioning it to the board, Mrs. Mann.' (He drew it towards him.) 'You feel as a mother, Mrs. Mann.' (He stirred the gin-and-water.) 'I—I drink your health with cheerfulness, Mrs. Mann'; and he swallowed half of it.

'And now about business,' said the beadle, taking out a leathern pocket-book. 'The child that was half-baptized Oliver Twist, is nine year old to-day.'

'Bless him!' interposed Mrs. Mann, inflaming her left eye with the corner of her apron.

'And notwithstanding a offered reward of ten pound, which was afterwards increased to twenty pound. Notwithstanding the most superlative, and, I may say, supernat'ral exertions on the part of this parish,' said Bumble, 'we have never been able to discover who is his father, or what was his mother's settlement, name, or condition.'

Mrs. Mann raised her hands in astonishment; but added, after a moment's reflection, 'How comes he to have any name at all, then?'

The beadle drew himself up with great pride, and said, 'I inwented it.'

'You, Mr. Bumble!'

'I, Mrs. Mann. We name our fondlings in alphabetical order. The last was a S,—Swubble, I named him. This was a T,—Twist, I named *him*. The next one comes will be Unwin, and the next Vilkins. I have got names ready made to the end of the alphabet, and all the way through it again, when we come to Z.'

'Why, you're quite a literary character, sir!' said Mrs. Mann.

'Well, well,' said the beadle, evidently gratified with the compliment; 'perhaps I may be. Perhaps I may be, Mrs. Mann.' He finished the gin-and-water, and added, 'Oliver being now too old to remain here, the board have determined to have him back into the house. I have come out myself to take him there. So let me see him at once.'

'I'll fetch him directly,' said Mrs. Mann, leaving the room for that purpose. Oliver, having had by this time as much of the outer coat of dirt which encrusted his face and hands, removed, as could be scrubbed off in one washing, was led into the room by his benevolent protectress.

'Make a bow to the gentleman, Oliver,' said Mrs. Mann.

Oliver made a bow, which was divided between the beadle on the chair, and the cocked hat on the table.

'Will you go along with me, Oliver?' said Mr. Bumble, in a majestic voice.

Oliver was about to say that he would go along with anybody with great readiness, when, glancing upward, he caught sight of Mrs. Mann, who had got behind the beadle's chair, and was shaking her fist at him with a furious countenance. He took the hint at once, for the fist had been too often impressed upon his body not to be deeply impressed upon his recollection.

'Will she go with me?' inquired poor Oliver.

‘No, she can’t,’ replied Mr. Bumble. ‘But she’ll come and see you sometimes.’

This was no very great consolation to the child. Young as he was, however, he had sense enough to make a feint of feeling great regret at going away. It was no very difficult matter for the boy to call tears into his eyes. Hunger and recent ill-usage are great assistants if you want to cry; and Oliver cried very naturally indeed. Mrs. Mann gave him a thousand embraces, and what Oliver wanted a great deal more, a piece of bread and butter, less he should seem too hungry when he got to the workhouse. With the slice of bread in his hand, and the little brown-cloth parish cap on his head, Oliver was then led away by Mr. Bumble from the wretched home where one kind word or look had never lighted the gloom of his infant years. And yet he burst into an agony of childish grief, as the cottage-gate closed after him. Wretched as were the little companions in misery he was leaving behind, they were the only friends he had ever known; and a sense of his loneliness in the great wide world, sank into the child’s heart for the first time.

Mr. Bumble walked on with long strides; little Oliver, firmly grasping his gold-laced cuff, trotted beside him, inquiring at the end of every quarter of a mile whether they were ‘nearly there.’ To these interrogations Mr. Bumble returned very brief and snappish replies; for the temporary blandness which gin-and-water awakens in some bosoms had by this time evaporated; and he was once again a beadle.

Oliver had not been within the walls of the workhouse a quarter of an hour, and had scarcely completed the demolition of a second slice of bread, when Mr. Bumble, who had handed him over to the care of an old woman, returned; and, telling him it was a board night, informed him that the board had said he was to appear before it forthwith.

Not having a very clearly defined notion of what a live board was, Oliver was rather astounded by this intelligence, and was not quite certain whether he ought to laugh or cry. He had no time to think about the matter, however; for Mr. Bumble gave him a tap on the head, with his cane, to wake him up: and another on the back to make him lively: and bidding him to follow, conducted him into a large white-washed room, where eight or ten fat gentlemen were sitting round a table. At the top of the table, seated in an arm-chair rather higher than the rest, was a particularly fat gentleman with a very round, red face.

‘Bow to the board,’ said Bumble. Oliver brushed away two or three tears that were lingering in his eyes; and seeing no board but the table, fortunately bowed to that.

‘What’s your name, boy?’ said the gentleman in the high chair.

Oliver was frightened at the sight of so many gentlemen, which made him tremble: and the beadle gave him another tap behind, which made him cry. These two causes made him answer in a very low and hesitating voice; whereupon a gentleman in a white waistcoat said he was a fool. Which was a capital way of raising his spirits, and putting him quite at his ease.

‘Boy,’ said the gentleman in the high chair, ‘listen to me. You know you’re an orphan, I suppose?’

‘What’s that, sir?’ inquired poor Oliver.

‘The boy *is* a fool—I thought he was,’ said the gentleman in the white waistcoat.

‘Hush!’ said the gentleman who had spoken first. ‘You know you’ve got no father or mother, and that you were brought up by the parish, don’t you?’

‘Yes, sir,’ replied Oliver, weeping bitterly.

‘What are you crying for?’ inquired the gentleman in the white waistcoat. And to be sure it was very extraordinary. What *could* the boy be crying for?

‘I hope you say your prayers every night,’ said another gentleman in a gruff voice; ‘and pray for the people who feed you, and take care of you—like a Christian.’

‘Yes, sir,’ stammered the boy. The gentleman who spoke last was unconsciously right. It would have been very like a Christian, and a marvellously good Christian too, if Oliver had prayed for the people who fed and took care of *him*. But he hadn’t, because nobody had taught him.

‘Well! You have come here to be educated, and taught a useful trade,’ said the red-faced gentleman in the high chair.

‘So you’ll begin to pick oakum to-morrow morning at six o’clock,’ added the surly one in the white waistcoat.

For the combination of both these blessings in the one simple process of picking oakum, Oliver bowed low by the direction of the beadle, and was then hurried away to a large ward; where, on a rough, hard bed, he sobbed himself to sleep. What a novel illustration of the tender laws of England! They let the paupers go to sleep!

Poor Oliver! He little thought, as he lay sleeping in happy unconsciousness of all around him, that the board had that very day arrived at a decision which would exercise the most material influence over all his future fortunes. But they had. And this was it:

The members of this board were very sage, deep, philosophical men; and when they came to turn their attention to the workhouse, they found out at once, what ordinary folks would never have discovered—the poor people liked it! It was a regular place of public entertainment for the poorer classes; a tavern where there was nothing to pay; a public breakfast, dinner, tea, and supper all the year round; a brick and mortar elysium, where it was all play and no work. ‘Oho!’ said the board, looking very knowing; ‘we are the fellows to set this to rights; we’ll stop it all, in no time.’ So, they established the rule, that all poor people should have the alternative (for they would compel nobody, not they), of being starved by a gradual process in the house, or by a quick one out of it. With this view, they contracted with the water-works to lay on an unlimited supply of water; and with a corn-factor to supply periodically small quantities of oatmeal; and issued three meals of thin gruel a day, with an onion twice a week, and half a roll of Sundays. They made a great many other wise and humane regulations, having reference to the ladies, which it is not necessary to repeat; kindly undertook to divorce poor married people, in consequence of the great expense of a suit in Doctors’ Commons; and, instead of compelling a man to support his family, as they had theretofore done, took his family away from him, and made him a bachelor! There is no saying how many applicants for relief, under these last two heads,

might have started up in all classes of society, if it had not been coupled with the workhouse; but the board were long-headed men, and had provided for this difficulty. The relief was inseparable from the workhouse and the gruel; and that frightened people.

For the first six months after Oliver Twist was removed, the system was in full operation. It was rather expensive at first, in consequence of the increase in the undertaker's bill, and the necessity of taking in the clothes of all the paupers, which fluttered loosely on their wasted, shrunken forms, after a week or two's gruel. But the number of workhouse inmates got thin as well as the paupers; and the board were in ecstasies.

The room in which the boys were fed, was a large stone hall, with a copper at one end: out of which the master, dressed in an apron for the purpose, and assisted by one or two women, ladled the gruel at mealtimes. Of this festive composition each boy had one porringer, and no more—except on occasions of great public rejoicing, when he had two ounces and a quarter of bread besides.

The bowls never wanted washing. The boys polished them with their spoons till they shone again; and when they had performed this operation (which never took very long, the spoons being nearly as large as the bowls), they would sit staring at the copper, with such eager eyes, as if they could have devoured the very bricks of which it was composed; employing themselves, meanwhile, in sucking their fingers most assiduously, with the view of catching up any stray splashes of gruel that might have been cast thereon. Boys have generally excellent appetites. Oliver Twist and his companions suffered the tortures of slow starvation for three months: at last they got so voracious and wild with hunger, that one boy, who was tall for his age, and hadn't been used to that sort of thing (for his father had kept a small cook-shop), hinted darkly to his companions, that unless he had another basin of gruel per diem, he was afraid he might some night happen to eat the boy who slept next him, who happened to be a weakly youth of tender age. He had a wild, hungry eye; and they implicitly believed him. A council was held; lots were cast who should walk up to the master after supper that evening, and ask for more; and it fell to Oliver Twist.

The evening arrived; the boys took their places. The master, in his cook's uniform, stationed himself at the copper; his pauper assistants ranged themselves behind him; the gruel was served out; and a long grace was said over the short commons. The gruel disappeared; the boys whispered each other, and winked at Oliver; while his next neighbors nudged him. Child as he was, he was desperate with hunger, and reckless with misery. He rose from the table; and advancing to the master, basin and spoon in hand, said: somewhat alarmed at his own temerity:

'Please, sir, I want some more.'

The master was a fat, healthy man; but he turned very pale. He gazed in stupefied astonishment on the small rebel for some seconds, and then clung for support to the copper. The assistants were paralysed with wonder; the boys with fear.

'What!' said the master at length, in a faint voice.

'Please, sir,' replied Oliver, 'I want some more.'

The master aimed a blow at Oliver's head with the ladle; pinioned him in his arm; and shrieked aloud for the beadle.

The board were sitting in solemn conclave, when Mr. Bumble rushed into the room in great excitement, and addressing the gentleman in the high chair, said,

'Mr. Limbkins, I beg your pardon, sir! Oliver Twist has asked for more!'

There was a general start. Horror was depicted on every countenance.

‘For *more*!’ said Mr. Limbkins. ‘Compose yourself, Bumble, and answer me distinctly. Do I understand that he asked for more, after he had eaten the supper allotted by the dietary?’

‘He did, sir,’ replied Bumble.

‘That boy will be hung,’ said the gentleman in the white waistcoat. ‘I know that boy will be hung.’

Nobody controverted the prophetic gentleman’s opinion. An animated discussion took place. Oliver was ordered into instant confinement; and a bill was next morning pasted on the outside of the gate, offering a reward of five pounds to anybody who would take Oliver Twist off the hands of the parish. In other words, five pounds and Oliver Twist were offered to any man or woman who wanted an apprentice to any trade, business, or calling.

‘I never was more convinced of anything in my life,’ said the gentleman in the white waistcoat, as he knocked at the gate and read the bill next morning: ‘I never was more convinced of anything in my life, than I am that that boy will come to be hung.’

As I purpose to show in the sequel whether the white waistcoated gentleman was right or not, I should perhaps mar the interest of this narrative (supposing it to possess any at all), if I ventured to hint just yet, whether the life of Oliver Twist had this violent termination or no.

CHAPTER III — RELATES HOW OLIVER TWIST WAS VERY NEAR GETTING A PLACE WHICH WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN A SINECURE

For a week after the commission of the impious and profane offence of asking for more, Oliver remained a close prisoner in the dark and solitary room to which he had been consigned by the wisdom and mercy of the board. It appears, at first sight not unreasonable to suppose, that, if he had entertained a becoming feeling of respect for the prediction of the gentleman in the white waistcoat, he would have established that sage individual’s prophetic character, once and for ever, by tying one end of his pocket-handkerchief to a hook in the wall, and attaching himself to the other. To the performance of this feat, however, there was one obstacle: namely, that pocket-handkerchiefs being decided articles of luxury, had been, for all future times and ages, removed from the noses of paupers by the express order of the board, in council assembled: solemnly given and pronounced under their hands and seals. There was a still greater obstacle in Oliver’s youth and childishness. He only cried bitterly all day; and, when the long, dismal night came on, spread his little hands before his eyes to shut out the darkness, and crouching in the corner, tried to sleep: ever and anon waking with a start and tremble, and drawing himself closer and closer to the wall, as if to feel even its cold hard surface were a protection in the gloom and loneliness which surrounded him.

Let it not be supposed by the enemies of ‘the system,’ that, during the period of his solitary incarceration, Oliver was denied the benefit of exercise, the pleasure of society, or the advantages of religious consolation. As for exercise, it was nice cold weather, and he was allowed to perform his ablutions every morning under the pump, in a stone yard, in the presence of Mr. Bumble, who prevented his catching cold, and caused a tingling sensation to pervade his frame, by repeated applications of the cane. As for society, he was carried every other day into the hall where the boys dined, and there sociably flogged as a public warning and example. And so far from being denied the advantages of religious consolation, he was kicked into the same apartment every evening at prayer-time, and there permitted to listen to, and console his mind with, a general supplication of the boys, containing a special clause, therein inserted by authority of the board, in which they entreated to be made good, virtuous, contented, and obedient, and to be guarded from the sins and vices of Oliver Twist: whom the supplication distinctly set forth to be under the exclusive patronage and protection of the powers of wickedness, and an article direct from the manufactory of the very Devil himself.

It chanced one morning, while Oliver’s affairs were in this auspicious and comfortable state, that Mr. Gamfield, chimney-sweep, went his way down the High Street, deeply cogitating in his mind his ways and means of paying certain arrears of rent, for which his landlord had become rather pressing. Mr. Gamfield’s most sanguine estimate of his finances could not raise them within full five pounds of the desired amount; and, in a species of arithmetical desperation, he was alternately cudgelling his brains and his donkey, when passing the workhouse, his eyes encountered the bill on the gate.

‘Wo—o!’ said Mr. Gamfield to the donkey.

The donkey was in a state of profound abstraction: wondering, probably, whether he was destined to be regaled with a cabbage-stalk or two when he had disposed of the two sacks of soot with which the little cart was laden; so, without noticing the word of command, he jogged onward.

Mr. Gamfield growled a fierce imprecation on the donkey generally, but more particularly on his eyes; and, running after him, bestowed a blow on his head, which would inevitably have beaten in any skull but a donkey’s. Then, catching hold of the bridle, he gave his jaw a sharp wrench, by way of gentle reminder that he was not his own master; and by these means turned him round. He then gave him another blow on the head, just to stun him till he came back again. Having completed these arrangements, he walked up to the gate, to read the bill.

The gentleman with the white waistcoat was standing at the gate with his hands behind him, after having delivered himself of some profound sentiments in the board-room. Having witnessed the little dispute

between Mr. Gamfield and the donkey, he smiled joyously when that person came up to read the bill, for he saw at once that Mr. Gamfield was exactly the sort of master Oliver Twist wanted. Mr. Gamfield smiled, too, as he perused the document; for five pounds was just the sum he had been wishing for; and, as to the boy with which it was encumbered, Mr. Gamfield, knowing what the dietary of the workhouse was, well knew he would be a nice small pattern, just the very thing for register stoves. So, he spelt the bill through again, from beginning to end; and then, touching his fur cap in token of humility, accosted the gentleman in the white waistcoat.

'This here boy, sir, wot the parish wants to 'prentis,' said Mr. Gamfield.

'Ay, my man,' said the gentleman in the white waistcoat, with a condescending smile. 'What of him?'

'If the parish vould like him to learn a right pleasant trade, in a good 'spectable chimbley-sweepin' bisness,' said Mr. Gamfield, 'I wants a 'prentis, and I am ready to take him.'

'Walk in,' said the gentleman in the white waistcoat. Mr. Gamfield having lingered behind, to give the donkey another blow on the head, and another wrench of the jaw, as a caution not to run away in his absence, followed the gentleman with the white waistcoat into the room where Oliver had first seen him.

'It's a nasty trade,' said Mr. Limbkins, when Gamfield had again stated his wish.

'Young boys have been smothered in chimneys before now,' said another gentleman.

'That's acause they damped the straw afore they lit it in the chimbley to make 'em come down again,' said Gamfield; 'that's all smoke, and no blaze; vereas smoke ain't o' no use at all in making a boy come down, for it only sinds him to sleep, and that's wot he likes. Boys is wery obstinit, and wery lazy, Gen'l'men, and there's nothink like a good hot blaze to make 'em come down vith a run. It's humane too, gen'l'men, acause, even if they've stuck in the chimbley, roasting their feet makes 'em struggle to hextricate theirselves.'

The gentleman in the white waistcoat appeared very much amused by this explanation; but his mirth was speedily checked by a look from Mr. Limbkins. The board then proceeded to converse among themselves for a few minutes, but in so low a tone, that the words 'saving of expenditure,' 'looked well in the accounts,' 'have a printed report published,' were alone audible. These only chanced to be heard, indeed, or account of their being very frequently repeated with great emphasis.

At length the whispering ceased; and the members of the board, having resumed their seats and their solemnity, Mr. Limbkins said:

'We have considered your proposition, and we don't approve of it.'

'Not at all,' said the gentleman in the white waistcoat.

'Decidedly not,' added the other members.

As Mr. Gamfield did happen to labour under the slight imputation of having bruised three or four boys to death already, it occurred to him that the board had, perhaps, in some unaccountable freak, taken it into their heads that this extraneous circumstance ought to influence their proceedings. It was very unlike their general mode of doing business, if they had; but still, as he had no particular wish to revive the rumour, he twisted his cap in his hands, and walked slowly from the table.

'So you won't let me have him, gen'l'men?' said Mr. Gamfield, pausing near the door.

'No,' replied Mr. Limbkins; 'at least, as it's a nasty business, we think you ought to take something less than the premium we offered.'

Mr. Gamfield's countenance brightened, as, with a quick step, he returned to the table, and said,

'What'll you give, gen'l'men? Come! Don't be too hard on a poor man. What'll you give?'

'I should say, three pound ten was plenty,' said Mr. Limbkins.

'Ten shillings too much,' said the gentleman in the white waistcoat.

'Come!' said Gamfield; 'say four pound, gen'l'men. Say four pound, and you've got rid of him for good and all. There!'

'Three pound ten,' repeated Mr. Limbkins, firmly.

'Come! I'll split the diff'erence, gen'l'men,' urged Gamfield. 'Three pound fifteen.'

'Not a farthing more,' was the firm reply of Mr. Limbkins.

'You're desperate hard upon me, gen'l'men,' said Gamfield, wavering.

'Pooh! pooh! nonsense!' said the gentleman in the white waistcoat. 'He'd be cheap with nothing at all, as a premium. Take him, you silly fellow! He's just the boy for you. He wants the stick, now and then: it'll do him good; and his board needn't come very expensive, for he hasn't been overfed since he was born. Ha! ha! ha!'

Mr. Gamfield gave an arch look at the faces round the table, and, observing a smile on all of them, gradually broke into a smile himself. The bargain was made. Mr. Bumble, was at once instructed that Oliver Twist and his indentures were to be conveyed before the magistrate, for signature and approval, that very afternoon.

In pursuance of this determination, little Oliver, to his excessive astonishment, was released from bondage, and ordered to put himself into a clean shirt. He had hardly achieved this very unusual gymnastic performance, when Mr. Bumble brought him, with his own hands, a basin of gruel, and the holiday allowance of two ounces and a quarter of bread. At this tremendous sight, Oliver began to cry very piteously: thinking, not unnaturally, that the board must have determined to kill him for some useful purpose, or they never would have begun to fatten him up in that way.

'Don't make your eyes red, Oliver, but eat your food and be thankful,' said Mr. Bumble, in a tone of impressive pomposity. 'You're a going to be made a 'prentice of, Oliver.'

'A prentice, sir!' said the child, trembling.

'Yes, Oliver,' said Mr. Bumble. 'The kind and blessed gentleman which is so many parents to you, Oliver, when you have none of your own: are a going to 'prentice' you: and to set you up in life, and make a man of you: although the expense to the parish is three pound ten!—three pound ten, Oliver!—seventy shillins—one hundred and forty sixpences!—and all for a naughty orphan which nobody can't love.'

As Mr. Bumble paused to take breath, after delivering this address in an awful voice, the tears rolled down the poor child's face, and he sobbed bitterly.

'Come,' said Mr. Bumble, somewhat less pompously, for it was gratifying to his feelings to observe the effect his eloquence had produced; 'Come, Oliver! Wipe your eyes with the cuffs of your jacket, and don't cry into your gruel; that's a very foolish action, Oliver.' It certainly was, for there was quite enough water in it already.

On their way to the magistrate, Mr. Bumble instructed Oliver that all he would have to do, would be to look very happy, and say, when the gentleman asked him if he wanted to be apprenticed, that he should like it very much indeed; both of which injunctions Oliver promised to obey: the rather as Mr. Bumble threw in a gentle hint, that if he failed in either particular, there was no telling what would be done to him. When they arrived at the office, he was shut up in a little room by himself, and admonished by Mr. Bumble to stay there, until he came back to fetch him.

There the boy remained, with a palpitating heart, for half an hour. At the expiration of which time Mr. Bumble thrust in his head, unadorned with the cocked hat, and said aloud:

'Now, Oliver, my dear, come to the gentleman.' As Mr. Bumble said this, he put on a grim and threatening look, and added, in a low voice, 'Mind what I told you, you young rascal!'

Oliver stared innocently in Mr. Bumble's face at this somewhat contradictory style of address; but that gentleman prevented his offering any remark thereupon, by leading him at once into an adjoining room: the door of which was open. It was a large room, with a great window. Behind a desk, sat two old gentleman with powdered heads: one of whom was reading the newspaper; while the other was perusing, with the aid of a pair of tortoise-shell spectacles, a small piece of parchment which lay before him. Mr. Limbkins was standing in front of the desk on one side; and Mr. Gamfield, with a partially washed face, on the other; while two or three bluff-looking men, in top-boots, were lounging about.

The old gentleman with the spectacles gradually dozed off, over the little bit of parchment; and there was a short pause, after Oliver had been stationed by Mr. Bumble in front of the desk.

'This is the boy, your worship,' said Mr. Bumble.

The old gentleman who was reading the newspaper raised his head for a moment, and pulled the other old

gentleman by the sleeve; whereupon, the last-mentioned old gentleman woke up.

'Oh, is this the boy?' said the old gentleman.

'This is him, sir,' replied Mr. Bumble. 'Bow to the magistrate, my dear.'

Oliver roused himself, and made his best obeisance. He had been wondering, with his eyes fixed on the magistrates' powder, whether all boards were born with that white stuff on their heads, and were boards from thenceforth on that account.

'Well,' said the old gentleman, 'I suppose he's fond of chimney-sweeping?'

'He doats on it, your worship,' replied Bumble; giving Oliver a sly pinch, to intimate that he had better not say he didn't.

'And he *will* be a sweep, will he?' inquired the old gentleman.

'If we was to bind him to any other trade to-morrow, he'd run away simultaneous, your worship,' replied Bumble.

'And this man that's to be his master—you, sir—you'll treat him well, and feed him, and do all that sort of thing, will you?' said the old gentleman.

'When I says I will, I means I will,' replied Mr. Gamfield doggedly.

'You're a rough speaker, my friend, but you look an honest, open-hearted man,' said the old gentleman: turning his spectacles in the direction of the candidate for Oliver's premium, whose villainous countenance was a regular stamped receipt for cruelty. But the magistrate was half blind and half childish, so he couldn't reasonably be expected to discern what other people did.

'I hope I am, sir,' said Mr. Gamfield, with an ugly leer.

'I have no doubt you are, my friend,' replied the old gentleman: fixing his spectacles more firmly on his nose, and looking about him for the inkstand.

It was the critical moment of Oliver's fate. If the inkstand had been where the old gentleman thought it was, he would have dipped his pen into it, and signed the indentures, and Oliver would have been straightway hurried off. But, as it chanced to be immediately under his nose, it followed, as a matter of course, that he looked all over his desk for it, without finding it; and happening in the course of his search to look straight before him, his gaze encountered the pale and terrified face of Oliver Twist: who, despite all the admonitory looks and pinches of Bumble, was regarding the repulsive countenance of his future master, with a mingled expression of horror and fear, too palpable to be mistaken, even by a half-blind magistrate.

The old gentleman stopped, laid down his pen, and looked from Oliver to Mr. Limbkins; who attempted to take snuff with a cheerful and unconcerned aspect.

'My boy!' said the old gentleman, 'you look pale and alarmed. What is the matter?'

'Stand a little away from him, Beadle,' said the other magistrate: laying aside the paper, and leaning forward with an expression of interest. 'Now, boy, tell us what's the matter: don't be afraid.'

Oliver fell on his knees, and clasping his hands together, prayed that they would order him back to the dark room—that they would starve him—beat him—kill him if they pleased—rather than send him away with that dreadful man.

'Well!' said Mr. Bumble, raising his hands and eyes with most impressive solemnity. 'Well! of all the artful and designing orphans that ever I see, Oliver, you are one of the most bare-facedest.'

'Hold your tongue, Beadle,' said the second old gentleman, when Mr. Bumble had given vent to this compound adjective.

'I beg your worship's pardon,' said Mr. Bumble, incredulous of having heard aright. 'Did your worship speak to me?'

'Yes. Hold your tongue.'

Mr. Bumble was stupefied with astonishment. A beadle ordered to hold his tongue! A moral revolution!

The old gentleman in the tortoise-shell spectacles looked at his companion, he nodded significantly.

'We refuse to sanction these indentures,' said the old gentleman: tossing aside the piece of parchment as he spoke.

'I hope,' stammered Mr. Limbkins: 'I hope the magistrates will not form the opinion that the authorities have been guilty of any improper conduct, on the unsupported testimony of a child.'

'The magistrates are not called upon to pronounce any opinion on the matter,' said the second old gentleman sharply. 'Take the boy back to the workhouse, and treat him kindly. He seems to want it.'

That same evening, the gentleman in the white waistcoat most positively and decidedly affirmed, not only that Oliver would be hung, but that he would be drawn and quartered into the bargain. Mr. Bumble shook his head with gloomy mystery, and said he wished he might come to good; whereunto Mr. Gamfield replied, that he wished he might come to him; which, although he agreed with the beadle in most matters, would seem to be a wish of a totally opposite description.

The next morning, the public were once informed that Oliver Twist was again To Let, and that five pounds would be paid to anybody who would take possession of him.

CHAPTER IV — OLIVER, BEING OFFERED

ANOTHER PLACE, MAKES HIS FIRST ENTRY INTO PUBLIC LIFE

In great families, when an advantageous place cannot be obtained, either in possession, reversion, remainder, or expectancy, for the young man who is growing up, it is a very general custom to send him to sea. The board, in imitation of so wise and salutary an example, took counsel together on the expediency of shipping off Oliver Twist, in some small trading vessel bound to a good unhealthy port. This suggested itself as the very best thing that could possibly be done with him: the probability being, that the skipper would flog him to death, in a playful mood, some day after dinner, or would knock his brains out with an iron bar; both pastimes being, as is pretty generally known, very favourite and common recreations among gentleman of that class. The more the case presented itself to the board, in this point of view, the more manifold the advantages of the step appeared; so, they came to the conclusion that the only way of providing for Oliver effectually, was to send him to sea without delay.

Mr. Bumble had been despatched to make various preliminary inquiries, with the view of finding out some captain or other who wanted a cabin-boy without any friends; and was returning to the workhouse to communicate the result of his mission; when he encountered at the gate, no less a person than Mr. Sowerberry, the parochial undertaker.

Mr. Sowerberry was a tall gaunt, large-jointed man, attired in a suit of threadbare black, with darned cotton stockings of the same colour, and shoes to answer. His features were not naturally intended to wear a smiling aspect, but he was in general rather given to professional jocosity. His step was elastic, and his face betokened inward pleasantry, as he advanced to Mr. Bumble, and shook him cordially by the hand.

‘I have taken the measure of the two women that died last night, Mr. Bumble,’ said the undertaker.

‘You’ll make your fortune, Mr. Sowerberry,’ said the beadle, as he thrust his thumb and forefinger into the proffered snuff-box of the undertaker: which was an ingenious little model of a patent coffin. ‘I say you’ll make your fortune, Mr. Sowerberry,’ repeated Mr. Bumble, tapping the undertaker on the shoulder, in a friendly manner, with his cane.

‘Think so?’ said the undertaker in a tone which half admitted and half disputed the probability of the event. ‘The prices allowed by the board are very small, Mr. Bumble.’

‘So are the coffins,’ replied the beadle: with precisely as near an approach to a laugh as a great official ought to indulge in.

Mr. Sowerberry was much tickled at this: as of course he ought to be; and laughed a long time without cessation. ‘Well, well, Mr. Bumble,’ he said at length, ‘there’s no denying that, since the new system of feeding has come in, the coffins are something narrower and more shallow than they used to be; but we must have some profit, Mr. Bumble. Well-seasoned timber is an expensive article, sir; and all the iron handles come, by canal, from Birmingham.’

‘Well, well,’ said Mr. Bumble, ‘every trade has its drawbacks. A fair profit is, of course, allowable.’

‘Of course, of course,’ replied the undertaker; ‘and if I don’t get a profit upon this or that particular article, why, I make it up in the long-run, you see—he! he! he!’

‘Just so,’ said Mr. Bumble.

‘Though I must say,’ continued the undertaker, resuming the current of observations which the beadle had interrupted: ‘though I must say, Mr. Bumble, that I have to contend against one very great disadvantage: which is, that all the stout people go off the quickest. The people who have been better off, and have paid rates for many years, are the first to sink when they come into the house; and let me tell you, Mr. Bumble, that three or four inches over one’s calculation makes a great hole in one’s profits: especially when one has a family to provide for, sir.’

As Mr. Sowerberry said this, with the becoming indignation of an ill-used man; and as Mr. Bumble felt that it rather tended to convey a reflection on the honour of the parish; the latter gentleman thought it advisable to change the subject. Oliver Twist being uppermost in his mind, he made him his theme.

‘By the bye,’ said Mr. Bumble, ‘you don’t know anybody who wants a boy, do you? A porochial ‘prentis, who is at present a dead-weight; a millstone, as I may say, round the porochial throat? Liberal terms, Mr. Sowerberry, liberal terms?’ As Mr. Bumble spoke, he raised his cane to the bill above him, and gave three distinct raps upon the words ‘five pounds’: which were printed thereon in Roman capitals of gigantic size.

‘Gadso!’ said the undertaker: taking Mr. Bumble by the gilt-edged lappel of his official coat; ‘that’s just the very thing I wanted to speak to you about. You know—dear me, what a very elegant button this is, Mr. Bumble! I never noticed it before.’

‘Yes, I think it rather pretty,’ said the beadle, glancing proudly downwards at the large brass buttons which embellished his coat. ‘The die is the same as the porochial seal—the Good Samaritan healing the sick and bruised man. The board presented it to me on Newyear’s morning, Mr. Sowerberry. I put it on, I remember, for the first time, to attend the inquest on that reduced tradesman, who died in a doorway at midnight.’

‘I recollect,’ said the undertaker. ‘The jury brought it in, “Died from exposure to the cold, and want of the common necessaries of life,” didn’t they?’

Mr. Bumble nodded.

‘And they made it a special verdict, I think,’ said the undertaker, ‘by adding some words to the effect, that if the relieving officer had—’

‘Tush! Foolery!’ interposed the beadle. ‘If the board attended to all the nonsense that ignorant jurymen talk, they’d have enough to do.’

‘Very true,’ said the undertaker; ‘they would indeed.’

‘Juries,’ said Mr. Bumble, grasping his cane tightly, as was his wont when working into a passion: ‘juries is ineddicated, vulgar, grovelling wretches.’

‘So they are,’ said the undertaker.

‘They haven’t no more philosophy nor political economy about ‘em than that,’ said the beadle, snapping his fingers contemptuously.

‘No more they have,’ acquiesced the undertaker.

‘I despise ‘em,’ said the beadle, growing very red in the face.

‘So do I,’ rejoined the undertaker.

‘And I only wish we’d a jury of the independent sort, in the house for a week or two,’ said the beadle; ‘the rules and regulations of the board would soon bring their spirit down for ‘em.’

‘Let ‘em alone for that,’ replied the undertaker. So saying, he smiled, approvingly: to calm the rising wrath of the indignant parish officer.

Mr Bumble lifted off his cocked hat; took a handkerchief from the inside of the crown; wiped from his forehead the perspiration which his rage had engendered; fixed the cocked hat on again; and, turning to the undertaker, said in a calmer voice:

‘Well; what about the boy?’

‘Oh!’ replied the undertaker; ‘why, you know, Mr. Bumble, I pay a good deal towards the poor’s rates.’

‘Hem!’ said Mr. Bumble. ‘Well?’

‘Well,’ replied the undertaker, ‘I was thinking that if I pay so much towards ‘em, I’ve a right to get as much out of ‘em as I can, Mr. Bumble; and so—I think I’ll take the boy myself.’

Mr. Bumble grasped the undertaker by the arm, and led him into the building. Mr. Sowerberry was closeted with the board for five minutes; and it was arranged that Oliver should go to him that evening ‘upon liking’—a phrase which means, in the case of a parish apprentice, that if the master find, upon a short trial, that he can get enough work out of a boy without putting too much food into him, he shall have him for a term of years, to do what he likes with.

When little Oliver was taken before ‘the gentlemen’ that evening; and informed that he was to go, that night, as general house-lad to a coffin-maker’s; and that if he complained of his situation, or ever came back to the parish again, he would be sent to sea, there to be drowned, or knocked on the head, as the case might be, he evinced so little emotion, that they by common consent pronounced him a hardened young rascal, and ordered Mr. Bumble to remove him forthwith.

Now, although it was very natural that the board, of all people in the world, should feel in a great state of virtuous astonishment and horror at the smallest tokens of want of feeling on the part of anybody, they were rather out, in this particular instance. The simple fact was, that Oliver, instead of possessing too little feeling, possessed rather too much; and was in a fair way of being reduced, for life, to a state of brutal stupidity and sullenness by the ill usage he had received. He heard the news of his destination, in perfect silence; and, having had his luggage put into his hand—which was not very difficult to carry, inasmuch as it was all comprised within the limits of a brown paper parcel, about half a foot square by three inches deep—he pulled his cap over his eyes; and once more attaching himself to Mr. Bumble’s coat cuff, was led away by that dignitary to a new scene of suffering.

For some time, Mr. Bumble drew Oliver along, without notice or remark; for the beadle carried his head very erect, as a beadle always should: and, it being a windy day, little Oliver was completely enshrouded by the skirts of Mr. Bumble’s coat as they blew open, and disclosed to great advantage his flapped waistcoat and drab plush knee-breeches. As they drew near to their destination, however, Mr. Bumble thought it expedient to look down, and see that the boy was in good order for inspection by his new master: which he accordingly did, with a fit and becoming air of gracious patronage.

‘Oliver!’ said Mr. Bumble.

‘Yes, sir,’ replied Oliver, in a low, tremulous voice.

‘Pull that cap off your eyes, and hold up your head, sir.’

Although Oliver did as he was desired, at once; and passed the back of his unoccupied hand briskly across his eyes, he left a tear in them when he looked up at his conductor. As Mr. Bumble gazed sternly upon him, it rolled down his cheek. It was followed by another, and another. The child made a strong effort, but it was an unsuccessful one. Withdrawing his other hand from Mr. Bumble’s he covered his face with both; and wept until the tears sprung out from between his chin and bony fingers.

‘Well!’ exclaimed Mr. Bumble, stopping short, and darting at his little charge a look of intense malignity. ‘Well! Of *all* the ungratefullest, and worst-disposed boys as ever I see, Oliver, you are the—’

‘No, no, sir,’ sobbed Oliver, clinging to the hand which held the well-known cane; ‘no, no, sir; I will be good indeed; indeed, indeed I will, sir! I am a very little boy, sir; and it is so—so—’

‘So what?’ inquired Mr. Bumble in amazement.

‘So lonely, sir! So very lonely!’ cried the child. ‘Everybody hates me. Oh! sir, don’t, don’t pray be cross to me!’ The child beat his hand upon his heart; and looked in his companion’s face, with tears of real agony.

Mr. Bumble regarded Oliver’s piteous and helpless look, with some astonishment, for a few seconds; hemmed three or four times in a husky manner; and after muttering something about ‘that troublesome cough,’ bade Oliver dry his eyes and be a good boy. Then once more taking his hand, he walked on with him in silence.

The undertaker, who had just put up the shutters of his shop, was making some entries in his day-book by the light of a most appropriate dismal candle, when Mr. Bumble entered.

‘Aha!’ said the undertaker; looking up from the book, and pausing in the middle of a word; ‘is that you, Bumble?’

‘No one else, Mr. Sowerberry,’ replied the beadle. ‘Here! I’ve brought the boy.’ Oliver made a bow.

‘Oh! that’s the boy, is it?’ said the undertaker: raising the candle above his head, to get a better view of Oliver. ‘Mrs. Sowerberry, will you have the goodness to come here a moment, my dear?’

Mrs. Sowerberry emerged from a little room behind the shop, and presented the form of a short, then, squeezed-up woman, with a vixenish countenance.

'My dear,' said Mr. Sowerberry, deferentially, 'this is the boy from the workhouse that I told you of.' Oliver bowed again.

'Dear me!' said the undertaker's wife, 'he's very small.'

'Why, he *is* rather small,' replied Mr. Bumble: looking at Oliver as if it were his fault that he was no bigger; 'he is small. There's no denying it. But he'll grow, Mrs. Sowerberry—he'll grow.'

'Ah! I dare say he will,' replied the lady pettishly, 'on our victuals and our drink. I see no saving in parish children, not I; for they always cost more to keep, than they're worth. However, men always think they know best. There! Get downstairs, little bag o' bones.' With this, the undertaker's wife opened a side door, and pushed Oliver down a steep flight of stairs into a stone cell, damp and dark: forming the ante-room to the coal-cellar, and denominated 'kitchen'; wherein sat a slatternly girl, in shoes down at heel, and blue worsted stockings very much out of repair.

'Here, Charlotte,' said Mr. Sowerberry, who had followed Oliver down, 'give this boy some of the cold bits that were put by for Trip. He hasn't come home since the morning, so he may go without 'em. I dare say the boy isn't too dainty to eat 'em—are you, boy?'

Oliver, whose eyes had glistened at the mention of meat, and who was trembling with eagerness to devour it, replied in the negative; and a plateful of coarse broken victuals was set before him.

I wish some well-fed philosopher, whose meat and drink turn to gall within him; whose blood is ice, whose heart is iron; could have seen Oliver Twist clutching at the dainty viands that the dog had neglected. I wish he could have witnessed the horrible avidity with which Oliver tore the bits asunder with all the ferocity of famine. There is only one thing I should like better; and that would be to see the Philosopher making the same sort of meal himself, with the same relish.

'Well,' said the undertaker's wife, when Oliver had finished his supper: which she had regarded in silent horror, and with fearful auguries of his future appetite: 'have you done?'

There being nothing eatable within his reach, Oliver replied in the affirmative.

'Then come with me,' said Mrs. Sowerberry: taking up a dim and dirty lamp, and leading the way upstairs; 'your bed's under the counter. You don't mind sleeping among the coffins, I suppose? But it doesn't much matter whether you do or don't, for you can't sleep anywhere else. Come; don't keep me here all night!'

Oliver lingered no longer, but meekly followed his new mistress.

CHAPTER V — OLIVER MINGLES WITH NEW ASSOCIATES. GOING TO A FUNERAL FOR THE FIRST TIME, HE FORMS AN UNFAVOURABLE NOTION OF HIS MASTER'S BUSINESS

Oliver, being left to himself in the undertaker's shop, set the lamp down on a workman's bench, and gazed timidly about him with a feeling of awe and dread, which many people a good deal older than he will be at no loss to understand. An unfinished coffin on black tressels, which stood in the middle of the shop, looked so gloomy and death-like that a cold tremble came over him, every time his eyes wandered in the direction of the dismal object: from which he almost expected to see some frightful form slowly rear its head, to drive him mad with terror. Against the wall were ranged, in regular array, a long row of elm boards cut in the same shape: looking in the dim light, like high-shouldered ghosts with their hands in their breeches pockets. Coffin-plates, elm-chips, bright-headed nails, and shreds of black cloth, lay scattered on the floor; and the wall behind the counter was ornamented with a lively representation of two mutes in very stiff neckcloths, on duty at a large private door, with a hearse drawn by four black steeds, approaching in the distance. The shop was close and hot. The atmosphere seemed tainted with the smell of coffins. The recess beneath the counter in which his flock mattress was thrust, looked like a grave.

Nor were these the only dismal feelings which depressed Oliver. He was alone in a strange place; and we all know how chilled and desolate the best of us will sometimes feel in such a situation. The boy had no friends to care for, or to care for him. The regret of no recent separation was fresh in his mind; the absence of no loved and well-remembered face sank heavily into his heart.

But his heart was heavy, notwithstanding; and he wished, as he crept into his narrow bed, that that were his coffin, and that he could be lain in a calm and lasting sleep in the churchyard ground, with the tall grass waving gently above his head, and the sound of the old deep bell to soothe him in his sleep.

Oliver was awakened in the morning, by a loud kicking at the outside of the shop-door: which, before he could huddle on his clothes, was repeated, in an angry and impetuous manner, about twenty-five times. When he began to undo the chain, the legs desisted, and a voice began.

'Open the door, will yer?' cried the voice which belonged to the legs which had kicked at the door.

'I will, directly, sir,' replied Oliver: undoing the chain, and turning the key.

'I suppose yer the new boy, ain't yer?' said the voice through the key-hole.

‘Yes, sir,’ replied Oliver.

‘How old are yer?’ inquired the voice.

‘Ten, sir,’ replied Oliver.

‘Then I’ll whop yer when I get in,’ said the voice; ‘you just see if I don’t, that’s all, my work’us brat!’ and having made this obliging promise, the voice began to whistle.

Oliver had been too often subjected to the process to which the very expressive monosyllable just recorded bears reference, to entertain the smallest doubt that the owner of the voice, whoever he might be, would redeem his pledge, most honourably. He drew back the bolts with a trembling hand, and opened the door.

For a second or two, Oliver glanced up the street, and down the street, and over the way: impressed with the belief that the unknown, who had addressed him through the key-hole, had walked a few paces off, to warm himself; for nobody did he see but a big charity-boy, sitting on a post in front of the house, eating a slice of bread and butter: which he cut into wedges, the size of his mouth, with a clasp-knife, and then consumed with great dexterity.

‘I beg your pardon, sir,’ said Oliver at length: seeing that no other visitor made his appearance; ‘did you knock?’

‘I kicked,’ replied the charity-boy.

‘Did you want a coffin, sir?’ inquired Oliver, innocently.

At this, the charity-boy looked monstrous fierce; and said that Oliver would want one before long, if he cut jokes with his superiors in that way.

‘Yer don’t know who I am, I suppose, Work’us?’ said the charity-boy, in continuation: descending from the top of the post, meanwhile, with edifying gravity.

‘No, sir,’ rejoined Oliver.

‘I’m Mister Noah Claypole,’ said the charity-boy, ‘and you’re under me. Take down the shutters, yer idle young ruffian!’ With this, Mr. Claypole administered a kick to Oliver, and entered the shop with a dignified air, which did him great credit. It is difficult for a large-headed, small-eyed youth, of lumbering make and heavy countenance, to look dignified under any circumstances; but it is more especially so, when superadded to these personal attractions are a red nose and yellow smalls.

Oliver, having taken down the shutters, and broken a pane of glass in his effort to stagger away beneath the weight of the first one to a small court at the side of the house in which they were kept during the day, was graciously assisted by Noah: who having consoled him with the assurance that ‘he’d catch it,’ condescended to help him. Mr. Sowerberry came down soon after. Shortly afterwards, Mrs. Sowerberry appeared. Oliver having ‘caught it,’ in fulfilment of Noah’s prediction, followed that young gentleman down the stairs to breakfast.

‘Come near the fire, Noah,’ said Charlotte. ‘I saved a nice little bit of bacon for you from master’s breakfast. Oliver, shut that door at Mister Noah’s back, and take them bits that I’ve put out on the cover of the bread-pan. There’s your tea; take it away to that box, and drink it there, and make haste, for they’ll want you to mind the shop. D’ye hear?’

‘D’ye hear, Work’us?’ said Noah Claypole.

‘Lor, Noah!’ said Charlotte, ‘what a rum creature you are! Why don’t you let the boy alone?’

‘Let him alone!’ said Noah. ‘Why everybody lets him alone enough, for the matter of that. Neither his father nor his mother will ever interfere with him. All his relations let him have his own way pretty well. Eh, Charlotte? He! he! he!’

‘Oh, you queer soul!’ said Charlotte, bursting into a hearty laugh, in which she was joined by Noah; after which they both looked scornfully at poor Oliver Twist, as he sat shivering on the box in the coldest corner of the room, and ate the stale pieces which had been specially reserved for him.

Noah was a charity-boy, but not a workhouse orphan. No chance-child was he, for he could trace his genealogy all the way back to his parents, who lived hard by; his mother being a washerwoman, and his father a drunken soldier, discharged with a wooden leg, and a diurnal pension of twopence-halfpenny and an unstateable fraction. The shop-boys in the neighbourhood had long been in the habit of branding Noah in the public streets, with the ignominious epithets of ‘leathers,’ ‘charity,’ and the like; and Noah had bourne them without reply. But, now that fortune had cast in his way a nameless orphan, at whom even the meanest could point the finger of scorn, he retorted on him with interest. This affords charming food for contemplation. It shows us what a beautiful thing human nature may be made to be; and how impartially the same amiable qualities are developed in the finest lord and the dirtiest charity-boy.

Oliver had been sojourning at the undertaker’s some three weeks or a month. Mr. and Mrs. Sowerberry—the shop being shut up—were taking their supper in the little back-parlour, when Mr. Sowerberry, after several deferential glances at his wife, said,

‘My dear—’ He was going to say more; but, Mrs. Sowerberry looking up, with a peculiarly unpropitious aspect, he stopped short.

‘Well,’ said Mrs. Sowerberry, sharply.

‘Nothing, my dear, nothing,’ said Mr. Sowerberry.

‘Ugh, you brute!’ said Mrs. Sowerberry.

‘Not at all, my dear,’ said Mr. Sowerberry humbly. ‘I thought you didn’t want to hear, my dear. I was only going to say—’

‘Oh, don’t tell me what you were going to say,’ interposed Mrs. Sowerberry. ‘I am nobody; don’t consult me, pray. *I* don’t want to intrude upon your secrets.’ As Mrs. Sowerberry said this, she gave an hysterical laugh, which threatened violent consequences.

‘But, my dear,’ said Sowerberry, ‘I want to ask your advice.’

‘No, no, don’t ask mine,’ replied Mrs. Sowerberry, in an affecting manner: ‘ask somebody else’s.’ Here,

there was another hysterical laugh, which frightened Mr. Sowerberry very much. This is a very common and much-approved matrimonial course of treatment, which is often very effective. It at once reduced Mr. Sowerberry to begging, as a special favour, to be allowed to say what Mrs. Sowerberry was most curious to hear. After a short duration, the permission was most graciously conceded.

'It's only about young Twist, my dear,' said Mr. Sowerberry. 'A very good-looking boy, that, my dear.'

'He need be, for he eats enough,' observed the lady.

'There's an expression of melancholy in his face, my dear,' resumed Mr. Sowerberry, 'which is very interesting. He would make a delightful mute, my love.'

Mrs. Sowerberry looked up with an expression of considerable wonderment. Mr. Sowerberry remarked it and, without allowing time for any observation on the good lady's part, proceeded.

'I don't mean a regular mute to attend grown-up people, my dear, but only for children's practice. It would be very new to have a mute in proportion, my dear. You may depend upon it, it would have a superb effect.'

Mrs. Sowerberry, who had a good deal of taste in the undertaking way, was much struck by the novelty of this idea; but, as it would have been compromising her dignity to have said so, under existing circumstances, she merely inquired, with much sharpness, why such an obvious suggestion had not presented itself to her husband's mind before? Mr. Sowerberry rightly construed this, as an acquiescence in his proposition; it was speedily determined, therefore, that Oliver should be at once initiated into the mysteries of the trade; and, with this view, that he should accompany his master on the very next occasion of his services being required.

The occasion was not long in coming. Half an hour after breakfast next morning, Mr. Bumble entered the shop; and supporting his cane against the counter, drew forth his large leathern pocket-book: from which he selected a small scrap of paper, which he handed over to Sowerberry.

'Aha!' said the undertaker, glancing over it with a lively countenance; 'an order for a coffin, eh?'

'For a coffin first, and a porochial funeral afterwards,' replied Mr. Bumble, fastening the strap of the leathern pocket-book: which, like himself, was very corpulent.

'Bayton,' said the undertaker, looking from the scrap of paper to Mr. Bumble. 'I never heard the name before.'

Bumble shook his head, as he replied, 'Obstinate people, Mr. Sowerberry; very obstinate. Proud, too, I'm afraid, sir.'

'Proud, eh?' exclaimed Mr. Sowerberry with a sneer. 'Come, that's too much.'

'Oh, it's sickening,' replied the beadle. 'Antimonial, Mr. Sowerberry!'

'So it is,' acquiesced the undertaker.

'We only heard of the family the night before last,' said the beadle; 'and we shouldn't have known anything about them, then, only a woman who lodges in the same house made an application to the porochial committee for them to send the porochial surgeon to see a woman as was very bad. He had gone out to dinner; but his 'prentice (which is a very clever lad) sent 'em some medicine in a blacking-bottle, offhand.'

'Ah, there's promptness,' said the undertaker.

'Promptness, indeed!' replied the beadle. 'But what's the consequence; what's the ungrateful behaviour of these rebels, sir? Why, the husband sends back word that the medicine won't suit his wife's complaint, and so she shan't take it—says she shan't take it, sir! Good, strong, wholesome medicine, as was given with great success to two Irish labourers and a coal-heaver, only a week before—sent 'em for nothing, with a blackin'-bottle in,—and he sends back word that she shan't take it, sir!'

As the atrocity presented itself to Mr. Bumble's mind in full force, he struck the counter sharply with his cane, and became flushed with indignation.

'Well,' said the undertaker, 'I ne—ver—did—'

'Never did, sir!' ejaculated the beadle. 'No, nor nobody never did; but now she's dead, we've got to bury her; and that's the direction; and the sooner it's done, the better.'

Thus saying, Mr. Bumble put on his cocked hat wrong side first, in a fever of parochial excitement; and flounced out of the shop.

'Why, he was so angry, Oliver, that he forgot even to ask after you!' said Mr. Sowerberry, looking after the beadle as he strode down the street.

'Yes, sir,' replied Oliver, who had carefully kept himself out of sight, during the interview; and who was shaking from head to foot at the mere recollection of the sound of Mr. Bumble's voice.

He needn't haven taken the trouble to shrink from Mr. Bumble's glance, however; for that functionary, on whom the prediction of the gentleman in the white waistcoat had made a very strong impression, thought that now the undertaker had got Oliver upon trial the subject was better avoided, until such time as he should be firmly bound for seven years, and all danger of his being returned upon the hands of the parish should be thus effectually and legally overcome.

'Well,' said Mr. Sowerberry, taking up his hat, 'the sooner this job is done, the better. Noah, look after the shop. Oliver, put on your cap, and come with me.' Oliver obeyed, and followed his master on his professional mission.

They walked on, for some time, through the most crowded and densely inhabited part of the town; and then, striking down a narrow street more dirty and miserable than any they had yet passed through, paused to look for the house which was the object of their search. The houses on either side were high and large, but very old, and tenanted by people of the poorest class: as their neglected appearance would have sufficiently denoted, without the concurrent testimony afforded by the squalid looks of the few men and women who, with folded arms and bodies half doubled, occasionally skulked along. A great many of the tenements had shop-fronts; but these were fast closed, and mouldering away; only the upper rooms being inhabited. Some houses which had become insecure from age and decay, were prevented from falling into the street, by huge beams of wood reared against the walls, and firmly planted in the road; but even these crazy dens seemed to

have been selected as the nightly haunts of some houseless wretches, for many of the rough boards which supplied the place of door and window, were wrenched from their positions, to afford an aperture wide enough for the passage of a human body. The kennel was stagnant and filthy. The very rats, which here and there lay putrefying in its rottenness, were hideous with famine.

There was neither knocker nor bell-handle at the open door where Oliver and his master stopped; so, groping his way cautiously through the dark passage, and bidding Oliver keep close to him and not be afraid the undertaker mounted to the top of the first flight of stairs. Stumbling against a door on the landing, he rapped at it with his knuckles.

It was opened by a young girl of thirteen or fourteen. The undertaker at once saw enough of what the room contained, to know it was the apartment to which he had been directed. He stepped in; Oliver followed him.

There was no fire in the room; but a man was crouching, mechanically, over the empty stove. An old woman, too, had drawn a low stool to the cold hearth, and was sitting beside him. There were some ragged children in another corner; and in a small recess, opposite the door, there lay upon the ground, something covered with an old blanket. Oliver shuddered as he cast his eyes toward the place, and crept involuntarily closer to his master; for though it was covered up, the boy felt that it was a corpse.

The man's face was thin and very pale; his hair and beard were grizzly; his eyes were bloodshot. The old woman's face was wrinkled; her two remaining teeth protruded over her under lip; and her eyes were bright and piercing. Oliver was afraid to look at either her or the man. They seemed so like the rats he had seen outside.

'Nobody shall go near her,' said the man, starting fiercely up, as the undertaker approached the recess. 'Keep back! Damn you, keep back, if you've a life to lose!'

'Nonsense, my good man,' said the undertaker, who was pretty well used to misery in all its shapes. 'Nonsense!'

'I tell you,' said the man: clenching his hands, and stamping furiously on the floor,—'I tell you I won't have her put into the ground. She couldn't rest there. The worms would worry her—not eat her—she is so worn away.'

The undertaker offered no reply to this raving; but producing a tape from his pocket, knelt down for a moment by the side of the body.

'Ah!' said the man: bursting into tears, and sinking on his knees at the feet of the dead woman; 'kneel down, kneel down—kneel round her, every one of you, and mark my words! I say she was starved to death. I never knew how bad she was, till the fever came upon her; and then her bones were starting through the skin. There was neither fire nor candle; she died in the dark—in the dark! She couldn't even see her children's faces, though we heard her gasping out their names. I begged for her in the streets: and they sent me to prison. When I came back, she was dying; and all the blood in my heart has dried up, for they starved her to death. I swear it before the God that saw it! They starved her!' He twined his hands in his hair; and, with a loud scream, rolled grovelling upon the floor: his eyes fixed, and the foam covering his lips.

The terrified children cried bitterly; but the old woman, who had hitherto remained as quiet as if she had been wholly deaf to all that passed, menaced them into silence. Having unloosened the cravat of the man who still remained extended on the ground, she tottered towards the undertaker.

'She was my daughter,' said the old woman, nodding her head in the direction of the corpse; and speaking with an idiotic leer, more ghastly than even the presence of death in such a place. 'Lord, Lord! Well, it *is* strange that I who gave birth to her, and was a woman then, should be alive and merry now, and she lying there: so cold and stiff! Lord, Lord!—to think of it; it's as good as a play—as good as a play!'

As the wretched creature mumbled and chuckled in her hideous merriment, the undertaker turned to go away.

'Stop, stop!' said the old woman in a loud whisper. 'Will she be buried to-morrow, or next day, or to-night? I laid her out; and I must walk, you know. Send me a large cloak: a good warm one: for it is bitter cold. We should have cake and wine, too, before we go! Never mind; send some bread—only a loaf of bread and a cup of water. Shall we have some bread, dear?' she said eagerly: catching at the undertaker's coat, as he once more moved towards the door.

'Yes, yes,' said the undertaker, 'of course. Anything you like!' He disengaged himself from the old woman's grasp; and, drawing Oliver after him, hurried away.

The next day, (the family having been meanwhile relieved with a half-quartern loaf and a piece of cheese, left with them by Mr. Bumble himself,) Oliver and his master returned to the miserable abode; where Mr. Bumble had already arrived, accompanied by four men from the workhouse, who were to act as bearers. An old black cloak had been thrown over the rags of the old woman and the man; and the bare coffin having been screwed down, was hoisted on the shoulders of the bearers, and carried into the street.

'Now, you must put your best leg foremost, old lady!' whispered Sowerberry in the old woman's ear; 'we are rather late; and it won't do, to keep the clergyman waiting. Move on, my men,—as quick as you like!'

Thus directed, the bearers trotted on under their light burden; and the two mourners kept as near them, as they could. Mr. Bumble and Sowerberry walked at a good smart pace in front; and Oliver, whose legs were not so long as his master's, ran by the side.

There was not so great a necessity for hurrying as Mr. Sowerberry had anticipated, however; for when they reached the obscure corner of the churchyard in which the nettles grew, and where the parish graves were made, the clergyman had not arrived; and the clerk, who was sitting by the vestry-room fire, seemed to think it by no means improbable that it might be an hour or so, before he came. So, they put the bier on the brink of the grave; and the two mourners waited patiently in the damp clay, with a cold rain drizzling down, while the ragged boys whom the spectacle had attracted into the churchyard played a noisy game at hide-and-seek among the tombstones, or varied their amusements by jumping backwards and forwards over the coffin. Mr. Sowerberry and Bumble, being personal friends of the clerk, sat by the fire with him, and read the paper.

At length, after a lapse of something more than an hour, Mr. Bumble, and Sowerberry, and the clerk, were

seen running towards the grave. Immediately afterwards, the clergyman appeared: putting on his surplice as he came along. Mr. Bumble then thrashed a boy or two, to keep up appearances; and the reverend gentleman, having read as much of the burial service as could be compressed into four minutes, gave his surplice to the clerk, and walked away again.

'Now, Bill!' said Sowerberry to the grave-digger. 'Fill up!'

It was no very difficult task, for the grave was so full, that the uppermost coffin was within a few feet of the surface. The grave-digger shovelled in the earth; stamped it loosely down with his feet: shouldered his spade; and walked off, followed by the boys, who murmured very loud complaints at the fun being over so soon.

'Come, my good fellow!' said Bumble, tapping the man on the back. 'They want to shut up the yard.'

The man who had never once moved, since he had taken his station by the grave side, started, raised his head, stared at the person who had addressed him, walked forward for a few paces; and fell down in a swoon. The crazy old woman was too much occupied in bewailing the loss of her cloak (which the undertaker had taken off), to pay him any attention; so they threw a can of cold water over him; and when he came to, saw him safely out of the churchyard, locked the gate, and departed on their different ways.

'Well, Oliver,' said Sowerberry, as they walked home, 'how do you like it?'

'Pretty well, thank you, sir' replied Oliver, with considerable hesitation. 'Not very much, sir.'

'Ah, you'll get used to it in time, Oliver,' said Sowerberry. 'Nothing when you *are* used to it, my boy.'

Oliver wondered, in his own mind, whether it had taken a very long time to get Mr. Sowerberry used to it. But he thought it better not to ask the question; and walked back to the shop: thinking over all he had seen and heard.

CHAPTER VI — OLIVER, BEING GOADED BY THE TAUNTS OF NOAH, ROUSES INTO ACTION, AND RATHER ASTONISHES HIM

The month's trial over, Oliver was formally apprenticed. It was a nice sickly season just at this time. In commercial phrase, coffins were looking up; and, in the course of a few weeks, Oliver acquired a great deal of experience. The success of Mr. Sowerberry's ingenious speculation, exceeded even his most sanguine hopes. The oldest inhabitants recollected no period at which measles had been so prevalent, or so fatal to infant existence; and many were the mournful processions which little Oliver headed, in a hat-band reaching down to his knees, to the indescribable admiration and emotion of all the mothers in the town. As Oliver accompanied his master in most of his adult expeditions too, in order that he might acquire that equanimity of demeanour and full command of nerve which was essential to a finished undertaker, he had many opportunities of observing the beautiful resignation and fortitude with which some strong-minded people bear their trials and losses.

For instance; when Sowerberry had an order for the burial of some rich old lady or gentleman, who was surrounded by a great number of nephews and nieces, who had been perfectly inconsolable during the previous illness, and whose grief had been wholly irrepressible even on the most public occasions, they would be as happy among themselves as need be—quite cheerful and contented—conversing together with as much freedom and gaiety, as if nothing whatever had happened to disturb them. Husbands, too, bore the loss of their wives with the most heroic calmness. Wives, again, put on weeds for their husbands, as if, so far from grieving in the garb of sorrow, they had made up their minds to render it as becoming and attractive as possible. It was observable, too, that ladies and gentlemen who were in passions of anguish during the ceremony of interment, recovered almost as soon as they reached home, and became quite composed before the tea-drinking was over. All this was very pleasant and improving to see; and Oliver beheld it with great admiration.

That Oliver Twist was moved to resignation by the example of these good people, I cannot, although I am his biographer, undertake to affirm with any degree of confidence; but I can most distinctly say, that for many months he continued meekly to submit to the domination and ill-treatment of Noah Claypole: who used him far worse than before, now that his jealousy was roused by seeing the new boy promoted to the black stick and hatband, while he, the old one, remained stationary in the muffin-cap and leathers. Charlotte treated him ill, because Noah did; and Mrs. Sowerberry was his decided enemy, because Mr. Sowerberry was disposed to be his friend; so, between these three on one side, and a glut of funerals on the other, Oliver was not altogether as comfortable as the hungry pig was, when he was shut up, by mistake, in the grain department of a brewery.

And now, I come to a very important passage in Oliver's history; for I have to record an act, slight and unimportant perhaps in appearance, but which indirectly produced a material change in all his future prospects and proceedings.

One day, Oliver and Noah had descended into the kitchen at the usual dinner-hour, to banquet upon a small joint of mutton—a pound and a half of the worst end of the neck—when Charlotte being called out of the way, there ensued a brief interval of time, which Noah Claypole, being hungry and vicious, considered he could not possibly devote to a worthier purpose than aggravating and tantalising young Oliver Twist.

Intent upon this innocent amusement, Noah put his feet on the table-cloth; and pulled Oliver's hair; and twitched his ears; and expressed his opinion that he was a 'sneak'; and furthermore announced his intention

of coming to see him hanged, whenever that desirable event should take place; and entered upon various topics of petty annoyance, like a malicious and ill-conditioned charity-boy as he was. But, making Oliver cry, Noah attempted to be more facetious still; and in his attempt, did what many sometimes do to this day, when they want to be funny. He got rather personal.

'Work'us,' said Noah, 'how's your mother?'

'She's dead,' replied Oliver; 'don't you say anything about her to me!'

Oliver's colour rose as he said this; he breathed quickly; and there was a curious working of the mouth and nostrils, which Mr. Claypole thought must be the immediate precursor of a violent fit of crying. Under this impression he returned to the charge.

'What did she die of, Work'us?' said Noah.

'Of a broken heart, some of our old nurses told me,' replied Oliver: more as if he were talking to himself, than answering Noah. 'I think I know what it must be to die of that!'

'Tol de rol lol lol, right fol lairy, Work'us,' said Noah, as a tear rolled down Oliver's cheek. 'What's set you a snivelling now?'

'Not *you*,' replied Oliver, sharply. 'There; that's enough. Don't say anything more to me about her; you'd better not!'

'Better not!' exclaimed Noah. 'Well! Better not! Work'us, don't be impudent. *Your* mother, too! She was a nice 'un she was. Oh, Lor!' And here, Noah nodded his head expressively; and curled up as much of his small red nose as muscular action could collect together, for the occasion.

'Yer know, Work'us,' continued Noah, emboldened by Oliver's silence, and speaking in a jeering tone of affected pity: of all tones the most annoying: 'Yer know, Work'us, it can't be helped now; and of course yer couldn't help it then; and I am very sorry for it; and I'm sure we all are, and pity yer very much. But yer must know, Work'us, yer mother was a regular right-down bad 'un.'

'What did you say?' inquired Oliver, looking up very quickly.

'A regular right-down bad 'un, Work'us,' replied Noah, coolly. 'And it's a great deal better, Work'us, that she died when she did, or else she'd have been hard labouring in Bridewell, or transported, or hung; which is more likely than either, isn't it?'

Crimson with fury, Oliver started up; overthrew the chair and table; seized Noah by the throat; shook him, in the violence of his rage, till his teeth chattered in his head; and collecting his whole force into one heavy blow, felled him to the ground.

A minute ago, the boy had looked the quiet child, mild, dejected creature that harsh treatment had made him. But his spirit was roused at last; the cruel insult to his dead mother had set his blood on fire. His breast heaved; his attitude was erect; his eye bright and vivid; his whole person changed, as he stood glaring over the cowardly tormentor who now lay crouching at his feet; and defied him with an energy he had never known before.

'He'll murder me!' blubbered Noah. 'Charlotte! missis! Here's the new boy a murdering of me! Help! help! Oliver's gone mad! Char—lotte!'

Noah's shouts were responded to, by a loud scream from Charlotte, and a louder from Mrs. Sowerberry; the former of whom rushed into the kitchen by a side-door, while the latter paused on the staircase till she was quite certain that it was consistent with the preservation of human life, to come further down.

'Oh, you little wretch!' screamed Charlotte: seizing Oliver with her utmost force, which was about equal to

that of a moderately strong man in particularly good training. ‘Oh, you little un-grate-ful, mur-de-rous, hor-rid villain!’ And between every syllable, Charlotte gave Oliver a blow with all her might: accompanying it with a scream, for the benefit of society.

Charlotte’s fist was by no means a light one; but, lest it should not be effectual in calming Oliver’s wrath, Mrs. Sowerberry plunged into the kitchen, and assisted to hold him with one hand, while she scratched his face with the other. In this favourable position of affairs, Noah rose from the ground, and pommelled him behind.

This was rather too violent exercise to last long. When they were all wearied out, and could tear and beat no longer, they dragged Oliver, struggling and shouting, but nothing daunted, into the dust-cellar, and there locked him up. This being done, Mrs. Sowerberry sunk into a chair, and burst into tears.

‘Bless her, she’s going off!’ said Charlotte. ‘A glass of water, Noah, dear. Make haste!’

‘Oh! Charlotte,’ said Mrs. Sowerberry: speaking as well as she could, through a deficiency of breath, and a sufficiency of cold water, which Noah had poured over her head and shoulders. ‘Oh! Charlotte, what a mercy we have not all been murdered in our beds!’

‘Ah! mercy indeed, ma’am,’ was the reply. I only hope this’ll teach master not to have any more of these dreadful creatures, that are born to be murderers and robbers from their very cradle. Poor Noah! He was all but killed, ma’am, when I come in.’

‘Poor fellow!’ said Mrs. Sowerberry: looking piteously on the charity-boy.

Noah, whose top waistcoat-button might have been somewhere on a level with the crown of Oliver’s head, rubbed his eyes with the inside of his wrists while this commiseration was bestowed upon him, and performed some affecting tears and sniffs.

‘What’s to be done!’ exclaimed Mrs. Sowerberry. ‘Your master’s not at home; there’s not a man in the house, and he’ll kick that door down in ten minutes.’ Oliver’s vigorous plunges against the bit of timber in question, rendered this occurance highly probable.

‘Dear, dear! I don’t know, ma’am,’ said Charlotte, ‘unless we send for the police-officers.’

‘Or the millingtary,’ suggested Mr. Claypole.

‘No, no,’ said Mrs. Sowerberry: bethinking herself of Oliver’s old friend. ‘Run to Mr. Bumble, Noah, and tell him to come here directly, and not to lose a minute; never mind your cap! Make haste! You can hold a knife to that black eye, as you run along. It’ll keep the swelling down.’

Noah stopped to make no reply, but started off at his fullest speed; and very much it astonished the people who were out walking, to see a charity-boy tearing through the streets pell-mell, with no cap on his head, and a clasp-knife at his eye.

CHAPTER VII — OLIVER CONTINUES REFRACTORY

Noah Claypole ran along the streets at his swiftest pace, and paused not once for breath, until he reached the workhouse-gate. Having rested here, for a minute or so, to collect a good burst of sobs and an imposing show of tears and terror, he knocked loudly at the wicket; and presented such a rueful face to the aged pauper who opened it, that even he, who saw nothing but rueful faces about him at the best of times, started back in astonishment.

‘Why, what’s the matter with the boy!’ said the old pauper.

‘Mr. Bumble! Mr. Bumble!’ cried Noah, with well-affected dismay: and in tones so loud and agitated, that they not only caught the ear of Mr. Bumble himself, who happened to be hard by, but alarmed him so much that he rushed into the yard without his cocked hat,—which is a very curious and remarkable circumstance: as showing that even a beadle, acted upon a sudden and powerful impulse, may be afflicted with a momentary visitation of loss of self-possession, and forgetfulness of personal dignity.

‘Oh, Mr. Bumble, sir!’ said Noah: ‘Oliver, sir,—Oliver has—’

‘What? What?’ interposed Mr. Bumble: with a gleam of pleasure in his metallic eyes. ‘Not run away; he hasn’t run away, has he, Noah?’

‘No, sir, no. Not run away, sir, but he’s turned wicious,’ replied Noah. ‘He tried to murder me, sir; and then he tried to murder Charlotte; and then missis. Oh! what dreadful pain it is!

Such agony, please, sir!’ And here, Noah writhed and twisted his body into an extensive variety of eel-like positions; thereby giving Mr. Bumble to understand that, from the violent and sanguinary onset of Oliver Twist, he had sustained severe internal injury and damage, from which he was at that moment suffering the acutest torture.

When Noah saw that the intelligence he communicated perfectly paralysed Mr. Bumble, he imparted additional effect thereunto, by bewailing his dreadful wounds ten times louder than before; and when he observed a gentleman in a white waistcoat crossing the yard, he was more tragic in his lamentations than ever: rightly conceiving it highly expedient to attract the notice, and rouse the indignation, of the gentleman aforesaid.

The gentleman’s notice was very soon attracted; for he had not walked three paces, when he turned angrily round, and inquired what that young cur was howling for, and why Mr. Bumble did not favour him with

something which would render the series of vocular exclamations so designated, an involuntary process?

'It's a poor boy from the free-school, sir,' replied Mr. Bumble, 'who has been nearly murdered—all but murdered, sir,—by young Twist.'

'By Jove!' exclaimed the gentleman in the white waistcoat, stopping short. 'I knew it! I felt a strange presentiment from the very first, that that audacious young savage would come to be hung!'

'He has likewise attempted, sir, to murder the female servant,' said Mr. Bumble, with a face of ashy paleness.

'And his missis,' interposed Mr. Claypole.

'And his master, too, I think you said, Noah?' added Mr. Bumble.

'No! he's out, or he would have murdered him,' replied Noah. 'He said he wanted to.'

'Ah! Said he wanted to, did he, my boy?' inquired the gentleman in the white waistcoat.

'Yes, sir,' replied Noah. 'And please, sir, missis wants to know whether Mr. Bumble can spare time to step up there, directly, and flog him—'cause master's out.'

'Certainly, my boy; certainly,' said the gentleman in the white waistcoat: smiling benignly, and patting Noah's head, which was about three inches higher than his own. 'You're a good boy—a very good boy. Here's a penny for you. Bumble, just step up to Sowerberry's with your cane, and see what's best to be done. Don't spare him, Bumble.'

'No, I will not, sir,' replied the beadle. And the cocked hat and cane having been, by this time, adjusted to their owner's satisfaction, Mr. Bumble and Noah Claypole betook themselves with all speed to the undertaker's shop.

Here the position of affairs had not at all improved. Sowerberry had not yet returned, and Oliver continued to kick, with undiminished vigour, at the cellar-door. The accounts of his ferocity as related by Mrs. Sowerberry and Charlotte, were of so startling a nature, that Mr. Bumble judged it prudent to parley, before opening the door. With this view he gave a kick at the outside, by way of prelude; and, then, applying his mouth to the keyhole, said, in a deep and impressive tone:

'Oliver!'

'Come; you let me out!' replied Oliver, from the inside.

'Do you know this here voice, Oliver?' said Mr. Bumble.

'Yes,' replied Oliver.

'Ain't you afraid of it, sir? Ain't you a-trembling while I speak, sir?' said Mr. Bumble.

'No!' replied Oliver, boldly.

An answer so different from the one he had expected to elicit, and was in the habit of receiving, staggered Mr. Bumble not a little. He stepped back from the keyhole; drew himself up to his full height; and looked from one to another of the three bystanders, in mute astonishment.

'Oh, you know, Mr. Bumble, he must be mad,' said Mrs. Sowerberry.

'No boy in half his senses could venture to speak so to you.'

'It's not Madness, ma'am,' replied Mr. Bumble, after a few moments of deep meditation. 'It's Meat.'

'What?' exclaimed Mrs. Sowerberry.

'Meat, ma'am, meat,' replied Bumble, with stern emphasis. 'You've over-fed him, ma'am. You've raised a artificial soul and spirit in him, ma'am unbecoming a person of his condition: as the board, Mrs. Sowerberry, who are practical philosophers, will tell you. What have paupers to do with soul or spirit? It's quite enough that we let 'em have live bodies. If you had kept the boy on gruel, ma'am, this would never have happened.'

'Dear, dear!' ejaculated Mrs. Sowerberry, piously raising her eyes to the kitchen ceiling: 'this comes of being liberal!'

The liberality of Mrs. Sowerberry to Oliver, had consisted of a profuse bestowal upon him of all the dirty odds and ends which nobody else would eat; so there was a great deal of meekness and self-devotion in her voluntarily remaining under Mr. Bumble's heavy accusation. Of which, to do her justice, she was wholly innocent, in thought, word, or deed.

'Ah!' said Mr. Bumble, when the lady brought her eyes down to earth again; 'the only thing that can be done now, that I know of, is to leave him in the cellar for a day or so, till he's a little starved down; and then to take him out, and keep him on gruel all through the apprenticeship. He comes of a bad family. Excitable natures, Mrs. Sowerberry! Both the nurse and doctor said, that that mother of his made her way here, against difficulties and pain that would have killed any well-disposed woman, weeks before.'

At this point of Mr. Bumble's discourse, Oliver, just hearing enough to know that some allusion was being made to his mother, recommenced kicking, with a violence that rendered every other sound inaudible. Sowerberry returned at this juncture. Oliver's offence having been explained to him, with such exaggerations as the ladies thought best calculated to rouse his ire, he unlocked the cellar-door in a twinkling, and dragged his rebellious apprentice out, by the collar.

Oliver's clothes had been torn in the beating he had received; his face was bruised and scratched; and his hair scattered over his forehead. The angry flush had not disappeared, however; and when he was pulled out of his prison, he scowled boldly on Noah, and looked quite undismayed.

'Now, you are a nice young fellow, ain't you?' said Sowerberry; giving Oliver a shake, and a box on the ear.

'He called my mother names,' replied Oliver.

'Well, and what if he did, you little ungrateful wretch?' said Mrs. Sowerberry. 'She deserved what he said, and worse.'

'She didn't' said Oliver.

'She did,' said Mrs. Sowerberry.

‘It’s a lie!’ said Oliver.

Mrs. Sowerberry burst into a flood of tears.

This flood of tears left Mr. Sowerberry no alternative. If he had hesitated for one instant to punish Oliver most severely, it must be quite clear to every experienced reader that he would have been, according to all precedents in disputes of matrimony established, a brute, an unnatural husband, an insulting creature, a base imitation of a man, and various other agreeable characters too numerous for recital within the limits of this chapter. To do him justice, he was, as far as his power went—it was not very extensive—kindly disposed towards the boy; perhaps, because it was his interest to be so; perhaps, because his wife disliked him. The flood of tears, however, left him no resource; so he at once gave him a drubbing, which satisfied even Mrs. Sowerberry herself, and rendered Mr. Bumble’s subsequent application of the parochial cane, rather unnecessary. For the rest of the day, he was shut up in the back kitchen, in company with a pump and a slice of bread; and at night, Mrs. Sowerberry, after making various remarks outside the door, by no means complimentary to the memory of his mother, looked into the room, and, amidst the jeers and pointings of Noah and Charlotte, ordered him upstairs to his dismal bed.

It was not until he was left alone in the silence and stillness of the gloomy workshop of the undertaker, that Oliver gave way to the feelings which the day’s treatment may be supposed likely to have awakened in a mere child. He had listened to their taunts with a look of contempt; he had borne the lash without a cry: for he felt that pride swelling in his heart which would have kept down a shriek to the last, though they had roasted him alive. But now, when there were none to see or hear him, he fell upon his knees on the floor; and, hiding his face in his hands, wept such tears as, God send for the credit of our nature, few so young may ever have cause to pour out before him!

For a long time, Oliver remained motionless in this attitude. The candle was burning low in the socket when he rose to his feet. Having gazed cautiously round him, and listened intently, he gently undid the fastenings of the door, and looked abroad.

It was a cold, dark night. The stars seemed, to the boy’s eyes, farther from the earth than he had ever seen them before; there was no wind; and the sombre shadows thrown by the trees upon the ground, looked sepulchral and death-like, from being so still. He softly reclosed the door. Having availed himself of the expiring light of the candle to tie up in a handkerchief the few articles of wearing apparel he had, sat himself down upon a bench, to wait for morning.

With the first ray of light that struggled through the crevices in the shutters, Oliver arose, and again unbarred the door. One timid look around—one moment’s pause of hesitation—he had closed it behind him, and was in the open street.

He looked to the right and to the left, uncertain whither to fly.

He remembered to have seen the waggons, as they went out, toiling up the hill. He took the same route; and arriving at a footpath across the fields: which he knew, after some distance, led out again into the road; struck into it, and walked quickly on.

Along this same footpath, Oliver well-remembered he had trotted beside Mr. Bumble, when he first carried him to the workhouse from the farm. His way lay directly in front of the cottage. His heart beat quickly when he bethought himself of this; and he half resolved to turn back. He had come a long way though, and should lose a great deal of time by doing so. Besides, it was so early that there was very little fear of his being seen; so he walked on.

He reached the house. There was no appearance of its inmates stirring at that early hour. Oliver stopped, and peeped into the garden. A child was weeding one of the little beds; as he stopped, he raised his pale face and disclosed the features of one of his former companions. Oliver felt glad to see him, before he went; for, though younger than himself, he had been his little friend and playmate. They had been beaten, and starved, and shut up together, many and many a time.

‘Hush, Dick!’ said Oliver, as the boy ran to the gate, and thrust his thin arm between the rails to greet him. ‘Is any one up?’

‘Nobody but me,’ replied the child.

‘You musn’t say you saw me, Dick,’ said Oliver. ‘I am running away. They beat and ill-use me, Dick; and I am going to seek my fortune, some long way off. I don’t know where. How pale you are!’

‘I heard the doctor tell them I was dying,’ replied the child with a faint smile. ‘I am very glad to see you, dear; but don’t stop, don’t stop!’

‘Yes, yes, I will, to say good-b’ye to you,’ replied Oliver. ‘I shall see you again, Dick. I know I shall! You will be well and happy!’

‘I hope so,’ replied the child. ‘After I am dead, but not before. I know the doctor must be right, Oliver, because I dream so much of Heaven, and Angels, and kind faces that I never see when I am awake. Kiss me,’ said the child, climbing up the low gate, and flinging his little arms round Oliver’s neck. ‘Good-b’ye, dear! God bless you!’

The blessing was from a young child’s lips, but it was the first that Oliver had ever heard invoked upon his head; and through the struggles and sufferings, and troubles and changes, of his after life, he never once forgot it.

CHAPTER VIII — OLIVER WALKS TO

LONDON. HE ENCOUNTERS ON THE ROAD A STRANGE SORT OF YOUNG GENTLEMAN

Oliver reached the stile at which the by-path terminated; and once more gained the high-road. It was eight o'clock now. Though he was nearly five miles away from the town, he ran, and hid behind the hedges, by turns, till noon: fearing that he might be pursued and overtaken. Then he sat down to rest by the side of the milestone, and began to think, for the first time, where he had better go and try to live.

The stone by which he was seated, bore, in large characters, an intimation that it was just seventy miles from that spot to London. The name awakened a new train of ideas in the boy's mind.

London!—that great place!—nobody—not even Mr. Bumble—could ever find him there! He had often heard the old men in the workhouse, too, say that no lad of spirit need want in London; and that there were ways of living in that vast city, which those who had been bred up in country parts had no idea of. It was the very place for a homeless boy, who must die in the streets unless some one helped him. As these things passed through his thoughts, he jumped upon his feet, and again walked forward.

He had diminished the distance between himself and London by full four miles more, before he recollected how much he must undergo ere he could hope to reach his place of destination. As this consideration forced itself upon him, he slackened his pace a little, and meditated upon his means of getting there. He had a crust of bread, a coarse shirt, and two pairs of stockings, in his bundle. He had a penny too—a gift of Sowerberry's after some funeral in which he had acquitted himself more than ordinarily well—in his pocket. 'A clean shirt,' thought Oliver, 'is a very comfortable thing; and so are two pairs of darned stockings; and so is a penny; but they are small helps to a sixty-five miles' walk in winter time.' But Oliver's thoughts, like those of most other people, although they were extremely ready and active to point out his difficulties, were wholly at a loss to suggest any feasible mode of surmounting them; so, after a good deal of thinking to no particular purpose, he changed his little bundle over to the other shoulder, and trudged on.

Oliver walked twenty miles that day; and all that time tasted nothing but the crust of dry bread, and a few draughts of water, which he begged at the cottage-doors by the road-side. When the night came, he turned into a meadow; and, creeping close under a hay-rick, determined to lie there, till morning. He felt frightened at first, for the wind moaned dismally over the empty fields: and he was cold and hungry, and more alone than he had ever felt before. Being very tired with his walk, however, he soon fell asleep and forgot his troubles.

He felt cold and stiff, when he got up next morning, and so hungry that he was obliged to exchange the penny for a small loaf, in the very first village through which he passed. He had walked no more than twelve miles, when night closed in again. His feet were sore, and his legs so weak that they trembled beneath him. Another night passed in the bleak damp air, made him worse; when he set forward on his journey next morning he could hardly crawl along.

He waited at the bottom of a steep hill till a stage-coach came up, and then begged of the outside passengers; but there were very few who took any notice of him: and even those told him to wait till they got to the top of the hill, and then let them see how far he could run for a halfpenny. Poor Oliver tried to keep up with the coach a little way, but was unable to do it, by reason of his fatigue and sore feet. When the outsides saw this, they put their halfpence back into their pockets again, declaring that he was an idle young dog, and didn't deserve anything; and the coach rattled away and left only a cloud of dust behind.

In some villages, large painted boards were fixed up: warning all persons who begged within the district, that they would be sent to jail. This frightened Oliver very much, and made him glad to get out of those villages with all possible expedition. In others, he would stand about the inn-yards, and look mournfully at every one who passed: a proceeding which generally terminated in the landlady's ordering one of the post-boys who were lounging about, to drive that strange boy out of the place, for she was sure he had come to steal something. If he begged at a farmer's house, ten to one but they threatened to set the dog on him; and when he showed his nose in a shop, they talked about the beadle—which brought Oliver's heart into his mouth,—very often the only thing he had there, for many hours together.

In fact, if it had not been for a good-hearted turnpike-man, and a benevolent old lady, Oliver's troubles would have been shortened by the very same process which had put an end to his mother's; in other words, he would most assuredly have fallen dead upon the king's highway. But the turnpike-man gave him a meal of bread and cheese; and the old lady, who had a shipwrecked grandson wandering barefoot in some distant part of the earth, took pity upon the poor orphan, and gave him what little she could afford—and more—with such kind and gentle words, and such tears of sympathy and compassion, that they sank deeper into Oliver's soul, than all the sufferings he had ever undergone.

Early on the seventh morning after he had left his native place, Oliver limped slowly into the little town of Barnet. The window-shutters were closed; the street was empty; not a soul had awakened to the business of the day. The sun was rising in all its splendid beauty; but the light only served to show the boy his own lonesomeness and desolation, as he sat, with bleeding feet and covered with dust, upon a door-step.

By degrees, the shutters were opened; the window-blinds were drawn up; and people began passing to and fro. Some few stopped to gaze at Oliver for a moment or two, or turned round to stare at him as they hurried by; but none relieved him, or troubled themselves to inquire how he came there. He had no heart to beg. And there he sat.

He had been crouching on the step for some time: wondering at the great number of public-houses (every other house in Barnet was a tavern, large or small), gazing listlessly at the coaches as they passed through, and thinking how strange it seemed that they could do, with ease, in a few hours, what it had taken him a whole week of courage and determination beyond his years to accomplish: when he was roused by observing that a boy, who had passed him carelessly some minutes before, had returned, and was now surveying him most earnestly from the opposite side of the way. He took little heed of this at first; but the boy remained in the same attitude of close observation so long, that Oliver raised his head, and returned his steady look. Upon

this, the boy crossed over; and walking close up to Oliver, said,

'Hullo, my covey! What's the row?'

The boy who addressed this inquiry to the young wayfarer, was about his own age: but one of the queerest looking boys that Oliver had even seen. He was a snub-nosed, flat-browed, common-faced boy enough; and as dirty a juvenile as one would wish to see; but he had about him all the airs and manners of a man. He was short of his age: with rather bow-legs, and little, sharp, ugly eyes. His hat was stuck on the top of his head so lightly, that it threatened to fall off every moment—and would have done so, very often, if the wearer had not had a knack of every now and then giving his head a sudden twitch, which brought it back to its old place again. He wore a man's coat, which reached nearly to his heels. He had turned the cuffs back, half-way up his arm, to get his hands out of the sleeves: apparently with the ultimate view of thrusting them into the pockets of his corduroy trousers; for there he kept them. He was, altogether, as roystering and swaggering a young gentleman as ever stood four feet six, or something less, in the bluchers.

'Hullo, my covey! What's the row?' said this strange young gentleman to Oliver.

'I am very hungry and tired,' replied Oliver: the tears standing in his eyes as he spoke. 'I have walked a long way. I have been walking these seven days.'

'Walking for sivin days!' said the young gentleman. 'Oh, I see. Beak's order, eh? But,' he added, noticing Oliver's look of surprise, 'I suppose you don't know what a beak is, my flash com-pan-i-on.'

Oliver mildly replied, that he had always heard a bird's mouth described by the term in question.

'My eyes, how green!' exclaimed the young gentleman. 'Why, a beak's a madgst'rate; and when you walk by a beak's order, it's not straight for'erd, but always agoing up, and niver a coming down agin. Was you never on the mill?'

'What mill?' inquired Oliver.

'What mill! Why, *the* mill—the mill as takes up so little room that it'll work inside a Stone Jug; and always goes better when the wind's low with people, than when it's high; acos then they can't get workmen. But come,' said the young gentleman; 'you want grub, and you shall have it. I'm at low-water-mark myself—only one bob and a magpie; but, as far as it goes, I'll fork out and stump. Up with you on your pins. There! Now then! 'Morrice!'

Assisting Oliver to rise, the young gentleman took him to an adjacent chandler's shop, where he purchased a sufficiency of ready-dressed ham and a half-quartern loaf, or, as he himself expressed it, 'a fourpenny bran!' the ham being kept clean and preserved from dust, by the ingenious expedient of making a hole in the loaf by pulling out a portion of the crumb, and stuffing it therein. Taking the bread under his arm, the young gentlman turned into a small public-house, and led the way to a tap-room in the rear of the premises. Here, a pot of beer was brought in, by direction of the mysterious youth; and Oliver, falling to, at his new friend's bidding, made a long and hearty meal, during the progress of which the strange boy eyed him from time to time with great attention.

'Going to London?' said the strange boy, when Oliver had at length concluded.

'Yes.'

'Got any lodgings?'

'No.'

'Money?'

'No.'

The strange boy whistled; and put his arms into his pockets, as far as the big coat-sleeves would let them go.

'Do you live in London?' inquired Oliver.

'Yes. I do, when I'm at home,' replied the boy. 'I suppose you want some place to sleep in to-night, don't you?'

'I do, indeed,' answered Oliver. 'I have not slept under a roof since I left the country.'

'Don't fret your eyelids on that score,' said the young gentleman. 'I've got to be in London to-night; and I know a 'spectable old gentleman as lives there, wot'll give you lodgings for nothink, and never ask for the change—that is, if any genelman he knows interduces you. And don't he know me? Oh, no! Not in the least! By no means. Certainly not!'

The young gentleman smiled, as if to intimate that the latter fragments of discourse were playfully ironical; and finished the beer as he did so.

This unexpected offer of shelter was too tempting to be resisted; especially as it was immediately followed up, by the assurance that the old gentleman referred to, would doubtless provide Oliver with a comfortable place, without loss of time. This led to a more friendly and confidential dialogue; from which Oliver discovered that his friend's name was Jack Dawkins, and that he was a peculiar pet and protege of the elderly gentleman before mentioned.

Mr. Dawkin's appearance did not say a vast deal in favour of the comforts which his patron's interest obtained for those whom he took under his protection; but, as he had a rather flightly and dissolute mode of conversing, and furthermore avowed that among his intimate friends he was better known by the sobriquet of 'The Artful Dodger,' Oliver concluded that, being of a dissipated and careless turn, the moral precepts of his benefactor had hitherto been thrown away upon him. Under this impression, he secretly resolved to cultivate the good opinion of the old gentleman as quickly as possible; and, if he found the Dodger incorrigible, as he more than half suspected he should, to decline the honour of his farther acquaintance.

As John Dawkins objected to their entering London before nightfall, it was nearly eleven o'clock when they reached the turnpike at Islington. They crossed from the Angel into St. John's Road; struck down the small street which terminates at Sadler's Wells Theatre; through Exmouth Street and Coppice Row; down the little court by the side of the workhouse; across the classic ground which once bore the name of Hockley-in-the-

Hole; thence into Little Saffron Hill; and so into Saffron Hill the Great: along which the Dodger scudded at a rapid pace, directing Oliver to follow close at his heels.

Although Oliver had enough to occupy his attention in keeping sight of his leader, he could not help bestowing a few hasty glances on either side of the way, as he passed along. A dirtier or more wretched place he had never seen. The street was very narrow and muddy, and the air was impregnated with filthy odours.

There were a good many small shops; but the only stock in trade appeared to be heaps of children, who, even at that time of night, were crawling in and out at the doors, or screaming from the inside. The sole places that seemed to prosper amid the general blight of the place, were the public-houses; and in them, the lowest orders of Irish were wrangling with might and main. Covered ways and yards, which here and there diverged from the main street, disclosed little knots of houses, where drunken men and women were positively wallowing in filth; and from several of the door-ways, great ill-looking fellows were cautiously emerging, bound, to all appearance, on no very well-disposed or harmless errands.

Oliver was just considering whether he hadn't better run away, when they reached the bottom of the hill. His conductor, catching him by the arm, pushed open the door of a house near Field Lane; and drawing him into the passage, closed it behind them.

'Now, then!' cried a voice from below, in reply to a whistle from the Dodger.

'Plummy and slam!' was the reply.

This seemed to be some watchword or signal that all was right; for the light of a feeble candle gleamed on the wall at the remote end of the passage; and a man's face peeped out, from where a balustrade of the old kitchen staircase had been broken away.

'There's two on you,' said the man, thrusting the candle farther out, and shielding his eyes with his hand. 'Who's the t'other one?'

'A new pal,' replied Jack Dawkins, pulling Oliver forward.

'Where did he come from?'

'Greenland. Is Fagin upstairs?'

'Yes, he's a sortin' the wipes. Up with you!' The candle was drawn back, and the face disappeared.

Oliver, groping his way with one hand, and having the other firmly grasped by his companion, ascended with much difficulty the dark and broken stairs: which his conductor mounted with an ease and expedition that showed he was well acquainted with them.

He threw open the door of a back-room, and drew Oliver in after him.

The walls and ceiling of the room were perfectly black with age and dirt. There was a deal table before the fire: upon which were a candle, stuck in a ginger-beer bottle, two or three pewter pots, a loaf and butter, and a plate. In a frying-pan, which was on the fire, and which was secured to the mantelshelf by a string, some sausages were cooking; and standing over them, with a toasting-fork in his hand, was a very old shrivelled Jew, whose villainous-looking and repulsive face was obscured by a quantity of matted red hair. He was dressed in a greasy flannel gown, with his throat bare; and seemed to be dividing his attention between the frying-pan and the clothes-horse, over which a great number of silk handkerchiefs were hanging. Several rough beds made of old sacks, were huddled side by side on the floor. Seated round the table were four or five boys, none older than the Dodger, smoking long clay pipes, and drinking spirits with the air of middle-aged men. These all crowded about their associate as he whispered a few words to the Jew; and then turned round and grinned at Oliver. So did the Jew himself, toasting-fork in hand.

‘This is him, Fagin,’ said Jack Dawkins; ‘my friend Oliver Twist.’

The Jew grinned; and, making a low obeisance to Oliver, took him by the hand, and hoped he should have the honour of his intimate acquaintance. Upon this, the young gentleman with the pipes came round him, and shook both his hands very hard—especially the one in which he held his little bundle. One young gentleman was very anxious to hang up his cap for him; and another was so obliging as to put his hands in his pockets, in order that, as he was very tired, he might not have the trouble of emptying them, himself, when he went to bed. These civilities would probably be extended much farther, but for a liberal exercise of the Jew’s toasting-fork on the heads and shoulders of the affectionate youths who offered them.

‘We are very glad to see you, Oliver, very,’ said the Jew. ‘Dodger, take off the sausages; and draw a tub near the fire for Oliver. Ah, you’re a-staring at the pocket-handkerchiefs! eh, my dear. There are a good many of ‘em, ain’t there? We’ve just looked ‘em out, ready for the wash; that’s all, Oliver; that’s all. Ha! ha! ha!’

The latter part of this speech, was hailed by a boisterous shout from all the hopeful pupils of the merry old gentleman. In the midst of which they went to supper.

Oliver ate his share, and the Jew then mixed him a glass of hot gin-and-water: telling him he must drink it off directly, because another gentleman wanted the tumbler. Oliver did as he was desired. Immediately afterwards he felt himself gently lifted on to one of the sacks; and then he sunk into a deep sleep.

CHAPTER IX — CONTAINING FURTHER PARTICULARS CONCERNING THE PLEASANT OLD GENTLEMAN, AND HIS HOPEFUL PUPILS

It was late next morning when Oliver awoke, from a sound, long sleep. There was no other person in the room but the old Jew, who was boiling some coffee in a saucepan for breakfast, and whistling softly to himself as he stirred it round and round, with an iron spoon. He would stop every now and then to listen when there was the least noise below: and when he had satisfied himself, he would go on whistling and stirring again, as before.

Although Oliver had roused himself from sleep, he was not thoroughly awake. There is a drowsy state, between sleeping and waking, when you dream more in five minutes with your eyes half open, and yourself half conscious of everything that is passing around you, than you would in five nights with your eyes fast closed, and your senses wrapt in perfect unconsciousness. At such time, a mortal knows just enough of what his mind is doing, to form some glimmering conception of its mighty powers, its bounding from earth and spurning time and space, when freed from the restraint of its corporeal associate.

Oliver was precisely in this condition. He saw the Jew with his half-closed eyes; heard his low whistling; and recognised the sound of the spoon grating against the saucepan’s sides: and yet the self-same senses were mentally engaged, at the same time, in busy action with almost everybody he had ever known.

When the coffee was done, the Jew drew the saucepan to the hob. Standing, then in an irresolute attitude for a few minutes, as if he did not well know how to employ himself, he turned round and looked at Oliver, and called him by his name. He did not answer, and was to all appearances asleep.

After satisfying himself upon this head, the Jew stepped gently to the door: which he fastened. He then drew forth: as it seemed to Oliver, from some trap in the floor: a small box, which he placed carefully on the table. His eyes glistened as he raised the lid, and looked in. Dragging an old chair to the table, he sat down; and took from it a magnificent gold watch, sparkling with jewels.

‘Aha!’ said the Jew, shrugging up his shoulders, and distorting every feature with a hideous grin. ‘Clever dogs! Clever dogs! Staunch to the last! Never told the old parson where they were. Never poached upon old Fagin! And why should they? It wouldn’t have loosened the knot, or kept the drop up, a minute longer. No, no, no! Fine fellows! Fine fellows!’

With these, and other muttered reflections of the like nature, the Jew once more deposited the watch in its place of safety. At least half a dozen more were severally drawn forth from the same box, and surveyed with equal pleasure; besides rings, brooches, bracelets, and other articles of jewellery, of such magnificent materials, and costly workmanship, that Oliver had no idea, even of their names.

Having replaced these trinkets, the Jew took out another: so small that it lay in the palm of his hand. There seemed to be some very minute inscription on it; for the Jew laid it flat upon the table, and shading it with his hand, pored over it, long and earnestly. At length he put it down, as if despairing of success; and, leaning back in his chair, muttered:

‘What a fine thing capital punishment is! Dead men never repent; dead men never bring awkward stories to light. Ah, it’s a fine thing for the trade! Five of ‘em strung up in a row, and none left to play booty, or turn white-livered!’

As the Jew uttered these words, his bright dark eyes, which had been staring vacantly before him, fell on Oliver’s face; the boy’s eyes were fixed on his in mute curiousity; and although the recognition was only for an instant—for the briefest space of time that can possibly be conceived—it was enough to show the old man that he had been observed.

He closed the lid of the box with a loud crash; and, laying his hand on a bread knife which was on the table,

started furiously up. He trembled very much though; for, even in his terror, Oliver could see that the knife quivered in the air.

'What's that?' said the Jew. 'What do you watch me for? Why are you awake? What have you seen? Speak out, boy! Quick—quick! for your life.

'I wasn't able to sleep any longer, sir,' replied Oliver, meekly. 'I am very sorry if I have disturbed you, sir.'

'You were not awake an hour ago?' said the Jew, scowling fiercely on the boy.

'No! No, indeed!' replied Oliver.

'Are you sure?' cried the Jew: with a still fiercer look than before: and a threatening attitude.

'Upon my word I was not, sir,' replied Oliver, earnestly. 'I was not, indeed, sir.'

'Tush, tush, my dear!' said the Jew, abruptly resuming his old manner, and playing with the knife a little, before he laid it down; as if to induce the belief that he had caught it up, in mere sport. 'Of course I know that, my dear. I only tried to frighten you. You're a brave boy. Ha! ha! you're a brave boy, Oliver.' The Jew rubbed his hands with a chuckle, but glanced uneasily at the box, notwithstanding.

'Did you see any of these pretty things, my dear?' said the Jew, laying his hand upon it after a short pause.

'Yes, sir,' replied Oliver.

'Ah!' said the Jew, turning rather pale. 'They—they're mine, Oliver; my little property. All I have to live upon, in my old age. The folks call me a miser, my dear. Only a miser; that's all.'

Oliver thought the old gentleman must be a decided miser to live in such a dirty place, with so many watches; but, thinking that perhaps his fondness for the Dodger and the other boys, cost him a good deal of money, he only cast a deferential look at the Jew, and asked if he might get up.

'Certainly, my dear, certainly,' replied the old gentleman. 'Stay. There's a pitcher of water in the corner by the door. Bring it here; and I'll give you a basin to wash in, my dear.'

Oliver got up; walked across the room; and stooped for an instant to raise the pitcher. When he turned his head, the box was gone.

He had scarcely washed himself, and made everything tidy, by emptying the basin out of the window, agreeably to the Jew's directions, when the Dodger returned: accompanied by a very sprightly young friend, whom Oliver had seen smoking on the previous night, and who was now formally introduced to him as Charley Bates. The four sat down, to breakfast, on the coffee, and some hot rolls and ham which the Dodger had brought home in the crown of his hat.

'Well,' said the Jew, glancing slyly at Oliver, and addressing himself to the Dodger, 'I hope you've been at work this morning, my dears?'

'Hard,' replied the Dodger.

'As nails,' added Charley Bates.

'Good boys, good boys!' said the Jew. 'What have you got, Dodger?'

'A couple of pocket-books,' replied that young gentlman.

'Lined?' inquired the Jew, with eagerness.

'Pretty well,' replied the Dodger, producing two pocket-books; one green, and the other red.

'Not so heavy as they might be,' said the Jew, after looking at the insides carefully; 'but very neat and nicely made. Ingenious workman, ain't he, Oliver?'

'Very indeed, sir,' said Oliver. At which Mr. Charles Bates laughed uproariously; very much to the amazement of Oliver, who saw nothing to laugh at, in anything that had passed.

'And what have you got, my dear?' said Fagin to Charley Bates.

'Wipes,' replied Master Bates; at the same time producing four pocket-handkerchiefs.

'Well,' said the Jew, inspecting them closely; 'they're very good ones, very. You haven't marked them well, though, Charley; so the marks shall be picked out with a needle, and we'll teach Oliver how to do it. Shall us, Oliver, eh? Ha! ha! ha!'

'If you please, sir,' said Oliver.

'You'd like to be able to make pocket-handkerchiefs as easy as Charley Bates, wouldn't you, my dear?' said the Jew.

'Very much, indeed, if you'll teach me, sir,' replied Oliver.

Master Bates saw something so exquisitely ludicrous in this reply, that he burst into another laugh; which laugh, meeting the coffee he was drinking, and carrying it down some wrong channel, very nearly terminated in his premature suffocation.

'He is so jolly green!' said Charley when he recovered, as an apology to the company for his unpolite behaviour.

The Dodger said nothing, but he smoothed Oliver's hair over his eyes, and said he'd know better, by and by; upon which the old gentleman, observing Oliver's colour mounting, changed the subject by asking whether there had been much of a crowd at the execution that morning? This made him wonder more and more; for it was plain from the replies of the two boys that they had both been there; and Oliver naturally wondered how they could possibly have found time to be so very industrious.

When the breakfast was cleared away; the merry old gentlman and the two boys played at a very curious and uncommon game, which was performed in this way. The merry old gentleman, placing a snuff-box in one pocket of his trousers, a note-case in the other, and a watch in his waistcoat pocket, with a guard-chain round his neck, and sticking a mock diamond pin in his shirt: buttoned his coat tight round him, and putting his spectacle-case and handkerchief in his pockets, trotted up and down the room with a stick, in imitation of the manner in which old gentlemen walk about the streets any hour in the day. Sometimes he stopped at the fire-place, and sometimes at the door, making believe that he was staring with all his might into shop-windows. At such times, he would look constantly round him, for fear of thieves, and would keep slapping all his pockets in

turn, to see that he hadn’t lost anything, in such a very funny and natural manner, that Oliver laughed till the tears ran down his face. All this time, the two boys followed him closely about: getting out of his sight, so nimbly, every time he turned round, that it was impossible to follow their motions. At last, the Dodger trod upon his toes, or ran upon his boot accidently, while Charley Bates stumbled up against him behind; and in that one moment they took from him, with the most extraordinary rapidity, snuff-box, note-case, watch-guard, chain, shirt-pin, pocket-handkerchief, even the spectacle-case. If the old gentlman felt a hand in any one of his pockets, he cried out where it was; and then the game began all over again.

When this game had been played a great many times, a couple of young ladies called to see the young gentleman; one of whom was named Bet, and the other Nancy. They wore a good deal of hair, not very neatly turned up behind, and were rather untidy about the shoes and stockings. They were not exactly pretty, perhaps; but they had a great deal of colour in their faces, and looked quite stout and hearty. Being remarkably free and agreeable in their manners, Oliver thought them very nice girls indeed. As there is no doubt they were.

The visitors stopped a long time. Spirits were produced, in consequence of one of the young ladies complaining of a coldness in her inside; and the conversation took a very convivial and improving turn. At length, Charley Bates expressed his opinion that it was time to pad the hoof. This, it occurred to Oliver, must be French for going out; for directly afterwards, the Dodger, and Charley, and the two young ladies, went away together, having been kindly furnished by the amiable old Jew with money to spend.

‘There, my dear,’ said Fagin. ‘That’s a pleasant life, isn’t it? They have gone out for the day.’

‘Have they done work, sir?’ inquired Oliver.

‘Yes,’ said the Jew; ‘that is, unless they should unexpectedly come across any, when they are out; and they won’t neglect it, if they do, my dear, depend upon it. Make ‘em your models, my dear. Make ‘em your models,’ tapping the fire-shovel on the hearth to add force to his words; ‘do everything they bid you, and take their advice in all matters—especially the Dodger’s, my dear. He’ll be a great man himself, and will make you one too, if you take pattern by him.—Is my handkerchief hanging out of my pocket, my dear?’ said the Jew, stopping short.

‘Yes, sir,’ said Oliver.

‘See if you can take it out, without my feeling it; as you saw them do, when we were at play this morning.’

Oliver held up the bottom of the pocket with one hand, as he had seen the Dodger hold it, and drew the handkerchief lightly out of it with the other.

‘Is it gone?’ cried the Jew.

‘Here it is, sir,’ said Oliver, showing it in his hand.

‘You’re a clever boy, my dear,’ said the playful old gentleman, patting Oliver on the head approvingly. ‘I never saw a sharper lad. Here’s a shilling for you. If you go on, in this way, you’ll be the greatest man of the time. And now come here, and I’ll show you how to take the marks out of the handkerchiefs.’

Oliver wondered what picking the old gentleman’s pocket in play, had to do with his chances of being a great man. But, thinking that the Jew, being so much his senior, must know best, he followed him quietly to the table, and was soon deeply involved in his new study.

CHAPTER X — OLIVER BECOMES BETTER ACQUAINTED WITH THE CHARACTERS OF HIS NEW ASSOCIATES; AND PURCHASES EXPERIENCE AT A HIGH PRICE. BEING A SHORT, BUT VERY IMPORTANT CHAPTER, IN THIS HISTORY

For many days, Oliver remained in the Jew’s room, picking the marks out of the pocket-handkerchief, (of which a great number were brought home,) and sometimes taking part in the game already described: which the two boys and the Jew played, regularly, every morning. At length, he began to languish for fresh air, and took many occasions of earnestly entreating the old gentleman to allow him to go out to work with his two companions.

Oliver was rendered the more anxious to be actively employed, by what he had seen of the stern morality of the old gentleman’s character. Whenever the Dodger or Charley Bates came home at night, empty-handed, he would expatiate with great vehemence on the misery of idle and lazy habits; and would enforce upon them the necessity of an active life, by sending them supperless to bed. On one occasion, indeed, he even went so far as to knock them both down a flight of stairs; but this was carrying out his virtuous precepts to an unusual extent.

At length, one morning, Oliver obtained the permission he had so eagerly sought. There had been no handkerchiefs to work upon, for two or three days, and the dinners had been rather meagre. Perhaps these were reasons for the old gentleman’s giving his assent; but, whether they were or no, he told Oliver he might go, and placed him under the joint guardianship of Charley Bates, and his friend the Dodger.

The three boys sallied out; the Dodger with his coat-sleeves tucked up, and his hat cocked, as usual; Master

Bates sauntering along with his hands in his pockets; and Oliver between them, wondering where they were going, and what branch of manufacture he would be instructed in, first.

The pace at which they went, was such a very lazy, ill-looking saunter, that Oliver soon began to think his companions were going to deceive the old gentleman, by not going to work at all. The Dodger had a vicious propensity, too, of pulling the caps from the heads of small boys and tossing them down areas; while Charley Bates exhibited some very loose notions concerning the rights of property, by pilfering divers apples and onions from the stalls at the kennel sides, and thrusting them into pockets which were so surprisingly capacious, that they seemed to undermine his whole suit of clothes in every direction. These things looked so bad, that Oliver was on the point of declaring his intention of seeking his way back, in the best way he could; when his thoughts were suddenly directed into another channel, by a very mysterious change of behaviour on the part of the Dodger.

They were just emerging from a narrow court not far from the open square in Clerkenwell, which is yet called, by some strange perversion of terms, 'The Green': when the Dodger made a sudden stop; and, laying his finger on his lip, drew his companions back again, with the greatest caution and circumspection.

'What's the matter?' demanded Oliver.

'Hush!' replied the Dodger. 'Do you see that old cove at the book-stall?'

'The old gentleman over the way?' said Oliver. 'Yes, I see him.'

'He'll do,' said the Dodger.

'A prime plant,' observed Master Charley Bates.

Oliver looked from one to the other, with the greatest surprise; but he was not permitted to make any inquiries; for the two boys walked stealthily across the road, and slunk close behind the old gentleman towards whom his attention had been directed. Oliver walked a few paces after them; and, not knowing whether to advance or retire, stood looking on in silent amazement.

The old gentleman was a very respectable-looking personage, with a powdered head and gold spectacles. He was dressed in a bottle-green coat with a black velvet collar; wore white trousers; and carried a smart bamboo cane under his arm. He had taken up a book from the stall, and there he stood, reading away, as hard as if he were in his elbow-chair, in his own study. It is very possible that he fancied himself there, indeed; for it was plain, from his abstraction, that he saw not the book-stall, nor the street, nor the boys, nor, in short, anything but the book itself: which he was reading straight through: turning over the leaf when he got to the bottom of a page, beginning at the top line of the next one, and going regularly on, with the greatest interest and eagerness.

What was Oliver's horror and alarm as he stood a few paces off, looking on with his eyelids as wide open as they would possibly go, to see the Dodger plunge his hand into the old gentleman's pocket, and draw from thence a handkerchief! To see him hand the same to Charley Bates; and finally to behold them, both running away round the corner at full speed!

In an instant the whole mystery of the hankerchiefs, and the watches, and the jewels, and the Jew, rushed upon the boy's mind.

He stood, for a moment, with the blood so tingling through all his veins from terror, that he felt as if he were in a burning fire; then, confused and frightened, he took to his heels; and, not knowing what he did,

made off as fast as he could lay his feet to the ground.

This was all done in a minute's space. In the very instant when Oliver began to run, the old gentleman, putting his hand to his pocket, and missing his handkerchief, turned sharp round. Seeing the boy scudding away at such a rapid pace, he very naturally concluded him to be the depredator; and shouting 'Stop thief!' with all his might, made off after him, book in hand.

But the old gentleman was not the only person who raised the hue-and-cry. The Dodger and Master Bates, unwilling to attract public attention by running down the open street, had merely retired into the very first doorway round the corner. They no sooner heard the cry, and saw Oliver running, than, guessing exactly how the matter stood, they issued forth with great promptitude; and, shouting 'Stop thief!' too, joined in the pursuit like good citizens.

Although Oliver had been brought up by philosophers, he was not theoretically acquainted with the beautiful axiom that self-preservation is the first law of nature. If he had been, perhaps he would have been prepared for this. Not being prepared, however, it alarmed him the more; so away he went like the wind, with the old gentleman and the two boys roaring and shouting behind him.

'Stop thief! Stop thief!' There is a magic in the sound. The tradesman leaves his counter, and the car-man his waggon; the butcher throws down his tray; the baker his basket; the milkman his pail; the errand-boy his parcels; the school-boy his marbles; the paviour his pickaxe; the child his battledore. Away they run, pell-mell, helter-skelter, slap-dash: tearing, yelling, screaming, knocking down the passengers as they turn the corners, rousing up the dogs, and astonishing the fowls: and streets, squares, and courts, re-echo with the sound.

'Stop thief! Stop thief!' The cry is taken up by a hundred voices, and the crowd accumulate at every turning. Away they fly, splashing through the mud, and rattling along the pavements: up go the windows, out run the people, onward bear the mob, a whole audience desert Punch in the very thickest of the plot, and, joining the rushing throng, swell the shout, and lend fresh vigour to the cry, 'Stop thief! Stop thief!'

'Stop thief! Stop thief!' There is a passion for *hunting something* deeply implanted in the human breast. One wretched breathless child, panting with exhaustion; terror in his looks; agony in his eyes; large drops of perspiration streaming down his face; strains every nerve to make head upon his pursuers; and as they follow on his track, and gain upon him every instant, they hail his decreasing strength with joy. 'Stop thief!' Ay, stop him for God's sake, were it only in mercy!

Stopped at last! A clever blow. He is down upon the pavement; and the crowd eagerly gather round him: each new comer, jostling and struggling with the others to catch a glimpse. 'Stand aside!' 'Give him a little air!' 'Nonsense! he don't deserve it.' 'Where's the gentleman?' 'Here his is, coming down the street.' 'Make room there for the gentleman!' 'Is this the boy, sir!' 'Yes.'

Oliver lay, covered with mud and dust, and bleeding from the mouth, looking wildly round upon the heap of faces that surrounded him, when the old gentleman was officiously dragged and pushed into the circle by the foremost of the pursuers.

'Yes,' said the gentleman, 'I am afraid it is the boy.'

'Afraid!' murmured the crowd. 'That's a good 'un!'

'Poor fellow!' said the gentleman, 'he has hurt himself.'

'*I* did that, sir,' said a great lubberly fellow, stepping forward; 'and preciously I cut my knuckle agin' his mouth. I stopped him, sir.'

The fellow touched his hat with a grin, expecting something for his pains; but, the old gentleman, eyeing him with an expression of dislike, look anxiously round, as if he contemplated running away himself: which it is very possible he might have attempted to do, and thus have afforded another chase, had not a police officer (who is generally the last person to arrive in such cases) at that moment made his way through the crowd, and seized Oliver by the collar.

'Come, get up,' said the man, roughly.

'It wasn't me indeed, sir. Indeed, indeed, it was two other boys,' said Oliver, clasping his hands passionately, and looking round. 'They are here somewhere.'

'Oh no, they ain't,' said the officer. He meant this to be ironical, but it was true besides; for the Dodger and Charley Bates had filed off down the first convenient court they came to.

'Come, get up!'

'Don't hurt him,' said the old gentleman, compassionately.

'Oh no, I won't hurt him,' replied the officer, tearing his jacket half off his back, in proof thereof. 'Come, I know you; it won't do. Will you stand upon your legs, you young devil?'

Oliver, who could hardly stand, made a shift to raise himself on his feet, and was at once lugged along the streets by the jacket-collar, at a rapid pace. The gentleman walked on with them by the officer's side; and as many of the crowd as could achieve the feat, got a little ahead, and stared back at Oliver from time to time. The boys shouted in triumph; and on they went.

CHAPTER XI — TREATS OF MR. FANG THE POLICE MAGISTRATE; AND FURNISHES A

SLIGHT SPECIMEN OF HIS MODE OF ADMINISTERING JUSTICE

The offence had been committed within the district, and indeed in the immediate neighborhood of, a very notorious metropolitan police office. The crowd had only the satisfaction of accompanying Oliver through two or three streets, and down a place called Mutton Hill, when he was led beneath a low archway, and up a dirty court, into this dispensary of summary justice, by the back way. It was a small paved yard into which they turned; and here they encountered a stout man with a bunch of whiskers on his face, and a bunch of keys in his hand.

'What's the matter now?' said the man carelessly.

'A young fogle-hunter,' replied the man who had Oliver in charge.

'Are you the party that's been robbed, sir?' inquired the man with the keys.

'Yes, I am,' replied the old gentleman; 'but I am not sure that this boy actually took the handkerchief. I—I would rather not press the case.'

'Must go before the magistrate now, sir,' replied the man. 'His worship will be disengaged in half a minute. Now, young gallows!'

This was an invitation for Oliver to enter through a door which he unlocked as he spoke, and which led into a stone cell. Here he was searched; and nothing being found upon him, locked up.

This cell was in shape and size something like an area cellar, only not so light. It was most intolerably dirty; for it was Monday morning; and it had been tenanted by six drunken people, who had been locked up, elsewhere, since Saturday night. But this is little. In our station-houses, men and women are every night confined on the most trivial charges—the word is worth noting—in dungeons, compared with which, those in Newgate, occupied by the most atrocious felons, tried, found guilty, and under sentence of death, are palaces. Let any one who doubts this, compare the two.

The old gentleman looked almost as rueful as Oliver when the key grated in the lock. He turned with a sigh to the book, which had been the innocent cause of all this disturbance.

'There is something in that boy's face,' said the old gentleman to himself as he walked slowly away, tapping his chin with the cover of the book, in a thoughtful manner; 'something that touches and interests me. *Can* he be innocent? He looked like—Bye the bye,' exclaimed the old gentleman, halting very abruptly, and staring up into the sky, 'Bless my soul!—where have I seen something like that look before?'

After musing for some minutes, the old gentleman walked, with the same meditative face, into a back anteroom opening from the yard; and there, retiring into a corner, called up before his mind's eye a vast amphitheatre of faces over which a dusky curtain had hung for many years. 'No,' said the old gentleman, shaking his head; 'it must be imagination.

He wandered over them again. He had called them into view, and it was not easy to replace the shroud that had so long concealed them. There were the faces of friends, and foes, and of many that had been almost strangers peering intrusively from the crowd; there were the faces of young and blooming girls that were now old women; there were faces that the grave had changed and closed upon, but which the mind, superior to its power, still dressed in their old freshness and beauty, calling back the lustre of the eyes, the brightness of the smile, the beaming of the soul through its mask of clay, and whispering of beauty beyond the tomb, changed but to be heightened, and taken from earth only to be set up as a light, to shed a soft and gentle glow upon the path to Heaven.

But the old gentleman could recall no one countenance of which Oliver's features bore a trace. So, he heaved a sigh over the recollections he awakened; and being, happily for himself, an absent old gentleman, buried them again in the pages of the musty book.

He was roused by a touch on the shoulder, and a request from the man with the keys to follow him into the office. He closed his book hastily; and was at once ushered into the imposing presence of the renowned Mr. Fang.

The office was a front parlour, with a panelled wall. Mr. Fang sat behind a bar, at the upper end; and on one side the door was a sort of wooden pen in which poor little Oliver was already deposited; trembling very much at the awfulness of the scene.

Mr. Fang was a lean, long-backed, stiff-necked, middle-sized man, with no great quantity of hair, and what he had, growing on the back and sides of his head. His face was stern, and much flushed. If he were really not in the habit of drinking rather more than was exactly good for him, he might have brought action against his countenance for libel, and have recovered heavy damages.

The old gentleman bowed respectfully; and advancing to the magistrate's desk, said, suiting the action to the word, 'That is my name and address, sir.' He then withdrew a pace or two; and, with another polite and gentlemanly inclination of the head, waited to be questioned.

Now, it so happened that Mr. Fang was at that moment perusing a leading article in a newspaper of the morning, adverting to some recent decision of his, and commending him, for the three hundred and fiftieth time, to the special and particular notice of the Secretary of State for the Home Department. He was out of temper; and he looked up with an angry scowl.

'Who are you?' said Mr. Fang.

The old gentleman pointed, with some surprise, to his card.

'Officer!' said Mr. Fang, tossing the card contemptuously away with the newspaper. 'Who is this fellow?'

'My name, sir,' said the old gentleman, speaking *like* a gentleman, 'my name, sir, is Brownlow. Permit me to inquire the name of the magistrate who offers a gratuitous and unprovoked insult to a respectable person, under the protection of the bench.' Saying this, Mr. Brownlow looked around the office as if in search of some person who would afford him the required information.

‘Officer!’ said Mr. Fang, throwing the paper on one side, ‘what’s this fellow charged with?’

‘He’s not charged at all, your worship,’ replied the officer. ‘He appears against this boy, your worship.’

His worship knew this perfectly well; but it was a good annoyance, and a safe one.

‘Appears against the boy, does he?’ said Mr. Fang, surveying Mr. Brownlow contemptuously from head to foot. ‘Swear him!’

‘Before I am sworn, I must beg to say one word,’ said Mr. Brownlow; ‘and that is, that I really never, without actual experience, could have believed—’

‘Hold your tongue, sir!’ said Mr. Fang, peremptorily.

‘I will not, sir!’ replied the old gentleman.

‘Hold your tongue this instant, or I’ll have you turned out of the office!’ said Mr. Fang. ‘You’re an insolent impertinent fellow. How dare you bully a magistrate!’

‘What!’ exclaimed the old gentleman, reddening.

‘Swear this person!’ said Fang to the clerk. ‘I’ll not hear another word. Swear him.’

Mr. Brownlow’s indignation was greatly roused; but reflecting perhaps, that he might only injure the boy by giving vent to it, he suppressed his feelings and submitted to be sworn at once.

‘Now,’ said Fang, ‘what’s the charge against this boy? What have you got to say, sir?’

‘I was standing at a bookstall—’ Mr. Brownlow began.

‘Hold your tongue, sir,’ said Mr. Fang. ‘Policeman! Where’s the policeman? Here, swear this policeman. Now, policeman, what is this?’

The policeman, with becoming humility, related how he had taken the charge; how he had searched Oliver, and found nothing on his person; and how that was all he knew about it.

‘Are there any witnesses?’ inquired Mr. Fang.

‘None, your worship,’ replied the policeman.

Mr. Fang sat silent for some minutes, and then, turning round to the prosecutor, said in a towering passion.

‘Do you mean to state what your complaint against this boy is, man, or do you not? You have been sworn. Now, if you stand there, refusing to give evidence, I’ll punish you for disrespect to the bench; I will, by—’

By what, or by whom, nobody knows, for the clerk and jailor coughed very loud, just at the right moment; and the former dropped a heavy book upon the floor, thus preventing the word from being heard—accidently, of course.

With many interruptions, and repeated insults, Mr. Brownlow contrived to state his case; observing that, in the surprise of the moment, he had run after the boy because he had saw him running away; and expressing his hope that, if the magistrate should believe him, although not actually the thief, to be connected with the thieves, he would deal as leniently with him as justice would allow.

‘He has been hurt already,’ said the old gentleman in conclusion. ‘And I fear,’ he added, with great energy, looking towards the bar, ‘I really fear that he is ill.’

‘Oh! yes, I dare say!’ said Mr. Fang, with a sneer. ‘Come, none of your tricks here, you young vagabond; they won’t do. What’s your name?’

Oliver tried to reply but his tongue failed him. He was deadly pale; and the whole place seemed turning round and round.

‘What’s your name, you hardened scoundrel?’ demanded Mr. Fang. ‘Officer, what’s his name?’

This was addressed to a bluff old fellow, in a striped waistcoat, who was standing by the bar. He bent over Oliver, and repeated the inquiry; but finding him really incapable of understanding the question; and knowing that his not replying would only infuriate the magistrate the more, and add to the severity of his sentence; he hazarded a guess.

‘He says his name’s Tom White, your worship,’ said the kind-hearted thief-taker.

‘Oh, he won’t speak out, won’t he?’ said Fang. ‘Very well, very well. Where does he live?’

‘Where he can, your worship,’ replied the officer; again pretending to receive Oliver’s answer.

‘Has he any parents?’ inquired Mr. Fang.

‘He says they died in his infancy, your worship,’ replied the officer: hazarding the usual reply.

At this point of the inquiry, Oliver raised his head; and, looking round with imploring eyes, murmured a feeble prayer for a draught of water.

‘Stuff and nonsense!’ said Mr. Fang: ‘don’t try to make a fool of me.’

‘I think he really is ill, your worship,’ remonstrated the officer.

‘I know better,’ said Mr. Fang.

‘Take care of him, officer,’ said the old gentleman, raising his hands instinctively; ‘he’ll fall down.’

‘Stand away, officer,’ cried Fang; ‘let him, if he likes.’

Oliver availed himself of the kind permission, and fell to the floor in a fainting fit. The men in the office looked at each other, but no one dared to stir.

‘I knew he was shamming,’ said Fang, as if this were incontestable proof of the fact. ‘Let him lie there; he’ll soon be tired of that.’

‘How do you propose to deal with the case, sir?’ inquired the clerk in a low voice.

‘Summarily,’ replied Mr. Fang. ‘He stands committed for three months—hard labour of course. Clear the office.’

The door was opened for this purpose, and a couple of men were preparing to carry the insensible boy to his cell; when an elderly man of decent but poor appearance, clad in an old suit of black, rushed hastily into the office, and advanced towards the bench.

‘Stop, stop! don’t take him away! For Heaven’s sake stop a moment!’ cried the new comer, breathless with haste.

Although the presiding Genii in such an office as this, exercise a summary and arbitrary power over the liberties, the good name, the character, almost the lives, of Her Majesty’s subjects, expecially of the poorer class; and although, within such walls, enough fantastic tricks are daily played to make the angels blind with weeping; they are closed to the public, save through the medium of the daily press.[Footnote: Or were virtually, then.] Mr. Fang was consequently not a little indignant to see an unbidden guest enter in such irreverent disorder.

‘What is this? Who is this? Turn this man out. Clear the office!’ cried Mr. Fang.

‘I *will* speak,’ cried the man; ‘I will not be turned out. I saw it all. I keep the book-stall. I demand to be sworn. I will not be put down. Mr. Fang, you must hear me. You must not refuse, sir.’

The man was right. His manner was determined; and the matter was growing rather too serious to be hushed up.

‘Swear the man,’ growled Mr. Fang, with a very ill grace. ‘Now, man, what have you got to say?’

‘This,’ said the man: ‘I saw three boys: two others and the prisoner here: loitering on the opposite side of the way, when this gentleman was reading. The robbery was committed by another boy. I saw it done; and I saw that this boy was perfectly amazed and stupified by it.’ Having by this time recovered a little breath, the worthy book-stall keeper proceeded to relate, in a more coherent manner the exact circumstances of the robbery.

‘Why didn’t you come here before?’ said Fang, after a pause.

‘I hadn’t a soul to mind the shop,’ replied the man. ‘Everybody who could have helped me, had joined in the pursuit. I could get nobody till five minutes ago; and I’ve run here all the way.’

‘The prosecutor was reading, was he?’ inquired Fang, after another pause.

‘Yes,’ replied the man. ‘The very book he has in his hand.’

‘Oh, that book, eh?’ said Fang. ‘Is it paid for?’

‘No, it is not,’ replied the man, with a smile.

‘Dear me, I forgot all about it!’ exclaimed the absent old gentleman, innocently.

‘A nice person to prefer a charge against a poor boy!’ said Fang, with a comical effort to look humane. ‘I consider, sir, that you have obtained possession of that book, under very suspicious and disreputable circumstances; and you may think yourself very fortunate that the owner of the property declines to prosecute. Let this be a lesson to you, my man, or the law will overtake you yet. The boy is discharged. Clear the office!’

‘D—n me!’ cried the old gentleman, bursting out with the rage he had kept down so long, ‘d—n me! I’ll—’

‘Clear the office!’ said the magistrate. ‘Officers, do you hear? Clear the office!’

The mandate was obeyed; and the indignant Mr. Brownlow was conveyed out, with the book in one hand, and the bamboo cane in the other: in a perfect phrenzy of rage and defiance. He reached the yard; and his passion vanished in a moment. Little Oliver Twist lay on his back on the pavement, with his shirt unbuttoned, and his temples bathed with water; his face a deadly white; and a cold tremble convulsing his whole frame.

‘Poor boy, poor boy!’ said Mr. Brownlow, bending over him. ‘Call a coach, somebody, pray. Directly!’

A coach was obtained, and Oliver having been carefully laid on the seat, the old gentleman got in and sat himself on the other.

‘May I accompany you?’ said the book-stall keeper, looking in.

‘Bless me, yes, my dear sir,’ said Mr. Brownlow quickly. ‘I forgot you. Dear, dear! I have this unhappy book still! Jump in. Poor fellow! There’s no time to lose.’

The book-stall keeper got into the coach; and away they drove.

CHAPTER XII — IN WHICH OLIVER IS TAKEN BETTER CARE OF THAN HE EVER WAS BEFORE. AND IN WHICH THE NARRATIVE REVERTS TO THE MERRY OLD GENTLEMAN AND HIS YOUTHFUL FRIENDS.

The coach rattled away, over nearly the same ground as that which Oliver had traversed when he first entered London in company with the Dodger; and, turning a different way when it reached the Angel at Islington, stopped at length before a neat house, in a quiet shady street near Pentonville. Here, a bed was prepared, without loss of time, in which Mr. Brownlow saw his young charge carefully and comfortably deposited; and here, he was tended with a kindness and solicitude that knew no bounds.

But, for many days, Oliver remained insensible to all the goodness of his new friends. The sun rose and sank, and rose and sank again, and many times after that; and still the boy lay stretched on his uneasy bed, dwindling away beneath the dry and wasting heat of fever. The worm does not work more surely on the dead

body, than does this slow creeping fire upon the living frame.

Weak, and thin, and pallid, he awoke at last from what seemed to have been a long and troubled dream. Feebly raising himself in the bed, with his head resting on his trembling arm, he looked anxiously around.

'What room is this? Where have I been brought to?' said Oliver. 'This is not the place I went to sleep in.'

He uttered these words in a feeble voice, being very faint and weak; but they were overheard at once. The curtain at the bed's head was hastily drawn back, and a motherly old lady, very neatly and precisely dressed, rose as she undrew it, from an arm-chair close by, in which she had been sitting at needle-work.

'Hush, my dear,' said the old lady softly. 'You must be very quiet, or you will be ill again; and you have been very bad,—as bad as bad could be, pretty nigh. Lie down again; there's a dear!' With those words, the old lady very gently placed Oliver's head upon the pillow; and, smoothing back his hair from his forehead, looked so kindly and loving in his face, that he could not help placing his little withered hand in hers, and drawing it round his neck.

'Save us!' said the old lady, with tears in her eyes. 'What a grateful little dear it is. Pretty creetur! What would his mother feel if she had sat by him as I have, and could see him now!'

'Perhaps she does see me,' whispered Oliver, folding his hands together; 'perhaps she has sat by me. I almost feel as if she had.'

'That was the fever, my dear,' said the old lady mildly.

'I suppose it was,' replied Oliver, 'because heaven is a long way off; and they are too happy there, to come down to the bedside of a poor boy. But if she knew I was ill, she must have pitied me, even there; for she was very ill herself before she died. She can't know anything about me though,' added Oliver after a moment's silence. 'If she had seen me hurt, it would have made her sorrowful; and her face has always looked sweet and happy, when I have dreamed of her.'

The old lady made no reply to this; but wiping her eyes first, and her spectacles, which lay on the counterpane, afterwards, as if they were part and parcel of those features, brought some cool stuff for Oliver to drink; and then, patting him on the cheek, told him he must lie very quiet, or he would be ill again.

So, Oliver kept very still; partly because he was anxious to obey the kind old lady in all things; and partly, to tell the truth, because he was completely exhausted with what he had already said. He soon fell into a gentle doze, from which he was awakened by the light of a candle: which, being brought near the bed, showed him a gentleman with a very large and loud-ticking gold watch in his hand, who felt his pulse, and said he was a great deal better.

'You *are* a great deal better, are you not, my dear?' said the gentleman.

'Yes, thank you, sir,' replied Oliver.

'Yes, I know you are,' said the gentleman: 'You're hungry too, an't you?'

'No, sir,' answered Oliver.

'Hem!' said the gentleman. 'No, I know you're not. He is not hungry, Mrs. Bedwin,' said the gentleman: looking very wise.

The old lady made a respectful inclination of the head, which seemed to say that she thought the doctor was a very clever man. The doctor appeared much of the same opinion himself.

'You feel sleepy, don't you, my dear?' said the doctor.

'No, sir,' replied Oliver.

'No,' said the doctor, with a very shrewd and satisfied look. 'You're not sleepy. Nor thirsty. Are you?'

'Yes, sir, rather thirsty,' answered Oliver.

'Just as I expected, Mrs. Bedwin,' said the doctor. 'It's very natural that he should be thirsty. You may give him a little tea, ma'am, and some dry toast without any butter. Don't keep him too warm, ma'am; but be careful that you don't let him be too cold; will you have the goodness?'

The old lady dropped a curtsey. The doctor, after tasting the cool stuff, and expressing a qualified approval of it, hurried away: his boots creaking in a very important and wealthy manner as he went downstairs.

Oliver dozed off again, soon after this; when he awoke, it was nearly twelve o'clock. The old lady tenderly bade him good-night shortly afterwards, and left him in charge of a fat old woman who had just come: bringing with her, in a little bundle, a small Prayer Book and a large nightcap. Putting the latter on her head and the former on the table, the old woman, after telling Oliver that she had come to sit up with him, drew her chair close to the fire and went off into a series of short naps, chequered at frequent intervals with sundry tumblings forward, and divers moans and chokings. These, however, had no worse effect than causing her to rub her nose very hard, and then fall asleep again.

And thus the night crept slowly on. Oliver lay awake for some time, counting the little circles of light which the reflection of the rushlight-shade threw upon the ceiling; or tracing with his languid eyes the intricate pattern of the paper on the wall. The darkness and the deep stillness of the room were very solemn; as they brought into the boy's mind the thought that death had been hovering there, for many days and nights, and might yet fill it with the gloom and dread of his awful presence, he turned his face upon the pillow, and fervently prayed to Heaven.

Gradually, he fell into that deep tranquil sleep which ease from recent suffering alone imparts; that calm and peaceful rest which it is pain to wake from. Who, if this were death, would be roused again to all the struggles and turmoils of life; to all its cares for the present; its anxieties for the future; more than all, its weary recollections of the past!

It had been bright day, for hours, when Oliver opened his eyes; he felt cheerful and happy. The crisis of the disease was safely past. He belonged to the world again.

In three days' time he was able to sit in an easy-chair, well propped up with pillows; and, as he was still too weak to walk, Mrs. Bedwin had him carried downstairs into the little housekeeper's room, which belonged to her. Having him set, here, by the fire-side, the good old lady sat herself down too; and, being in a state of

considerable delight at seeing him so much better, forthwith began to cry most violently.

'Never mind me, my dear,' said the old lady; 'I'm only having a regular good cry. There; it's all over now; and I'm quite comfortable.'

'You're very, very kind to me, ma'am,' said Oliver.

'Well, never you mind that, my dear,' said the old lady; 'that's got nothing to do with your broth; and it's full time you had it; for the doctor says Mr. Brownlow may come in to see you this morning; and we must get up our best looks, because the better we look, the more he'll be pleased.' And with this, the old lady applied herself to warming up, in a little saucepan, a basin full of broth: strong enough, Oliver thought, to furnish an ample dinner, when reduced to the regulation strength, for three hundred and fifty paupers, at the lowest computation.

'Are you fond of pictures, dear?' inquired the old lady, seeing that Oliver had fixed his eyes, most intently, on a portrait which hung against the wall; just opposite his chair.

'I don't quite know, ma'am,' said Oliver, without taking his eyes from the canvas; 'I have seen so few that I hardly know. What a beautiful, mild face that lady's is!'

'Ah!' said the old lady, 'painters always make ladies out prettier than they are, or they wouldn't get any custom, child. The man that invented the machine for taking likenesses might have known that would never succeed; it's a deal too honest. A deal,' said the old lady, laughing very heartily at her own acuteness.

'Is—is that a likeness, ma'am?' said Oliver.

'Yes,' said the old lady, looking up for a moment from the broth; 'that's a portrait.'

'Whose, ma'am?' asked Oliver.

'Why, really, my dear, I don't know,' answered the old lady in a good-humoured manner. 'It's not a likeness of anybody that you or I know, I expect. It seems to strike your fancy, dear.'

'It is so pretty,' replied Oliver.

'Why, sure you're not afraid of it?' said the old lady: observing in great surprise, the look of awe with which the child regarded the painting.

'Oh no, no,' returned Oliver quickly; 'but the eyes look so sorrowful; and where I sit, they seem fixed upon me. It makes my heart beat,' added Oliver in a low voice, 'as if it was alive, and wanted to speak to me, but couldn't.'

'Lord save us!' exclaimed the old lady, starting; 'don't talk in that way, child. You're weak and nervous after your illness. Let me wheel your chair round to the other side; and then you won't see it. There!' said the old lady, suiting the action to the word; 'you don't see it now, at all events.'

Oliver *did* see it in his mind's eye as distinctly as if he had not altered his position; but he thought it better not to worry the kind old lady; so he smiled gently when she looked at him; and Mrs. Bedwin, satisfied that he felt more comfortable, salted and broke bits of toasted bread into the broth, with all the bustle befitting so solemn a preparation. Oliver got through it with extraordinary expedition. He had scarcely swallowed the last spoonful, when there came a soft rap at the door. 'Come in,' said the old lady; and in walked Mr. Brownlow.

Now, the old gentleman came in as brisk as need be; but, he had no sooner raised his spectacles on his forehead, and thrust his hands behind the skirts of his dressing-gown to take a good long look at Oliver, than his countenance underwent a very great variety of odd contortions. Oliver looked very worn and shadowy from sickness, and made an ineffectual attempt to stand up, out of respect to his benefactor, which terminated in his sinking back into the chair again; and the fact is, if the truth must be told, that Mr. Brownlow's heart, being large enough for any six ordinary old gentlemen of humane disposition, forced a supply of tears into his eyes, by some hydraulic process which we are not sufficiently philosophical to be in a condition to explain.

‘Poor boy, poor boy!’ said Mr. Brownlow, clearing his throat. ‘I’m rather hoarse this morning, Mrs. Bedwin. I’m afraid I have caught cold.’

‘I hope not, sir,’ said Mrs. Bedwin. ‘Everything you have had, has been well aired, sir.’

‘I don’t know, Bedwin. I don’t know,’ said Mr. Brownlow; ‘I rather think I had a damp napkin at dinner-time yesterday; but never mind that. How do you feel, my dear?’

‘Very happy, sir,’ replied Oliver. ‘And very grateful indeed, sir, for your goodness to me.’

‘Good by,’ said Mr. Brownlow, stoutly. ‘Have you given him any nourishment, Bedwin? Any slops, eh?’

‘He has just had a basin of beautiful strong broth, sir,’ replied Mrs. Bedwin: drawing herself up slightly, and laying strong emphasis on the last word: to intimate that between slops, and broth will compounded, there existed no affinity or connection whatsoever.

‘Ugh!’ said Mr. Brownlow, with a slight shudder; ‘a couple of glasses of port wine would have done him a great deal more good. Wouldn’t they, Tom White, eh?’

‘My name is Oliver, sir,’ replied the little invalid: with a look of great astonishment.

‘Oliver,’ said Mr. Brownlow; ‘Oliver what? Oliver White, eh?’

‘No, sir, Twist, Oliver Twist.’

‘Queer name!’ said the old gentleman. ‘What made you tell the magistrate your name was White?’

‘I never told him so, sir,’ returned Oliver in amazement.

This sounded so like a falsehood, that the old gentleman looked somewhat sternly in Oliver’s face. It was impossible to doubt him; there was truth in every one of its thin and sharpened lineaments.

‘Some mistake,’ said Mr. Brownlow. But, although his motive for looking steadily at Oliver no longer existed, the old idea of the resemblance between his features and some familiar face came upon him so strongly, that he could not withdraw his gaze.

‘I hope you are not angry with me, sir?’ said Oliver, raising his eyes beseechingly.

‘No, no,’ replied the old gentleman. ‘Why! what’s this? Bedwin, look there!’

As he spoke, he pointed hastily to the picture over Oliver’s head, and then to the boy’s face. There was its living copy. The eyes, the head, the mouth; every feature was the same. The expression was, for the instant, so precisely alike, that the minutest line seemed copied with startling accuracy!

Oliver knew not the cause of this sudden exclamation; for, not being strong enough to bear the start it gave him, he fainted away. A weakness on his part, which affords the narrative an opportunity of relieving the reader from suspense, in behalf of the two young pupils of the Merry Old Gentleman; and of recording—

That when the Dodger, and his accomplished friend Master Bates, joined in the hue-and-cry which was raised at Oliver’s heels, in consequence of their executing an illegal conveyance of Mr. Brownlow’s personal property, as has been already described, they were actuated by a very laudable and becoming regard for themselves; and forasmuch as the freedom of the subject and the liberty of the individual are among the first and proudest boasts of a true-hearted Englishman, so, I need hardly beg the reader to observe, that this action should tend to exalt them in the opinion of all public and patriotic men, in almost as great a degree as this strong proof of their anxiety for their own preservation and safety goes to corroborate and confirm the little code of laws which certain profound and sound-judging philosophers have laid down as the main-springs

of all Nature's deeds and actions: the said philosophers very wisely reducing the good lady's proceedings to matters of maxim and theory: and, by a very neat and pretty compliment to her exalted wisdom and understanding, putting entirely out of sight any considerations of heart, or generous impulse and feeling. For, these are matters totally beneath a female who is acknowledged by universal admission to be far above the numerous little foibles and weaknesses of her sex.

If I wanted any further proof of the strictly philosophical nature of the conduct of these young gentlemen in their very delicate predicament, I should at once find it in the fact (also recorded in a foregoing part of this narrative), of their quitting the pursuit, when the general attention was fixed upon Oliver; and making immediately for their home by the shortest possible cut. Although I do not mean to assert that it is usually the practice of renowned and learned sages, to shorten the road to any great conclusion (their course indeed being rather to lengthen the distance, by various circumlocutions and discursive staggerings, like unto those in which drunken men under the pressure of a too mighty flow of ideas, are prone to indulge); still, I do mean to say, and do say distinctly, that it is the invariable practice of many mighty philosophers, in carrying out their theories, to evince great wisdom and foresight in providing against every possible contingency which can be supposed at all likely to affect themselves. Thus, to do a great right, you may do a little wrong; and you may take any means which the end to be attained, will justify; the amount of the right, or the amount of the wrong, or indeed the distinction between the two, being left entirely to the philosopher concerned, to be settled and determined by his clear, comprehensive, and impartial view of his own particular case.

It was not until the two boys had scoured, with great rapidity, through a most intricate maze of narrow streets and courts, that they ventured to halt beneath a low and dark archway. Having remained silent here, just long enough to recover breath to speak, Master Bates uttered an exclamation of amusement and delight; and, bursting into an uncontrollable fit of laughter, flung himself upon a doorstep, and rolled thereon in a transport of mirth.

'What's the matter?' inquired the Dodger.

'Ha! ha! ha!' roared Charley Bates.

'Hold your noise,' remonstrated the Dodger, looking cautiously round. 'Do you want to be grabbed, stupid?'

'I can't help it,' said Charley, 'I can't help it! To see him splitting away at that pace, and cutting round the corners, and knocking up again' the posts, and starting on again as if he was made of iron as well as them, and me with the wipe in my pocket, singing out arter him—oh, my eye!' The vivid imagination of Master Bates presented the scene before him in too strong colours. As he arrived at this apostrophe, he again rolled upon the door-step, and laughed louder than before.

'What'll Fagin say?' inquired the Dodger; taking advantage of the next interval of breathlessness on the part of his friend to propound the question.

'What?' repeated Charley Bates.

'Ah, what?' said the Dodger.

'Why, what should he say?' inquired Charley: stopping rather suddenly in his merriment; for the Dodger's manner was impressive. 'What should he say?'

Mr. Dawkins whistled for a couple of minutes; then, taking off his hat, scratched his head, and nodded thrice.

'What do you mean?' said Charley.

'Toor rul lol loo, gammon and spinnage, the frog he wouldn't, and high cockolorum,' said the Dodger: with a slight sneer on his intellectual countenance.

This was explanatory, but not satisfactory. Master Bates felt it so; and again said, 'What do you mean?'

The Dodger made no reply; but putting his hat on again, and gathering the skirts of his long-tailed coat under his arm, thrust his tongue into his cheek, slapped the bridge of his nose some half-dozen times in a familiar but expressive manner, and turning on his heel, slunk down the court. Master Bates followed, with a thoughtful countenance.

The noise of footsteps on the creaking stairs, a few minutes after the occurrence of this conversation, roused the merry old gentleman as he sat over the fire with a saveloy and a small loaf in his hand; a pocket-knife in his right; and a pewter pot on the trivet. There was a rascally smile on his white face as he turned round, and looking sharply out from under his thick red eyebrows, bent his ear towards the door, and listened.

'Why, how's this?' muttered the Jew: changing countenance; 'only two of 'em? Where's the third? They can't have got into trouble. Hark!'

The footsteps approached nearer; they reached the landing. The door was slowly opened; and the Dodger and Charley Bates entered, closing it behind them.

CHAPTER XIII — SOME NEW ACQUAINTANCES ARE INTRODUCED TO THE INTELLIGENT READER, CONNECTED WITH WHOM VARIOUS PLEASANT MATTERS ARE RELATED, APPERTAINING TO THIS HISTORY

‘Where’s Oliver?’ said the Jew, rising with a menacing look. ‘Where’s the boy?’

The young thieves eyed their preceptor as if they were alarmed at his violence; and looked uneasily at each other. But they made no reply.

‘What’s become of the boy?’ said the Jew, seizing the Dodger tightly by the collar, and threatening him with horrid imprecations. ‘Speak out, or I’ll throttle you!’

Mr. Fagin looked so very much in earnest, that Charley Bates, who deemed it prudent in all cases to be on the safe side, and who conceived it by no means improbable that it might be his turn to be throttled second, dropped upon his knees, and raised a loud, well-sustained, and continuous roar—something between a mad bull and a speaking trumpet.

‘Will you speak?’ thundered the Jew: shaking the Dodger so much that his keeping in the big coat at all, seemed perfectly miraculous.

‘Why, the traps have got him, and that’s all about it,’ said the Dodger, sullenly. ‘Come, let go o’ me, will you!’ And, swinging himself, at one jerk, clean out of the big coat, which he left in the Jew’s hands, the Dodger snatched up the toasting fork, and made a pass at the merry old gentleman’s waistcoat; which, if it had taken effect, would have let a little more merriment out than could have been easily replaced.

The Jew stepped back in this emergency, with more agility than could have been anticipated in a man of his apparent decrepitude; and, seizing up the pot, prepared to hurl it at his assailant’s head. But Charley Bates, at this moment, calling his attention by a perfectly terrific howl, he suddenly altered its destination, and flung it full at that young gentleman.

‘Why, what the blazes is in the wind now!’ growled a deep voice. ‘Who pitched that ‘ere at me? It’s well it’s the beer, and not the pot, as hit me, or I’d have settled somebody. I might have know’d, as nobody but an infernal, rich, plundering, thundering old Jew could afford to throw away any drink but water—and not that, unless he done the River Company every quarter. Wot’s it all about, Fagin? D—me, if my neck-handkercher an’t lined with beer! Come in, you sneaking warmint; wot are you stopping outside for, as if you was ashamed of your master! Come in!’

The man who growled out these words, was a stoutly-built fellow of about five-and-thirty, in a black velveteen coat, very soiled drab breeches, lace-up half boots, and grey cotton stockings which inclosed a bulky pair of legs, with large swelling calves;—the kind of legs, which in such costume, always look in an unfinished and incomplete state without a set of fetters to garnish them. He had a brown hat on his head, and a dirty belcher handkerchief round his neck: with the long frayed ends of which he smeared the beer from his face as he spoke. He disclosed, when he had done so, a broad heavy countenance with a beard of three days’ growth, and two scowling eyes; one of which displayed various parti-coloured symptoms of having been recently damaged by a blow.

‘Come in, d’ye hear?’ growled this engaging ruffian.

A white shaggy dog, with his face scratched and torn in twenty different places, skulked into the room.

‘Why didn’t you come in afore?’ said the man. ‘You’re getting too proud to own me afore company, are you? Lie down!’

This command was accompanied with a kick, which sent the animal to the other end of the room. He appeared well used to it, however; for he coiled himself up in a corner very quietly, without uttering a sound, and winking his very ill-looking eyes twenty times in a minute, appeared to occupy himself in taking a survey of the apartment.

‘What are you up to? Ill-treating the boys, you covetous, avaricious, in-sa-ti-a-ble old fence?’ said the man, seating himself deliberately. ‘I wonder they don’t murder you! I would if I was them. If I’d been your ‘prentice, I’d have done it long ago, and—no, I couldn’t have sold you afterwards, for you’re fit for nothing but keeping as a curiousity of ugliness in a glass bottle, and I suppose they don’t blow glass bottles large enough.’

‘Hush! hush! Mr. Sikes,’ said the Jew, trembling; ‘don’t speak so loud!’

‘None of your mistering,’ replied the ruffian; ‘you always mean mischief when you come that. You know my name: out with it! I shan’t disgrace it when the time comes.’

‘Well, well, then—Bill Sikes,’ said the Jew, with abject humility. ‘You seem out of humour, Bill.’

‘Perhaps I am,’ replied Sikes; ‘I should think you was rather out of sorts too, unless you mean as little harm when you throw pewter pots about, as you do when you blab and—’

‘Are you mad?’ said the Jew, catching the man by the sleeve, and pointing towards the boys.

Mr. Sikes contented himself with tying an imaginary knot under his left ear, and jerking his head over on the right shoulder; a piece of dumb show which the Jew appeared to understand perfectly. He then, in cant terms, with which his whole conversation was plentifully besprinkled, but which would be quite unintelligible if they were recorded here, demanded a glass of liquor.

‘And mind you don’t poison it,’ said Mr. Sikes, laying his hat upon the table.

This was said in jest; but if the speaker could have seen the evil leer with which the Jew bit his pale lip as he turned round to the cupboard, he might have thought the caution not wholly unnecessary, or the wish (at all events) to improve upon the distiller’s ingenuity not very far from the old gentleman’s merry heart.

After swallowing two of three glasses of spirits, Mr. Sikes condescended to take some notice of the young gentlemen; which gracious act led to a conversation, in which the cause and manner of Oliver’s capture were circumstantially detailed, with such alterations and improvements on the truth, as to the Dodger appeared most advisable under the circumstances.

‘I’m afraid,’ said the Jew, ‘that he may say something which will get us into trouble.’

‘That’s very likely,’ returned Sikes with a malicious grin. ‘You’re blowed upon, Fagin.’

‘And I’m afraid, you see,’ added the Jew, speaking as if he had not noticed the interruption; and regarding

the other closely as he did so,—'I'm afraid that, if the game was up with us, it might be up with a good many more, and that it would come out rather worse for you than it would for me, my dear.'

The man started, and turned round upon the Jew. But the old gentleman's shoulders were shrugged up to his ears; and his eyes were vacantly staring on the opposite wall.

There was a long pause. Every member of the respectable coterie appeared plunged in his own reflections; not excepting the dog, who by a certain malicious licking of his lips seemed to be meditating an attack upon the legs of the first gentleman or lady he might encounter in the streets when he went out.

'Somebody must find out wot's been done at the office,' said Mr. Sikes in a much lower tone than he had taken since he came in.

The Jew nodded assent.

'If he hasn't peached, and is committed, there's no fear till he comes out again,' said Mr. Sikes, 'and then he must be taken care on. You must get hold of him somehow.'

Again the Jew nodded.

The prudence of this line of action, indeed, was obvious; but, unfortunately, there was one very strong objection to its being adopted. This was, that the Dodger, and Charley Bates, and Fagin, and Mr. William Sikes, happened, one and all, to entertain a violent and deeply-rooted antipathy to going near a police-office on any ground or pretext whatever.

How long they might have sat and looked at each other, in a state of uncertainty not the most pleasant of its kind, it is difficult to guess. It is not necessary to make any guesses on the subject, however; for the sudden entrance of the two young ladies whom Oliver had seen on a former occasion, caused the conversation to flow afresh.

'The very thing!' said the Jew. 'Bet will go; won't you, my dear?'

'Wheres?' inquired the young lady.

'Only just up to the office, my dear,' said the Jew coaxingly.

It is due to the young lady to say that she did not positively affirm that she would not, but that she merely expressed an emphatic and earnest desire to be 'blessed' if she would; a polite and delicate evasion of the request, which shows the young lady to have been possessed of that natural good breeding which cannot bear to inflict upon a fellow-creature, the pain of a direct and pointed refusal.

The Jew's countenance fell. He turned from this young lady, who was gaily, not to say gorgeously attired, in a red gown, green boots, and yellow curl-papers, to the other female.

'Nancy, my dear,' said the Jew in a soothing manner, 'what do *you* say?'

'That it won't do; so it's no use a-trying it on, Fagin,' replied Nancy.

'What do you mean by that?' said Mr. Sikes, looking up in a surly manner.

'What I say, Bill,' replied the lady collectedly.

'Why, you're just the very person for it,' reasoned Mr. Sikes: 'nobody about here knows anything of you.'

'And as I don't want 'em to, neither,' replied Nancy in the same composed manner, 'it's rather more no than yes with me, Bill.'

'She'll go, Fagin,' said Sikes.

'No, she won't, Fagin,' said Nancy.

'Yes, she will, Fagin,' said Sikes.

And Mr. Sikes was right. By dint of alternate threats, promises, and bribes, the lady in question was ultimately prevailed upon to undertake the commission. She was not, indeed, withheld by the same considerations as her agreeable friend; for, having recently removed into the neighborhood of Field Lane from the remote but genteel suburb of Ratcliffe, she was not under the same apprehension of being recognised by any of her numerous acquaintances.

Accordingly, with a clean white apron tied over her gown, and her curl-papers tucked up under a straw bonnet,—both articles of dress being provided from the Jew's inexhaustible stock,—Miss Nancy prepared to issue forth on her errand.

'Stop a minute, my dear,' said the Jew, producing, a little covered basket. 'Carry that in one hand. It looks more respectable, my dear.'

'Give her a door-key to carry in her t'other one, Fagin,' said Sikes; 'it looks real and genivine like.'

'Yes, yes, my dear, so it does,' said the Jew, hanging a large street-door key on the forefinger of the young lady's right hand.

'There; very good! Very good indeed, my dear!' said the Jew, rubbing his hands.

'Oh, my brother! My poor, dear, sweet, innocent little brother!' exclaimed Nancy, bursting into tears, and wringing the little basket and the street-door key in an agony of distress. 'What has become of him! Where have they taken him to! Oh, do have pity, and tell me what's been done with the dear boy, gentlemen; do, gentlemen, if you please, gentlemen!'

Having uttered those words in a most lamentable and heart-broken tone: to the immeasurable delight of her hearers: Miss Nancy paused, winked to the company, nodded smilingly round, and disappeared.

'Ah, she's a clever girl, my dears,' said the Jew, turning round to his young friends, and shaking his head gravely, as if in mute admonition to them to follow the bright example they had just beheld.

'She's a honour to her sex,' said Mr. Sikes, filling his glass, and smiting the table with his enormous fist. 'Here's her health, and wishing they was all like her!'

While these, and many other encomiums, were being passed on the accomplished Nancy, that young lady made the best of her way to the police-office; whither, notwithstanding a little natural timidity consequent upon walking through the streets alone and unprotected, she arrived in perfect safety shortly afterwards.

Entering by the back way, she tapped softly with the key at one of the cell-doors, and listened. There was no sound within: so she coughed and listened again. Still there was no reply: so she spoke.

'Nolly, dear?' murmured Nancy in a gentle voice; 'Nolly?'

There was nobody inside but a miserable shoeless criminal, who had been taken up for playing the flute, and who, the offence against society having been clearly proved, had been very properly committed by Mr. Fang to the House of Correction for one month; with the appropriate and amusing remark that since he had so much breath to spare, it would be more wholesomely expended on the treadmill than in a musical instrument. He made no answer: being occupied mentally bewailing the loss of the flute, which had been confiscated for the use of the county: so Nancy passed on to the next cell, and knocked there.

'Well!' cried a faint and feeble voice.

'Is there a little boy here?' inquired Nancy, with a preliminary sob.

'No,' replied the voice; 'God forbid.'

This was a vagrant of sixty-five, who was going to prison for *not* playing the flute; or, in other words, for begging in the streets, and doing nothing for his livelihood. In the next cell was another man, who was going to the same prison for hawking tin saucepans without license; thereby doing something for his living, in defiance of the Stamp-office.

But, as neither of these criminals answered to the name of Oliver, or knew anything about him, Nancy made straight up to the bluff officer in the striped waistcoat; and with the most piteous wailings and lamentations, rendered more piteous by a prompt and efficient use of the street-door key and the little basket, demanded her own dear brother.

'I haven't got him, my dear,' said the old man.

'Where is he?' screamed Nancy, in a distracted manner.

'Why, the gentleman's got him,' replied the officer.

'What gentleman! Oh, gracious heavens! What gentleman?' exclaimed Nancy.

In reply to this incoherent questioning, the old man informed the deeply affected sister that Oliver had been taken ill in the office, and discharged in consequence of a witness having proved the robbery to have been committed by another boy, not in custody; and that the prosecutor had carried him away, in an insensible condition, to his own residence: of and concerning which, all the informant knew was, that it was somewhere in Pentonville, he having heard that word mentioned in the directions to the coachman.

In a dreadful state of doubt and uncertainty, the agonised young woman staggered to the gate, and then, exchanging her faltering walk for a swift run, returned by the most devious and complicated route she could think of, to the domicile of the Jew.

Mr. Bill Sikes no sooner heard the account of the expedition delivered, than he very hastily called up the white dog, and, putting on his hat, expeditiously departed: without devoting any time to the formality of wishing the company good-morning.

'We must know where he is, my dears; he must be found,' said the Jew greatly excited. 'Charley, do nothing but skulk about, till you bring home some news of him! Nancy, my dear, I must have him found. I trust to you, my dear,—to you and the Artful for everything! Stay, stay,' added the Jew, unlocking a drawer with a shaking hand; 'there's money, my dears. I shall shut up this shop to-night. You'll know where to find me! Don't stop here a minute. Not an instant, my dears!'

With these words, he pushed them from the room: and carefully double-locking and barring the door behind them, drew from its place of concealment the box which he had unintentionally disclosed to Oliver. Then, he hastily proceeded to dispose the watches and jewellery beneath his clothing.

A rap at the door startled him in this occupation. 'Who's there?' he cried in a shrill tone.

'Me!' replied the voice of the Dodger, through the key-hole.

'What now?' cried the Jew impatiently.

'Is he to be kidnapped to the other ken, Nancy says?' inquired the Dodger.

'Yes,' replied the Jew, 'wherever she lays hands on him. Find him, find him out, that's all. I shall know what to do next; never fear.'

The boy murmured a reply of intelligence: and hurried downstairs after his companions.

'He has not peached so far,' said the Jew as he pursued his occupation. 'If he means to blab us among his new friends, we may stop his mouth yet.'

CHAPTER XIV — COMPRISING FURTHER PARTICULARS OF OLIVER'S STAY AT MR. BROWNLOW'S, WITH THE REMARKABLE PREDICTION WHICH ONE MR. GRIMWIG UTTERED CONCERNING HIM, WHEN HE WENT OUT ON AN ERRAND

Oliver soon recovering from the fainting-fit into which Mr. Brownlow's abrupt exclamation had thrown him, the subject of the picture was carefully avoided, both by the old gentleman and Mrs. Bedwin, in the conversation that ensued: which indeed bore no reference to Oliver's history or prospects, but was confined to such topics as might amuse without exciting him. He was still too weak to get up to breakfast; but, when he came down into the housekeeper's room next day, his first act was to cast an eager glance at the wall, in the hope of again looking on the face of the beautiful lady. His expectations were disappointed, however, for the picture had been removed.

'Ah!' said the housekeeper, watching the direction of Oliver's eyes. 'It is gone, you see.'

'I see it is ma'am,' replied Oliver. 'Why have they taken it away?'

'It has been taken down, child, because Mr. Brownlow said, that as it seemed to worry you, perhaps it might prevent your getting well, you know,' rejoined the old lady.

'Oh, no, indeed. It didn't worry me, ma'am,' said Oliver. 'I liked to see it. I quite loved it.'

'Well, well!' said the old lady, good-humouredly; 'you get well as fast as ever you can, dear, and it shall be hung up again. There! I promise you that! Now, let us talk about something else.'

This was all the information Oliver could obtain about the picture at that time. As the old lady had been so kind to him in his illness, he endeavoured to think no more of the subject just then; so he listened attentively to a great many stories she told him, about an amiable and handsome daughter of hers, who was married to an amiable and handsome man, and lived in the country; and about a son, who was clerk to a merchant in the West Indies; and who was, also, such a good young man, and wrote such dutiful letters home four times a-year, that it brought the tears into her eyes to talk about them. When the old lady had expatiated, a long time, on the excellences of her children, and the merits of her kind good husband besides, who had been dead and gone, poor dear soul! just six-and-twenty years, it was time to have tea. After tea she began to teach Oliver cribbage: which he learnt as quickly as she could teach: and at which game they played, with great interest and gravity, until it was time for the invalid to have some warm wine and water, with a slice of dry toast, and then to go cosily to bed.

They were happy days, those of Oliver's recovery. Everything was so quiet, and neat, and orderly; everybody so kind and gentle; that after the noise and turbulence in the midst of which he had always lived, it seemed like Heaven itself. He was no sooner strong enough to put his clothes on, properly, than Mr. Brownlow caused a complete new suit, and a new cap, and a new pair of shoes, to be provided for him. As Oliver was told that he might do what he liked with the old clothes, he gave them to a servant who had been very kind to him, and asked her to sell them to a Jew, and keep the money for herself. This she very readily did; and, as Oliver looked out of the parlour window, and saw the Jew roll them up in his bag and walk away, he felt quite delighted to think that they were safely gone, and that there was now no possible danger of his ever being able to wear them again. They were sad rags, to tell the truth; and Oliver had never had a new suit before.

One evening, about a week after the affair of the picture, as he was sitting talking to Mrs. Bedwin, there came a message down from Mr. Brownlow, that if Oliver Twist felt pretty well, he should like to see him in his study, and talk to him a little while.

'Bless us, and save us! Wash your hands, and let me part your hair nicely for you, child,' said Mrs. Bedwin. 'Dear heart alive! If we had known he would have asked for you, we would have put you a clean collar on, and made you as smart as sixpence!'

Oliver did as the old lady bade him; and, although she lamented grievously, meanwhile, that there was not even time to crimp the little frill that bordered his shirt-collar; he looked so delicate and handsome, despite that important personal advantage, that she went so far as to say: looking at him with great complacency from head to foot, that she really didn't think it would have been possible, on the longest notice, to have made much difference in him for the better.

Thus encouraged, Oliver tapped at the study door. On Mr. Brownlow calling to him to come in, he found himself in a little back room, quite full of books, with a window, looking into some pleasant little gardens. There was a table drawn up before the window, at which Mr. Brownlow was seated reading. When he saw Oliver, he pushed the book away from him, and told him to come near the table, and sit down. Oliver complied; marvelling where the people could be found to read such a great number of books as seemed to be written to make the world wiser. Which is still a marvel to more experienced people than Oliver Twist, every day of their lives.

'There are a good many books, are there not, my boy?' said Mr. Brownlow, observing the curiosity with which Oliver surveyed the shelves that reached from the floor to the ceiling.

'A great number, sir,' replied Oliver. 'I never saw so many.'

'You shall read them, if you behave well,' said the old gentleman kindly; 'and you will like that, better than looking at the outsides,—that is, some cases; because there are books of which the backs and covers are by far the best parts.'

'I suppose they are those heavy ones, sir,' said Oliver, pointing to some large quartos, with a good deal of gilding about the binding.

'Not always those,' said the old gentleman, patting Oliver on the head, and smiling as he did so; 'there are other equally heavy ones, though of a much smaller size. How should you like to grow up a clever man, and write books, eh?'

'I think I would rather read them, sir,' replied Oliver.

'What! wouldn't you like to be a book-writer?' said the old gentleman.

Oliver considered a little while; and at last said, he should think it would be a much better thing to be a book-seller; upon which the old gentleman laughed heartily, and declared he had said a very good thing. Which Oliver felt glad to have done, though he by no means knew what it was.

'Well, well,' said the old gentleman, composing his features. 'Don't be afraid! We won't make an author of

you, while there's an honest trade to be learnt, or brick-making to turn to.'

'Thank you, sir,' said Oliver. At the earnest manner of his reply, the old gentleman laughed again; and said something about a curious instinct, which Oliver, not understanding, paid no very great attention to.

'Now,' said Mr. Brownlow, speaking if possible in a kinder, but at the same time in a much more serious manner, than Oliver had ever known him assume yet, 'I want you to pay great attention, my boy, to what I am going to say. I shall talk to you without any reserve; because I am sure you are well able to understand me, as many older persons would be.'

'Oh, don't tell you are going to send me away, sir, pray!' exclaimed Oliver, alarmed at the serious tone of the old gentleman's commencement! 'Don't turn me out of doors to wander in the streets again. Let me stay here, and be a servant. Don't send me back to the wretched place I came from. Have mercy upon a poor boy, sir!'

'My dear child,' said the old gentleman, moved by the warmth of Oliver's sudden appeal; 'you need not be afraid of my deserting you, unless you give me cause.'

'I never, never will, sir,' interposed Oliver.

'I hope not,' rejoined the old gentleman. 'I do not think you ever will. I have been deceived, before, in the objects whom I have endeavoured to benefit; but I feel strongly disposed to trust you, nevertheless; and I am more interested in your behalf than I can well account for, even to myself. The persons on whom I have bestowed my dearest love, lie deep in their graves; but, although the happiness and delight of my life lie buried there too, I have not made a coffin of my heart, and sealed it up, forever, on my best affections. Deep affliction has but strengthened and refined them.'

As the old gentleman said this in a low voice: more to himself than to his companion: and as he remained silent for a short time afterwards: Oliver sat quite still.

'Well, well!' said the old gentleman at length, in a more cheerful tone, 'I only say this, because you have a young heart; and knowing that I have suffered great pain and sorrow, you will be more careful, perhaps, not to wound me again. You say you are an orphan, without a friend in the world; all the inquiries I have been able to make, confirm the statement. Let me hear your story; where you come from; who brought you up; and how you got into the company in which I found you. Speak the truth, and you shall not be friendless while I live.'

Oliver's sobs checked his utterance for some minutes; when he was on the point of beginning to relate how he had been brought up at the farm, and carried to the workhouse by Mr. Bumble, a peculiarly impatient little double-knock was heard at the street-door: and the servant, running upstairs, announced Mr. Grimwig.

'Is he coming up?' inquired Mr. Brownlow.

'Yes, sir,' replied the servant. 'He asked if there were any muffins in the house; and, when I told him yes, he said he had come to tea.'

Mr. Brownlow smiled; and, turning to Oliver, said that Mr. Grimwig was an old friend of his, and he must not mind his being a little rough in his manners; for he was a worthy creature at bottom, as he had reason to know.

'Shall I go downstairs, sir?' inquired Oliver.

'No,' replied Mr. Brownlow, 'I would rather you remained here.'

At this moment, there walked into the room: supporting himself by a thick stick: a stout old gentleman, rather lame in one leg, who was dressed in a blue coat, striped waistcoat, nankeen breeches and gaiters, and a broad-brimmed white hat, with the sides turned up with green. A very small-plaited shirt frill stuck out from his waistcoat; and a very long steel watch-chain, with nothing but a key at the end, dangled loosely below it. The ends of his white neckerchief were twisted into a ball about the size of an orange; the variety of shapes into which his countenance was twisted, defy description. He had a manner of screwing his head on one side when he spoke; and of looking out of the corners of his eyes at the same time: which irresistibly reminded the beholder of a parrot. In this attitude, he fixed himself, the moment he made his appearance; and, holding out a small piece of orange-peel at arm's length, exclaimed, in a growling, discontented voice.

'Look here! do you see this! Isn't it a most wonderful and extraordinary thing that I can't call at a man's house but I find a piece of this poor surgeon's friend on the staircase? I've been lamed with orange-peel once, and I know orange-peel will be my death, or I'll be content to eat my own head, sir!'

This was the handsome offer with which Mr. Grimwig backed and confirmed nearly every assertion he made; and it was the more singular in his case, because, even admitting for the sake of argument, the possibility of scientific improvements being brought to that pass which will enable a gentleman to eat his own head in the event of his being so disposed, Mr. Grimwig's head was such a particularly large one, that the most sanguine man alive could hardly entertain a hope of being able to get through it at a sitting—to put entirely out of the question, a very thick coating of powder.

'I'll eat my head, sir,' repeated Mr. Grimwig, striking his stick upon the ground. 'Hallo! what's that!' looking at Oliver, and retreating a pace or two.

'This is young Oliver Twist, whom we were speaking about,' said Mr. Brownlow.

Oliver bowed.

'You don't mean to say that's the boy who had the fever, I hope?' said Mr. Grimwig, recoiling a little more. 'Wait a minute! Don't speak! Stop—' continued Mr. Grimwig, abruptly, losing all dread of the fever in his triumph at the discovery; 'that's the boy who had the orange! If that's not the boy, sir, who had the orange, and threw this bit of peel upon the staircase, I'll eat my head, and his too.'

'No, no, he has not had one,' said Mr. Brownlow, laughing. 'Come! Put down your hat; and speak to my young friend.'

'I feel strongly on this subject, sir,' said the irritable old gentleman, drawing off his gloves. 'There's always more or less orange-peel on the pavement in our street; and I *know* it's put there by the surgeon's boy at the corner. A young woman stumbled over a bit last night, and fell against my garden-railings; directly she got up

I saw her look towards his infernal red lamp with the pantomime-light. “Don’t go to him,” I called out of the window, “he’s an assassin! A man-trap!” So he is. If he is not—’ Here the irascible old gentleman gave a great knock on the ground with his stick; which was always understood, by his friends, to imply the customary offer, whenever it was not expressed in words. Then, still keeping his stick in his hand, he sat down; and, opening a double eye-glass, which he wore attached to a broad black riband, took a view of Oliver: who, seeing that he was the object of inspection, coloured, and bowed again.

‘That’s the boy, is it?’ said Mr. Grimwig, at length.

‘That’s the boy,’ replied Mr. Brownlow.

‘How are you, boy?’ said Mr. Grimwig.

‘A great deal better, thank you, sir,’ replied Oliver.

Mr. Brownlow, seeming to apprehend that his singular friend was about to say something disagreeable, asked Oliver to step downstairs and tell Mrs. Bedwin they were ready for tea; which, as he did not half like the visitor’s manner, he was very happy to do.

‘He is a nice-looking boy, is he not?’ inquired Mr. Brownlow.

‘I don’t know,’ replied Mr. Grimwig, pettishly.

‘Don’t know?’

‘No. I don’t know. I never see any difference in boys. I only knew two sort of boys. Mealy boys, and beef-faced boys.’

‘And which is Oliver?’

‘Mealy. I know a friend who has a beef-faced boy; a fine boy, they call him; with a round head, and red cheeks, and glaring eyes; a horrid boy; with a body and limbs that appear to be swelling out of the seams of his blue clothes; with the voice of a pilot, and the appetite of a wolf. I know him! The wretch!’

‘Come,’ said Mr. Brownlow, ‘these are not the characteristics of young Oliver Twist; so he needn’t excite your wrath.’

‘They are not,’ replied Mr. Grimwig. ‘He may have worse.’

Here, Mr. Brownlow coughed impatiently; which appeared to afford Mr. Grimwig the most exquisite delight.

‘He may have worse, I say,’ repeated Mr. Grimwig. ‘Where does he come from! Who is he? What is he? He has had a fever. What of that? Fevers are not peculiar to good people; are they? Bad people have fevers sometimes; haven’t they, eh? I knew a man who was hung in Jamaica for murdering his master. He had had a fever six times; he wasn’t recommended to mercy on that account. Pooh! nonsense!’

Now, the fact was, that in the inmost recesses of his own heart, Mr. Grimwig was strongly disposed to admit that Oliver’s appearance and manner were unusually prepossessing; but he had a strong appetite for contradiction, sharpened on this occasion by the finding of the orange-peel; and, inwardly determining that no man should dictate to him whether a boy was well-looking or not, he had resolved, from the first, to oppose his friend. When Mr. Brownlow admitted that on no one point of inquiry could he yet return a satisfactory answer; and that he had postponed any investigation into Oliver’s previous history until he thought the boy was strong enough to hear it; Mr. Grimwig chuckled maliciously. And he demanded, with a sneer, whether the housekeeper was in the habit of counting the plate at night; because if she didn’t find a table-spoon or two missing some sunshiny morning, why, he would be content to—and so forth.

All this, Mr. Brownlow, although himself somewhat of an impetuous gentleman: knowing his friend’s peculiarities, bore with great good humour; as Mr. Grimwig, at tea, was graciously pleased to express his entire approval of the muffins, matters went on very smoothly; and Oliver, who made one of the party, began to feel more at his ease than he had yet done in the fierce old gentleman’s presence.

‘And when are you going to hear a full, true, and particular account of the life and adventures of Oliver Twist?’ asked Grimwig of Mr. Brownlow, at the conclusion of the meal; looking sideways at Oliver, as he resumed his subject.

‘To-morrow morning,’ replied Mr. Brownlow. ‘I would rather he was alone with me at the time. Come up to me to-morrow morning at ten o’clock, my dear.’

‘Yes, sir,’ replied Oliver. He answered with some hesitation, because he was confused by Mr. Grimwig’s looking so hard at him.

‘I’ll tell you what,’ whispered that gentleman to Mr. Brownlow; ‘he won’t come up to you to-morrow morning. I saw him hesitate. He is deceiving you, my good friend.’

‘I’ll swear he is not,’ replied Mr. Brownlow, warmly.

‘If he is not,’ said Mr. Grimwig, ‘I’ll—’ and down went the stick.

‘I’ll answer for that boy’s truth with my life!’ said Mr. Brownlow, knocking the table.

‘And I for his falsehood with my head!’ rejoined Mr. Grimwig, knocking the table also.

‘We shall see,’ said Mr. Brownlow, checking his rising anger.

‘We will,’ replied Mr. Grimwig, with a provoking smile; ‘we will.’

As fate would have it, Mrs. Bedwin chanced to bring in, at this moment, a small parcel of books, which Mr. Brownlow had that morning purchased of the identical bookstall-keeper, who has already figured in this history; having laid them on the table, she prepared to leave the room.

‘Stop the boy, Mrs. Bedwin!’ said Mr. Brownlow; ‘there is something to go back.’

‘He has gone, sir,’ replied Mrs. Bedwin.

‘Call after him,’ said Mr. Brownlow; ‘it’s particular. He is a poor man, and they are not paid for. There are some books to be taken back, too.’

The street-door was opened. Oliver ran one way; and the girl ran another; and Mrs. Bedwin stood on the step and screamed for the boy; but there was no boy in sight. Oliver and the girl returned, in a breathless

state, to report that there were no tidings of him.

‘Dear me, I am very sorry for that,’ exclaimed Mr. Brownlow; ‘I particularly wished those books to be returned to-night.’

‘Send Oliver with them,’ said Mr. Grimwig, with an ironical smile; ‘he will be sure to deliver them safely, you know.’

‘Yes; do let me take them, if you please, sir,’ said Oliver. ‘I’ll run all the way, sir.’

The old gentleman was just going to say that Oliver should not go out on any account; when a most malicious cough from Mr. Grimwig determined him that he should; and that, by his prompt discharge of the commission, he should prove to him the injustice of his suspicions: on this head at least: at once.

‘You *shall* go, my dear,’ said the old gentleman. ‘The books are on a chair by my table. Fetch them down.’

Oliver, delighted to be of use, brought down the books under his arm in a great bustle; and waited, cap in hand, to hear what message he was to take.

‘You are to say,’ said Mr. Brownlow, glancing steadily at Grimwig; ‘you are to say that you have brought those books back; and that you have come to pay the four pound ten I owe him. This is a five-pound note, so you will have to bring me back, ten shillings change.’

‘I won’t be ten minutes, sir,’ said Oliver, eagerly. Having buttoned up the bank-note in his jacket pocket, and placed the books carefully under his arm, he made a respectful bow, and left the room. Mrs. Bedwin followed him to the street-door, giving him many directions about the nearest way, and the name of the bookseller, and the name of the street: all of which Oliver said he clearly understood. Having superadded many injunctions to be sure and not take cold, the old lady at length permitted him to depart.

‘Bless his sweet face!’ said the old lady, looking after him. ‘I can’t bear, somehow, to let him go out of my sight.’

At this moment, Oliver looked gaily round, and nodded before he turned the corner. The old lady smilingly returned his salutation, and, closing the door, went back to her own room.

‘Let me see; he’ll be back in twenty minutes, at the longest,’ said Mr. Brownlow, pulling out his watch, and placing it on the table. ‘It will be dark by that time.’

‘Oh! you really expect him to come back, do you?’ inquired Mr. Grimwig.

‘Don’t you?’ asked Mr. Brownlow, smiling.

The spirit of contradiction was strong in Mr. Grimwig’s breast, at the moment; and it was rendered stronger by his friend’s confident smile.

‘No,’ he said, smiting the table with his fist, ‘I do not. The boy has a new suit of clothes on his back, a set of valuable books under his arm, and a five-pound note in his pocket. He’ll join his old friends the thieves, and laugh at you. If ever that boy returns to this house, sir, I’ll eat my head.’

With these words he drew his chair closer to the table; and there the two friends sat, in silent expectation, with the watch between them.

It is worthy of remark, as illustrating the importance we attach to our own judgments, and the pride with which we put forth our most rash and hasty conclusions, that, although Mr. Grimwig was not by any means a bad-hearted man, and though he would have been unfeignedly sorry to see his respected friend duped and deceived, he really did most earnestly and strongly hope at that moment, that Oliver Twist might not come back.

It grew so dark, that the figures on the dial-plate were scarcely discernible; but there the two old gentlemen continued to sit, in silence, with the watch between them.

CHAPTER XV — SHOWING HOW VERY FOND OF OLIVER TWIST, THE MERRY OLD JEW AND MISS NANCY WERE

In the obscure parlour of a low public-house, in the filthiest part of Little Saffron Hill; a dark and gloomy den, where a flaring gas-light burnt all day in the winter-time; and where no ray of sun ever shone in the summer: there sat, brooding over a little pewter measure and a small glass, strongly impregnated with the smell of liquor, a man in a velveteen coat, drab shorts, half-boots and stockings, whom even by that dim light no experienced agent of the police would have hesitated to recognise as Mr. William Sikes. At his feet, sat a white-coated, red-eyed dog; who occupied himself, alternately, in winking at his master with both eyes at the same time; and in licking a large, fresh cut on one side of his mouth, which appeared to be the result of some recent conflict.

‘Keep quiet, you warmint! Keep quiet!’ said Mr. Sikes, suddenly breaking silence. Whether his meditations were so intense as to be disturbed by the dog’s winking, or whether his feelings were so wrought upon by his reflections that they required all the relief derivable from kicking an unoffending animal to allay them, is matter for argument and consideration. Whatever was the cause, the effect was a kick and a curse, bestowed upon the dog simultaneously.

Dogs are not generally apt to revenge injuries inflicted upon them by their masters; but Mr. Sikes’s dog, having faults of temper in common with his owner, and labouring, perhaps, at this moment, under a powerful

sense of injury, made no more ado but at once fixed his teeth in one of the half-boots. Having given in a hearty shake, he retired, growling, under a form; just escaping the pewter measure which Mr. Sikes levelled at his head.

'You would, would you?' said Sikes, seizing the poker in one hand, and deliberately opening with the other a large clasp-knife, which he drew from his pocket. 'Come here, you born devil! Come here! D'ye hear?'

The dog no doubt heard; because Mr. Sikes spoke in the very harshest key of a very harsh voice; but, appearing to entertain some unaccountable objection to having his throat cut, he remained where he was, and growled more fiercely than before: at the same time grasping the end of the poker between his teeth, and biting at it like a wild beast.

This resistance only infuriated Mr. Sikes the more; who, dropping on his knees, began to assail the animal most furiously. The dog jumped from right to left, and from left to right; snapping, growling, and barking; the man thrust and swore, and struck and blasphemed; and the struggle was reaching a most critical point for one or other; when, the door suddenly opening, the dog darted out: leaving Bill Sikes with the poker and the clasp-knife in his hands.

There must always be two parties to a quarrel, says the old adage. Mr. Sikes, being disappointed of the dog's participation, at once transferred his share in the quarrel to the new comer.

'What the devil do you come in between me and my dog for?' said Sikes, with a fierce gesture.

'I didn't know, my dear, I didn't know,' replied Fagin, humbly; for the Jew was the new comer.

'Didn't know, you white-livered thief!' growled Sikes. 'Couldn't you hear the noise?'

'Not a sound of it, as I'm a living man, Bill,' replied the Jew.

'Oh no! You hear nothing, you don't,' retorted Sikes with a fierce sneer. 'Sneaking in and out, so as nobody hears how you come or go! I wish you had been the dog, Fagin, half a minute ago.'

'Why?' inquired the Jew with a forced smile.

'Cause the government, as cares for the lives of such men as you, as haven't half the pluck of curs, lets a man kill a dog how he likes,' replied Sikes, shutting up the knife with a very expressive look; 'that's why.'

The Jew rubbed his hands; and, sitting down at the table, affected to laugh at the pleasantry of his friend. He was obviously very ill at ease, however.

'Grin away,' said Sikes, replacing the poker, and surveying him with savage contempt; 'grin away. You'll never have the laugh at me, though, unless it's behind a nightcap. I've got the upper hand over you, Fagin; and, d—me, I'll keep it. There! If I go, you go; so take care of me.'

'Well, well, my dear,' said the Jew, 'I know all that; we—we—have a mutual interest, Bill,—a mutual interest.'

'Humph,' said Sikes, as if he thought the interest lay rather more on the Jew's side than on his. 'Well, what have you got to say to me?'

'It's all passed safe through the melting-pot,' replied Fagin, 'and this is your share. It's rather more than it ought to be, my dear; but as I know you'll do me a good turn another time, and—'

'Stow that gammon,' interposed the robber, impatiently. 'Where is it? Hand over!'

'Yes, yes, Bill; give me time, give me time,' replied the Jew, soothingly. 'Here it is! All safe!' As he spoke, he drew forth an old cotton handkerchief from his breast; and untying a large knot in one corner, produced a small brown-paper packet. Sikes, snatching it from him, hastily opened it; and proceeded to count the sovereigns it contained.

'This is all, is it?' inquired Sikes.

'All,' replied the Jew.

'You haven't opened the parcel and swallowed one or two as you come along, have you?' inquired Sikes, suspiciously. 'Don't put on an injured look at the question; you've done it many a time. Jerk the tinkler.'

These words, in plain English, conveyed an injunction to ring the bell. It was answered by another Jew: younger than Fagin, but nearly as vile and repulsive in appearance.

Bill Sikes merely pointed to the empty measure. The Jew, perfectly understanding the hint, retired to fill it: previously exchanging a remarkable look with Fagin, who raised his eyes for an instant, as if in expectation of it, and shook his head in reply; so slightly that the action would have been almost imperceptible to an observant third person. It was lost upon Sikes, who was stooping at the moment to tie the boot-lace which the dog had torn. Possibly, if he had observed the brief interchange of signals, he might have thought that it boded no good to him.

'Is anybody here, Barney?' inquired Fagin; speaking, now that that Sikes was looking on, without raising his eyes from the ground.

'Dot a shoul,' replied Barney; whose words: whether they came from the heart or not: made their way through the nose.

'Nobody?' inquired Fagin, in a tone of surprise: which perhaps might mean that Barney was at liberty to tell the truth.

'Dobody but Biss Dadsy,' replied Barney.

'Nancy!' exclaimed Sikes. 'Where? Strike me blind, if I don't honour that 'ere girl, for her native talents.'

'She's bid havid a plate of boiled beef id the bar,' replied Barney.

'Send her here,' said Sikes, pouring out a glass of liquor. 'Send her here.'

Barney looked timidly at Fagin, as if for permission; the Jew remaining silent, and not lifting his eyes from the ground, he retired; and presently returned, ushering in Nancy; who was decorated with the bonnet, apron, basket, and street-door key, complete.

'You are on the scent, are you, Nancy?' inquired Sikes, proffering the glass.

'Yes, I am, Bill,' replied the young lady, disposing of its contents; 'and tired enough of it I am, too. The

young brat's been ill and confined to the crib; and—'

'Ah, Nancy, dear!' said Fagin, looking up.

Now, whether a peculiar contraction of the Jew's red eye-brows, and a half closing of his deeply-set eyes, warned Miss Nancy that she was disposed to be too communicative, is not a matter of much importance. The fact is all we need care for here; and the fact is, that she suddenly checked herself, and with several gracious smiles upon Mr. Sikes, turned the conversation to other matters. In about ten minutes' time, Mr. Fagin was seized with a fit of coughing; upon which Nancy pulled her shawl over her shoulders, and declared it was time to go. Mr. Sikes, finding that he was walking a short part of her way himself, expressed his intention of accompanying her; they went away together, followed, at a little distant, by the dog, who slunk out of a back-yard as soon as his master was out of sight.

The Jew thrust his head out of the room door when Sikes had left it; looked after him as we walked up the dark passage; shook his clenched fist; muttered a deep curse; and then, with a horrible grin, reseated himself at the table; where he was soon deeply absorbed in the interesting pages of the Hue-and-Cry.

Meanwhile, Oliver Twist, little dreaming that he was within so very short a distance of the merry old gentleman, was on his way to the book-stall. When he got into Clerkenwell, he accidently turned down a by-street which was not exactly in his way; but not discovering his mistake until he had got half-way down it, and knowing it must lead in the right direction, he did not think it worth while to turn back; and so marched on, as quickly as he could, with the books under his arm.

He was walking along, thinking how happy and contented he ought to feel; and how much he would give for only one look at poor little Dick, who, starved and beaten, might be weeping bitterly at that very moment; when he was startled by a young woman screaming out very loud. 'Oh, my dear brother!' And he had hardly looked up, to see what the matter was, when he was stopped by having a pair of arms thrown tight round his neck.

'Don't,' cried Oliver, struggling. 'Let go of me. Who is it? What are you stopping me for?'

The only reply to this, was a great number of loud lamentations from the young woman who had embraced him; and who had a little basket and a street-door key in her hand.

'Oh my gracious!' said the young woman, 'I have found him! Oh! Oliver! Oliver! Oh you naughty boy, to make me suffer such distress on your account! Come home, dear, come. Oh, I've found him. Thank gracious goodness heavins, I've found him!' With these incoherent exclamations, the young woman burst into another fit of crying, and got so dreadfully hysterical, that a couple of women who came up at the moment asked a butcher's boy with a shiny head of hair anointed with suet, who was also looking on, whether he didn't think he had better run for the doctor. To which, the butcher's boy: who appeared of a lounging, not to say indolent disposition: replied, that he thought not.

'Oh, no, no, never mind,' said the young woman, grasping Oliver's hand; 'I'm better now. Come home directly, you cruel boy! Come!'

'Oh, ma'am,' replied the young woman, 'he ran away, near a month ago, from his parents, who are hard-working and respectable people; and went and joined a set of thieves and bad characters; and almost broke his mother's heart.'

'Young wretch!' said one woman.

'Go home, do, you little brute,' said the other.

'I am not,' replied Oliver, greatly alarmed. 'I don't know her. I haven't any sister, or father and mother either. I'm an orphan; I live at Pentonville.'

'Only hear him, how he braves it out!' cried the young woman.

'Why, it's Nancy!' exclaimed Oliver; who now saw her face for the first time; and started back, in irrepressible astonishment.

'You see he knows me!' cried Nancy, appealing to the bystanders. 'He can't help himself. Make him come home, there's good people, or he'll kill his dear mother and father, and break my heart!'

'What the devil's this?' said a man, bursting out of a beer-shop, with a white dog at his heels; 'young Oliver! Come home to your poor mother, you young dog! Come home directly.'

'I don't belong to them. I don't know them. Help! help!' cried Oliver, struggling in the man's powerful grasp.

‘Help!’ repeated the man. ‘Yes; I’ll help you, you young rascal!

What books are these? You’ve been a stealing ‘em, have you? Give ‘em here.’ With these words, the man tore the volumes from his grasp, and struck him on the head.

‘That’s right!’ cried a looker-on, from a garret-window. ‘That’s the only way of bringing him to his senses!’

‘To be sure!’ cried a sleepy-faced carpenter, casting an approving look at the garret-window.

‘It’ll do him good!’ said the two women.

‘And he shall have it, too!’ rejoined the man, administering another blow, and seizing Oliver by the collar. ‘Come on, you young villain! Here, Bull’s-eye, mind him, boy! Mind him!’

Weak with recent illness; stupified by the blows and the suddenness of the attack; terrified by the fierce growling of the dog, and the brutality of the man; overpowered by the conviction of the bystanders that he really was the hardened little wretch he was described to be; what could one poor child do! Darkness had set in; it was a low neighborhood; no help was near; resistance was useless. In another moment he was dragged into a labyrinth of dark narrow courts, and was forced along them at a pace which rendered the few cries he dared to give utterance to, unintelligible. It was of little moment, indeed, whether they were intelligible or no; for there was nobody to care for them, had they been ever so plain.

The gas-lamps were lighted; Mrs. Bedwin was waiting anxiously at the open door; the servant had run up the street twenty times to see if there were any traces of Oliver; and still the two old gentlemen sat, perseveringly, in the dark parlour, with the watch between them.

CHAPTER XVI — RELATES WHAT BECAME OF OLIVER TWIST, AFTER HE HAD BEEN CLAIMED BY NANCY

The narrow streets and courts, at length, terminated in a large open space; scattered about which, were pens for beasts, and other indications of a cattle-market. Sikes slackened his pace when they reached this spot: the girl being quite unable to support any longer, the rapid rate at which they had hitherto walked.

Turning to Oliver, he roughly commanded him to take hold of Nancy's hand.

'Do you hear?' growled Sikes, as Oliver hesitated, and looked round.

They were in a dark corner, quite out of the track of passengers.

Oliver saw, but too plainly, that resistance would be of no avail. He held out his hand, which Nancy clasped tight in hers.

'Give me the other,' said Sikes, seizing Oliver's unoccupied hand. 'Here, Bull's-Eye!'

The dog looked up, and growled.

'See here, boy!' said Sikes, putting his other hand to Oliver's throat; 'if he speaks ever so soft a word, hold him! D'ye mind!'

The dog growled again; and licking his lips, eyed Oliver as if he were anxious to attach himself to his windpipe without delay.

'He's as willing as a Christian, strike me blind if he isn't!' said Sikes, regarding the animal with a kind of grim and ferocious approval. 'Now, you know what you've got to expect, master, so call away as quick as you like; the dog will soon stop that game. Get on, young'un!'

Bull's-eye wagged his tail in acknowledgment of this unusually endearing form of speech; and, giving vent to another admonitory growl for the benefit of Oliver, led the way onward.

It was Smithfield that they were crossing, although it might have been Grosvenor Square, for anything Oliver knew to the contrary. The night was dark and foggy. The lights in the shops could scarecely struggle through the heavy mist, which thickened every moment and shrouded the streets and houses in gloom; rendering the strange place still stranger in Oliver's eyes; and making his uncertainty the more dismal and depressing.

They had hurried on a few paces, when a deep church-bell struck the hour. With its first stroke, his two conductors stopped, and turned their heads in the direction whence the sound proceeded.

'Eight o' clock, Bill,' said Nancy, when the bell ceased.

'What's the good of telling me that; I can hear it, can't I!' replied Sikes.

'I wonder whether *they* can hear it,' said Nancy.

'Of course they can,' replied Sikes. 'It was Bartlemy time when I was shopped; and there warn't a penny trumpet in the fair, as I couldn't hear the squeaking on. Arter I was locked up for the night, the row and din outside made the thundering old jail so silent, that I could almost have beat my brains out against the iron plates of the door.'

'Poor fellow!' said Nancy, who still had her face turned towards the quarter in which the bell had sounded. 'Oh, Bill, such fine young chaps as them!'

'Yes; that's all you women think of,' answered Sikes. 'Fine young chaps! Well, they're as good as dead, so it don't much matter.'

With this consolation, Mr. Sikes appeared to repress a rising tendency to jealousy, and, clasping Oliver's wrist more firmly, told him to step out again.

'Wait a minute!' said the girl: 'I wouldn't hurry by, if it was you that was coming out to be hung, the next time eight o'clock struck, Bill. I'd walk round and round the place till I dropped, if the snow was on the ground, and I hadn't a shawl to cover me.'

'And what good would that do?' inquired the unsentimental Mr. Sikes. 'Unless you could pitch over a file and twenty yards of good stout rope, you might as well be walking fifty mile off, or not walking at all, for all the good it would do me. Come on, and don't stand preaching there.'

The girl burst into a laugh; drew her shawl more closely round her; and they walked away. But Oliver felt her hand tremble, and, looking up in her face as they passed a gas-lamp, saw that it had turned a deadly white.

They walked on, by little-frequented and dirty ways, for a full half-hour: meeting very few people, and those appearing from their looks to hold much the same position in society as Mr. Sikes himself. At length they turned into a very filthy narrow street, nearly full of old-clothes shops; the dog running forward, as if conscious that there was no further occasion for his keeping on guard, stopped before the door of a shop that was closed and apparently untenanted; the house was in a ruinous condition, and on the door was nailed a board, intimating that it was to let: which looked as if it had hung there for many years.

'All right,' cried Sikes, glancing cautiously about.

Nancy stooped below the shutters, and Oliver heard the sound of a bell. They crossed to the opposite side of the street, and stood for a few moments under a lamp. A noise, as if a sash window were gently raised, was heard; and soon afterwards the door softly opened. Mr. Sikes then seized the terrified boy by the collar with very little ceremony; and all three were quickly inside the house.

The passage was perfectly dark. They waited, while the person who had let them in, chained and barred the door.

'Anybody here?' inquired Sikes.

'No,' replied a voice, which Oliver thought he had heard before.

'Is the old 'un here?' asked the robber.

'Yes,' replied the voice, 'and precious down in the mouth he has been. Won't he be glad to see you? Oh, no!'

The style of this reply, as well as the voice which delivered it, seemed familiar to Oliver's ears: but it was impossible to distinguish even the form of the speaker in the darkness.

'Let's have a glim,' said Sikes, 'or we shall go breaking our necks, or treading on the dog. Look after your legs if you do!'

'Stand still a moment, and I'll get you one,' replied the voice. The receding footsteps of the speaker were heard; and, in another minute, the form of Mr. John Dawkins, otherwise the Artful Dodger, appeared. He bore

in his right hand a tallow candle stuck in the end of a cleft stick.

The young gentleman did not stop to bestow any other mark of recognition upon Oliver than a humourous grin; but, turning away, beckoned the visitors to follow him down a flight of stairs. They crossed an empty kitchen; and, opening the door of a low earthy-smelling room, which seemed to have been built in a small back-yard, were received with a shout of laughter.

‘Oh, my wig, my wig!’ cried Master Charles Bates, from whose lungs the laughter had proceeded: ‘here he is! oh, cry, here he is! Oh, Fagin, look at him! Fagin, do look at him! I can’t bear it; it is such a jolly game, I cant’ bear it. Hold me, somebody, while I laugh it out.’

With this irrepressible ebullition of mirth, Master Bates laid himself flat on the floor: and kicked convulsively for five minutes, in an ectasy of facetious joy. Then jumping to his feet, he snatched the cleft stick from the Dodger; and, advancing to Oliver, viewed him round and round; while the Jew, taking off his nightcap, made a great number of low bows to the bewildered boy. The Artful, meantime, who was of a rather saturnine disposition, and seldom gave way to merriment when it interfered with business, rifled Oliver’s pockets with steady assiduity.

‘Look at his togs, Fagin!’ said Charley, putting the light so close to his new jacket as nearly to set him on fire. ‘Look at his togs! Superfine cloth, and the heavy swell cut! Oh, my eye, what a game! And his books, too! Nothing but a gentleman, Fagin!’

‘Delighted to see you looking so well, my dear,’ said the Jew, bowing with mock humility. ‘The Artful shall give you another suit, my dear, for fear you should spoil that Sunday one. Why didn’t you write, my dear, and say you were coming? We’d have got something warm for supper.’

At his, Master Bates roared again: so loud, that Fagin himself relaxed, and even the Dodger smiled; but as the Artful drew forth the five-pound note at that instant, it is doubtful whether the sally of the discovery awakened his merriment.

‘Hallo, what’s that?’ inquired Sikes, stepping forward as the Jew seized the note. ‘That’s mine, Fagin.’

‘No, no, my dear,’ said the Jew. ‘Mine, Bill, mine. You shall have the books.’

‘If that ain’t mine!’ said Bill Sikes, putting on his hat with a determined air; ‘mine and Nancy’s that is; I’ll take the boy back again.’

The Jew started. Oliver started too, though from a very different cause; for he hoped that the dispute might really end in his being taken back.

‘Come! Hand over, will you?’ said Sikes.

‘This is hardly fair, Bill; hardly fair, is it, Nancy?’ inquired the Jew.

‘Fair, or not fair,’ retorted Sikes, ‘hand over, I tell you! Do you think Nancy and me has got nothing else to do with our precious time but to spend it in scouting arter, and kidnapping, every young boy as gets grabbed through you? Give it here, you avaricious old skeleton, give it here!’

With this gentle remonstrance, Mr. Sikes plucked the note from between the Jew’s finger and thumb; and looking the old man coolly in the face, folded it up small, and tied it in his neckerchief.

‘That’s for our share of the trouble,’ said Sikes; ‘and not half enough, neither. You may keep the books, if you’re fond of reading. If you ain’t, sell ‘em.’

‘They’re very pretty,’ said Charley Bates: who, with sundry grimaces, had been affecting to read one of the volumes in question; ‘beautiful writing, isn’t is, Oliver?’ At sight of the dismayed look with which Oliver

regarded his tormentors, Master Bates, who was blessed with a lively sense of the ludicrous, fell into another ectasy, more boisterous than the first.

'They belong to the old gentleman,' said Oliver, wringing his hands; 'to the good, kind, old gentleman who took me into his house, and had me nursed, when I was near dying of the fever. Oh, pray send them back; send him back the books and money. Keep me here all my life long; but pray, pray send them back. He'll think I stole them; the old lady: all of them who were so kind to me: will think I stole them. Oh, do have mercy upon me, and send them back!'

With these words, which were uttered with all the energy of passionate grief, Oliver fell upon his knees at the Jew's feet; and beat his hands together, in perfect desperation.

'The boy's right,' remarked Fagin, looking covertly round, and knitting his shaggy eyebrows into a hard knot. 'You're right, Oliver, you're right; they *will* think you have stolen 'em. Ha! ha!' chuckled the Jew, rubbing his hands, 'it couldn't have happened better, if we had chosen our time!'

'Of course it couldn't,' replied Sikes; 'I know'd that, directly I see him coming through Clerkenwell, with the books under his arm. It's all right enough. They're soft-hearted psalm-singers, or they wouldn't have taken him in at all; and they'll ask no questions after him, fear they should be obliged to prosecute, and so get him lagged. He's safe enough.'

Oliver had looked from one to the other, while these words were being spoken, as if he were bewildered, and could scarecely understand what passed; but when Bill Sikes concluded, he jumped suddenly to his feet, and tore wildly from the room: uttering shrieks for help, which made the bare old house echo to the roof.

'Keep back the dog, Bill!' cried Nancy, springing before the door, and closing it, as the Jew and his two pupils darted out in pursuit. 'Keep back the dog; he'll tear the boy to pieces.'

'Serve him right!' cried Sikes, struggling to disengage himself from the girl's grasp. 'Stand off from me, or I'll split your head against the wall.'

'I don't care for that, Bill, I don't care for that,' screamed the girl, struggling violently with the man, 'the child shan't be torn down by the dog, unless you kill me first.'

'Shan't he!' said Sikes, setting his teeth. 'I'll soon do that, if you don't keep off.'

The housebreaker flung the girl from him to the further end of the room, just as the Jew and the two boys returned, dragging Oliver among them.

'What's the matter here!' said Fagin, looking round.

'The girl's gone mad, I think,' replied Sikes, savagely.

'No, she hasn't,' said Nancy, pale and breathless from the scuffle; 'no, she hasn't, Fagin; don't think it.'

'Then keep quiet, will you?' said the Jew, with a threatening look.

'No, I won't do that, neither,' replied Nancy, speaking very loud. 'Come! What do you think of that?'

Mr. Fagin was sufficiently well acquainted with the manners and customs of that particular species of humanity to which Nancy belonged, to feel tolerably certain that it would be rather unsafe to prolong any conversation with her, at present. With the view of diverting the attention of the company, he turned to Oliver.

'So you wanted to get away, my dear, did you?' said the Jew, taking up a jagged and knotted club which law in a corner of the fireplace; 'eh?'

Oliver made no reply. But he watched the Jew's motions, and breathed quickly.

'Wanted to get assistance; called for the police; did you?' sneered the Jew, catching the boy by the arm. 'We'll cure you of that, my young master.'

The Jew inflicted a smart blow on Oliver's shoulders with the club; and was raising it for a second, when the girl, rushing forward, wrested it from his hand. She flung it into the fire, with a force that brought some of the glowing coals whirling out into the room.

'I won't stand by and see it done, Fagin,' cried the girl. 'You've got the boy, and what more would you have? —Let him be—let him be—or I shall put that mark on some of you, that will bring me to the gallows before my time.'

The girl stamped her foot violently on the floor as she vented this threat; and with her lips compressed, and her hands clenched, looked alternately at the Jew and the other robber: her face quite colourless from the passion of rage into which she had gradually worked herself.

'Why, Nancy!' said the Jew, in a soothing tone; after a pause, during which he and Mr. Sikes had stared at one another in a disconcerted manner; 'you,—you're more clever than ever to-night. Ha! ha! my dear, you are acting beautifully.'

'Am I!' said the girl. 'Take care I don't overdo it. You will be the worse for it, Fagin, if I do; and so I tell you in good time to keep clear of me.'

There is something about a roused woman: especially if she add to all her other strong passions, the fierce impulses of recklessness and despair; which few men like to provoke. The Jew saw that it would be hopeless to affect any further mistake regarding the reality of Miss Nancy's rage; and, shrinking involuntarily back a few paces, cast a glance, half imploring and half cowardly, at Sikes: as if to hint that he was the fittest person to pursue the dialogue.

Mr. Sikes, thus mutely appealed to; and possibly feeling his personal pride and influence interested in the immediate reduction of Miss Nancy to reason; gave utterance to about a couple of score of curses and threats, the rapid production of which reflected great credit on the fertility of his invention. As they produced no visible effect on the object against whom they were discharged, however, he resorted to more tangible arguments.

'What do you mean by this?' said Sikes; backing the inquiry with a very common imprecation concerning the most beautiful of human features: which, if it were heard above, only once out of every fifty thousand times that it is uttered below, would render blindness as common a disorder as measles: 'what do you mean

by it? Burn my body! Do you know who you are, and what you are?'

'Oh, yes, I know all about it,' replied the girl, laughing hysterically; and shaking her head from side to side, with a poor assumption of indifference.

'Well, then, keep quiet,' rejoined Sikes, with a growl like that he was accustomed to use when addressing his dog, 'or I'll quiet you for a good long time to come.'

The girl laughed again: even less composedly than before; and, darting a hasty look at Sikes, turned her face aside, and bit her lip till the blood came.

'You're a nice one,' added Sikes, as he surveyed her with a contemptuous air, 'to take up the humane and gen—teel side! A pretty subject for the child, as you call him, to make a friend of!'

'God Almighty help me, I am!' cried the girl passionately; 'and I wish I had been struck dead in the street, or had changed places with them we passed so near to-night, before I had lent a hand in bringing him here. He's a thief, a liar, a devil, all that's bad, from this night forth. Isn't that enough for the old wretch, without blows?'

'Come, come, Sikes,' said the Jew appealing to him in a remonstratory tone, and motioning towards the boys, who were eagerly attentive to all that passed; 'we must have civil words; civil words, Bill.'

'Civil words!' cried the girl, whose passion was frightful to see. 'Civil words, you villain! Yes, you deserve 'em from me. I thieved for you when I was a child not half as old as this!' pointing to Oliver. 'I have been in the same trade, and in the same service, for twelve years since. Don't you know it? Speak out! Don't you know it?'

'Well, well,' replied the Jew, with an attempt at pacification; 'and, if you have, it's your living!'

'Aye, it is!' returned the girl; not speaking, but pouring out the words in one continuous and vehement scream. 'It is my living; and the cold, wet, dirty streets are my home; and you're the wretch that drove me to them long ago, and that'll keep me there, day and night, day and night, till I die!'

'I shall do you a mischief!' interposed the Jew, goaded by these reproaches; 'a mischief worse than that, if you say much more!'

The girl said nothing more; but, tearing her hair and dress in a transport of passion, made such a rush at the Jew as would probably have left signal marks of her revenge upon him, had not her wrists been seized by Sikes at the right moment; upon which, she made a few ineffectual struggles, and fainted.

'She's all right now,' said Sikes, laying her down in a corner. 'She's uncommon strong in the arms, when she's up in this way.'

The Jew wiped his forehead: and smiled, as if it were a relief to have the disturbance over; but neither he, nor Sikes, nor the dog, nor the boys, seemed to consider it in any other light than a common occurance incidental to business.

'It's the worst of having to do with women,' said the Jew, replacing his club; 'but they're clever, and we can't get on, in our line, without 'em. Charley, show Oliver to bed.'

'I suppose he'd better not wear his best clothes tomorrow, Fagin, had he?' inquired Charley Bates.

'Certainly not,' replied the Jew, reciprocating the grin with which Charley put the question.

Master Bates, apparently much delighted with his commission, took the cleft stick: and led Oliver into an adjacent kitchen, where there were two or three of the beds on which he had slept before; and here, with many uncontrollable bursts of laughter, he produced the identical old suit of clothes which Oliver had so much congratulated himself upon leaving off at Mr. Brownlow's; and the accidental display of which, to Fagin, by the Jew who purchased them, had been the very first clue received, of his whereabout.

'Put off the smart ones,' said Charley, 'and I'll give 'em to Fagin to take care of. What fun it is!'

Poor Oliver unwillingly complied. Master Bates rolling up the new clothes under his arm, departed from the room, leaving Oliver in the dark, and locking the door behind him.

The noise of Charley's laughter, and the voice of Miss Betsy, who opportunely arrived to throw water over her friend, and perform other feminine offices for the promotion of her recovery, might have kept many people awake under more happy circumstances than those in which Oliver was placed. But he was sick and weary; and he soon fell sound asleep.

CHAPTER XVII — OLIVER'S DESTINY CONTINUING UNPROPITIOUS, BRINGS A GREAT MAN TO LONDON TO INJURE HIS REPUTATION

It is the custom on the stage, in all good murderous melodramas, to present the tragic and the comic scenes, in as regular alternation, as the layers of red and white in a side of streaky bacon. The hero sinks upon his straw bed, weighed down by fetters and misfortunes; in the next scene, his faithful but unconscious squire regales the audience with a comic song. We behold, with throbbing bosoms, the heroine in the grasp of a proud and ruthless baron: her virtue and her life alike in danger, drawing forth her dagger to preserve the one at the cost of the other; and just as our expectations are wrought up to the highest pitch, a whistle is heard, and we are straightway transported to the great hall of the castle; where a grey-headed seneschal

sings a funny chorus with a funnier body of vassals, who are free of all sorts of places, from church vaults to palaces, and roam about in company, carolling perpetually.

Such changes appear absurd; but they are not so unnatural as they would seem at first sight. The transitions in real life from well-spread boards to death-beds, and from mourning-weeds to holiday garments, are not a whit less startling; only, there, we are busy actors, instead of passive lookers-on, which makes a vast difference. The actors in the mimic life of the theatre, are blind to violent transitions and abrupt impulses of passion or feeling, which, presented before the eyes of mere spectators, are at once condemned as outrageous and preposterous.

As sudden shiftings of the scene, and rapid changes of time and place, are not only sanctioned in books by long usage, but are by many considered as the great art of authorship: an author's skill in his craft being, by such critics, chiefly estimated with relation to the dilemmas in which he leaves his characters at the end of every chapter: this brief introduction to the present one may perhaps be deemed unnecessary. If so, let it be considered a delicate intimation on the part of the historian that he is going back to the town in which Oliver Twist was born; the reader taking it for granted that there are good and substantial reasons for making the journey, or he would not be invited to proceed upon such an expedition.

Mr. Bumble emerged at early morning from the workhouse-gate, and walked with portly carriage and commanding steps, up the High Street. He was in the full bloom and pride of beadlehood; his cocked hat and coat were dazzling in the morning sun; he clutched his cane with the vigorous tenacity of health and power. Mr. Bumble always carried his head high; but this morning it was higher than usual. There was an abstraction in his eye, an elevation in his air, which might have warned an observant stranger that thoughts were passing in the beadle's mind, too great for utterance.

Mr. Bumble stopped not to converse with the small shopkeepers and others who spoke to him, deferentially, as he passed along. He merely returned their salutations with a wave of his hand, and relaxed not in his dignified pace, until he reached the farm where Mrs. Mann tended the infant paupers with parochial care.

'Drat that beadle!' said Mrs. Mann, hearing the well-known shaking at the garden-gate. 'If it isn't him at this time in the morning! Lauk, Mr. Bumble, only think of its being you! Well, dear me, it *is* a pleasure, this is! Come into the parlour, sir, please.'

The first sentence was addressed to Susan; and the exclamations of delight were uttered to Mr. Bumble: as the good lady unlocked the garden-gate: and showed him, with great attention and respect, into the house.

'Mrs. Mann,' said Mr. Bumble; not sitting upon, or dropping himself into a seat, as any common jackanapes would: but letting himself gradually and slowly down into a chair; 'Mrs. Mann, ma'am, good morning.'

'Well, and good morning to *you*, sir,' replied Mrs. Mann, with many smiles; 'and hoping you find yourself well, sir!'

'So-so, Mrs. Mann,' replied the beadle. 'A porochial life is not a bed of roses, Mrs. Mann.'

'Ah, that it isn't indeed, Mr. Bumble,' rejoined the lady. And all the infant paupers might have chorused the rejoinder with great propriety, if they had heard it.

'A porochial life, ma'am,' continued Mr. Bumble, striking the table with his cane, 'is a life of worrit, and vexation, and hardihood; but all public characters, as I may say, must suffer prosecution.'

Mrs. Mann, not very well knowing what the beadle meant, raised her hands with a look of sympathy, and sighed.

'Ah! You may well sigh, Mrs. Mann!' said the beadle.

Finding she had done right, Mrs. Mann sighed again: evidently to the satisfaction of the public character: who, repressing a complacent smile by looking sternly at his cocked hat, said,

'Mrs. Mann, I am going to London.'

'Lauk, Mr. Bumble!' cried Mrs. Mann, starting back.

'To London, ma'am,' resumed the inflexible beadle, 'by coach. I and two paupers, Mrs. Mann! A legal action is a coming on, about a settlement; and the board has appointed me—me, Mrs. Mann—to dispose to the matter before the quarter-sessions at Clerkinwell.

And I very much question,' added Mr. Bumble, drawing himself up, 'whether the Clerkinwell Sessions will not find themselves in the wrong box before they have done with me.'

'Oh! you mustn't be too hard upon them, sir,' said Mrs. Mann, coaxingly.

'The Clerkinwell Sessions have brought it upon themselves, ma'am,' replied Mr. Bumble; 'and if the Clerkinwell Sessions find that they come off rather worse than they expected, the Clerkinwell Sessions have only themselves to thank.'

There was so much determination and depth of purpose about the menacing manner in which Mr. Bumble delivered himself of these words, that Mrs. Mann appeared quite awed by them. At length she said,

'You're going by coach, sir? I thought it was always usual to send them paupers in carts.'

'That's when they're ill, Mrs. Mann,' said the beadle. 'We put the sick paupers into open carts in the rainy weather, to prevent their taking cold.'

'Oh!' said Mrs. Mann.

'The opposition coach contracts for these two; and takes them cheap,' said Mr. Bumble. 'They are both in a very low state, and we find it would come two pound cheaper to move 'em than to bury 'em—that is, if we can throw 'em upon another parish, which I think we shall be able to do, if they don't die upon the road to spite us. Ha! ha! ha!'

When Mr. Bumble had laughed a little while, his eyes again encountered the cocked hat; and he became grave.

'We are forgetting business, ma'am,' said the beadle; 'here is your porochial stipend for the month.'

Mr. Bumble produced some silver money rolled up in paper, from his pocket-book; and requested a receipt:

which Mrs. Mann wrote.

'It's very much blotted, sir,' said the farmer of infants; 'but it's formal enough, I dare say. Thank you, Mr. Bumble, sir, I am very much obliged to you, I'm sure.'

Mr. Bumble nodded, blandly, in acknowledgment of Mrs. Mann's curtsey; and inquired how the children were.

'Bless their dear little hearts!' said Mrs. Mann with emotion, 'they're as well as can be, the dears! Of course, except the two that died last week. And little Dick.'

'Isn't that boy no better?' inquired Mr. Bumble.

Mrs. Mann shook her head.

'He's a ill-conditioned, wicious, bad-disposed porochial child that,' said Mr. Bumble angrily. 'Where is he?'

'I'll bring him to you in one minute, sir,' replied Mrs. Mann. 'Here, you Dick!'

After some calling, Dick was discovered. Having had his face put under the pump, and dried upon Mrs. Mann's gown, he was led into the awful presence of Mr. Bumble, the beadle.

The child was pale and thin; his cheeks were sunken; and his eyes large and bright. The scanty parish dress, the livery of his misery, hung loosely on his feeble body; and his young limbs had wasted away, like those of an old man.

Such was the little being who stood trembling beneath Mr. Bumble's glance; not daring to lift his eyes from the floor; and dreading even to hear the beadle's voice.

'Can't you look at the gentleman, you obstinate boy?' said Mrs. Mann.

The child meekly raised his eyes, and encountered those of Mr. Bumble.

'What's the matter with you, porochial Dick?' inquired Mr. Bumble, with well-timed jocularity.

'Nothing, sir,' replied the child faintly.

'I should think not,' said Mrs. Mann, who had of course laughed very much at Mr. Bumble's humour.

'You want for nothing, I'm sure.'

'I should like—' faltered the child.

'Hey-day!' interposed Mr. Mann, 'I suppose you're going to say that you *do* want for something, now? Why, you little wretch—'

'Stop, Mrs. Mann, stop!' said the beadle, raising his hand with a show of authority. 'Like what, sir, eh?'

'I should like,' faltered the child, 'if somebody that can write, would put a few words down for me on a piece of paper, and fold it up and seal it, and keep it for me, after I am laid in the ground.'

'Why, what does the boy mean?' exclaimed Mr. Bumble, on whom the earnest manner and wan aspect of the child had made some impression: accustomed as he was to such things. 'What do you mean, sir?'

'I should like,' said the child, 'to leave my dear love to poor Oliver Twist; and to let him know how often I have sat by myself and cried to think of his wandering about in the dark nights with nobody to help him. And I should like to tell him,' said the child pressing his small hands together, and speaking with great fervour, 'that I was glad to die when I was very young; for, perhaps, if I had lived to be a man, and had grown old, my little sister who is in Heaven, might forget me, or be unlike me; and it would be so much happier if we were both children there together.'

Mr. Bumble surveyed the little speaker, from head to foot, with indescribable astonishment; and, turning to his companion, said, 'They're all in one story, Mrs. Mann. That out-dacious Oliver had demogalized them all!'

'I couldn't have believed it, sir' said Mrs Mann, holding up her hands, and looking malignantly at Dick. 'I never see such a hardened little wretch!'

'Take him away, ma'am!' said Mr. Bumble imperiously. 'This must be stated to the board, Mrs. Mann.

'I hope the gentleman will understand that it isn't my fault, sir?' said Mrs. Mann, whimpering pathetically.

'They shall understand that, ma'am; they shall be acquainted with the true state of the case,' said Mr. Bumble. 'There; take him away, I can't bear the sight on him.'

Dick was immediately taken away, and locked up in the coal-cellar. Mr. Bumble shortly afterwards took himself off, to prepare for his journey.

At six o'clock next morning, Mr. Bumble: having exchanged his cocked hat for a round one, and encased his person in a blue great-coat with a cape to it: took his place on the outside of the coach, accompanied by the criminals whose settlement was disputed; with whom, in due course of time, he arrived in London.

He experienced no other crosses on the way, than those which originated in the perverse behaviour of the two paupers, who persisted in shivering, and complaining of the cold, in a manner which, Mr. Bumble declared, caused his teeth to chatter in his head, and made him feel quite uncomfortable; although he had a great-coat on.

Having disposed of these evil-minded persons for the night, Mr. Bumble sat himself down in the house at which the coach stopped; and took a temperate dinner of steaks, oyster sauce, and porter. Putting a glass of hot gin-and-water on the chimney-piece, he drew his chair to the fire; and, with sundry moral reflections on the too-prevalent sin of discontent and complaining, composed himself to read the paper.

The very first paragraph upon which Mr. Bumble's eye rested, was the following advertisement.

'FIVE GUINEAS REWARD

'Whereas a young boy, named Oliver Twist, absconded, or enticed, on Thursday evening last, from his home, at was Pentonville; and has not since been heard of. The above reward will be paid to any person who will give such information as will lead to the discovery of the said Oliver Twist, or tend to throw any light upon his previous history, in which the advertiser is, for many reasons, warmly

interested.’

And then followed a full description of Oliver’s dress, person, appearance, and disappearance: with the name and address of Mr. Brownlow at full length.

Mr. Bumble opened his eyes; read the advertisement, slowly and carefully, three several times; and in something more than five minutes was on his way to Pentonville: having actually, in his excitement, left the glass of hot gin-and-water, untasted.

‘Is Mr. Brownlow at home?’ inquired Mr. Bumble of the girl who opened the door.

To this inquiry the girl returned the not uncommon, but rather evasive reply of ‘I don’t know; where do you come from?’

Mr. Bumble no sooner uttered Oliver’s name, in explanation of his errand, than Mrs. Bedwin, who had been listening at the parlour door, hastened into the passage in a breathless state.

‘Come in, come in,’ said the old lady: ‘I knew we should hear of him. Poor dear! I knew we should! I was certain of it. Bless his heart! I said so all along.’

Having heard this, the worthy old lady hurried back into the parlour again; and seating herself on a sofa, burst into tears. The girl, who was not quite so susceptible, had run upstairs meanwhile; and now returned with a request that Mr. Bumble would follow her immediately: which he did.

He was shown into the little back study, where sat Mr. Brownlow and his friend Mr. Grimwig, with decanters and glasses before them. The latter gentleman at once burst into the exclamation:

‘A beadle. A parish beadle, or I’ll eat my head.’

‘Pray don’t interrupt just now,’ said Mr. Brownlow. ‘Take a seat, will you?’

Mr. Bumble sat himself down; quite confounded by the oddity of Mr. Grimwig’s manner. Mr. Brownlow moved the lamp, so as to obtain an uninterrupted view of the beadle’s countenance; and said, with a little impatience, ‘Now, sir, you come in consequence of having seen the advertisement?’

‘Yes, sir,’ said Mr. Bumble.

‘And you *are* a beadle, are you not?’ inquired Mr. Grimwig.

‘I am a porochial beadle, gentlemen,’ rejoined Mr. Bumble proudly.

‘Of course,’ observed Mr. Grimwig aside to his friend, ‘I knew he was. A beadle all over!’

Mr. Brownlow gently shook his head to impose silence on his friend, and resumed:

‘Do you know where this poor boy is now?’

‘No more than nobody,’ replied Mr. Bumble.

‘Well, what *do* you know of him?’ inquired the old gentleman. ‘Speak out, my friend, if you have anything to say. What *do* you know of him?’

‘You don’t happen to know any good of him, do you?’ said Mr. Grimwig, caustically; after an attentive perusal of Mr. Bumble’s features.

Mr. Bumble, catching at the inquiry very quickly, shook his head with portentous solemnity.

‘You see?’ said Mr. Grimwig, looking triumphantly at Mr. Brownlow.

Mr. Brownlow looked apprehensively at Mr. Bumble’s pursed-up countenance; and requested him to communicate what he knew regarding Oliver, in as few words as possible.

Mr. Bumble put down his hat; unbuttoned his coat; folded his arms; inclined his head in a retrospective manner; and, after a few moments’ reflection, commenced his story.

It would be tedious if given in the beadle’s words: occupying, as it did, some twenty minutes in the telling; but the sum and substance of it was, that Oliver was a foundling, born of low and vicious parents. That he had, from his birth, displayed no better qualities than treachery, ingratitude, and malice. That he had terminated his brief career in the place of his birth, by making a sanguinary and cowardly attack on an unoffending lad, and running away in the night-time from his master’s house. In proof of his really being the person he represented himself, Mr. Bumble laid upon the table the papers he had brought to town. Folding his arms again, he then awaited Mr. Brownlow’s observations.

‘I fear it is all too true,’ said the old gentleman sorrowfully, after looking over the papers. ‘This is not much for your intelligence; but I would gladly have given you treble the money, if it had been favourable to the boy.’

It is not improbable that if Mr. Bumble had been possessed of this information at an earlier period of the interview, he might have imparted a very different colouring to his little history. It was too late to do it now, however; so he shook his head gravely, and, pocketing the five guineas, withdrew.

Mr. Brownlow paced the room to and fro for some minutes; evidently so much disturbed by the beadle’s tale, that even Mr. Grimwig forbore to vex him further.

At length he stopped, and rang the bell violently.

‘Mrs. Bedwin,’ said Mr. Brownlow, when the housekeeper appeared; ‘that boy, Oliver, is an imposter.’

‘It can’t be, sir. It cannot be,’ said the old lady energetically.

‘I tell you he is,’ retorted the old gentleman. ‘What do you mean by can’t be? We have just heard a full account of him from his birth; and he has been a thorough-paced little villain, all his life.’

‘I never will believe it, sir,’ replied the old lady, firmly. ‘Never!’

‘You old women never believe anything but quack-doctors, and lying story-books,’ growled Mr. Grimwig. ‘I knew it all along. Why didn’t you take my advise in the beginning; you would if he hadn’t had a fever, I suppose, eh? He was interesting, wasn’t he? Interesting! Bah!’ And Mr. Grimwig poked the fire with a flourish.

‘He was a dear, grateful, gentle child, sir,’ retorted Mrs. Bedwin, indignantly. ‘I know what children are, sir; and have done these forty years; and people who can’t say the same, shouldn’t say anything about them.

That's my opinion!'

This was a hard hit at Mr. Grimwig, who was a bachelor. As it extorted nothing from that gentleman but a smile, the old lady tossed her head, and smoothed down her apron preparatory to another speech, when she was stopped by Mr. Brownlow.

'Silence!' said the old gentleman, feigning an anger he was far from feeling. 'Never let me hear the boy's name again. I rang to tell you that. Never. Never, on any pretence, mind! You may leave the room, Mrs. Bedwin. Remember! I am in earnest.'

There were sad hearts at Mr. Brownlow's that night.

Oliver's heart sank within him, when he thought of his good friends; it was well for him that he could not know what they had heard, or it might have broken outright.

CHAPTER XVIII — HOW OLIVER PASSED HIS TIME IN THE IMPROVING SOCIETY OF HIS REPUTABLE FRIENDS

About noon next day, when the Dodger and Master Bates had gone out to pursue their customary avocations, Mr. Fagin took the opportunity of reading Oliver a long lecture on the crying sin of ingratitude; of which he clearly demonstrated he had been guilty, to no ordinary extent, in wilfully absenting himself from the society of his anxious friends; and, still more, in endeavouring to escape from them after so much trouble and expense had been incurred in his recovery. Mr. Fagin laid great stress on the fact of his having taken Oliver in, and cherished him, when, without his timely aid, he might have perished with hunger; and he related the dismal and affecting history of a young lad whom, in his philanthropy, he had succoured under parallel circumstances, but who, proving unworthy of his confidence and evincing a desire to communicate with the police, had unfortunately come to be hanged at the Old Bailey one morning. Mr. Fagin did not seek to conceal his share in the catastrophe, but lamented with tears in his eyes that the wrong-headed and treacherous behaviour of the young person in question, had rendered it necessary that he should become the victim of certain evidence for the crown: which, if it were not precisely true, was indispensably necessary for the safety of him (Mr. Fagin) and a few select friends. Mr. Fagin concluded by drawing a rather disagreeable picture of the discomforts of hanging; and, with great friendliness and politeness of manner, expressed his anxious hopes that he might never be obliged to submit Oliver Twist to that unpleasant operation.

Little Oliver's blood ran cold, as he listened to the Jew's words, and imperfectly comprehended the dark threats conveyed in them. That it was possible even for justice itself to confound the innocent with the guilty when they were in accidental companionship, he knew already; and that deeply-laid plans for the destruction of inconveniently knowing or over-communicative persons, had been really devised and carried out by the Jew on more occasions than one, he thought by no means unlikely, when he recollected the general nature of the altercations between that gentleman and Mr. Sikes: which seemed to bear reference to some foregone conspiracy of the kind. As he glanced timidly up, and met the Jew's searching look, he felt that his pale face and trembling limbs were neither unnoticed nor unrelished by that wary old gentleman.

The Jew, smiling hideously, patted Oliver on the head, and said, that if he kept himself quiet, and applied himself to business, he saw they would be very good friends yet. Then, taking his hat, and covering himself with an old patched great-coat, he went out, and locked the room-door behind him.

And so Oliver remained all that day, and for the greater part of many subsequent days, seeing nobody, between early morning and midnight, and left during the long hours to commune with his own thoughts. Which, never failing to revert to his kind friends, and the opinion they must long ago have formed of him, were sad indeed.

After the lapse of a week or so, the Jew left the room-door unlocked; and he was at liberty to wander about the house.

It was a very dirty place. The rooms upstairs had great high wooden chimney-pieces and large doors, with panelled walls and cornices to the ceiling; which, although they were black with neglect and dust, were ornamented in various ways. From all of these tokens Oliver concluded that a long time ago, before the old Jew was born, it had belonged to better people, and had perhaps been quite gay and handsome: dismal and dreary as it looked now.

Spiders had built their webs in the angles of the walls and ceilings; and sometimes, when Oliver walked softly into a room, the mice would scamper across the floor, and run back terrified to their holes. With these exceptions, there was neither sight nor sound of any living thing; and often, when it grew dark, and he was tired of wandering from room to room, he would crouch in the corner of the passage by the street-door, to be as near living people as he could; and would remain there, listening and counting the hours, until the Jew or the boys returned.

In all the rooms, the mouldering shutters were fast closed: the bars which held them were screwed tight into the wood; the only light which was admitted, stealing its way through round holes at the top: which made the rooms more gloomy, and filled them with strange shadows. There was a back-garret window with rusty bars outside, which had no shutter; and out of this, Oliver often gazed with a melancholy face for hours together; but nothing was to be descried from it but a confused and crowded mass of housetops, blackened chimneys, and gable-ends. Sometimes, indeed, a grizzly head might be seen, peering over the parapet-wall of

a distant house; but it was quickly withdrawn again; and as the window of Oliver's observatory was nailed down, and dimmed with the rain and smoke of years, it was as much as he could do to make out the forms of the different objects beyond, without making any attempt to be seen or heard,—which he had as much chance of being, as if he had lived inside the ball of St. Paul's Cathedral.

One afternoon, the Dodger and Master Bates being engaged out that evening, the first-named young gentleman took it into his head to evince some anxiety regarding the decoration of his person (to do him justice, this was by no means an habitual weakness with him); and, with this end and aim, he condescendingly commanded Oliver to assist him in his toilet, straightway.

Oliver was but too glad to make himself useful; too happy to have some faces, however bad, to look upon; too desirous to conciliate those about him when he could honestly do so; to throw any objection in the way of this proposal. So he at once expressed his readiness; and, kneeling on the floor, while the Dodger sat upon the table so that he could take his foot in his laps, he applied himself to a process which Mr. Dawkins designated as 'japanning his trotter-cases.' The phrase, rendered into plain English, signifieth, cleaning his boots.

Whether it was the sense of freedom and independence which a rational animal may be supposed to feel when he sits on a table in an easy attitude smoking a pipe, swinging one leg carelessly to and fro, and having his boots cleaned all the time, without even the past trouble of having taken them off, or the prospective misery of putting them on, to disturb his reflections; or whether it was the goodness of the tobacco that soothed the feelings of the Dodger, or the mildness of the beer that mollified his thoughts; he was evidently tinctured, for the nonce, with a spice of romance and enthusiasm, foreign to his general nature. He looked down on Oliver, with a thoughtful countenance, for a brief space; and then, raising his head, and heaving a gentle sign, said, half in abstraction, and half to Master Bates:

'What a pity it is he isn't a prig!'

'Ah!' said Master Charles Bates; 'he don't know what's good for him.'

The Dodger sighed again, and resumed his pipe: as did Charley Bates. They both smoked, for some seconds, in silence.

'I suppose you don't even know what a prig is?' said the Dodger mournfully.

'I think I know that,' replied Oliver, looking up. 'It's a the—; you're one, are you not?' inquired Oliver, checking himself.

'I am,' replied the Dodger. 'I'd scorn to be anything else.' Mr. Dawkins gave his hat a ferocious cock, after delivering this sentiment, and looked at Master Bates, as if to denote that he would feel obliged by his saying anything to the contrary.

'I am,' repeated the Dodger. 'So's Charley. So's Fagin. So's Sikes. So's Nancy. So's Bet. So we all are, down to the dog. And he's the downiest one of the lot!'

'And the least given to peaching,' added Charley Bates.

'He wouldn't so much as bark in a witness-box, for fear of committing himself; no, not if you tied him up in one, and left him there without wittles for a fortnight,' said the Dodger.

'Not a bit of it,' observed Charley.

'He's a rum dog. Don't he look fierce at any strange cove that laughs or sings when he's in company!' pursued the Dodger. 'Won't he growl at all, when he hears a fiddle playing! And don't he hate other dogs as ain't of his breed! Oh, no!'

‘He’s an out-and-out Christian,’ said Charley.

This was merely intended as a tribute to the animal’s abilities, but it was an appropriate remark in another sense, if Master Bates had only known it; for there are a good many ladies and gentlemen, claiming to be out-and-out Christians, between whom, and Mr. Sikes’ dog, there exist strong and singular points of resemblance.

‘Well, well,’ said the Dodger, recurring to the point from which they had strayed: with that mindfulness of his profession which influenced all his proceedings. ‘This hasn’t go anything to do with young Green here.’

‘No more it has,’ said Charley. ‘Why don’t you put yourself under Fagin, Oliver?’

‘And make your fortun’ out of hand?’ added the Dodger, with a grin.

‘And so be able to retire on your property, and do the gen-teel: as I mean to, in the very next leap-year but four that ever comes, and the forty-second Tuesday in Trinity-week,’ said Charley Bates.

‘I don’t like it,’ rejoined Oliver, timidly; ‘I wish they would let me go. I—I—would rather go.’

‘And Fagin would *rather* not!’ rejoined Charley.

Oliver knew this too well; but thinking it might be dangerous to express his feelings more openly, he only sighed, and went on with his boot-cleaning.

‘Go!’ exclaimed the Dodger. ‘Why, where’s your spirit?’ Don’t you take any pride out of yourself? Would you go and be dependent on your friends?’

‘Oh, blow that!’ said Master Bates: drawing two or three silk handkerchiefs from his pocket, and tossing them into a cupboard, ‘that’s too mean; that is.’

‘*I* couldn’t do it,’ said the Dodger, with an air of haughty disgust.

‘You can leave your friends, though,’ said Oliver with a half smile; ‘and let them be punished for what you did.’

‘That,’ rejoined the Dodger, with a wave of his pipe, ‘That was all out of consideration for Fagin, ‘cause the traps know that we work together, and he might have got into trouble if we hadn’t made our lucky; that was the move, wasn’t it, Charley?’

Master Bates nodded assent, and would have spoken, but the recollection of Oliver’s flight came so suddenly upon him, that the smoke he was inhaling got entangled with a laugh, and went up into his head, and down into his throat: and brought on a fit of coughing and stamping, about five minutes long.

‘Look here!’ said the Dodger, drawing forth a handful of shillings and halfpence. ‘Here’s a jolly life! What’s the odds where it comes from? Here, catch hold; there’s plenty more where they were took from. You won’t, won’t you? Oh, you precious flat!’

‘It’s naughty, ain’t it, Oliver?’ inquired Charley Bates. ‘He’ll come to be scragged, won’t he?’

‘I don’t know what that means,’ replied Oliver.

‘Something in this way, old feller,’ said Charly. As he said it, Master Bates caught up an end of his neckerchief; and, holding it erect in the air, dropped his head on his shoulder, and jerked a curious sound through his teeth; thereby indicating, by a lively pantomimic representation, that scragging and hanging were one and the same thing.

‘That’s what it means,’ said Charley. ‘Look how he stares, Jack!

I never did see such prime company as that ‘ere boy; he’ll be the death of me, I know he will.’ Master Charley Bates, having laughed heartily again, resumed his pipe with tears in his eyes.

‘You’ve been brought up bad,’ said the Dodger, surveying his boots with much satisfaction when Oliver had polished them. ‘Fagin will make something of you, though, or you’ll be the first he ever had that turned out unprofitable. You’d better begin at once; for you’ll come to the trade long before you think of it; and you’re only losing time, Oliver.’

Master Bates backed this advice with sundry moral admonitions of his own: which, being exhausted, he and his friend Mr. Dawkins launched into a glowing description of the numerous pleasures incidental to the life they led, interspersed with a variety of hints to Oliver that the best thing he could do, would be to secure Fagin’s favour without more delay, by the means which they themselves had employed to gain it.

‘And always put this in your pipe, Nolly,’ said the Dodger, as the Jew was heard unlocking the door above, ‘if you don’t take fogels and tickers—’

‘What’s the good of talking in that way?’ interposed Master Bates; ‘he don’t know what you mean.’

‘If you don’t take pocket-handkechers and watches,’ said the Dodger, reducing his conversation to the level of Oliver’s capacity, ‘some other cove will; so that the coves that lose ‘em will be all the worse, and you’ll be all the worse, too, and nobody half a ha’p’orth the better, except the chaps wot gets them—and you’ve just as good a right to them as they have.’

‘To be sure, to be sure!’ said the Jew, who had entered unseen by Oliver. ‘It all lies in a nutshell my dear; in a nutshell, take the Dodger’s word for it. Ha! ha! ha! He understands the catechism of his trade.’

The old man rubbed his hands gleefully together, as he corroborated the Dodger’s reasoning in these terms; and chuckled with delight at his pupil’s proficiency.

The conversation proceeded no farther at this time, for the Jew had returned home accompanied by Miss Betsy, and a gentleman whom Oliver had never seen before, but who was accosted by the Dodger as Tom Chitling; and who, having lingered on the stairs to exchange a few gallantries with the lady, now made his appearance.

Mr. Chitling was older in years than the Dodger: having perhaps numbered eighteen winters; but there was a degree of deference in his deportment towards that young gentleman which seemed to indicate that he felt himself conscious of a slight inferiority in point of genius and professional aquirements. He had small twinkling eyes, and a pock-marked face; wore a fur cap, a dark corduroy jacket, greasy fustian trousers, and an apron. His wardrobe was, in truth, rather out of repair; but he excused himself to the company by stating that his ‘time’ was only out an hour before; and that, in consequence of having worn the regimentals for six

weeks past, he had not been able to bestow any attention on his private clothes. Mr. Chitling added, with strong marks of irritation, that the new way of fumigating clothes up yonder was infernal unconstitutional, for it burnt holes in them, and there was no remedy against the County. The same remark he considered to apply to the regulation mode of cutting the hair: which he held to be decidedly unlawful. Mr. Chitling wound up his observations by stating that he had not touched a drop of anything for forty-two moral long hard-working days; and that he 'wished he might be busted if he warn't as dry as a lime-basket.'

'Where do you think the gentleman has come from, Oliver?' inquired the Jew, with a grin, as the other boys put a bottle of spirits on the table.

'I—I—don't know, sir,' replied Oliver.

'Who's that?' inquired Tom Chitling, casting a contemptuous look at Oliver.

'A young friend of mine, my dear,' replied the Jew.

'He's in luck, then,' said the young man, with a meaning look at Fagin. 'Never mind where I came from, young 'un; you'll find your way there, soon enough, I'll bet a crown!'

At this sally, the boys laughed. After some more jokes on the same subject, they exchanged a few short whispers with Fagin; and withdrew.

After some words apart between the last comer and Fagin, they drew their chairs towards the fire; and the Jew, telling Oliver to come and sit by him, led the conversation to the topics most calculated to interest his hearers. These were, the great advantages of the trade, the proficiency of the Dodger, the amiability of Charley Bates, and the liberality of the Jew himself. At length these subjects displayed signs of being thoroughly exhausted; and Mr. Chitling did the same: for the house of correction becomes fatiguing after a week or two. Miss Betsy accordingly withdrew; and left the party to their repose.

From this day, Oliver was seldom left alone; but was placed in almost constant communication with the two boys, who played the old game with the Jew every day: whether for their own improvement or Oliver's, Mr. Fagin best knew. At other times the old man would tell them stories of robberies he had committed in his younger days: mixed up with so much that was droll and curious, that Oliver could not help laughing heartily, and showing that he was amused in spite of all his better feelings.

In short, the wily old Jew had the boy in his toils. Having prepared his mind, by solitude and gloom, to prefer any society to the companionship of his own sad thoughts in such a dreary place, he was now slowly instilling into his soul the poison which he hoped would blacken it, and change its hue for ever.

CHAPTER XIX — IN WHICH A NOTABLE PLAN IS DISCUSSED AND DETERMINED ON

It was a chill, damp, windy night, when the Jew: buttoning his great-coat tight round his shrivelled body, and pulling the collar up over his ears so as completely to obscure the lower part of his face: emerged from his den. He paused on the step as the door was locked and chained behind him; and having listened while the boys made all secure, and until their retreating footsteps were no longer audible, slunk down the street as quickly as he could.

The house to which Oliver had been conveyed, was in the neighborhood of Whitechapel. The Jew stopped for an instant at the corner of the street; and, glancing suspiciously round, crossed the road, and struck off in the direction of the Spitalfields.

The mud lay thick upon the stones, and a black mist hung over the streets; the rain fell sluggishly down, and everything felt cold and clammy to the touch. It seemed just the night when it befitted such a being as the Jew to be abroad. As he glided stealthily along, creeping beneath the shelter of the walls and doorways, the hideous old man seemed like some loathsome reptile, engendered in the slime and darkness through which he moved: crawling forth, by night, in search of some rich offal for a meal.

He kept on his course, through many winding and narrow ways, until he reached Bethnal Green; then, turning suddenly off to the left, he soon became involved in a maze of the mean and dirty streets which abound in that close and densely-populated quarter.

The Jew was evidently too familiar with the ground he traversed to be at all bewildered, either by the darkness of the night, or the intricacies of the way. He hurried through several alleys and streets, and at length turned into one, lighted only by a single lamp at the farther end. At the door of a house in this street, he knocked; having exchanged a few muttered words with the person who opened it, he walked upstairs.

A dog growled as he touched the handle of a room-door; and a man's voice demanded who was there.

'Only me, Bill; only me, my dear,' said the Jew looking in.

'Bring in your body then,' said Sikes. 'Lie down, you stupid brute! Don't you know the devil when he's got a great-coat on?'

Apparently, the dog had been somewhat deceived by Mr. Fagin's outer garment; for as the Jew unbuttoned it, and threw it over the back of a chair, he retired to the corner from which he had risen: wagging his tail as he went, to show that he was as well satisfied as it was in his nature to be.

'Well!' said Sikes.

'Well, my dear,' replied the Jew.—'Ah! Nancy.'

The latter recognition was uttered with just enough of embarrassment to imply a doubt of its reception; for

Mr. Fagin and his young friend had not met, since she had interfered in behalf of Oliver. All doubts upon the subject, if he had any, were speedily removed by the young lady's behaviour. She took her feet off the fender, pushed back her chair, and bade Fagin draw up his, without saying more about it: for it was a cold night, and no mistake.

'It is cold, Nancy dear,' said the Jew, as he warmed his skinny hands over the fire. 'It seems to go right through one,' added the old man, touching his side.

'It must be a piercer, if it finds its way through your heart,' said Mr. Sikes. 'Give him something to drink, Nancy. Burn my body, make haste! It's enough to turn a man ill, to see his lean old carcase shivering in that way, like a ugly ghost just rose from the grave.'

Nancy quickly brought a bottle from a cupboard, in which there were many: which, to judge from the diversity of their appearance, were filled with several kinds of liquids. Sikes pouring out a glass of brandy, bade the Jew drink it off.

'Quite enough, quite, thankee, Bill,' replied the Jew, putting down the glass after just setting his lips to it.

'What! You're afraid of our getting the better of you, are you?' inquired Sikes, fixing his eyes on the Jew. 'Ugh!'

With a hoarse grunt of contempt, Mr. Sikes seized the glass, and threw the remainder of its contents into the ashes: as a preparatory ceremony to filling it again for himself: which he did at once.

The Jew glanced round the room, as his companion tossed down the second glassful; not in curiousity, for he had seen it often before; but in a restless and suspicious manner habitual to him. It was a meanly furnished apartment, with nothing but the contents of the closet to induce the belief that its occupier was anything but a working man; and with no more suspicious articles displayed to view than two or three heavy bludgeons which stood in a corner, and a 'life-preserver' that hung over the chimney-piece.

'There,' said Sikes, smacking his lips. 'Now I'm ready.'

'For business?' inquired the Jew.

'For business,' replied Sikes; 'so say what you've got to say.'

'About the crib at Chertsey, Bill?' said the Jew, drawing his chair forward, and speaking in a very low voice.

'Yes. Wot about it?' inquired Sikes.

'Ah! you know what I mean, my dear,' said the Jew. 'He knows what I mean, Nancy; don't he?'

'No, he don't,' sneered Mr. Sikes. 'Or he won't, and that's the same thing. Speak out, and call things by their right names; don't sit there, winking and blinking, and talking to me in hints, as if you warn't the very first that thought about the robbery. Wot d'ye mean?'

'Hush, Bill, hush!' said the Jew, who had in vain attempted to stop this burst of indignation; 'somebody will hear us, my dear. Somebody will hear us.'

'Let 'em hear!' said Sikes; 'I don't care.' But as Mr. Sikes *did* care, on reflection, he dropped his voice as he said the words, and grew calmer.

'There, there,' said the Jew, coaxingly. 'It was only my caution, nothing more. Now, my dear, about that crib at Chertsey; when is it to be done, Bill, eh? When is it to be done? Such plate, my dear, such plate!' said the Jew: rubbing his hands, and elevating his eyebrows in a rapture of anticipation.

'Not at all,' replied Sikes coldly.

'Not to be done at all!' echoed the Jew, leaning back in his chair.

'No, not at all,' rejoined Sikes. 'At least it can't be a put-up job, as we expected.'

'Then it hasn't been properly gone about,' said the Jew, turning pale with anger. 'Don't tell me!'

'But I will tell you,' retorted Sikes. 'Who are you that's not to be told? I tell you that Toby Crackit has been hanging about the place for a fortnight, and he can't get one of the servants in line.'

'Do you mean to tell me, Bill,' said the Jew: softening as the other grew heated: 'that neither of the two men in the house can be got over?'

'Yes, I do mean to tell you so,' replied Sikes. 'The old lady has had 'em these twenty years; and if you were to give 'em five hundred pound, they wouldn't be in it.'

'But do you mean to say, my dear,' remonstrated the Jew, 'that the women can't be got over?'

'Not a bit of it,' replied Sikes.

'Not by flash Toby Crackit?' said the Jew incredulously. 'Think what women are, Bill.'

'No; not even by flash Toby Crackit,' replied Sikes. 'He says he's worn sham whiskers, and a canary waistcoat, the whole blessed time he's been loitering down there, and it's all of no use.'

'He should have tried mustachios and a pair of military trousers, my dear,' said the Jew.

'So he did,' rejoined Sikes, 'and they warn't of no more use than the other plant.'

The Jew looked blank at this information. After ruminating for some minutes with his chin sunk on his breast, he raised his head and said, with a deep sigh, that if flash Toby Crackit reported aright, he feared the game was up.

'And yet,' said the old man, dropping his hands on his knees, 'it's a sad thing, my dear, to lose so much when we had set our hearts upon it.'

'So it is,' said Mr. Sikes. 'Worse luck!'

A long silence ensued; during which the Jew was plunged in deep thought, with his face wrinkled into an expression of villainy perfectly demoniacal. Sikes eyed him furtively from time to time. Nancy, apparently fearful of irritating the housebreaker, sat with her eyes fixed upon the fire, as if she had been deaf to all that passed.

'Fagin,' said Sikes, abruptly breaking the stillness that prevailed; 'is it worth fifty shiners extra, if it's safely done from the outside?'

‘Yes,’ said the Jew, as suddenly rousing himself.

‘Is it a bargain?’ inquired Sikes.

‘Yes, my dear, yes,’ rejoined the Jew; his eyes glistening, and every muscle in his face working, with the excitement that the inquiry had awakened.

‘Then,’ said Sikes, thrusting aside the Jew’s hand, with some disdain, ‘let it come off as soon as you like. Toby and me were over the garden-wall the night afore last, sounding the panels of the door and shutters. The crib’s barred up at night like a jail; but there’s one part we can crack, safe and softly.’

‘Which is that, Bill?’ asked the Jew eagerly.

‘Why,’ whispered Sikes, ‘as you cross the lawn—’

‘Yes?’ said the Jew, bending his head forward, with his eyes almost starting out of it.

‘Umph!’ cried Sikes, stopping short, as the girl, scarcely moving her head, looked suddenly round, and pointed for an instant to the Jew’s face. ‘Never mind which part it is. You can’t do it without me, I know; but it’s best to be on the safe side when one deals with you.’

‘As you like, my dear, as you like’ replied the Jew. ‘Is there no help wanted, but yours and Toby’s?’

‘None,’ said Sikes. ‘Cept a centre-bit and a boy. The first we’ve both got; the second you must find us.’

‘A boy!’ exclaimed the Jew. ‘Oh! then it’s a panel, eh?’

‘Never mind wot it is!’ replied Sikes. ‘I want a boy, and he musn’t be a big ‘un. Lord!’ said Mr. Sikes, reflectively, ‘if I’d only got that young boy of Ned, the chimbley-sweeper’s! He kept him small on purpose, and let him out by the job. But the father gets lagged; and then the Juvenile Delinquent Society comes, and takes the boy away from a trade where he was earning money, teaches him to read and write, and in time makes a ‘prentice of him. And so they go on,’ said Mr. Sikes, his wrath rising with the recollection of his wrongs, ‘so they go on; and, if they’d got money enough (which it’s a Providence they haven’t,) we shouldn’t have half a dozen boys left in the whole trade, in a year or two.’

‘No more we should,’ acquiesced the Jew, who had been considering during this speech, and had only caught the last sentence. ‘Bill!’

‘What now?’ inquired Sikes.

The Jew nodded his head towards Nancy, who was still gazing at the fire; and intimated, by a sign, that he would have her told to leave the room. Sikes shrugged his shoulders impatiently, as if he thought the precaution unnecessary; but complied, nevertheless, by requesting Miss Nancy to fetch him a jug of beer.

‘You don’t want any beer,’ said Nancy, folding her arms, and retaining her seat very composedly.

‘I tell you I do!’ replied Sikes.

‘Nonsense,’ rejoined the girl coolly, ‘Go on, Fagin. I know what he’s going to say, Bill; he needn’t mind me.’

The Jew still hesitated. Sikes looked from one to the other in some surprise.

‘Why, you don’t mind the old girl, do you, Fagin?’ he asked at length. ‘You’ve known her long enough to trust her, or the Devil’s in it. She ain’t one to blab. Are you Nancy?’

‘*I* should think not!’ replied the young lady: drawing her chair up to the table, and putting her elbows upon it.

‘No, no, my dear, I know you’re not,’ said the Jew; ‘but—’ and again the old man paused.

‘But wot?’ inquired Sikes.

‘I didn’t know whether she mightn’t p’r’aps be out of sorts, you know, my dear, as she was the other night,’ replied the Jew.

At this confession, Miss Nancy burst into a loud laugh; and, swallowing a glass of brandy, shook her head with an air of defiance, and burst into sundry exclamations of ‘Keep the game a-going!’ ‘Never say die!’ and the like. These seemed to have the effect of re-assuring both gentlemen; for the Jew nodded his head with a satisfied air, and resumed his seat: as did Mr. Sikes likewise.

‘Now, Fagin,’ said Nancy with a laugh. ‘Tell Bill at once, about Oliver!’

‘Ha! you’re a clever one, my dear: the sharpest girl I ever saw!’ said the Jew, patting her on the neck. ‘It *was* about Oliver I was going to speak, sure enough. Ha! ha! ha!’

‘What about him?’ demanded Sikes.

‘He’s the boy for you, my dear,’ replied the Jew in a hoarse whisper; laying his finger on the side of his nose, and grinning frightfully.

‘He!’ exclaimed. Sikes.

‘Have him, Bill!’ said Nancy. ‘I would, if I was in your place. He mayn’t be so much up, as any of the others; but that’s not what you want, if he’s only to open a door for you. Depend upon it he’s a safe one, Bill.’

‘I know he is,’ rejoined Fagin. ‘He’s been in good training these last few weeks, and it’s time he began to work for his bread. Besides, the others are all too big.’

‘Well, he is just the size I want,’ said Mr. Sikes, ruminating.

‘And will do everything you want, Bill, my dear,’ interposed the Jew; ‘he can’t help himself. That is, if you frighten him enough.’

‘Frighten him!’ echoed Sikes. ‘It’ll be no sham frightening, mind you. If there’s anything queer about him when we once get into the work; in for a penny, in for a pound. You won’t see him alive again, Fagin. Think of that, before you send him. Mark my words!’ said the robber, poising a crowbar, which he had drawn from under the bedstead.

‘I’ve thought of it all,’ said the Jew with energy. ‘I’ve—I’ve had my eye upon him, my dears, close—close. Once let him feel that he is one of us; once fill his mind with the idea that he has been a thief; and he’s ours! Ours for his life. Oho! It couldn’t have come about better! The old man crossed his arms upon his breast; and, drawing his head and shoulders into a heap, literally hugged himself for joy.

‘Ours!’ said Sikes. ‘Yours, you mean.’

‘Perhaps I do, my dear,’ said the Jew, with a shrill chuckle. ‘Mine, if you like, Bill.’

‘And wot,’ said Sikes, scowling fiercely on his agreeable friend, ‘wot makes you take so much pains about one chalk-faced kid, when you know there are fifty boys snoozing about Common Garden every night, as you might pick and choose from?’

‘Because they’re of no use to me, my dear,’ replied the Jew, with some confusion, ‘not worth the taking. Their looks convict ‘em when they get into trouble, and I lose ‘em all. With this boy, properly managed, my dears, I could do what I couldn’t with twenty of them. Besides,’ said the Jew, recovering his self-possession, ‘he has us now if he could only give us leg-bail again; and he must be in the same boat with us. Never mind how he came there; it’s quite enough for my power over him that he was in a robbery; that’s all I want. Now, how much better this is, than being obliged to put the poor leetle boy out of the way—which would be dangerous, and we should lose by it besides.’

‘When is it to be done?’ asked Nancy, stopping some turbulent exclamation on the part of Mr. Sikes, expressive of the disgust with which he received Fagin’s affectation of humanity.

‘Ah, to be sure,’ said the Jew; ‘when is it to be done, Bill?’

‘I planned with Toby, the night arter to-morrow,’ rejoined Sikes in a surly voice, ‘if he heerd nothing from me to the contrairy.’

‘Good,’ said the Jew; ‘there’s no moon.’

‘No,’ rejoined Sikes.

‘It’s all arranged about bringing off the swag, is it?’ asked the Jew.

Sikes nodded.

‘And about—’

‘Oh, ah, it’s all planned,’ rejoined Sikes, interrupting him. ‘Never mind particulars. You’d better bring the boy here to-morrow night. I shall get off the stone an hour arter daybreak. Then you hold your tongue, and keep the melting-pot ready, and that’s all you’ll have to do.’

After some discussion, in which all three took an active part, it was decided that Nancy should repair to the Jew’s next evening when the night had set in, and bring Oliver away with her; Fagin craftily observing, that, if he evinced any disinclination to the task, he would be more willing to accompany the girl who had so recently interfered in his behalf, than anybody else. It was also solemnly arranged that poor Oliver should, for the purposes of the contemplated expedition, be unreservedly consigned to the care and custody of Mr. William Sikes; and further, that the said Sikes should deal with him as he thought fit; and should not be held responsible by the Jew for any mischance or evil that might be necessary to visit him: it being understood that, to render the compact in this respect binding, any representations made by Mr. Sikes on his return should be required to be confirmed and corroborated, in all important particulars, by the testimony of flash Toby Crackit.

These preliminaries adjusted, Mr. Sikes proceeded to drink brandy at a furious rate, and to flourish the crowbar in an alarming manner; yelling forth, at the same time, most unmusical snatches of song, mingled with wild execrations. At length, in a fit of professional enthusiasm, he insisted upon producing his box of housebreaking tools: which he had no sooner stumbled in with, and opened for the purpose of explaining the nature and properties of the various implements it contained, and the peculiar beauties of their construction, than he fell over the box upon the floor, and went to sleep where he fell.

‘Good-night, Nancy,’ said the Jew, muffling himself up as before.

‘Good-night.’

Their eyes met, and the Jew scrutinised her, narrowly. There was no flinching about the girl. She was as true and earnest in the matter as Toby Crackit himself could be.

The Jew again bade her good-night, and, bestowing a sly kick upon the prostrate form of Mr. Sikes while her back was turned, groped downstairs.

‘Always the way!’ muttered the Jew to himself as he turned homeward. ‘The worst of these women is, that a very little thing serves to call up some long-forgotten feeling; and, the best of them is, that it never lasts. Ha! ha! The man against the child, for a bag of gold!’

Beguiling the time with these pleasant reflections, Mr. Fagin wended his way, through mud and mire, to his gloomy abode: where the Dodger was sitting up, impatiently awaiting his return.

‘Is Oliver a-bed? I want to speak to him,’ was his first remark as they descended the stairs.

‘Hours ago,’ replied the Dodger, throwing open a door. ‘Here he is!’

The boy was lying, fast asleep, on a rude bed upon the floor; so pale with anxiety, and sadness, and the closeness of his prison, that he looked like death; not death as it shows in shroud and coffin, but in the guise it wears when life has just departed; when a young and gentle spirit has, but an instant, fled to Heaven, and the gross air of the world has not had time to breathe upon the changing dust it hallowed.

‘Not now,’ said the Jew, turning softly away. ‘To-morrow. To-morrow.’

CHAPTER XX — WHEREIN OLIVER IS DELIVERED OVER TO MR. WILLIAM SIKES

When Oliver awoke in the morning, he was a good deal surprised to find that a new pair of shoes, with strong thick soles, had been placed at his bedside; and that his old shoes had been removed. At first, he was pleased with the discovery: hoping that it might be the forerunner of his release; but such thoughts were quickly dispelled, on his sitting down to breakfast along with the Jew, who told him, in a tone and manner which increased his alarm, that he was to be taken to the residence of Bill Sikes that night.

'To—to—stop there, sir?' asked Oliver, anxiously.

'No, no, my dear. Not to stop there,' replied the Jew. 'We shouldn't like to lose you. Don't be afraid, Oliver, you shall come back to us again. Ha! ha! ha! We won't be so cruel as to send you away, my dear. Oh no, no!'

The old man, who was stooping over the fire toasting a piece of bread, looked round as he bantered Oliver thus; and chuckled as if to show that he knew he would still be very glad to get away if he could.

'I suppose,' said the Jew, fixing his eyes on Oliver, 'you want to know what you're going to Bill's for—-eh, my dear?'

Oliver coloured, involuntarily, to find that the old thief had been reading his thoughts; but boldly said, Yes, he did want to know.

'Why, do you think?' inquired Fagin, parrying the question.

'Indeed I don't know, sir,' replied Oliver.

'Bah!' said the Jew, turning away with a disappointed countenance from a close perusal of the boy's face. 'Wait till Bill tells you, then.'

The Jew seemed much vexed by Oliver's not expressing any greater curiosity on the subject; but the truth is, that, although Oliver felt very anxious, he was too much confused by the earnest cunning of Fagin's looks, and his own speculations, to make any further inquiries just then. He had no other opportunity: for the Jew remained very surly and silent till night: when he prepared to go abroad.

'You may burn a candle,' said the Jew, putting one upon the table. 'And here's a book for you to read, till they come to fetch you. Good-night!'

'Good-night!' replied Oliver, softly.

The Jew walked to the door: looking over his shoulder at the boy as he went. Suddenly stopping, he called him by his name.

Oliver looked up; the Jew, pointing to the candle, motioned him to light it. He did so; and, as he placed the candlestick upon the table, saw that the Jew was gazing fixedly at him, with lowering and contracted brows, from the dark end of the room.

'Take heed, Oliver! take heed!' said the old man, shaking his right hand before him in a warning manner. 'He's a rough man, and thinks nothing of blood when his own is up. Whatever falls out, say nothing; and do what he bids you. Mind!' Placing a strong emphasis on the last word, he suffered his features gradually to resolve themselves into a ghastly grin, and, nodding his head, left the room.

Oliver leaned his head upon his hand when the old man disappeared, and pondered, with a trembling heart, on the words he had just heard. The more he thought of the Jew's admonition, the more he was at a loss to divine its real purpose and meaning.

He could think of no bad object to be attained by sending him to Sikes, which would not be equally well answered by his remaining with Fagin; and after meditating for a long time, concluded that he had been selected to perform some ordinary menial offices for the housebreaker, until another boy, better suited for his purpose could be engaged. He was too well accustomed to suffering, and had suffered too much where he was, to bewail the prospect of change very severely. He remained lost in thought for some minutes; and then, with a heavy sigh, snuffed the candle, and, taking up the book which the Jew had left with him, began to read.

He turned over the leaves. Carelessly at first; but, lighting on a passage which attracted his attention, he soon became intent upon the volume. It was a history of the lives and trials of great criminals; and the pages were soiled and thumbed with use. Here, he read of dreadful crimes that made the blood run cold; of secret murders that had been committed by the lonely wayside; of bodies hidden from the eye of man in deep pits and wells: which would not keep them down, deep as they were, but had yielded them up at last, after many years, and so maddened the murderers with the sight, that in their horror they had confessed their guilt, and yelled for the gibbet to end their agony. Here, too, he read of men who, lying in their beds at dead of night, had been tempted (so they said) and led on, by their own bad thoughts, to such dreadful bloodshed as it made the flesh creep, and the limbs quail, to think of. The terrible descriptions were so real and vivid, that the sallow pages seemed to turn red with gore; and the words upon them, to be sounded in his ears, as if they were whispered, in hollow murmurs, by the spirits of the dead.

In a paroxysm of fear, the boy closed the book, and thrust it from him. Then, falling upon his knees, he prayed Heaven to spare him from such deeds; and rather to will that he should die at once, than be reserved for crimes, so fearful and appalling. By degrees, he grew more calm, and besought, in a low and broken voice, that he might be rescued from his present dangers; and that if any aid were to be raised up for a poor outcast boy who had never known the love of friends or kindred, it might come to him now, when, desolate and deserted, he stood alone in the midst of wickedness and guilt.

He had concluded his prayer, but still remained with his head buried in his hands, when a rustling noise aroused him.

'What's that!' he cried, starting up, and catching sight of a figure standing by the door. 'Who's there?'

'Me. Only me,' replied a tremulous voice.

Oliver raised the candle above his head: and looked towards the door. It was Nancy.

'Put down the light,' said the girl, turning away her head. 'It hurts my eyes.'

Oliver saw that she was very pale, and gently inquired if she were ill. The girl threw herself into a chair, with her back towards him: and wrung her hands; but made no reply.

'God forgive me!' she cried after a while, 'I never thought of this.'

‘Has anything happened?’ asked Oliver. ‘Can I help you? I will if I can. I will, indeed.’

She rocked herself to and fro; caught her throat; and, uttering a gurgling sound, gasped for breath.

‘Nancy!’ cried Oliver, ‘What is it?’

The girl beat her hands upon her knees, and her feet upon the ground; and, suddenly stopping, drew her shawl close round her: and shivered with cold.

Oliver stirred the fire. Drawing her chair close to it, she sat there, for a little time, without speaking; but at length she raised her head, and looked round.

‘I don’t know what comes over me sometimes,’ said she, affecting to busy herself in arranging her dress; ‘it’s this damp dirty room, I think. Now, Nolly, dear, are you ready?’

‘Am I to go with you?’ asked Oliver.

‘Yes. I have come from Bill,’ replied the girl. ‘You are to go with me.’

‘What for?’ asked Oliver, recoiling.

‘What for?’ echoed the girl, raising her eyes, and averting them again, the moment they encountered the boy’s face. ‘Oh! For no harm.’

‘I don’t believe it,’ said Oliver: who had watched her closely.

‘Have it your own way,’ rejoined the girl, affecting to laugh. ‘For no good, then.’

Oliver could see that he had some power over the girl’s better feelings, and, for an instant, thought of appealing to her compassion for his helpless state. But, then, the thought darted across his mind that it was barely eleven o’clock; and that many people were still in the streets: of whom surely some might be found to give credence to his tale. As the reflection occured to him, he stepped forward: and said, somewhat hastily, that he was ready.

Neither his brief consideration, nor its purport, was lost on his companion. She eyed him narrowly, while he spoke; and cast upon him a look of intelligence which sufficiently showed that she guessed what had been passing in his thoughts.

‘Hush!’ said the girl, stooping over him, and pointing to the door as she looked cautiously round. ‘You can’t help yourself. I have tried hard for you, but all to no purpose. You are hedged round and round. If ever you are to get loose from here, this is not the time.’

Struck by the energy of her manner, Oliver looked up in her face with great surprise. She seemed to speak the truth; her countenance was white and agitated; and she trembled with very earnestness.

‘I have saved you from being ill-used once, and I will again, and I do now,’ continued the girl aloud; ‘for those who would have fetched you, if I had not, would have been far more rough than me. I have promised for your being quiet and silent; if you are not, you will only do harm to yourself and me too, and perhaps be my death. See here! I have borne all this for you already, as true as God sees me show it.’

She pointed, hastily, to some livid bruises on her neck and arms; and continued, with great rapidity:

‘Remember this! And don’t let me suffer more for you, just now. If I could help you, I would; but I have not the power. They don’t mean to harm you; whatever they make you do, is no fault of yours. Hush! Every word from you is a blow for me. Give me your hand. Make haste! Your hand!’

She caught the hand which Oliver instinctively placed in hers, and, blowing out the light, drew him after her up the stairs. The door was opened, quickly, by some one shrouded in the darkness, and was as quickly closed, when they had passed out. A hackney-cabriolet was in waiting; with the same vehemence which she had exhibited in addressing Oliver, the girl pulled him in with her, and drew the curtains close. The driver wanted no directions, but lashed his horse into full speed, without the delay of an instant.

The girl still held Oliver fast by the hand, and continued to pour into his ear, the warnings and assurances she had already imparted. All was so quick and hurried, that he had scarcely time to recollect where he was, or how he came there, when the carriage stopped at the house to which the Jew’s steps had been directed on the previous evening.

For one brief moment, Oliver cast a hurried glance along the empty street, and a cry for help hung upon his lips. But the girl’s voice was in his ear, beseeching him in such tones of agony to remember her, that he had not the heart to utter it. While he hesitated, the opportunity was gone; he was already in the house, and the door was shut.

‘This way,’ said the girl, releasing her hold for the first time. ‘Bill!’

‘Hallo!’ replied Sikes: appearing at the head of the stairs, with a candle. ‘Oh! That’s the time of day. Come on!’

This was a very strong expression of approbation, an uncommonly hearty welcome, from a person of Mr. Sikes’ temperament. Nancy, appearing much gratified thereby, saluted him cordially.

‘Bull’s-eye’s gone home with Tom,’ observed Sikes, as he lighted them up. ‘He’d have been in the way.’

‘That’s right,’ rejoined Nancy.

‘So you’ve got the kid,’ said Sikes when they had all reached the room: closing the door as he spoke.

‘Yes, here he is,’ replied Nancy.

‘Did he come quiet?’ inquired Sikes.

‘Like a lamb,’ rejoined Nancy.

‘I’m glad to hear it,’ said Sikes, looking grimly at Oliver; ‘for the sake of his young carcase: as would otherways have suffered for it. Come here, young ‘un; and let me read you a lectur’, which is as well got over at once.’

Thus addressing his new pupil, Mr. Sikes pulled off Oliver’s cap and threw it into a corner; and then, taking him by the shoulder, sat himself down by the table, and stood the boy in front of him.

‘Now, first: do you know wot this is?’ inquired Sikes, taking up a pocket-pistol which lay on the table.

Oliver replied in the affirmative.

'Well, then, look here,' continued Sikes. 'This is powder; that 'ere's a bullet; and this is a little bit of a old hat for waddin'.'

Oliver murmured his comprehension of the different bodies referred to; and Mr. Sikes proceeded to load the pistol, with great nicety and deliberation.

'Now it's loaded,' said Mr. Sikes, when he had finished.

'Yes, I see it is, sir,' replied Oliver.

'Well,' said the robber, grasping Oliver's wrist, and putting the barrel so close to his temple that they touched; at which moment the boy could not repress a start; 'if you speak a word when you're out o'doors with me, except when I speak to you, that loading will be in your head without notice. So, if you *do* make up your mind to speak without leave, say your prayers first.'

Having bestowed a scowl upon the object of this warning, to increase its effect, Mr. Sikes continued.

'As near as I know, there isn't anybody as would be asking very partickler arter you, if you *was* disposed of; so I needn't take this devil-and-all of trouble to explain matters to you, if it warn't for your own good. D'ye hear me?'

'The short and the long of what you mean,' said Nancy: speaking very emphatically, and slightly frowning at Oliver as if to bespeak his serious attention to her words: 'is, that if you're crossed by him in this job you have on hand, you'll prevent his ever telling tales afterwards, by shooting him through the head, and will take your chance of swinging for it, as you do for a great many other things in the way of business, every month of your life.'

'That's it!' observed Mr. Sikes, approvingly; 'women can always put things in fewest words.—Except when it's blowing up; and then they lengthens it out. And now that he's thoroughly up to it, let's have some supper, and get a snooze before starting.'

In pursuance of this request, Nancy quickly laid the cloth; disappearing for a few minutes, she presently returned with a pot of porter and a dish of sheep's heads: which gave occasion to several pleasant witticisms on the part of Mr. Sikes, founded upon the singular coincidence of 'jemmies' being a can name, common to them, and also to an ingenious implement much used in his profession. Indeed, the worthy gentleman, stimulated perhaps by the immediate prospect of being on active service, was in great spirits and good humour; in proof whereof, it may be here remarked, that he humourously drank all the beer at a draught, and did not utter, on a rough calculation, more than four-score oaths during the whole progress of the meal.

Supper being ended—it may be easily conceived that Oliver had no great appetite for it—Mr. Sikes disposed of a couple of glasses of spirits and water, and threw himself on the bed; ordering Nancy, with many imprecations in case of failure, to call him at five precisely. Oliver stretched himself in his clothes, by command of the same authority, on a mattress upon the floor; and the girl, mending the fire, sat before it, in readiness to rouse them at the appointed time.

For a long time Oliver lay awake, thinking it not impossible that Nancy might seek that opportunity of whispering some further advice; but the girl sat brooding over the fire, without moving, save now and then to trim the light. Weary with watching and anxiety, he at length fell asleep.

When he awoke, the table was covered with tea-things, and Sikes was thrusting various articles into the pockets of his great-coat, which hung over the back of a chair. Nancy was busily engaged in preparing breakfast. It was not yet daylight; for the candle was still burning, and it was quite dark outside. A sharp rain, too, was beating against the window-panes; and the sky looked black and cloudy.

'Now, then!' growled Sikes, as Oliver started up; 'half-past five! Look sharp, or you'll get no breakfast; for it's late as it is.'

Oliver was not long in making his toilet; having taken some breakfast, he replied to a surly inquiry from Sikes, by saying that he was quite ready.

Nancy, scarcely looking at the boy, threw him a handkerchief to tie round his throat; Sikes gave him a large rough cape to button over his shoulders. Thus attired, he gave his hand to the robber, who, merely pausing to show him with a menacing gesture that he had that same pistol in a side-pocket of his great-coat, clasped it firmly in his, and, exchanging a farewell with Nancy, led him away.

Oliver turned, for an instant, when they reached the door, in the hope of meeting a look from the girl. But she had resumed her old seat in front of the fire, and sat, perfectly motionless before it.

CHAPTER XXI — THE EXPEDITION

It was a cheerless morning when they got into the street; blowing and raining hard; and the clouds looking dull and stormy. The night had been very wet: large pools of water had collected in the road: and the kennels were overflowing. There was a faint glimmering of the coming day in the sky; but it rather aggravated than relieved the gloom of the scene: the sombre light only serving to pale that which the street lamps afforded, without shedding any warmer or brighter tints upon the wet house-tops, and dreary streets. There appeared to be nobody stirring in that quarter of the town; the windows of the houses were all closely shut; and the streets through which they passed, were noiseless and empty.

By the time they had turned into the Bethnal Green Road, the day had fairly begun to break. Many of the lamps were already extinguished; a few country waggons were slowly toiling on, towards London; now and

then, a stage-coach, covered with mud, rattled briskly by: the driver bestowing, as he passed, an admonitory lash upon the heavy waggoner who, by keeping on the wrong side of the road, had endangered his arriving at the office, a quarter of a minute after his time. The public-houses, with gas-lights burning inside, were already open. By degrees, other shops began to be unclosed, and a few scattered people were met with. Then, came straggling groups of labourers going to their work; then, men and women with fish-baskets on their heads; donkey-carts laden with vegetables; chaise-carts filled with live-stock or whole carcasses of meat; milk-women with pails; an unbroken concourse of people, trudging out with various supplies to the eastern suburbs of the town. As they approached the City, the noise and traffic gradually increased; when they threaded the streets between Shoreditch and Smithfield, it had swelled into a roar of sound and bustle. It was as light as it was likely to be, till night came on again, and the busy morning of half the London population had begun.

Turning down Sun Street and Crown Street, and crossing Finsbury square, Mr. Sikes struck, by way of Chiswell Street, into Barbican: thence into Long Lane, and so into Smithfield; from which latter place arose a tumult of discordant sounds that filled Oliver Twist with amazement.

It was market-morning. The ground was covered, nearly ankle-deep, with filth and mire; a thick steam, perpetually rising from the reeking bodies of the cattle, and mingling with the fog, which seemed to rest upon the chimney-tops, hung heavily above. All the pens in the centre of the large area, and as many temporary pens as could be crowded into the vacant space, were filled with sheep; tied up to posts by the gutter side were long lines of beasts and oxen, three or four deep. Countrymen, butchers, drovers, hawkers, boys, thieves, idlers, and vagabonds of every low grade, were mingled together in a mass; the whistling of drovers, the barking dogs, the bellowing and plunging of the oxen, the bleating of sheep, the grunting and squeaking of pigs, the cries of hawkers, the shouts, oaths, and quarrelling on all sides; the ringing of bells and roar of voices, that issued from every public-house; the crowding, pushing, driving, beating, whooping and yelling; the hideous and discordant dim that resounded from every corner of the market; and the unwashed, unshaven, squalid, and dirty figures constantly running to and fro, and bursting in and out of the throng; rendered it a stunning and bewildering scene, which quite confounded the senses.

Mr. Sikes, dragging Oliver after him, elbowed his way through the thickest of the crowd, and bestowed very little attention on the numerous sights and sounds, which so astonished the boy. He nodded, twice or thrice, to a passing friend; and, resisting as many invitations to take a morning dram, pressed steadily onward, until they were clear of the turmoil, and had made their way through Hosier Lane into Holborn.

‘Now, young ‘un!’ said Sikes, looking up at the clock of St. Andrew’s Church, ‘hard upon seven! you must step out. Come, don’t lag behind already, Lazy-legs!’

Mr. Sikes accompanied this speech with a jerk at his little companion’s wrist; Oliver, quickening his pace into a kind of trot between a fast walk and a run, kept up with the rapid strides of the house-breaker as well as he could.

They held their course at this rate, until they had passed Hyde Park corner, and were on their way to Kensington: when Sikes relaxed his pace, until an empty cart which was at some little distance behind, came up. Seeing ‘Hounslow’ written on it, he asked the driver with as much civility as he could assume, if he would give them a lift as far as Isleworth.

‘Jump up,’ said the man. ‘Is that your boy?’

‘Yes; he’s my boy,’ replied Sikes, looking hard at Oliver, and putting his hand abstractedly into the pocket where the pistol was.

‘Your father walks rather too quick for you, don’t he, my man?’ inquired the driver: seeing that Oliver was out of breath.

‘Not a bit of it,’ replied Sikes, interposing. ‘He’s used to it.

Here, take hold of my hand, Ned. In with you!’

Thus addressing Oliver, he helped him into the cart; and the driver, pointing to a heap of sacks, told him to lie down there, and rest himself.

As they passed the different mile-stones, Oliver wondered, more and more, where his companion meant to take him. Kensington, Hammersmith, Chiswick, Kew Bridge, Brentford, were all passed; and yet they went on as steadily as if they had only just begun their journey. At length, they came to a public-house called the Coach and Horses; a little way beyond which, another road appeared to run off. And here, the cart stopped.

Sikes dismounted with great precipitation, holding Oliver by the hand all the while; and lifting him down directly, bestowed a furious look upon him, and rapped the side-pocket with his fist, in a significant manner.

‘Good-bye, boy,’ said the man.

‘He’s sulky,’ replied Sikes, giving him a shake; ‘he’s sulky. A young dog! Don’t mind him.’

‘Not I!’ rejoined the other, getting into his cart. ‘It’s a fine day, after all.’ And he drove away.

Sikes waited until he had fairly gone; and then, telling Oliver he might look about him if he wanted, once again led him onward on his journey.

They turned round to the left, a short way past the public-house; and then, taking a right-hand road, walked on for a long time: passing many large gardens and gentlemen’s houses on both sides of the way, and stopping for nothing but a little beer, until they reached a town. Here against the wall of a house, Oliver saw written up in pretty large letters, ‘Hampton.’ They lingered about, in the fields, for some hours. At length they came back into the town; and, turning into an old public-house with a defaced sign-board, ordered some dinner by the kitchen fire.

The kitchen was an old, low-roofed room; with a great beam across the middle of the ceiling, and benches, with high backs to them, by the fire; on which were seated several rough men in smock-frocks, drinking and smoking. They took no notice of Oliver; and very little of Sikes; and, as Sikes took very little notice of them, he and his young comrade sat in a corner by themselves, without being much troubled by their company.

They had some cold meat for dinner, and sat so long after it, while Mr. Sikes indulged himself with three or

four pipes, that Oliver began to feel quite certain they were not going any further. Being much tired with the walk, and getting up so early, he dozed a little at first; then, quite overpowered by fatigue and the fumes of the tobacco, fell asleep.

It was quite dark when he was awakened by a push from Sikes. Rousing himself sufficiently to sit up and look about him, he found that worthy in close fellowship and communication with a labouring man, over a pint of ale.

'So, you're going on to Lower Halliford, are you?' inquired Sikes.

'Yes, I am,' replied the man, who seemed a little the worse—or better, as the case might be—for drinking; 'and not slow about it neither. My horse hasn't got a load behind him going back, as he had coming up in the mornin'; and he won't be long a-doing of it. Here's luck to him. Ecod! he's a good 'un!'

'Could you give my boy and me a lift as far as there?' demanded Sikes, pushing the ale towards his new friend.

'If you're going directly, I can,' replied the man, looking out of the pot. 'Are you going to Halliford?'

'Going on to Shepperton,' replied Sikes.

'I'm your man, as far as I go,' replied the other. 'Is all paid, Becky?'

'Yes, the other gentleman's paid,' replied the girl.

'I say!' said the man, with tipsy gravity; 'that won't do, you know.'

'Why not?' rejoined Sikes. 'You're a-going to accommodate us, and wot's to prevent my standing treat for a pint or so, in return?'

The stranger reflected upon this argument, with a very profound face; having done so, he seized Sikes by the hand: and declared he was a real good fellow. To which Mr. Sikes replied, he was joking; as, if he had been sober, there would have been strong reason to suppose he was.

After the exchange of a few more compliments, they bade the company good-night, and went out; the girl gathering up the pots and glasses as they did so, and lounging out to the door, with her hands full, to see the party start.

The horse, whose health had been drunk in his absence, was standing outside: ready harnessed to the cart. Oliver and Sikes got in without any further ceremony; and the man to whom he belonged, having lingered for a minute or two 'to bear him up,' and to defy the hostler and the world to produce his equal, mounted also. Then, the hostler was told to give the horse his head; and, his head being given him, he made a very unpleasant use of it: tossing it into the air with great disdain, and running into the parlour windows over the way; after performing those feats, and supporting himself for a short time on his hind-legs, he started off at great speed, and rattled out of the town right gallantly.

The night was very dark. A damp mist rose from the river, and the marshy ground about; and spread itself over the dreary fields. It was piercing cold, too; all was gloomy and black. Not a word was spoken; for the driver had grown sleepy; and Sikes was in no mood to lead him into conversation. Oliver sat huddled together, in a corner of the cart; bewildered with alarm and apprehension; and figuring strange objects in the gaunt trees, whose branches waved grimly to and fro, as if in some fantastic joy at the desolation of the scene.

As they passed Sunbury Church, the clock struck seven. There was a light in the ferry-house window opposite: which streamed across the road, and threw into more sombre shadow a dark yew-tree with graves beneath it. There was a dull sound of falling water not far off; and the leaves of the old tree stirred gently in the night wind. It seemed like quiet music for the repose of the dead.

Sunbury was passed through, and they came again into the lonely road. Two or three miles more, and the cart stopped. Sikes alighted, took Oliver by the hand, and they once again walked on.

They turned into no house at Shepperton, as the weary boy had expected; but still kept walking on, in mud and darkness, through gloomy lanes and over cold open wastes, until they came within sight of the lights of a town at no great distance. On looking intently forward, Oliver saw that the water was just below them, and that they were coming to the foot of a bridge.

Sikes kept straight on, until they were close upon the bridge; then turned suddenly down a bank upon the left.

'The water!' thought Oliver, turning sick with fear. 'He has brought me to this lonely place to murder me!'

He was about to throw himself on the ground, and make one struggle for his young life, when he saw that they stood before a solitary house: all ruinous and decayed. There was a window on each side of the dilapidated entrance; and one story above; but no light was visible. The house was dark, dismantled: and the all appearance, uninhabited.

Sikes, with Oliver's hand still in his, softly approached the low porch, and raised the latch. The door yielded to the pressure, and they passed in together.

CHAPTER XXII — THE BURGLARY

'Hallo!' cried a loud, hoarse voice, as soon as they set foot in the passage.

‘Don’t make such a row,’ said Sikes, bolting the door. ‘Show a glim, Toby.’

‘Aha! my pal!’ cried the same voice. ‘A glim, Barney, a glim! Show the gentleman in, Barney; wake up first, if convenient.’

The speaker appeared to throw a boot-jack, or some such article, at the person he addressed, to rouse him from his slumbers: for the noise of a wooden body, falling violently, was heard; and then an indistinct muttering, as of a man between sleep and awake.

‘Do you hear?’ cried the same voice. ‘There’s Bill Sikes in the passage with nobody to do the civil to him; and you sleeping there, as if you took laudanum with your meals, and nothing stronger. Are you any fresher now, or do you want the iron candlestick to wake you thoroughly?’

A pair of slipshod feet shuffled, hastily, across the bare floor of the room, as this interrogatory was put; and there issued, from a door on the right hand; first, a feeble candle: and next, the form of the same individual who has been heretofore described as labouring under the infirmity of speaking through his nose, and officiating as waiter at the public-house on Saffron Hill.

‘Bister Sikes!’ exclaimed Barney, with real or counterfeit joy; ‘cub id, sir; cub id.’

‘Here! you get on first,’ said Sikes, putting Oliver in front of him. ‘Quicker! or I shall tread upon your heels.’

Muttering a curse upon his tardiness, Sikes pushed Oliver before him; and they entered a low dark room with a smoky fire, two or three broken chairs, a table, and a very old couch: on which, with his legs much higher than his head, a man was reposing at full length, smoking a long clay pipe. He was dressed in a smartly-cut snuff-coloured coat, with large brass buttons; an orange neckerchief; a coarse, staring, shawl-pattern waistcoat; and drab breeches. Mr. Crackit (for he it was) had no very great quantity of hair, either upon his head or face; but what he had, was of a reddish dye, and tortured into long corkscrew curls, through which he occasionally thrust some very dirty fingers, ornamented with large common rings. He was a trifle above the middle size, and apparently rather weak in the legs; but this circumstance by no means detracted from his own admiration of his top-boots, which he contemplated, in their elevated situation, with lively satisfaction.

‘Bill, my boy!’ said this figure, turning his head towards the door, ‘I’m glad to see you. I was almost afraid you’d given it up: in which case I should have made a personal wentur. Hallo!’

Uttering this exclamation in a tone of great surprise, as his eyes rested on Oliver, Mr. Toby Crackit brought himself into a sitting posture, and demanded who that was.

‘The boy. Only the boy!’ replied Sikes, drawing a chair towards the fire.

‘Wud of Bister Fagid’s lads,’ exclaimed Barney, with a grin.

‘Fagin’s, eh!’ exclaimed Toby, looking at Oliver. ‘Wot an inwalable boy that’ll make, for the old ladies’ pockets in chapels! His mug is a fortin’ to him.’

‘There—there’s enough of that,’ interposed Sikes, impatiently; and stooping over his recumbant friend, he whispered a few words in his ear: at which Mr. Crackit laughed immensely, and honoured Oliver with a long stare of astonishment.

‘Now,’ said Sikes, as he resumed his seat, ‘if you’ll give us something to eat and drink while we’re waiting, you’ll put some heart in us; or in me, at all events. Sit down by the fire, younker, and rest yourself; for you’ll have to go out with us again to-night, though not very far off.’

Oliver looked at Sikes, in mute and timid wonder; and drawing a stool to the fire, sat with his aching head upon his hands, scarecely knowing where he was, or what was passing around him.

‘Here,’ said Toby, as the young Jew placed some fragments of food, and a bottle upon the table, ‘Success to the crack!’ He rose to honour the toast; and, carefully depositing his empty pipe in a corner, advanced to the table, filled a glass with spirits, and drank off its contents. Mr. Sikes did the same.

‘A drain for the boy,’ said Toby, half-filling a wine-glass. ‘Down with it, innocence.’

‘Indeed,’ said Oliver, looking piteously up into the man’s face; ‘indeed, I—’

‘Down with it!’ echoed Toby. ‘Do you think I don’t know what’s good for you? Tell him to drink it, Bill.’

‘He had better!’ said Sikes clapping his hand upon his pocket. ‘Burn my body, if he isn’t more trouble than a whole family of Dodgers. Drink it, you perwerse imp; drink it!’

Frightened by the menacing gestures of the two men, Oliver hastily swallowed the contents of the glass, and immediately fell into a violent fit of coughing: which delighted Toby Crackit and Barney, and even drew a smile from the surly Mr. Sikes.

This done, and Sikes having satisfied his appetite (Oliver could eat nothing but a small crust of bread which they made him swallow), the two men laid themselves down on chairs for a short nap. Oliver retained his stool by the fire; Barney wrapped in a blanket, stretched himself on the floor: close outside the fender.

They slept, or appeared to sleep, for some time; nobody stirring but Barney, who rose once or twice to throw coals on the fire. Oliver fell into a heavy doze: imagining himself straying along the gloomy lanes, or wandering about the dark churchyard, or retracing some one or other of the scenes of the past day: when he was roused by Toby Crackit jumping up and declaring it was half-past one.

In an instant, the other two were on their legs, and all were actively engaged in busy preparation. Sikes and his companion enveloped their necks and chins in large dark shawls, and drew on their great-coats; Barney, opening a cupboard, brought forth several articles, which he hastily crammed into the pockets.

‘Barkers for me, Barney,’ said Toby Crackit.

‘Here they are,’ replied Barney, producing a pair of pistols. ‘You loaded them yourself.’

‘All right!’ replied Toby, stowing them away. ‘The persuaders?’

‘I’ve got ‘em,’ replied Sikes.

‘Crape, keys, centre-bits, darkies—nothing forgotten?’ inquired Toby: fastening a small crowbar to a loop inside the skirt of his coat.

‘All right,’ rejoined his companion. ‘Bring them bits of timber, Barney. That’s the time of day.’

With these words, he took a thick stick from Barney’s hands, who, having delivered another to Toby, busied himself in fastening on Oliver’s cape.

‘Now then!’ said Sikes, holding out his hand.

Oliver: who was completely stupified by the unwonted exercise, and the air, and the drink which had been forced upon him: put his hand mechanically into that which Sikes extended for the purpose.

‘Take his other hand, Toby,’ said Sikes. ‘Look out, Barney.’

The man went to the door, and returned to announce that all was quiet. The two robbers issued forth with Oliver between them. Barney, having made all fast, rolled himself up as before, and was soon asleep again.

It was now intensely dark. The fog was much heavier than it had been in the early part of the night; and the atmosphere was so damp, that, although no rain fell, Oliver’s hair and eyebrows, within a few minutes after leaving the house, had become stiff with the half-frozen moisture that was floating about. They crossed the bridge, and kept on towards the lights which he had seen before. They were at no great distance off; and, as they walked pretty briskly, they soon arrived at Chertsey.

‘Slap through the town,’ whispered Sikes; ‘there’ll be nobody in the way, to-night, to see us.’

Toby acquiesced; and they hurried through the main street of the little town, which at that late hour was wholly deserted. A dim light shone at intervals from some bed-room window; and the hoarse barking of dogs occasionally broke the silence of the night. But there was nobody abroad. They had cleared the town, as the church-bell struck two.

Quickening their pace, they turned up a road upon the left hand. After walking about a quarter of a mile, they stopped before a detached house surrounded by a wall: to the top of which, Toby Crackit, scarcely pausing to take breath, climbed in a twinkling.

‘The boy next,’ said Toby. ‘Hoist him up; I’ll catch hold of him.’

Before Oliver had time to look round, Sikes had caught him under the arms; and in three or four seconds he and Toby were lying on the grass on the other side. Sikes followed directly. And they stole cautiously towards the house.

And now, for the first time, Oliver, well-nigh mad with grief and terror, saw that housebreaking and robbery, if not murder, were the objects of the expedition. He clasped his hands together, and involuntarily uttered a subdued exclamation of horror. A mist came before his eyes; the cold sweat stood upon his ashy face; his limbs failed him; and he sank upon his knees.

‘Get up!’ murmured Sikes, trembling with rage, and drawing the pistol from his pocket; ‘Get up, or I’ll strew your brains upon the grass.’

‘Oh! for God’s sake let me go!’ cried Oliver; ‘let me run away and die in the fields. I will never come near London; never, never! Oh! pray have mercy on me, and do not make me steal. For the love of all the bright Angels that rest in Heaven, have mercy upon me!’

The man to whom this appeal was made, swore a dreadful oath, and had cocked the pistol, when Toby, striking it from his grasp, placed his hand upon the boy’s mouth, and dragged him to the house.

‘Hush!’ cried the man; ‘it won’t answer here. Say another word, and I’ll do your business myself with a crack on the head. That makes no noise, and is quite as certain, and more genteel. Here, Bill, wrench the shutter open. He’s game enough now, I’ll engage. I’ve seen older hands of his age took the same way, for a minute or two, on a cold night.’

Sikes, invoking terrific imprecations upon Fagin’s head for sending Oliver on such an errand, plied the crowbar vigorously, but with little noise. After some delay, and some assistance from Toby, the shutter to which he had referred, swung open on its hinges.

It was a little lattice window, about five feet and a half above the ground, at the back of the house: which belonged to a scullery, or small brewing-place, at the end of the passage. The aperture was so small, that the inmates had probably not thought it worth while to defend it more securely; but it was large enough to admit a boy of Oliver’s size, nevertheless. A very brief exercise of Mr. Sike’s art, sufficed to overcome the fastening of the lattice; and it soon stood wide open also.

‘Now listen, you young limb,’ whispered Sikes, drawing a dark lantern from his pocket, and throwing the glare full on Oliver’s face; ‘I’m a going to put you through there. Take this light; go softly up the steps straight afore you, and along the little hall, to the street door; unfasten it, and let us in.’

‘There’s a bolt at the top, you won’t be able to reach,’ interposed Toby. ‘Stand upon one of the hall chairs. There are three there, Bill, with a jolly large blue unicorn and gold pitchfork on ‘em: which is the old lady’s arms.’

‘Keep quiet, can’t you?’ replied Sikes, with a threatening look. ‘The room-door is open, is it?’

‘Wide,’ replied Toby, after peeping in to satisfy himself. ‘The game of that is, that they always leave it open with a catch, so that the dog, who’s got a bed in here, may walk up and down the passage when he feels wakeful. Ha! ha! Barney ‘ticed him away to-night. So neat!’

Although Mr. Crackit spoke in a scarcely audible whisper, and laughed without noise, Sikes imperiously commanded him to be silent, and to get to work. Toby complied, by first producing his lantern, and placing it on the ground; then by planting himself firmly with his head against the wall beneath the window, and his hands upon his knees, so as to make a step of his back. This was no sooner done, than Sikes, mounting upon him, put Oliver gently through the window with his feet first; and, without leaving hold of his collar, planted him safely on the floor inside.

‘Take this lantern,’ said Sikes, looking into the room. ‘You see the stairs afore you?’

Oliver, more dead than alive, gasped out, ‘Yes.’ Sikes, pointing to the street-door with the pistol-barrel, briefly advised him to take notice that he was within shot all the way; and that if he faltered, he would fall dead that instant.

‘It’s done in a minute,’ said Sikes, in the same low whisper. ‘Directly I leave go of you, do your work. Hark!’

‘What’s that?’ whispered the other man.

They listened intently.

‘Nothing,’ said Sikes, releasing his hold of Oliver. ‘Now!’

In the short time he had had to collect his senses, the boy had firmly resolved that, whether he died in the attempt or not, he would make one effort to dart upstairs from the hall, and alarm the family. Filled with this idea, he advanced at once, but stealthily.

‘Come back!’ suddenly cried Sikes aloud. ‘Back! back!’

Scared by the sudden breaking of the dead stillness of the place, and by a loud cry which followed it, Oliver let his lantern fall, and knew not whether to advance or fly.

The cry was repeated—a light appeared—a vision of two terrified half-dressed men at the top of the stairs swam before his eyes—a flash—a loud noise—a smoke—a crash somewhere, but where he knew not,—and he staggered back.

Sikes had disappeared for an instant; but he was up again, and had him by the collar before the smoke had cleared away. He fired his own pistol after the men, who were already retreating; and dragged the boy up.

‘Clasp your arm tighter,’ said Sikes, as he drew him through the window. ‘Give me a shawl here. They’ve hit him. Quick! How the boy bleeds!’

Then came the loud ringing of a bell, mingled with the noise of fire-arms, and the shouts of men, and the sensation of being carried over uneven ground at a rapid pace. And then, the noises grew confused in the distance; and a cold deadly feeling crept over the boy’s heart; and he saw or heard no more.

CHAPTER XXIII — WHICH CONTAINS THE SUBSTANCE OF A PLEASANT CONVERSATION BETWEEN MR. BUMBLE AND A LADY; AND SHOWS THAT EVEN A BEADLE MAY BE SUSCEPTIBLE ON SOME POINTS

The night was bitter cold. The snow lay on the ground, frozen into a hard thick crust, so that only the heaps that had drifted into byways and corners were affected by the sharp wind that howled abroad: which, as if expending increased fury on such prey as it found, caught it savagely up in clouds, and, whirling it into a

thousand misty eddies, scattered it in air. Bleak, dark, and piercing cold, it was a night for the well-housed and fed to draw round the bright fire and thank God they were at home; and for the homeless, starving wretch to lay him down and die. Many hunger-worn outcasts close their eyes in our bare streets, at such times, who, let their crimes have been what they may, can hardly open them in a more bitter world.

Such was the aspect of out-of-doors affairs, when Mrs. Corney, the matron of the workhouse to which our readers have been already introduced as the birthplace of Oliver Twist, sat herself down before a cheerful fire in her own little room, and glanced, with no small degree of complacency, at a small round table: on which stood a tray of corresponding size, furnished with all necessary materials for the most grateful meal that matrons enjoy. In fact, Mrs. Corney was about to solace herself with a cup of tea. As she glanced from the table to the fireplace, where the smallest of all possible kettles was singing a small song in a small voice, her inward satisfaction evidently increased,—so much so, indeed, that Mrs. Corney smiled.

'Well!' said the matron, leaning her elbow on the table, and looking reflectively at the fire; 'I'm sure we have all on us a great deal to be grateful for! A great deal, if we did but know it. Ah!'

Mrs. Corney shook her head mournfully, as if deploring the mental blindness of those paupers who did not know it; and thrusting a silver spoon (private property) into the inmost recesses of a two-ounce tin tea-caddy, proceeded to make the tea.

How slight a thing will disturb the equanimity of our frail minds! The black teapot, being very small and easily filled, ran over while Mrs. Corney was moralising; and the water slightly scalded Mrs. Corney's hand.

'Drat the pot!' said the worthy matron, setting it down very hastily on the hob; 'a little stupid thing, that only holds a couple of cups! What use is it of, to anybody! Except,' said Mrs. Corney, pausing, 'except to a poor desolate creature like me. Oh dear!'

With these words, the matron dropped into her chair, and, once more resting her elbow on the table, thought of her solitary fate. The small teapot, and the single cup, had awakened in her mind sad recollections of Mr. Corney (who had not been dead more than five-and-twenty years); and she was overpowered.

'I shall never get another!' said Mrs. Corney, pettishly; 'I shall never get another—like him.'

Whether this remark bore reference to the husband, or the teapot, is uncertain. It might have been the latter; for Mrs. Corney looked at it as she spoke; and took it up afterwards. She had just tasted her first cup, when she was disturbed by a soft tap at the room-door.

'Oh, come in with you!' said Mrs. Corney, sharply. 'Some of the old women dying, I suppose. They always die when I'm at meals. Don't stand there, letting the cold air in, don't. What's amiss now, eh?'

'Nothing, ma'am, nothing,' replied a man's voice.

'Dear me!' exclaimed the matron, in a much sweeter tone, 'is that Mr. Bumble?'

'At your service, ma'am,' said Mr. Bumble, who had been stopping outside to rub his shoes clean, and to shake the snow off his coat; and who now made his appearance, bearing the cocked hat in one hand and a bundle in the other. 'Shall I shut the door, ma'am?'

The lady modestly hesitated to reply, lest there should be any impropriety in holding an interview with Mr. Bumble, with closed doors. Mr. Bumble taking advantage of the hesitation, and being very cold himself, shut it without permission.

'Hard weather, Mr. Bumble,' said the matron.

'Hard, indeed, ma'am,' replied the beadle. 'Anti-porochial weather this, ma'am. We have given away, Mrs. Corney, we have given away a matter of twenty quartern loaves and a cheese and a half, this very blessed afternoon; and yet them paupers are not contented.'

'Of course not. When would they be, Mr. Bumble?' said the matron, sipping her tea.

'When, indeed, ma'am!' rejoined Mr. Bumble. 'Why here's one man that, in consideration of his wife and large family, has a quartern loaf and a good pound of cheese, full weight. Is he grateful, ma'am? Is he grateful? Not a copper farthing's worth of it! What does he do, ma'am, but ask for a few coals; if it's only a pocket handkerchief full, he says! Coals! What would he do with coals? Toast his cheese with 'em and then come back for more. That's the way with these people, ma'am; give 'em a apron full of coals to-day, and they'll come back for another, the day after to-morrow, as brazen as alabaster.'

The matron expressed her entire concurrence in this intelligible simile; and the beadle went on.

'I never,' said Mr. Bumble, 'see anything like the pitch it's got to. The day afore yesterday, a man—you have been a married woman, ma'am, and I may mention it to you—a man, with hardly a rag upon his back (here Mrs. Corney looked at the floor), goes to our overseer's door when he has got company coming to dinner; and says, he must be relieved, Mrs. Corney. As he wouldn't go away, and shocked the company very much, our overseer sent him out a pound of potatoes and half a pint of oatmeal. "My heart!" says the ungrateful villain, "what's the use of *this* to me? You might as well give me a pair of iron spectacles!" "Very good," says our overseer, taking 'em away again, "you won't get anything else here." "Then I'll die in the streets!" says the vagrant. "Oh no, you won't," says our overseer.'

'Ha! ha! That was very good! So like Mr. Grannett, wasn't it?' interposed the matron. 'Well, Mr. Bumble?'

'Well, ma'am,' rejoined the beadle, 'he went away; and he *did* die in the streets. There's a obstinate pauper for you!'

'It beats anything I could have believed,' observed the matron emphatically. 'But don't you think out-of-door relief a very bad thing, any way, Mr. Bumble? You're a gentleman of experience, and ought to know. Come.'

'Mrs. Corney,' said the beadle, smiling as men smile who are conscious of superior information, 'out-of-door relief, properly managed: properly managed, ma'am: is the porochial safeguard. The great principle of out-of-door relief is, to give the paupers exactly what they don't want; and then they get tired of coming.'

'Dear me!' exclaimed Mrs. Corney. 'Well, that is a good one, too!'

'Yes. Betwixt you and me, ma'am,' returned Mr. Bumble, 'that's the great principle; and that's the reason why, if you look at any cases that get into them owdacious newspapers, you'll always observe that sick

families have been relieved with slices of cheese. That's the rule now, Mrs. Corney, all over the country. But, however,' said the beadle, stopping to unpack his bundle, 'these are official secrets, ma'am; not to be spoken of; except, as I may say, among the porochial officers, such as ourselves. This is the port wine, ma'am, that the board ordered for the infirmary; real, fresh, genuine port wine; only out of the cask this forenoon; clear as a bell, and no sediment!'

Having held the first bottle up to the light, and shaken it well to test its excellence, Mr. Bumble placed them both on top of a chest of drawers; folded the handkerchief in which they had been wrapped; put it carefully in his pocket; and took up his hat, as if to go.

'You'll have a very cold walk, Mr. Bumble,' said the matron.

'It blows, ma'am,' replied Mr. Bumble, turning up his coat-collar, 'enough to cut one's ears off.'

The matron looked, from the little kettle, to the beadle, who was moving towards the door; and as the beadle coughed, preparatory to bidding her good-night, bashfully inquired whether—whether he wouldn't take a cup of tea?

Mr. Bumble instantaneously turned back his collar again; laid his hat and stick upon a chair; and drew another chair up to the table. As he slowly seated himself, he looked at the lady. She fixed her eyes upon the little teapot. Mr. Bumble coughed again, and slightly smiled.

Mrs. Corney rose to get another cup and saucer from the closet. As she sat down, her eyes once again encountered those of the gallant beadle; she coloured, and applied herself to the task of making his tea. Again Mr. Bumble coughed—louder this time than he had coughed yet.

'Sweet? Mr. Bumble?' inquired the matron, taking up the sugar-basin.

'Very sweet, indeed, ma'am,' replied Mr. Bumble. He fixed his eyes on Mrs. Corney as he said this; and if ever a beadle looked tender, Mr. Bumble was that beadle at that moment.

The tea was made, and handed in silence. Mr. Bumble, having spread a handkerchief over his knees to prevent the crumbs from sullying the splendour of his shorts, began to eat and drink; varying these amusements, occasionally, by fetching a deep sigh; which, however, had no injurious effect upon his appetite, but, on the contrary, rather seemed to facilitate his operations in the tea and toast department.

'You have a cat, ma'am, I see,' said Mr. Bumble, glancing at one who, in the centre of her family, was basking before the fire; 'and kittens too, I declare!'

'I am so fond of them, Mr. Bumble, you can't think,' replied the matron. 'They're *so* happy, *so* frolicsome, and *so* cheerful, that they are quite companions for me.'

'Very nice animals, ma'am,' replied Mr. Bumble, approvingly; 'so very domestic.'

'Oh, yes!' rejoined the matron with enthusiasm; 'so fond of their home too, that it's quite a pleasure, I'm sure.'

'Mrs. Corney, ma'am,' said Mr. Bumble, slowly, and marking the time with his teaspoon, 'I mean to say this, ma'am; that any cat, or kitten, that could live with you, ma'am, and *not* be fond of its home, must be a ass, ma'am.'

'Oh, Mr. Bumble!' remonstrated Mrs. Corney.

'It's of no use disguising facts, ma'am,' said Mr. Bumble, slowly flourishing the teaspoon with a kind of amorous dignity which made him doubly impressive; 'I would drown it myself, with pleasure.'

'Then you're a cruel man,' said the matron vivaciously, as she held out her hand for the beadle's cup; 'and a very hard-hearted man besides.'

'Hard-hearted, ma'am?' said Mr. Bumble. 'Hard?' Mr. Bumble resigned his cup without another word; squeezed Mrs. Corney's little finger as she took it; and inflicting two open-handed slaps upon his laced waistcoat, gave a mighty sigh, and hitched his chair a very little morsel farther from the fire.

It was a round table; and as Mrs. Corney and Mr. Bumble had been sitting opposite each other, with no great space between them, and fronting the fire, it will be seen that Mr. Bumble, in receding from the fire, and still keeping at the table, increased the distance between himself and Mrs. Corney; which proceeding, some prudent readers will doubtless be disposed to admire, and to consider an act of great heroism on Mr. Bumble's part: he being in some sort tempted by time, place, and opportunity, to give utterance to certain soft nothings, which however well they may become the lips of the light and thoughtless, do seem immeasurably beneath the dignity of judges of the land, members of parliament, ministers of state, lord mayors, and other great public functionaries, but more particularly beneath the stateliness and gravity of a beadle: who (as is well known) should be the sternest and most inflexible among them all.

Whatever were Mr. Bumble's intentions, however (and no doubt they were of the best): it unfortunately happened, as has been twice before remarked, that the table was a round one; consequently Mr. Bumble, moving his chair by little and little, soon began to diminish the distance between himself and the matron; and, continuing to travel round the outer edge of the circle, brought his chair, in time, close to that in which the matron was seated.

Indeed, the two chairs touched; and when they did so, Mr. Bumble stopped.

Now, if the matron had moved her chair to the right, she would have been scorched by the fire; and if to the left, she must have fallen into Mr. Bumble's arms; so (being a discreet matron, and no doubt foreseeing these consequences at a glance) she remained where she was, and handed Mr. Bumble another cup of tea.

'Hard-hearted, Mrs. Corney?' said Mr. Bumble, stirring his tea, and looking up into the matron's face; 'are *you* hard-hearted, Mrs. Corney?'

'Dear me!' exclaimed the matron, 'what a very curious question from a single man. What can you want to know for, Mr. Bumble?'

The beadle drank his tea to the last drop; finished a piece of toast; whisked the crumbs off his knees; wiped his lips; and deliberately kissed the matron.

'Mr. Bumble!' cried that discreet lady in a whisper; for the fright was so great, that she had quite lost her voice, 'Mr. Bumble, I shall scream!' Mr. Bumble made no reply; but in a slow and dignified manner, put his arm round the matron's waist.

As the lady had stated her intention of screaming, of course she would have screamed at this additional boldness, but that the exertion was rendered unnecessary by a hasty knocking at the door: which was no sooner heard, than Mr. Bumble darted, with much agility, to the wine bottles, and began dusting them with great violence: while the matron sharply demanded who was there.

It is worthy of remark, as a curious physical instance of the efficacy of a sudden surprise in counteracting the effects of extreme fear, that her voice had quite recovered all its official asperity.

'If you please, mistress,' said a withered old female pauper, hideously ugly: putting her head in at the door, 'Old Sally is a-going fast.'

'Well, what's that to me?' angrily demanded the matron. 'I can't keep her alive, can I?'

'No, no, mistress,' replied the old woman, 'nobody can; she's far beyond the reach of help. I've seen a many people die; little babes and great strong men; and I know when death's a-coming, well enough. But she's troubled in her mind: and when the fits are not on her,—and that's not often, for she is dying very hard,—she says she has got something to tell, which you must hear. She'll never die quiet till you come, mistress.'

At this intelligence, the worthy Mrs. Corney muttered a variety of invectives against old women who couldn't even die without purposely annoying their betters; and, muffling herself in a thick shawl which she hastily caught up, briefly requested Mr. Bumble to stay till she came back, lest anything particular should occur. Bidding the messenger walk fast, and not be all night hobbling up the stairs, she followed her from the room with a very ill grace, scolding all the way.

Mr. Bumble's conduct on being left to himself, was rather inexplicable. He opened the closet, counted the teaspoons, weighed the sugar-tongs, closely inspected a silver milk-pot to ascertain that it was of the genuine metal, and, having satisfied his curiosity on these points, put on his cocked hat corner-wise, and danced with much gravity four distinct times round the table.

Having gone through this very extraordinary performance, he took off the cocked hat again, and, spreading himself before the fire with his back towards it, seemed to be mentally engaged in taking an exact inventory of the furniture.

CHAPTER XXIV — TREATS ON A VERY POOR SUBJECT. BUT IS A SHORT ONE, AND MAY BE FOUND OF IMPORTANCE IN THIS HISTORY

It was no unfit messenger of death, who had disturbed the quiet of the matron's room. Her body was bent by age; her limbs trembled with palsy; her face, distorted into a mumbling leer, resembled more the grotesque shaping of some wild pencil, than the work of Nature's hand.

Alas! How few of Nature's faces are left alone to gladden us with their beauty! The cares, and sorrows, and hungerings, of the world, change them as they change hearts; and it is only when those passions sleep, and have lost their hold for ever, that the troubled clouds pass off, and leave Heaven's surface clear. It is a common thing for the countenances of the dead, even in that fixed and rigid state, to subside into the long-forgotten expression of sleeping infancy, and settle into the very look of early life; so calm, so peaceful, do they grow again, that those who knew them in their happy childhood, kneel by the coffin's side in awe, and see the Angel even upon earth.

The old crone tottered along the passages, and up the stairs, muttering some indistinct answers to the chidings of her companion; being at length compelled to pause for breath, she gave the light into her hand, and remained behind to follow as she might: while the more nimble superior made her way to the room where the sick woman lay.

It was a bare garret-room, with a dim light burning at the farther end. There was another old woman watching by the bed; the parish apothecary's apprentice was standing by the fire, making a toothpick out of a quill.

'Cold night, Mrs. Corney,' said this young gentleman, as the matron entered.

'Very cold, indeed, sir,' replied the mistress, in her most civil tones, and dropping a curtsey as she spoke.

'You should get better coals out of your contractors,' said the apothecary's deputy, breaking a lump on the top of the fire with the rusty poker; 'these are not at all the sort of thing for a cold night.'

'They're the board's choosing, sir,' returned the matron. 'The least they could do, would be to keep us pretty warm: for our places are hard enough.'

The conversation was here interrupted by a moan from the sick woman.

'Oh!' said the young mag, turning his face towards the bed, as if he had previously quite forgotten the patient, 'it's all U.P. there, Mrs. Corney.'

'It is, is it, sir?' asked the matron.

'If she lasts a couple of hours, I shall be surprised,' said the apothecary's apprentice, intent upon the toothpick's point. 'It's a break-up of the system altogether. Is she dozing, old lady?'

The attendant stooped over the bed, to ascertain; and nodded in the affirmative.

'Then perhaps she'll go off in that way, if you don't make a row,' said the young man. 'Put the light on the floor. She won't see it there.'

The attendant did as she was told: shaking her head meanwhile, to intimate that the woman would not die so easily; having done so, she resumed her seat by the side of the other nurse, who had by this time returned. The mistress, with an expression of impatience, wrapped herself in her shawl, and sat at the foot of the bed.

The apothecary's apprentice, having completed the manufacture of the toothpick, planted himself in front of the fire and made good use of it for ten minutes or so: when apparently growing rather dull, he wished Mrs. Corney joy of her job, and took himself off on tiptoe.

When they had sat in silence for some time, the two old women rose from the bed, and crouching over the fire, held out their withered hands to catch the heat. The flame threw a ghastly light on their shrivelled faces, and made their ugliness appear terrible, as, in this position, they began to converse in a low voice.

'Did she say any more, Anny dear, while I was gone?' inquired the messenger.

'Not a word,' replied the other. 'She plucked and tore at her arms for a little time; but I held her hands, and she soon dropped off. She hasn't much strength in her, so I easily kept her quiet. I ain't so weak for an old woman, although I am on parish allowance; no, no!'

'Did she drink the hot wine the doctor said she was to have?' demanded the first.

'I tried to get it down,' rejoined the other. 'But her teeth were tight set, and she clenched the mug so hard that it was as much as I could do to get it back again. So I drank it; and it did me good!'

Looking cautiously round, to ascertain that they were not overheard, the two hags cowered nearer to the fire, and chuckled heartily.

'I mind the time,' said the first speaker, 'when she would have done the same, and made rare fun of it afterwards.'

'Ay, that she would,' rejoined the other; 'she had a merry heart. 'A many, many, beautiful corpses she laid out, as nice and neat as waxwork. My old eyes have seen them—ay, and those old hands touched them too; for I have helped her, scores of times.'

Stretching forth her trembling fingers as she spoke, the old creature shook them exultingly before her face, and fumbling in her pocket, brought out an old time-discoloured tin snuff-box, from which she shook a few grains into the outstretched palm of her companion, and a few more into her own. While they were thus

employed, the matron, who had been impatiently watching until the dying woman should awaken from her stupor, joined them by the fire, and sharply asked how long she was to wait?

'Not long, mistress,' replied the second woman, looking up into her face. 'We have none of us long to wait for Death. Patience, patience! He'll be here soon enough for us all.'

'Hold your tongue, you doting idiot!' said the matron sternly. 'You, Martha, tell me; has she been in this way before?'

'Often,' answered the first woman.

'But will never be again,' added the second one; 'that is, she'll never wake again but once—and mind, mistress, that won't be for long!'

'Long or short,' said the matron, snappishly, 'she won't find me here when she does wake; take care, both of you, how you worry me again for nothing. It's no part of my duty to see all the old women in the house die, and I won't—that's more. Mind that, you impudent old harridans. If you make a fool of me again, I'll soon cure you, I warrant you!'

She was bouncing away, when a cry from the two women, who had turned towards the bed, caused her to look round. The patient had raised herself upright, and was stretching her arms towards them.

'Who's that?' she cried, in a hollow voice.

'Hush, hush!' said one of the women, stooping over her. 'Lie down, lie down!'

'I'll never lie down again alive!' said the woman, struggling. 'I *will* tell her! Come here! Nearer! Let me whisper in your ear.'

She clutched the matron by the arm, and forcing her into a chair by the bedside, was about to speak, when looking round, she caught sight of the two old women bending forward in the attitude of eager listeners.

'Turn them away,' said the woman, drowsily; 'make haste! make haste!'

The two old crones, chiming in together, began pouring out many piteous lamentations that the poor dear was too far gone to know her best friends; and were uttering sundry protestations that they would never leave her, when the superior pushed them from the room, closed the door, and returned to the bedside. On being excluded, the old ladies changed their tone, and cried through the keyhole that old Sally was drunk; which, indeed, was not unlikely; since, in addition to a moderate dose of opium prescribed by the apothecary, she was labouring under the effects of a final taste of gin-and-water which had been privily administered, in the openness of their hearts, by the worthy old ladies themselves.

'Now listen to me,' said the dying woman aloud, as if making a great effort to revive one latent spark of energy. 'In this very room—in this very bed—I once nursed a pretty young creetur', that was brought into the house with her feet cut and bruised with walking, and all soiled with dust and blood. She gave birth to a boy, and died. Let me think—what was the year again!'

'Never mind the year,' said the impatient auditor; 'what about her?'

'Ay,' murmured the sick woman, relapsing into her former drowsy state, 'what about her?—what about—I know!' she cried, jumping fiercely up: her face flushed, and her eyes starting from her head—'I robbed her, so I did! She wasn't cold—I tell you she wasn't cold, when I stole it!'

'Stole what, for God's sake?' cried the matron, with a gesture as if she would call for help.

'*It*!' replied the woman, laying her hand over the other's mouth. 'The only thing she had. She wanted clothes to keep her warm, and food to eat; but she had kept it safe, and had it in her bosom. It was gold, I tell you! Rich gold, that might have saved her life!'

'Gold!' echoed the matron, bending eagerly over the woman as she fell back. 'Go on, go on—yes—what of it? Who was the mother? When was it?'

'She charge me to keep it safe,' replied the woman with a groan, 'and trusted me as the only woman about her. I stole it in my heart when she first showed it me hanging round her neck; and the child's death, perhaps, is on me besides! They would have treated him better, if they had known it all!'

'Known what?' asked the other. 'Speak!'

'The boy grew so like his mother,' said the woman, rambling on, and not heeding the question, 'that I could never forget it when I saw his face. Poor girl! poor girl! She was so young, too! Such a gentle lamb! Wait; there's more to tell. I have not told you all, have I?'

'No, no,' replied the matron, inclining her head to catch the words, as they came more faintly from the dying woman. 'Be quick, or it may be too late!'

'The mother,' said the woman, making a more violent effort than before; 'the mother, when the pains of death first came upon her, whispered in my ear that if her baby was born alive, and thrived, the day might come when it would not feel so much disgraced to hear its poor young mother named. "And oh, kind Heaven!" she said, folding her thin hands together, "whether it be boy or girl, raise up some friends for it in this troubled world, and take pity upon a lonely desolate child, abandoned to its mercy!"'

'The boy's name?' demanded the matron.

'They *called* him Oliver,' replied the woman, feebly. 'The gold I stole was—'

'Yes, yes—what?' cried the other.

She was bending eagerly over the woman to hear her reply; but drew back, instinctively, as she once again rose, slowly and stiffly, into a sitting posture; then, clutching the coverlid with both hands, muttered some indistinct sounds in her throat, and fell lifeless on the bed.

'Stone dead!' said one of the old women, hurrying in as soon as the door was opened.

‘And nothing to tell, after all,’ rejoined the matron, walking carelessly away.

The two crones, to all appearance, too busily occupied in the preparations for their dreadful duties to make any reply, were left alone, hovering about the body.

CHAPTER XXV — WHEREIN THIS HISTORY REVERTS TO MR. FAGIN AND COMPANY

While these things were passing in the country workhouse, Mr. Fagin sat in the old den—the same from which Oliver had been removed by the girl—brooding over a dull, smoky fire. He held a pair of bellows upon his knee, with which he had apparently been endeavouring to rouse it into more cheerful action; but he had fallen into deep thought; and with his arms folded on them, and his chin resting on his thumbs, fixed his eyes, abstractedly, on the rusty bars.

At a table behind him sat the Artful Dodger, Master Charles Bates, and Mr. Chitling: all intent upon a game of whist; the Artful taking dummy against Master Bates and Mr. Chitling. The countenance of the first-named gentleman, peculiarly intelligent at all times, acquired great additional interest from his close observance of the game, and his attentive perusal of Mr. Chitling’s hand; upon which, from time to time, as occasion served, he bestowed a variety of earnest glances: wisely regulating his own play by the result of his observations upon his neighbour’s cards. It being a cold night, the Dodger wore his hat, as, indeed, was often his custom within doors. He also sustained a clay pipe between his teeth, which he only removed for a brief space when he deemed it necessary to apply for refreshment to a quart pot upon the table, which stood ready filled with gin-and-water for the accommodation of the company.

Master Bates was also attentive to the play; but being of a more excitable nature than his accomplished friend, it was observable that he more frequently applied himself to the gin-and-water, and moreover indulged in many jests and irrelevant remarks, all highly unbecoming a scientific rubber. Indeed, the Artful, presuming upon their close attachment, more than once took occasion to reason gravely with his companion upon these improprieties; all of which remonstrances, Master Bates received in extremely good part; merely requesting his friend to be ‘blowed,’ or to insert his head in a sack, or replying with some other neatly-turned witticism of a similar kind, the happy application of which, excited considerable admiration in the mind of Mr. Chitling. It was remarkable that the latter gentleman and his partner invariably lost; and that the circumstance, so far from angering Master Bates, appeared to afford him the highest amusement, inasmuch as he laughed most uproariously at the end of every deal, and protested that he had never seen such a jolly game in all his born days.

‘That’s two doubles and the rub,’ said Mr. Chitling, with a very long face, as he drew half-a-crown from his waistcoat-pocket. ‘I never see such a feller as you, Jack; you win everything. Even when we’ve good cards, Charley and I can’t make nothing of ‘em.’

Either the master or the manner of this remark, which was made very ruefully, delighted Charley Bates so much, that his consequent shout of laughter roused the Jew from his reverie, and induced him to inquire what was the matter.

‘Matter, Fagin!’ cried Charley. ‘I wish you had watched the play. Tommy Chitling hasn’t won a point; and I went partners with him against the Artfull and dumb.’

‘Ay, ay!’ said the Jew, with a grin, which sufficiently demonstrated that he was at no loss to understand the reason. ‘Try ‘em again, Tom; try ‘em again.’

‘No more of it for me, thank ‘ee, Fagin,’ replied Mr. Chitling; ‘I’ve had enough. That ‘ere Dodger has such a run of luck that there’s no standing again’ him.’

‘Ha! ha! my dear,’ replied the Jew, ‘you must get up very early in the morning, to win against the Dodger.’

‘Morning!’ said Charley Bates; ‘you must put your boots on over-night, and have a telescope at each eye, and a opera-glass between your shoulders, if you want to come over him.’

Mr. Dawkins received these handsome compliments with much philosophy, and offered to cut any gentleman in company, for the first picture-card, at a shilling at a time. Nobody accepting the challenge, and his pipe being by this time smoked out, he proceeded to amuse himself by sketching a ground-plan of Newgate on the table with the piece of chalk which had served him in lieu of counters; whistling, meantime, with peculiar shrillness.

‘How precious dull you are, Tommy!’ said the Dodger, stopping short when there had been a long silence; and addressing Mr. Chitling. ‘What do you think he’s thinking of, Fagin?’

‘How should I know, my dear?’ replied the Jew, looking round as he plied the bellows. ‘About his losses, maybe; or the little retirement in the country that he’s just left, eh? Ha! ha! Is that it, my dear?’

‘Not a bit of it,’ replied the Dodger, stopping the subject of discourse as Mr. Chitling was about to reply. ‘What do *you* say, Charley?’

‘*I* should say,’ replied Master Bates, with a grin, ‘that he was uncommon sweet upon Betsy. See how he’s a-blushing! Oh, my eye! here’s a merry-go-rounder! Tommy Chitling’s in love! Oh, Fagin, Fagin! what a spree!’

Thoroughly overpowered with the notion of Mr. Chitling being the victim of the tender passion, Master Bates threw himself back in his chair with such violence, that he lost his balance, and pitched over upon the floor; where (the accident abating nothing of his merriment) he lay at full length until his laugh was over,

when he resumed his former position, and began another laugh.

'Never mind him, my dear,' said the Jew, winking at Mr. Dawkins, and giving Master Bates a reproving tap with the nozzle of the bellows. 'Betsy's a fine girl. Stick up to her, Tom. Stick up to her.'

'What I mean to say, Fagin,' replied Mr. Chitling, very red in the face, 'is, that that isn't anything to anybody here.'

'No more it is,' replied the Jew; 'Charley will talk. Don't mind him, my dear; don't mind him. Betsy's a fine girl. Do as she bids you, Tom, and you will make your fortune.'

'So I *do* do as she bids me,' replied Mr. Chitling; 'I shouldn't have been milled, if it hadn't been for her advice. But it turned out a good job for you; didn't it, Fagin! And what's six weeks of it? It must come, some time or another, and why not in the winter time when you don't want to go out a-walking so much; eh, Fagin?'

'Ah, to be sure, my dear,' replied the Jew.

'You wouldn't mind it again, Tom, would you,' asked the Dodger, winking upon Charley and the Jew, 'if Bet was all right?'

'I mean to say that I shouldn't,' replied Tom, angrily. 'There, now. Ah! Who'll say as much as that, I should like to know; eh, Fagin?'

'Nobody, my dear,' replied the Jew; 'not a soul, Tom. I don't know one of 'em that would do it besides you; not one of 'em, my dear.'

'I might have got clear off, if I'd split upon her; mightn't I, Fagin?' angrily pursued the poor half-witted dupe. 'A word from me would have done it; wouldn't it, Fagin?'

'To be sure it would, my dear,' replied the Jew.

'But I didn't blab it; did I, Fagin?' demanded Tom, pouring question upon question with great volubility.

'No, no, to be sure,' replied the Jew; 'you were too stout-hearted for that. A deal too stout, my dear!'

'Perhaps I was,' rejoined Tom, looking round; 'and if I was, what's to laugh at, in that; eh, Fagin?'

The Jew, perceiving that Mr. Chitling was considerably roused, hastened to assure him that nobody was laughing; and to prove the gravity of the company, appealed to Master Bates, the principal offender. But, unfortunately, Charley, in opening his mouth to reply that he was never more serious in his life, was unable to prevent the escape of such a violent roar, that the abused Mr. Chitling, without any preliminary ceremonies, rushed across the room and aimed a blow at the offender; who, being skilful in evading pursuit, ducked to avoid it, and chose his time so well that it lighted on the chest of the merry old gentleman, and caused him to stagger to the wall, where he stood panting for breath, while Mr. Chitling looked on in intense dismay.

'Hark!' cried the Dodger at this moment, 'I heard the tinkler.' Catching up the light, he crept softly upstairs.

The bell was rung again, with some impatience, while the party were in darkness. After a short pause, the Dodger reappeared, and whispered Fagin mysteriously.

'What!' cried the Jew, 'alone?'

The Dodger nodded in the affirmative, and, shading the flame of the candle with his hand, gave Charley Bates a private intimation, in dumb show, that he had better not be funny just then. Having performed this friendly office, he fixed his eyes on the Jew's face, and awaited his directions.

The old man bit his yellow fingers, and meditated for some seconds; his face working with agitation the while, as if he dreaded something, and feared to know the worst. At length he raised his head.

'Where is he?' he asked.

The Dodger pointed to the floor above, and made a gesture, as if to leave the room.

'Yes,' said the Jew, answering the mute inquiry; 'bring him down. Hush! Quiet, Charley! Gently, Tom! Scarce, scarce!'

This brief direction to Charley Bates, and his recent antagonist, was softly and immediately obeyed. There was no sound of their whereabout, when the Dodger descended the stairs, bearing the light in his hand, and followed by a man in a coarse smock-frock; who, after casting a hurried glance round the room, pulled off a large wrapper which had concealed the lower portion of his face, and disclosed: all haggard, unwashed, and unshorn: the features of flash Toby Crackit.

'How are you, Faguey?' said this worthy, nodding to the Jew. 'Pop that shawl away in my castor, Dodger, so that I may know where to find it when I cut; that's the time of day! You'll be a fine young cracksman afore the old file now.'

With these words he pulled up the smock-frock; and, winding it round his middle, drew a chair to the fire, and placed his feet upon the hob.

'See there, Faguey,' he said, pointing disconsolately to his top boots; 'not a drop of Day and Martin since you know when; not a bubble of blacking, by Jove! But don't look at me in that way, man. All in good time. I can't talk about business till I've eat and drank; so produce the sustainance, and let's have a quiet fill-out for the first time these three days!'

The Jew motioned to the Dodger to place what eatables there were, upon the table; and, seating himself opposite the housebreaker, waited his leisure.

To judge from appearances, Toby was by no means in a hurry to open the conversation. At first, the Jew contented himself with patiently watching his countenance, as if to gain from its expression some clue to the intelligence he brought; but in vain.

He looked tired and worn, but there was the same complacent repose upon his features that they always wore: and through dirt, and beard, and whisker, there still shone, unimpaired, the self-satisfied smirk of flash Toby Crackit. Then the Jew, in an agony of impatience, watched every morsel he put into his mouth; pacing up and down the room, meanwhile, in irrepressible excitement. It was all of no use. Toby continued to eat with the utmost outward indifference, until he could eat no more; then, ordering the Dodger out, he closed

the door, mixed a glass of spirits and water, and composed himself for talking.

‘First and foremost, Faguey,’ said Toby.

‘Yes, yes!’ interposed the Jew, drawing up his chair.

Mr. Crackit stopped to take a draught of spirits and water, and to declare that the gin was excellent; then placing his feet against the low mantelpiece, so as to bring his boots to about the level of his eye, he quietly resumed.

‘First and foremost, Faguey,’ said the housebreaker, ‘how’s Bill?’

‘What!’ screamed the Jew, starting from his seat.

‘Why, you don’t mean to say—’ began Toby, turning pale.

‘Mean!’ cried the Jew, stamping furiously on the ground. ‘Where are they? Sikes and the boy! Where are they? Where have they been? Where are they hiding? Why have they not been here?’

‘The crack failed,’ said Toby faintly.

‘I know it,’ replied the Jew, tearing a newspaper from his pocket and pointing to it. ‘What more?’

‘They fired and hit the boy. We cut over the fields at the back, with him between us—straight as the crow flies—through hedge and ditch. They gave chase. Damme! the whole country was awake, and the dogs upon us.’

‘The boy!’

‘Bill had him on his back, and scudded like the wind. We stopped to take him between us; his head hung down, and he was cold. They were close upon our heels; every man for himself, and each from the gallows! We parted company, and left the youngster lying in a ditch. Alive or dead, that’s all I know about him.’

The Jew stopped to hear no more; but uttering a loud yell, and twining his hands in his hair, rushed from the room, and from the house.

CHAPTER XXVI — IN WHICH A MYSTERIOUS CHARACTER APPEARS UPON THE SCENE; AND MANY THINGS, INSEPARABLE FROM THIS HISTORY, ARE DONE AND PERFORMED

The old man had gained the street corner, before he began to recover the effect of Toby Crackit’s intelligence. He had relaxed nothing of his unusual speed; but was still pressing onward, in the same wild and disordered manner, when the sudden dashing past of a carriage: and a boisterous cry from the foot passengers, who saw his danger: drove him back upon the pavement. Avoiding, as much as was possible, all the main streets, and skulking only through the by-ways and alleys, he at length emerged on Snow Hill. Here he walked even faster than before; nor did he linger until he had again turned into a court; when, as if conscious that he was now in his proper element, he fell into his usual shuffling pace, and seemed to breathe more freely.

Near to the spot on which Snow Hill and Holborn Hill meet, opens, upon the right hand as you come out of the City, a narrow and dismal alley, leading to Saffron Hill. In its filthy shops are exposed for sale huge bunches of second-hand silk handkerchiefs, of all sizes and patterns; for here reside the traders who purchase them from pick-pockets. Hundreds of these handkerchiefs hang dangling from pegs outside the windows or flaunting from the door-posts; and the shelves, within, are piled with them. Confined as the limits of Field Lane are, it has its barber, its coffee-shop, its beer-shop, and its fried-fish warehouse. It is a commercial colony of itself: the emporium of petty larceny: visited at early morning, and setting-in of dusk, by silent merchants, who traffic in dark back-parlours, and who go as strangely as they come. Here, the clothesman, the shoe-vamper, and the rag-merchant, display their goods, as sign-boards to the petty thief; here, stores of old iron and bones, and heaps of mildewy fragments of woollen-stuff and linen, rust and rot in the grimy cellars.

It was into this place that the Jew turned. He was well known to the sallow denizens of the lane; for such of them as were on the look-out to buy or sell, nodded, familiarly, as he passed along. He replied to their salutations in the same way; but bestowed no closer recognition until he reached the further end of the alley; when he stopped, to address a salesman of small stature, who had squeezed as much of his person into a child’s chair as the chair would hold, and was smoking a pipe at his warehouse door.

‘Why, the sight of you, Mr. Fagin, would cure the hoptalmy!’ said this respectable trader, in acknowledgment of the Jew’s inquiry after his health.

‘The neighbourhood was a little too hot, Lively,’ said Fagin, elevating his eyebrows, and crossing his hands upon his shoulders.

‘Well, I’ve heerd that complaint of it, once or twice before,’ replied the trader; ‘but it soon cools down again; don’t you find it so?’

Fagin nodded in the affirmative. Pointing in the direction of Saffron Hill, he inquired whether any one was up yonder to-night.

‘At the Cripples?’ inquired the man.

The Jew nodded.

'Let me see,' pursued the merchant, reflecting.

'Yes, there's some half-dozen of 'em gone in, that I knows. I don't think your friend's there.'

'Sikes is not, I suppose?' inquired the Jew, with a disappointed countenance.

'*Non istwentus*, as the lawyers say,' replied the little man, shaking his head, and looking amazingly sly. 'Have you got anything in my line to-night?'

'Nothing to-night,' said the Jew, turning away.

'Are you going up to the Cripples, Fagin?' cried the little man, calling after him. 'Stop! I don't mind if I have a drop there with you!'

But as the Jew, looking back, waved his hand to intimate that he preferred being alone; and, moreover, as the little man could not very easily disengage himself from the chair; the sign of the Cripples was, for a time, bereft of the advantage of Mr. Lively's presence. By the time he had got upon his legs, the Jew had disappeared; so Mr. Lively, after ineffectually standing on tiptoe, in the hope of catching sight of him, again forced himself into the little chair, and, exchanging a shake of the head with a lady in the opposite shop, in which doubt and mistrust were plainly mingled, resumed his pipe with a grave demeanour.

The Three Cripples, or rather the Cripples; which was the sign by which the establishment was familiarly known to its patrons: was the public-house in which Mr. Sikes and his dog have already figured. Merely making a sign to a man at the bar, Fagin walked straight upstairs, and opening the door of a room, and softly insinuating himself into the chamber, looked anxiously about: shading his eyes with his hand, as if in search of some particular person.

The room was illuminated by two gas-lights; the glare of which was prevented by the barred shutters, and closely-drawn curtains of faded red, from being visible outside. The ceiling was blackened, to prevent its colour from being injured by the flaring of the lamps; and the place was so full of dense tobacco smoke, that at first it was scarcely possible to discern anything more. By degrees, however, as some of it cleared away through the open door, an assemblage of heads, as confused as the noises that greeted the ear, might be made out; and as the eye grew more accustomed to the scene, the spectator gradually became aware of the presence of a numerous company, male and female, crowded round a long table: at the upper end of which, sat a chairman with a hammer of office in his hand; while a professional gentleman with a bluish nose, and his face tied up for the benefit of a toothache, presided at a jingling piano in a remote corner.

As Fagin stepped softly in, the professional gentleman, running over the keys by way of prelude, occasioned a general cry of order for a song; which having subsided, a young lady proceeded to entertain the company with a ballad in four verses, between each of which the accompanyist played the melody all through, as loud as he could. When this was over, the chairman gave a sentiment, after which, the professional gentleman on the chairman's right and left volunteered a duet, and sang it, with great applause.

It was curious to observe some faces which stood out prominently from among the group. There was the chairman himself, (the landlord of the house,) a coarse, rough, heavy built fellow, who, while the songs were proceeding, rolled his eyes hither and thither, and, seeming to give himself up to joviality, had an eye for everything that was done, and an ear for everything that was said—and sharp ones, too. Near him were the singers: receiving, with professional indifference, the compliments of the company, and applying themselves, in turn, to a dozen proffered glasses of spirits and water, tendered by their more boisterous admirers; whose countenances, expressive of almost every vice in almost every grade, irresistibly attracted the attention, by their very repulsiveness. Cunning, ferocity, and drunkeness in all its stages, were there, in their strongest aspect; and women: some with the last lingering tinge of their early freshness almost fading as you looked: others with every mark and stamp of their sex utterly beaten out, and presenting but one loathsome blank of profligacy and crime; some mere girls, others but young women, and none past the prime of life; formed the darkest and saddest portion of this dreary picture.

Fagin, troubled by no grave emotions, looked eagerly from face to face while these proceedings were in progress; but apparently without meeting that of which he was in search. Succeeding, at length, in catching the eye of the man who occupied the chair, he beckoned to him slightly, and left the room, as quietly as he had entered it.

'What can I do for you, Mr. Fagin?' inquired the man, as he followed him out to the landing. 'Won't you join us? They'll be delighted, every one of 'em.'

The Jew shook his head impatiently, and said in a whisper, 'Is *he* here?'

'No,' replied the man.

'And no news of Barney?' inquired Fagin.

'None,' replied the landlord of the Cripples; for it was he. 'He won't stir till it's all safe. Depend on it, they're on the scent down there; and that if he moved, he'd blow upon the thing at once. He's all right enough, Barney is, else I should have heard of him. I'll pound it, that Barney's managing properly. Let him alone for that.'

'Will *he* be here to-night?' asked the Jew, laying the same emphasis on the pronoun as before.

'Monks, do you mean?' inquired the landlord, hesitating.

'Hush!' said the Jew. 'Yes.'

'Certain,' replied the man, drawing a gold watch from his fob; 'I expected him here before now. If you'll wait ten minutes, he'll be—'

'No, no,' said the Jew, hastily; as though, however desirous he might be to see the person in question, he was nevertheless relieved by his absence. 'Tell him I came here to see him; and that he must come to me to-night. No, say to-morrow. As he is not here, to-morrow will be time enough.'

'Good!' said the man. 'Nothing more?'

'Not a word now,' said the Jew, descending the stairs.

‘I say,’ said the other, looking over the rails, and speaking in a hoarse whisper; ‘what a time this would be for a sell! I’ve got Phil Barker here: so drunk, that a boy might take him!’

‘Ah! But it’s not Phil Barker’s time,’ said the Jew, looking up.

‘Phil has something more to do, before we can afford to part with him; so go back to the company, my dear, and tell them to lead merry lives—*while they last*. Ha! ha! ha!’

The landlord reciprocated the old man’s laugh; and returned to his guests. The Jew was no sooner alone, than his countenance resumed its former expression of anxiety and thought. After a brief reflection, he called a hack-cabriolet, and bade the man drive towards Bethnal Green. He dismissed him within some quarter of a mile of Mr. Sikes’s residence, and performed the short remainder of the distance, on foot.

‘Now,’ muttered the Jew, as he knocked at the door, ‘if there is any deep play here, I shall have it out of you, my girl, cunning as you are.’

She was in her room, the woman said. Fagin crept softly upstairs, and entered it without any previous ceremony. The girl was alone; lying with her head upon the table, and her hair straggling over it.

‘She has been drinking,’ thought the Jew, cooly, ‘or perhaps she is only miserable.’

The old man turned to close the door, as he made this reflection; the noise thus occasioned, roused the girl. She eyed his crafty face narrowly, as she inquired to his recital of Toby Crackit’s story. When it was concluded, she sank into her former attitude, but spoke not a word. She pushed the candle impatiently away; and once or twice as she feverishly changed her position, shuffled her feet upon the ground; but this was all.

During the silence, the Jew looked restlessly about the room, as if to assure himself that there were no appearances of Sikes having covertly returned. Apparently satisfied with his inspection, he coughed twice or thrice, and made as many efforts to open a conversation; but the girl heeded him no more than if he had been made of stone. At length he made another attempt; and rubbing his hands together, said, in his most conciliatory tone, ‘And where should you think Bill was now, my dear?’

The girl moaned out some half intelligible reply, that she could not tell; and seemed, from the smothered noise that escaped her, to be crying.

‘And the boy, too,’ said the Jew, straining his eyes to catch a glimpse of her face. ‘Poor leetle child! Left in a ditch, Nance; only think!’

‘The child,’ said the girl, suddenly looking up, ‘is better where he is, than among us; and if no harm comes to Bill from it, I hope he lies dead in the ditch and that his young bones may rot there.’

‘What!’ cried the Jew, in amazement.

‘Ay, I do,’ returned the girl, meeting his gaze. ‘I shall be glad to have him away from my eyes, and to know that the worst is over. I can’t bear to have him about me. The sight of him turns me against myself, and all of you.’

‘Pooh!’ said the Jew, scornfully. ‘You’re drunk.’

‘Am I?’ cried the girl bitterly. ‘It’s no fault of yours, if I am not! You’d never have me anything else, if you had your will, except now;—the humour doesn’t suit you, doesn’t it?’

‘No!’ rejoined the Jew, furiously. ‘It does not.’

‘Change it, then!’ responded the girl, with a laugh.

‘Change it!’ exclaimed the Jew, exasperated beyond all bounds by his companion’s unexpected obstinacy, and the vexation of the night, ‘I *will* change it! Listen to me, you drab. Listen to me, who with six words, can strangle Sikes as surely as if I had his bull’s throat between my fingers now. If he comes back, and leaves the boy behind him; if he gets off free, and dead or alive, fails to restore him to me; murder him yourself if you would have him escape Jack Ketch. And do it the moment he sets foot in this room, or mind me, it will be too late!’

‘What is all this?’ cried the girl involuntarily.

‘What is it?’ pursued Fagin, mad with rage. ‘When the boy’s worth hundreds of pounds to me, am I to lose what chance threw me in the way of getting safely, through the whims of a drunken gang that I could whistle away the lives of! And me bound, too, to a born devil that only wants the will, and has the power to, to—’

Panting for breath, the old man stammered for a word; and in that instant checked the torrent of his wrath, and changed his whole demeanour. A moment before, his clenched hands had grasped the air; his eyes had dilated; and his face grown livid with passion; but now, he shrunk into a chair, and, cowering together, trembled with the apprehension of having himself disclosed some hidden villainy. After a short silence, he ventured to look round at his companion. He appeared somewhat reassured, on beholding her in the same listless attitude from which he had first roused her.

‘Nancy, dear!’ croaked the Jew, in his usual voice. ‘Did you mind me, dear?’

‘Don’t worry me now, Fagin!’ replied the girl, raising her head languidly. ‘If Bill has not done it this time, he will another. He has done many a good job for you, and will do many more when he can; and when he can’t he won’t; so no more about that.’

‘Regarding this boy, my dear?’ said the Jew, rubbing the palms of his hands nervously together.

‘The boy must take his chance with the rest,’ interrupted Nancy, hastily; ‘and I say again, I hope he is dead, and out of harm’s way, and out of yours,—that is, if Bill comes to no harm. And if Toby got clear off, Bill’s pretty sure to be safe; for Bill’s worth two of Toby any time.’

‘And about what I was saying, my dear?’ observed the Jew, keeping his glistening eye steadily upon her.

‘Your must say it all over again, if it’s anything you want me to do,’ rejoined Nancy; ‘and if it is, you had better wait till to-morrow. You put me up for a minute; but now I’m stupid again.’

Fagin put several other questions: all with the same drift of ascertaining whether the girl had profited by his unguarded hints; but, she answered them so readily, and was withal so utterly unmoved by his searching looks, that his original impression of her being more than a trifle in liquor, was confirmed. Nancy, indeed, was not exempt from a failing which was very common among the Jew’s female pupils; and in which, in their

tenderer years, they were rather encouraged than checked. Her disordered appearance, and a wholesale perfume of Geneva which pervaded the apartment, afforded strong confirmatory evidence of the justice of the Jew's supposition; and when, after indulging in the temporary display of violence above described, she subsided, first into dullness, and afterwards into a compound of feelings: under the influence of which she shed tears one minute, and in the next gave utterance to various exclamations of 'Never say die!' and divers calculations as to what might be the amount of the odds so long as a lady or gentleman was happy, Mr. Fagin, who had had considerable experience of such matters in his time, saw, with great satisfaction, that she was very far gone indeed.

Having eased his mind by this discovery; and having accomplished his twofold object of imparting to the girl what he had, that night, heard, and of ascertaining, with his own eyes, that Sikes had not returned, Mr. Fagin again turned his face homeward: leaving his young friend asleep, with her head upon the table.

It was within an hour of midnight. The weather being dark, and piercing cold, he had no great temptation to loiter. The sharp wind that scoured the streets, seemed to have cleared them of passengers, as of dust and mud, for few people were abroad, and they were to all appearance hastening fast home. It blew from the right quarter for the Jew, however, and straight before it he went: trembling, and shivering, as every fresh gust drove him rudely on his way.

He had reached the corner of his own street, and was already fumbling in his pocket for the door-key, when a dark figure emerged from a projecting entrance which lay in deep shadow, and, crossing the road, glided up to him unperceived.

'Fagin!' whispered a voice close to his ear.

'Ah!' said the Jew, turning quickly round, 'is that—'

'Yes!' interrupted the stranger. 'I have been lingering here these two hours. Where the devil have you been?'

'On your business, my dear,' replied the Jew, glancing uneasily at his companion, and slackening his pace as he spoke. 'On your business all night.'

'Oh, of course!' said the stranger, with a sneer. 'Well; and what's come of it?'

'Nothing good,' said the Jew.

'Nothing bad, I hope?' said the stranger, stopping short, and turning a startled look on his companion.

The Jew shook his head, and was about to reply, when the stranger, interrupting him, motioned to the house, before which they had by this time arrived: remarking, that he had better say what he had got to say, under cover: for his blood was chilled with standing about so long, and the wind blew through him.

Fagin looked as if he could have willingly excused himself from taking home a visitor at that unseasonable hour; and, indeed, muttered something about having no fire; but his companion repeating his request in a peremptory manner, he unlocked the door, and requested him to close it softly, while he got a light.

'It's as dark as the grave,' said the man, groping forward a few steps. 'Make haste!'

'Shut the door,' whispered Fagin from the end of the passage. As he spoke, it closed with a loud noise.

'That wasn't my doing,' said the other man, feeling his way. 'The wind blew it to, or it shut of its own accord: one or the other. Look sharp with the light, or I shall knock my brains out against something in this confounded hole.'

Fagin stealthily descended the kitchen stairs. After a short absence, he returned with a lighted candle, and the intelligence that Toby Crackit was asleep in the back room below, and that the boys were in the front one. Beckoning the man to follow him, he led the way upstairs.

'We can say the few words we've got to say in here, my dear,' said the Jew, throwing open a door on the first floor; 'and as there are holes in the shutters, and we never show lights to our neighbours, we'll set the candle on the stairs. There!'

With those words, the Jew, stooping down, placed the candle on an upper flight of stairs, exactly opposite to the room door. This done, he led the way into the apartment; which was destitute of all movables save a broken arm-chair, and an old couch or sofa without covering, which stood behind the door. Upon this piece of furniture, the stranger sat himself with the air of a weary man; and the Jew, drawing up the arm-chair opposite, they sat face to face. It was not quite dark; the door was partially open; and the candle outside, threw a feeble reflection on the opposite wall.

They conversed for some time in whispers. Though nothing of the conversation was distinguishable beyond a few disjointed words here and there, a listener might easily have perceived that Fagin appeared to be defending himself against some remarks of the stranger; and that the latter was in a state of considerable irritation. They might have been talking, thus, for a quarter of an hour or more, when Monks—by which name the Jew had designated the strange man several times in the course of their colloquy—said, raising his voice a little, 'I tell you again, it was badly planned. Why not have kept him here among the rest, and made a sneaking, snivelling pickpocket of him at once?'

'Only hear him!' exclaimed the Jew, shrugging his shoulders.

'Why, do you mean to say you couldn't have done it, if you had chosen?' demanded Monks, sternly. 'Haven't you done it, with other boys, scores of times? If you had had patience for a twelvemonth, at most, couldn't you have got him convicted, and sent safely out of the kingdom; perhaps for life?'

'Whose turn would that have served, my dear?' inquired the Jew humbly.

'Mine,' replied Monks.

'But not mine,' said the Jew, submissively. 'He might have become of use to me. When there are two parties to a bargain, it is only reasonable that the interests of both should be consulted; is it, my good friend?'

'What then?' demanded Monks.

'I saw it was not easy to train him to the business,' replied the Jew; 'he was not like other boys in the same circumstances.'

‘Curse him, no!’ muttered the man, ‘or he would have been a thief, long ago.’

‘I had no hold upon him to make him worse,’ pursued the Jew, anxiously watching the countenance of his companion. ‘His hand was not in. I had nothing to frighten him with; which we always must have in the beginning, or we labour in vain. What could I do? Send him out with the Dodger and Charley? We had enough of that, at first, my dear; I trembled for us all.’

‘*That* was not my doing,’ observed Monks.

‘No, no, my dear!’ renewed the Jew. ‘And I don’t quarrel with it now; because, if it had never happened, you might never have clapped eyes on the boy to notice him, and so led to the discovery that it was him you were looking for. Well! I got him back for you by means of the girl; and then *she* begins to favour him.’

‘Throttle the girl!’ said Monks, impatiently.

‘Why, we can’t afford to do that just now, my dear,’ replied the Jew, smiling; ‘and, besides, that sort of thing is not in our way; or, one of these days, I might be glad to have it done. I know what these girls are, Monks, well. As soon as the boy begins to harden, she’ll care no more for him, than for a block of wood. You want him made a thief. If he is alive, I can make him one from this time; and, if—if—’ said the Jew, drawing nearer to the other,—‘it’s not likely, mind,—but if the worst comes to the worst, and he is dead—’

‘It’s no fault of mine if he is!’ interposed the other man, with a look of terror, and clasping the Jew’s arm with trembling hands. ‘Mind that. Fagin! I had no hand in it. Anything but his death, I told you from the first. I won’t shed blood; it’s always found out, and haunts a man besides. If they shot him dead, I was not the cause; do you hear me? Fire this infernal den! What’s that?’

‘What!’ cried the Jew, grasping the coward round the body, with both arms, as he sprung to his feet. ‘Where?’

‘Yonder! replied the man, glaring at the opposite wall. ‘The shadow! I saw the shadow of a woman, in a cloak and bonnet, pass along the wainscot like a breath!’

The Jew released his hold, and they rushed tumultuously from the room. The candle, wasted by the draught, was standing where it had been placed. It showed them only the empty staircase, and their own white faces. They listened intently: a profound silence reigned throughout the house.

‘It’s your fancy,’ said the Jew, taking up the light and turning to his companion.

‘I’ll swear I saw it!’ replied Monks, trembling. ‘It was bending forward when I saw it first; and when I spoke, it darted away.’

The Jew glanced contemptuously at the pale face of his associate, and, telling him he could follow, if he pleased, ascended the stairs. They looked into all the rooms; they were cold, bare, and empty. They descended into the passage, and thence into the cellars below. The green damp hung upon the low walls; the tracks of the snail and slug glistened in the light of the candle; but all was still as death.

‘What do you think now?’ said the Jew, when they had regained the passage. ‘Besides ourselves, there’s not a creature in the house except Toby and the boys; and they’re safe enough. See here!’

As a proof of the fact, the Jew drew forth two keys from his pocket; and explained, that when he first went downstairs, he had locked them in, to prevent any intrusion on the conference.

This accumulated testimony effectually staggered Mr. Monks. His protestations had gradually become less and less vehement as they proceeded in their search without making any discovery; and, now, he gave vent to several very grim laughs, and confessed it could only have been his excited imagination. He declined any renewal of the conversation, however, for that night: suddenly remembering that it was past one o’clock. And so the amiable couple parted.

CHAPTER XXVII — ATONES FOR THE UNPOLITENESS OF A FORMER CHAPTER; WHICH DESERTED A LADY, MOST UNCEREMONIOUSLY

As it would be, by no means, seemly in a humble author to keep so mighty a personage as a beadle waiting, with his back to the fire, and the skirts of his coat gathered up under his arms, until such time as it might suit his pleasure to relieve him; and as it would still less become his station, or his gallantry to involve in the same neglect a lady on whom that beadle had looked with an eye of tenderness and affection, and in whose ear he had whispered sweet words, which, coming from such a quarter, might well thrill the bosom of maid or matron of whatsoever degree; the historian whose pen traces these words—trusting that he knows his place, and that he entertains a becoming reverence for those upon earth to whom high and important authority is delegated—hastens to pay them that respect which their position demands, and to treat them with all that duteous ceremony which their exalted rank, and (by consequence) great virtues, imperatively claim at his hands. Towards this end, indeed, he had purposed to introduce, in this place, a dissertation touching the divine right of beadles, and elucidative of the position, that a beadle can do no wrong: which could not fail to have been both pleasurable and profitable to the right-minded reader but which he is unfortunately compelled, by want of time and space, to postpone to some more convenient and fitting opportunity; on the arrival of which, he will be prepared to show, that a beadle properly constituted: that is to say, a parochial beadle, attached to a parochial workhouse, and attending in his official capacity the parochial church: is, in

right and virtue of his office, possessed of all the excellences and best qualities of humanity; and that to none of those excellences, can mere companies' beadles, or court-of-law beadles, or even chapel-of-ease beadles (save the last, and they in a very lowly and inferior degree), lay the remotest sustainable claim.

Mr. Bumble had re-counted the teaspoons, re-weighed the sugar-tongs, made a closer inspection of the milk-pot, and ascertained to a nicety the exact condition of the furniture, down to the very horse-hair seats of the chairs; and had repeated each process full half a dozen times; before he began to think that it was time for Mrs. Corney to return. Thinking begets thinking; as there were no sounds of Mrs. Corney's approach, it occured to Mr. Bumble that it would be an innocent and virtuous way of spending the time, if he were further to allay his curiousity by a cursory glance at the interior of Mrs. Corney's chest of drawers.

Having listened at the keyhole, to assure himself that nobody was approaching the chamber, Mr. Bumble, beginning at the bottom, proceeded to make himself acquainted with the contents of the three long drawers: which, being filled with various garments of good fashion and texture, carefully preserved between two layers of old newspapers, speckled with dried lavender: seemed to yield him exceeding satisfaction. Arriving, in course of time, at the right-hand corner drawer (in which was the key), and beholding therein a small padlocked box, which, being shaken, gave forth a pleasant sound, as of the chinking of coin, Mr. Bumble returned with a stately walk to the fireplace; and, resuming his old attitude, said, with a grave and determined air, 'I'll do it!' He followed up this remarkable declaration, by shaking his head in a waggish manner for ten minutes, as though he were remonstrating with himself for being such a pleasant dog; and then, he took a view of his legs in profile, with much seeming pleasure and interest.

He was still placidly engaged in this latter survey, when Mrs. Corney, hurrying into the room, threw herself, in a breathless state, on a chair by the fireside, and covering her eyes with one hand, placed the other over her heart, and gasped for breath.

'Mrs. Corney,' said Mr. Bumble, stooping over the matron, 'what is this, ma'am? Has anything happened, ma'am? Pray answer me: I'm on—on—' Mr. Bumble, in his alarm, could not immediately think of the word 'tenterhooks,' so he said 'broken bottles.'

'Oh, Mr. Bumble!' cried the lady, 'I have been so dreadfully put out!'

'Put out, ma'am!' exclaimed Mr. Bumble; 'who has dared to—? I know!' said Mr. Bumble, checking himself, with native majesty, 'this is them wicious paupers!'

'It's dreadful to think of!' said the lady, shuddering.

'Then *don't* think of it, ma'am,' rejoined Mr. Bumble.

'I can't help it,' whimpered the lady.

'Then take something, ma'am,' said Mr. Bumble soothingly. 'A little of the wine?'

'Not for the world!' replied Mrs. Corney. 'I couldn't,—oh! The top shelf in the right-hand corner—oh!' Uttering these words, the good lady pointed, distractedly, to the cupboard, and underwent a convulsion from internal spasms. Mr. Bumble rushed to the closet; and, snatching a pint green-glass bottle from the shelf thus incoherently indicated, filled a tea-cup with its contents, and held it to the lady's lips.

'I'm better now,' said Mrs. Corney, falling back, after drinking half of it.

Mr. Bumble raised his eyes piously to the ceiling in thankfulness; and, bringing them down again to the brim of the cup, lifted it to his nose.

'Peppermint,' exclaimed Mrs. Corney, in a faint voice, smiling gently on the beadle as she spoke. 'Try it! There's a little—a little something else in it.'

Mr. Bumble tasted the medicine with a doubtful look; smacked his lips; took another taste; and put the cup down empty.

'It's very comforting,' said Mrs. Corney.

'Very much so indeed, ma'am,' said the beadle. As he spoke, he drew a chair beside the matron, and tenderly inquired what had happened to distress her.

'Nothing,' replied Mrs. Corney. 'I am a foolish, excitable, weak creetur.'

'Not weak, ma'am,' retorted Mr. Bumble, drawing his chair a little closer. 'Are you a weak creetur, Mrs. Corney?'

'We are all weak creeturs,' said Mrs. Corney, laying down a general principle.

'So we are,' said the beadle.

Nothing was said on either side, for a minute or two afterwards. By the expiration of that time, Mr. Bumble had illustrated the position by removing his left arm from the back of Mrs. Corney's chair, where it had previously rested, to Mrs. Corney's apron-string, round which it gradually became entwined.

'We are all weak creeturs,' said Mr. Bumble.

Mrs. Corney sighed.

'Don't sigh, Mrs. Corney,' said Mr. Bumble.

'I can't help it,' said Mrs. Corney. And she sighed again.

'This is a very comfortable room, ma'am,' said Mr. Bumble looking round. 'Another room, and this, ma'am, would be a complete thing.'

'It would be too much for one,' murmured the lady.

'But not for two, ma'am,' rejoined Mr. Bumble, in soft accents. 'Eh, Mrs. Corney?'

Mrs. Corney drooped her head, when the beadle said this; the beadle drooped his, to get a view of Mrs. Corney's face. Mrs. Corney, with great propriety, turned her head away, and released her hand to get at her pocket-handkerchief; but insensibly replaced it in that of Mr. Bumble.

'The board allows you coals, don't they, Mrs. Corney?' inquired the beadle, affectionately pressing her hand.

'And candles,' replied Mrs. Corney, slightly returning the pressure.

‘Coals, candles, and house-rent free,’ said Mr. Bumble. ‘Oh, Mrs. Corney, what an Angel you are!’

The lady was not proof against this burst of feeling. She sank into Mr. Bumble’s arms; and that gentleman in his agitation, imprinted a passionate kiss upon her chaste nose.

‘Such porochial perfection!’ exclaimed Mr. Bumble, rapturously. ‘You know that Mr. Stout is worse to-night, my fascinator?’

‘Yes,’ replied Mrs. Corney, bashfully.

‘He can’t live a week, the doctor says,’ pursued Mr. Bumble. ‘He is the master of this establishment; his death will cause a wacancy; that wacancy must be filled up. Oh, Mrs. Corney, what a prospect this opens! What a opportunity for a jining of hearts and housekeepings!’

Mrs. Corney sobbed.

‘The little word?’ said Mr. Bumble, bending over the bashful beauty. ‘The one little, little, little word, my blessed Corney?’

‘Ye—ye—yes!’ sighed out the matron.

‘One more,’ pursued the beadle; ‘compose your darling feelings for only one more. When is it to come off?’

Mrs. Corney twice essayed to speak: and twice failed. At length summoning up courage, she threw her arms around Mr. Bumble’s neck, and said, it might be as soon as ever he pleased, and that he was ‘a irresistible duck.’

Matters being thus amicably and satisfactorily arranged, the contract was solemnly ratified in another teacupful of the peppermint mixture; which was rendered the more necessary, by the flutter and agitation of the lady’s spirits. While it was being disposed of, she acquainted Mr. Bumble with the old woman’s decease.

‘Very good,’ said that gentleman, sipping his peppermint; ‘I’ll call at Sowerberry’s as I go home, and tell him to send to-morrow morning. Was it that as frightened you, love?’

‘It wasn’t anything particular, dear,’ said the lady evasively.

‘It must have been something, love,’ urged Mr. Bumble. ‘Won’t you tell your own B.?’

‘Not now,’ rejoined the lady; ‘one of these days. After we’re married, dear.’

‘After we’re married!’ exclaimed Mr. Bumble. ‘It wasn’t any impudence from any of them male paupers as —’

‘No, no, love!’ interposed the lady, hastily.

‘If I thought it was,’ continued Mr. Bumble; ‘if I thought as any one of ‘em had dared to lift his wulgar eyes to that lovely countenance—’

‘They wouldn’t have dared to do it, love,’ responded the lady.

‘They had better not!’ said Mr. Bumble, clenching his fist. ‘Let me see any man, porochial or extra-porochial, as would presume to do it; and I can tell him that he wouldn’t do it a second time!’

Unembellished by any violence of gesticulation, this might have seemed no very high compliment to the lady’s charms; but, as Mr. Bumble accompanied the threat with many warlike gestures, she was much touched with this proof of his devotion, and protested, with great admiration, that he was indeed a dove.

The dove then turned up his coat-collar, and put on his cocked hat; and, having exchanged a long and affectionate embrace with his future partner, once again braved the cold wind of the night: merely pausing, for a few minutes, in the male paupers’ ward, to abuse them a little, with the view of satisfying himself that he could fill the office of workhouse-master with needful acerbity. Assured of his qualifications, Mr. Bumble left the building with a light heart, and bright visions of his future promotion: which served to occupy his mind until he reached the shop of the undertaker.

Now, Mr. and Mrs. Sowerberry having gone out to tea and supper: and Noah Claypole not being at any time disposed to take upon himself a greater amount of physical exertion than is necessary to a convenient performance of the two functions of eating and drinking, the shop was not closed, although it was past the usual hour of shutting-up. Mr. Bumble tapped with his cane on the counter several times; but, attracting no attention, and beholding a light shining through the glass-window of the little parlour at the back of the shop, he made bold to peep in and see what was going forward; and when he saw what was going forward, he was not a little surprised.

The cloth was laid for supper; the table was covered with bread and butter, plates and glasses; a porter-pot and a wine-bottle. At the upper end of the table, Mr. Noah Claypole lolled negligently in an easy-chair, with his legs thrown over one of the arms: an open clasp-knife in one hand, and a mass of buttered bread in the other. Close beside him stood Charlotte, opening oysters from a barrel: which Mr. Claypole condescended to swallow, with remarkable avidity. A more than ordinary redness in the region of the young gentleman’s nose, and a kind of fixed wink in his right eye, denoted that he was in a slight degree intoxicated; these symptoms were confirmed by the intense relish with which he took his oysters, for which nothing but a strong appreciation of their cooling properties, in cases of internal fever, could have sufficiently accounted.

‘Here’s a delicious fat one, Noah, dear!’ said Charlotte; ‘try him, do; only this one.’

‘What a delicious thing is a oyster!’ remarked Mr. Claypole, after he had swallowed it. ‘What a pity it is, a number of ‘em should ever make you feel uncomfortable; isn’t it, Charlotte?’

‘It’s quite a cruelty,’ said Charlotte.

‘So it is,’ acquiesced Mr. Claypole. ‘An’t yer fond of oysters?’

‘Not overmuch,’ replied Charlotte. ‘I like to see you eat ‘em, Noah dear, better than eating ‘em myself.’

‘Lor!’ said Noah, reflectively; ‘how queer!’

‘Have another,’ said Charlotte. ‘Here’s one with such a beautiful, delicate beard!’

‘I can’t manage any more,’ said Noah. ‘I’m very sorry. Come here, Charlotte, and I’ll kiss yer.’

‘What!’ said Mr. Bumble, bursting into the room. ‘Say that again, sir.’

Charlotte uttered a scream, and hid her face in her apron. Mr. Claypole, without making any further change in his position than suffering his legs to reach the ground, gazed at the beadle in drunken terror.

‘Say it again, you wile, owdacious fellow!’ said Mr. Bumble. ‘How dare you mention such a thing, sir? And how dare you encourage him, you insolent minx? Kiss her!’ exclaimed Mr. Bumble, in strong indignation. ‘Faugh!’

‘I didn’t mean to do it!’ said Noah, blubbering. ‘She’s always a-kissing of me, whether I like it, or not.’

‘Oh, Noah,’ cried Charlotte, reproachfully.

‘Yer are; yer know yer are!’ retorted Noah. ‘She’s always a-doin’ of it, Mr. Bumble, sir; she chucks me under the chin, please, sir; and makes all manner of love!’

‘Silence!’ cried Mr. Bumble, sternly. ‘Take yourself downstairs, ma’am. Noah, you shut up the shop; say another word till your master comes home, at your peril; and, when he does come home, tell him that Mr. Bumble said he was to send a old woman’s shell after breakfast to-morrow morning. Do you hear sir? Kissing!’ cried Mr. Bumble, holding up his hands. ‘The sin and wickedness of the lower orders in this porochial district is frightful! If Parliament don’t take their abominable courses under consideration, this country’s ruined, and the character of the peasantry gone for ever!’ With these words, the beadle strode, with a lofty and gloomy air, from the undertaker’s premises.

And now that we have accompanied him so far on his road home, and have made all necessary preparations for the old woman’s funeral, let us set on foot a few inquires after young Oliver Twist, and ascertain whether he be still lying in the ditch where Toby Crackit left him.

CHAPTER XXVIII — LOOKS AFTER OLIVER, AND PROCEEDS WITH HIS ADVENTURES

‘Wolves tear your throats!’ muttered Sikes, grinding his teeth. ‘I wish I was among some of you; you’d howl the hoarser for it.’

As Sikes growled forth this imprecation, with the most desperate ferocity that his desperate nature was capable of, he rested the body of the wounded boy across his bended knee; and turned his head, for an instant, to look back at his pursuers.

There was little to be made out, in the mist and darkness; but the loud shouting of men vibrated through the air, and the barking of the neighbouring dogs, roused by the sound of the alarm bell, resounded in every direction.

‘Stop, you white-livered hound!’ cried the robber, shouting after Toby Crackit, who, making the best use of his long legs, was already ahead. ‘Stop!’

The repetition of the word, brought Toby to a dead stand-still. For he was not quite satisfied that he was beyond the range of pistol-shot; and Sikes was in no mood to be played with.

‘Bear a hand with the boy,’ cried Sikes, beckoning furiously to his confederate. ‘Come back!’

Toby made a show of returning; but ventured, in a low voice, broken for want of breath, to intimate considerable reluctance as he came slowly along.

‘Quicker!’ cried Sikes, laying the boy in a dry ditch at his feet, and drawing a pistol from his pocket. ‘Don’t play booty with me.’

At this moment the noise grew louder. Sikes, again looking round, could discern that the men who had given chase were already climbing the gate of the field in which he stood; and that a couple of dogs were some paces in advance of them.

‘It’s all up, Bill!’ cried Toby; ‘drop the kid, and show ‘em your heels.’ With this parting advice, Mr. Crackit, preferring the chance of being shot by his friend, to the certainty of being taken by his enemies, fairly turned tail, and darted off at full speed. Sikes clenched his teeth; took one look around; threw over the prostrate form of Oliver, the cape in which he had been hurriedly muffled; ran along the front of the hedge, as if to distract the attention of those behind, from the spot where the boy lay; paused, for a second, before another hedge which met it at right angles; and whirling his pistol high into the air, cleared it at a bound, and was gone.

‘Ho, ho, there!’ cried a tremulous voice in the rear. ‘Pincher! Neptune! Come here, come here!’

The dogs, who, in common with their masters, seemed to have no particular relish for the sport in which they were engaged, readily answered to the command. Three men, who had by this time advanced some distance into the field, stopped to take counsel together.

‘My advice, or, leastways, I should say, my *orders*, is,’ said the fattest man of the party, ‘that we ‘mediately go home again.’

‘I am agreeable to anything which is agreeable to Mr. Giles,’ said a shorter man; who was by no means of a slim figure, and who was very pale in the face, and very polite: as frightened men frequently are.

‘I shouldn’t wish to appear ill-mannered, gentlemen,’ said the third, who had called the dogs back, ‘Mr. Giles ought to know.’

‘Certainly,’ replied the shorter man; ‘and whatever Mr. Giles says, it isn’t our place to contradict him. No, no, I know my sitiwation! Thank my stars, I know my sitiwation.’ To tell the truth, the little man *did* seem to know his situation, and to know perfectly well that it was by no means a desirable one; for his teeth chattered in his head as he spoke.

‘You are afraid, Brittles,’ said Mr. Giles.

‘I an’t,’ said Brittles.

‘You are,’ said Giles.

‘You’re a falsehood, Mr. Giles,’ said Brittles.

‘You’re a lie, Brittles,’ said Mr. Giles.

Now, these four retorts arose from Mr. Giles’s taunt; and Mr. Giles’s taunt had arisen from his indignation at having the responsibility of going home again, imposed upon himself under cover of a compliment. The third man brought the dispute to a close, most philosophically.

‘I’ll tell you what it is, gentlemen,’ said he, ‘we’re all afraid.’

‘Speak for yourself, sir,’ said Mr. Giles, who was the palest of the party.

‘So I do,’ replied the man. ‘It’s natural and proper to be afraid, under such circumstances. I am.’

‘So am I,’ said Brittles; ‘only there’s no call to tell a man he is, so bounceably.’

These frank admissions softened Mr. Giles, who at once owned that *he* was afraid; upon which, they all three faced about, and ran back again with the completest unanimity, until Mr. Giles (who had the shortest wind of the party, as was encumbered with a pitchfork) most handsomely insisted on stopping, to make an apology for his hastiness of speech.

‘But it’s wonderful,’ said Mr. Giles, when he had explained, ‘what a man will do, when his blood is up. I should have committed murder—I know I should—if we’d caught one of them rascals.’

As the other two were impressed with a similar presentiment; and as their blood, like his, had all gone down again; some speculation ensued upon the cause of this sudden change in their temperament.

‘I know what it was,’ said Mr. Giles; ‘it was the gate.’

‘I shouldn’t wonder if it was,’ exclaimed Brittles, catching at the idea.

‘You may depend upon it,’ said Giles, ‘that that gate stopped the flow of the excitement. I felt all mine suddenly going away, as I was climbing over it.’

By a remarkable coincidence, the other two had been visited with the same unpleasant sensation at that precise moment. It was quite obvious, therefore, that it was the gate; especially as there was no doubt regarding the time at which the change had taken place, because all three remembered that they had come in sight of the robbers at the instant of its occurance.

This dialogue was held between the two men who had surprised the burglars, and a travelling tinker who had been sleeping in an outhouse, and who had been roused, together with his two mongrel curs, to join in the pursuit. Mr. Giles acted in the double capacity of butler and steward to the old lady of the mansion; Brittles was a lad of all-work: who, having entered her service a mere child, was treated as a promising young boy still, though he was something past thirty.

Encouraging each other with such converse as this; but, keeping very close together, notwithstanding, and looking apprehensively round, whenever a fresh gust rattled through the boughs; the three men hurried back to a tree, behind which they had left their lantern, lest its light should inform the thieves in what direction to fire. Catching up the light, they made the best of their way home, at a good round trot; and long after their dusky forms had ceased to be discernible, the light might have been seen twinkling and dancing in the distance, like some exhalation of the damp and gloomy atmosphere through which it was swiftly borne.

The air grew colder, as day came slowly on; and the mist rolled along the ground like a dense cloud of smoke. The grass was wet; the pathways, and low places, were all mire and water; the damp breath of an unwholesome wind went languidly by, with a hollow moaning. Still, Oliver lay motionless and insensible on the spot where Sikes had left him.

Morning drew on apace. The air become more sharp and piercing, as its first dull hue—the death of night, rather than the birth of day—glimmered faintly in the sky. The objects which had looked dim and terrible in the darkness, grew more and more defined, and gradually resolved into their familiar shapes. The rain came down, thick and fast, and pattered noisily among the leafless bushes. But, Oliver felt it not, as it beat against him; for he still lay stretched, helpless and unconscious, on his bed of clay.

At length, a low cry of pain broke the stillness that prevailed; and uttering it, the boy awoke. His left arm, rudely bandaged in a shawl, hung heavy and useless at his side; the bandage was saturated with blood. He was so weak, that he could scarcely raise himself into a sitting posture; when he had done so, he looked feebly round for help, and groaned with pain. Trembling in every joint, from cold and exhaustion, he made an effort to stand upright; but, shuddering from head to foot, fell prostrate on the ground.

After a short return of the stupor in which he had been so long plunged, Oliver: urged by a creeping sickness at his heart, which seemed to warn him that if he lay there, he must surely die: got upon his feet, and essayed to walk. His head was dizzy, and he staggered to and fro like a drunken man. But he kept up, nevertheless, and, with his head drooping languidly on his breast, went stumbling onward, he knew not whither.

And now, hosts of bewildering and confused ideas came crowding on his mind. He seemed to be still walking between Sikes and Crackit, who were angrily disputing—for the very words they said, sounded in his ears; and when he caught his own attention, as it were, by making some violent effort to save himself from falling, he found that he was talking to them. Then, he was alone with Sikes, plodding on as on the previous day; and as shadowy people passed them, he felt the robber’s grasp upon his wrist. Suddenly, he started back at the report of firearms; there rose into the air, loud cries and shouts; lights gleamed before his eyes; all was noise and tumult, as some unseen hand bore him hurriedly away. Through all these rapid visions, there ran an undefined, uneasy consciousness of pain, which wearied and tormented him incessantly.

Thus he staggered on, creeping, almost mechanically, between the bars of gates, or through hedge-gaps as they came in his way, until he reached a road. Here the rain began to fall so heavily, that it roused him.

He looked about, and saw that at no great distance there was a house, which perhaps he could reach. Pitying his condition, they might have compassion on him; and if they did not, it would be better, he thought, to die near human beings, than in the lonely open fields. He summoned up all his strength for one last trial, and bent his faltering steps towards it.

As he drew nearer to this house, a feeling come over him that he had seen it before. He remembered nothing of its details; but the shape and aspect of the building seemed familiar to him.

That garden wall! On the grass inside, he had fallen on his knees last night, and prayed the two men’s mercy. It was the very house they had attempted to rob.

Oliver felt such fear come over him when he recognised the place, that, for the instant, he forgot the agony of his wound, and thought only of flight. Flight! He could scarcely stand: and if he were in full possession of all the best powers of his slight and youthful frame, whither could he fly? He pushed against the garden-gate; it was unlocked, and swung open on its hinges. He tottered across the lawn; climbed the steps; knocked faintly at the door; and, his whole strength failing him, sunk down against one of the pillars of the little portico.

It happened that about this time, Mr. Giles, Brittles, and the tinker, were recruiting themselves, after the fatigues and terrors of the night, with tea and sundries, in the kitchen. Not that it was Mr. Giles’s habit to admit to too great familiarity the humbler servants: towards whom it was rather his wont to deport himself with a lofty affability, which, while it gratified, could not fail to remind them of his superior position in society. But, death, fires, and burglary, make all men equals; so Mr. Giles sat with his legs stretched out before the kitchen fender, leaning his left arm on the table, while, with his right, he illustrated a circumstantial and minute account of the robbery, to which his bearers (but especially the cook and housemaid, who were of the party) listened with breathless interest.

‘It was about half-past two,’ said Mr. Giles, ‘or I wouldn’t swear that it mightn’t have been a little nearer three, when I woke up, and, turning round in my bed, as it might be so, (here Mr. Giles turned round in his chair, and pulled the corner of the table-cloth over him to imitate bed-clothes,) I fancied I heerd a noise.’

At this point of the narrative the cook turned pale, and asked the housemaid to shut the door: who asked Brittles, who asked the tinker, who pretended not to hear.

‘—Heerd a noise,’ continued Mr. Giles. ‘I says, at first, “This is illusion”; and was composing myself off to sleep, when I heerd the noise again, distinct.’

‘What sort of a noise?’ asked the cook.

‘A kind of a busting noise,’ replied Mr. Giles, looking round him.

‘More like the noise of powdering a iron bar on a nutmeg-grater,’ suggested Brittles.

‘It was, when *you* heerd it, sir,’ rejoined Mr. Giles; ‘but, at this time, it had a busting sound. I turned down the clothes’; continued Giles, rolling back the table-cloth, ‘sat up in bed; and listened.’

The cook and housemaid simultaneously ejaculated ‘Lor!’ and drew their chairs closer together.

‘I heerd it now, quite apparent,’ resumed Mr. Giles. ‘“Somebody,” I says, “is forcing of a door, or window; what’s to be done? I’ll call up that poor lad, Brittles, and save him from being murdered in his bed; or his throat,” I says, “may be cut from his right ear to his left, without his ever knowing it.”’

Here, all eyes were turned upon Brittles, who fixed his upon the speaker, and stared at him, with his mouth wide open, and his face expressive of the most unmitigated horror.

‘I tossed off the clothes,’ said Giles, throwing away the table-cloth, and looking very hard at the cook and housemaid, ‘got softly out of bed; drew on a pair of—’

‘Ladies present, Mr. Giles,’ murmured the tinker.

‘—Of *shoes*, sir,’ said Giles, turning upon him, and laying great emphasis on the word; ‘seized the loaded pistol that always goes upstairs with the plate-basket; and walked on tiptoes to his room. “Brittles,” I says, when I had woke him, “don’t be frightened!”’

‘So you did,’ observed Brittles, in a low voice.

‘“We’re dead men, I think, Brittles,” I says,’ continued Giles; ‘“but don’t be frightened.”’

‘*Was* he frightened?’ asked the cook.

‘Not a bit of it,’ replied Mr. Giles. ‘He was as firm—ah! pretty near as firm as I was.’

‘I should have died at once, I’m sure, if it had been me,’ observed the housemaid.

‘You’re a woman,’ retorted Brittles, plucking up a little.

‘Brittles is right,’ said Mr. Giles, nodding his head, approvingly; ‘from a woman, nothing else was to be expected. We, being men, took a dark lantern that was standing on Brittle’s hob, and groped our way downstairs in the pitch dark,—as it might be so.’

Mr. Giles had risen from his seat, and taken two steps with his eyes shut, to accompany his description with appropriate action, when he started violently, in common with the rest of the company, and hurried back to his chair. The cook and housemaid screamed.

‘It was a knock,’ said Mr. Giles, assuming perfect serenity. ‘Open the door, somebody.’

Nobody moved.

‘It seems a strange sort of a thing, a knock coming at such a time in the morning,’ said Mr. Giles, surveying the pale faces which surrounded him, and looking very blank himself; ‘but the door must be opened. Do you hear, somebody?’

Mr. Giles, as he spoke, looked at Brittles; but that young man, being naturally modest, probably considered himself nobody, and so held that the inquiry could not have any application to him; at all events, he tendered no reply. Mr. Giles directed an appealing glance at the tinker; but he had suddenly fallen asleep. The women were out of the question.

‘If Brittles would rather open the door, in the presence of witnesses,’ said Mr. Giles, after a short silence, ‘I am ready to make one.’

‘So am I,’ said the tinker, waking up, as suddenly as he had fallen asleep.

Brittles capitulated on these terms; and the party being somewhat re-assured by the discovery (made on throwing open the shutters) that it was now broad day, took their way upstairs; with the dogs in front. The two women, who were afraid to stay below, brought up the rear. By the advice of Mr. Giles, they all talked very loud, to warn any evil-disposed person outside, that they were strong in numbers; and by a master-stoke of policy, originating in the brain of the same ingenious gentleman, the dogs’ tails were well pinched, in the hall, to make them bark savagely.

These precautions having been taken, Mr. Giles held on fast by the tinker’s arm (to prevent his running away, as he pleasantly said), and gave the word of command to open the door. Brittles obeyed; the group, peeping timorously over each other’s shoulders, beheld no more formidable object than poor little Oliver Twist, speechless and exhausted, who raised his heavy eyes, and mutely solicited their compassion.

‘A boy!’ exclaimed Mr. Giles, valiantly, pushing the tinker into the background. ‘What’s the matter with the—eh?—Why—Brittles—look here—don’t you know?’

Brittles, who had got behind the door to open it, no sooner saw Oliver, than he uttered a loud cry. Mr. Giles, seizing the boy by one leg and one arm (fortunately not the broken limb) lugged him straight into the hall, and deposited him at full length on the floor thereof.

‘Here he is!’ bawled Giles, calling in a state of great excitement, up the staircase; ‘here’s one of the thieves, ma’am! Here’s a thief, miss! Wounded, miss! I shot him, miss; and Brittles held the light.’

‘—In a lantern, miss,’ cried Brittles, applying one hand to the side of his mouth, so that his voice might travel the better.

The two women-servants ran upstairs to carry the intelligence that Mr. Giles had captured a robber; and the tinker busied himself in endeavouring to restore Oliver, lest he should die before he could be hanged. In the midst of all this noise and commotion, there was heard a sweet female voice, which quelled it in an instant.

‘Giles!’ whispered the voice from the stair-head.

‘I’m here, miss,’ replied Mr. Giles. ‘Don’t be frightened, miss; I ain’t much injured. He didn’t make a very desperate resistance, miss! I was soon too many for him.’

‘Hush!’ replied the young lady; ‘you frighten my aunt as much as the thieves did. Is the poor creature much hurt?’

‘Wounded desperate, miss,’ replied Giles, with indescribable complacency.

‘He looks as if he was a-going, miss,’ bawled Brittles, in the same manner as before. ‘Wouldn’t you like to come and look at him, miss, in case he should?’

‘Hush, pray; there’s a good man!’ rejoined the lady. ‘Wait quietly only one instant, while I speak to aunt.’

With a footstep as soft and gentle as the voice, the speaker tripped away. She soon returned, with the direction that the wounded person was to be carried, carefully, upstairs to Mr. Giles’s room; and that Brittles was to saddle the pony and betake himself instantly to Chertsey: from which place, he was to despatch, with all speed, a constable and doctor.

‘But won’t you take one look at him, first, miss?’ asked Mr. Giles, with as much pride as if Oliver were some bird of rare plumage, that he had skilfully brought down. ‘Not one little peep, miss?’

‘Not now, for the world,’ replied the young lady. ‘Poor fellow! Oh! treat him kindly, Giles for my sake!’

The old servant looked up at the speaker, as she turned away, with a glance as proud and admiring as if she had been his own child. Then, bending over Oliver, he helped to carry him upstairs, with the care and solicitude of a woman.

CHAPTER XXIX — HAS AN INTRODUCTORY ACCOUNT OF THE INMATES OF THE HOUSE, TO WHICH OLIVER RESORTED

In a handsome room: though its furniture had rather the air of old-fashioned comfort, than of modern elegance: there sat two ladies at a well-spread breakfast-table. Mr. Giles, dressed with scrupulous care in a full suit of black, was in attendance upon them. He had taken his station some half-way between the side-board and the breakfast-table; and, with his body drawn up to its full height, his head thrown back, and inclined the merest trifle on one side, his left leg advanced, and his right hand thrust into his waist-coat, while his left hung down by his side, grasping a waiter, looked like one who laboured under a very agreeable sense of his own merits and importance.

Of the two ladies, one was well advanced in years; but the high-backed oaken chair in which she sat, was not more upright than she. Dressed with the utmost nicety and precision, in a quaint mixture of by-gone costume, with some slight concessions to the prevailing taste, which rather served to point the old style pleasantly than to impair its effect, she sat, in a stately manner, with her hands folded on the table before her. Her eyes (and age had dimmed but little of their brightness) were attentively upon her young companion.

The younger lady was in the lovely bloom and spring-time of womanhood; at that age, when, if ever angels be for God's good purposes enthroned in mortal forms, they may be, without impiety, supposed to abide in such as hers.

She was not past seventeen. Cast in so slight and exquisite a mould; so mild and gentle; so pure and beautiful; that earth seemed not her element, nor its rough creatures her fit companions. The very intelligence that shone in her deep blue eye, and was stamped upon her noble head, seemed scarcely of her age, or of the world; and yet the changing expression of sweetness and good humour, the thousand lights that played about the face, and left no shadow there; above all, the smile, the cheerful, happy smile, were made for Home, and fireside peace and happiness.

She was busily engaged in the little offices of the table. Chancing to raise her eyes as the elder lady was regarding her, she playfully put back her hair, which was simply braided on her forehead; and threw into her beaming look, such an expression of affection and artless loveliness, that blessed spirits might have smiled to look upon her.

'And Brittles has been gone upwards of an hour, has he?' asked the old lady, after a pause.

'An hour and twelve minutes, ma'am,' replied Mr. Giles, referring to a silver watch, which he drew forth by a black ribbon.

'He is always slow,' remarked the old lady.

'Brittles always was a slow boy, ma'am,' replied the attendant. And seeing, by the bye, that Brittles had been a slow boy for upwards of thirty years, there appeared no great probability of his ever being a fast one.

'He gets worse instead of better, I think,' said the elder lady.

'It is very inexcusable in him if he stops to play with any other boys,' said the young lady, smiling.

Mr. Giles was apparently considering the propriety of indulging in a respectful smile himself, when a gig drove up to the garden-gate: out of which there jumped a fat gentleman, who ran straight up to the door: and who, getting quickly into the house by some mysterious process, burst into the room, and nearly overturned Mr. Giles and the breakfast-table together.

'I never heard of such a thing!' exclaimed the fat gentleman. 'My dear Mrs. Maylie—bless my soul—in the silence of the night, too—I *never* heard of such a thing!'

With these expressions of condolence, the fat gentleman shook hands with both ladies, and drawing up a chair, inquired how they found themselves.

'You ought to be dead; positively dead with the fright,' said the fat gentleman. 'Why didn't you send? Bless me, my man should have come in a minute; and so would I; and my assistant would have been delighted; or anybody, I'm sure, under such circumstances. Dear, dear! So unexpected! In the silence of the night, too!'

The doctor seemed expecially troubled by the fact of the robbery having been unexpected, and attempted in the night-time; as if it were the established custom of gentlemen in the housebreaking way to transact business at noon, and to make an appointment, by post, a day or two previous.

'And you, Miss Rose,' said the doctor, turning to the young lady, 'I—'

'Oh! very much so, indeed,' said Rose, interrupting him; 'but there is a poor creature upstairs, whom aunt wishes you to see.'

'Ah! to be sure,' replied the doctor, 'so there is. That was your handiwork, Giles, I understand.'

Mr. Giles, who had been feverishly putting the tea-cups to rights, blushed very red, and said that he had had that honour.

'Honour, eh?' said the doctor; 'well, I don't know; perhaps it's as honourable to hit a thief in a back kitchen, as to hit your man at twelve paces. Fancy that he fired in the air, and you've fought a duel, Giles.'

Mr. Giles, who thought this light treatment of the matter an unjust attempt at diminishing his glory, answered respectfully, that it was not for the like of him to judge about that; but he rather thought it was no joke to the opposite party.

'Gad, that's true!' said the doctor. 'Where is he? Show me the way. I'll look in again, as I come down, Mrs. Maylie. That's the little window that he got in at, eh? Well, I couldn't have believed it!'

Talking all the way, he followed Mr. Giles upstairs; and while he is going upstairs, the reader may be informed, that Mr. Losberne, a surgeon in the neighbourhood, known through a circuit of ten miles round as 'the doctor,' had grown fat, more from good-humour than from good living: and was as kind and hearty, and withal as eccentric an old bachelor, as will be found in five times that space, by any explorer alive.

The doctor was absent, much longer than either he or the ladies had anticipated. A large flat box was fetched out of the gig; and a bedroom bell was rung very often; and the servants ran up and down stairs perpetually; from which tokens it was justly concluded that something important was going on above. At length he returned; and in reply to an anxious inquiry after his patient; looked very mysterious, and closed the door, carefully.

'This is a very extraordinary thing, Mrs. Maylie,' said the doctor, standing with his back to the door, as if to keep it shut.

'He is not in danger, I hope?' said the old lady.

'Why, that would *not* be an extraordinary thing, under the circumstances,' replied the doctor; 'though I don't think he is. Have you seen the thief?'

'No,' rejoined the old lady.

'Nor heard anything about him?'

'No.'

'I beg your pardon, ma'am, interposed Mr. Giles; 'but I was going to tell you about him when Doctor Losberne came in.'

The fact was, that Mr. Giles had not, at first, been able to bring his mind to the avowal, that he had only shot a boy. Such commendations had been bestowed upon his bravery, that he could not, for the life of him, help postponing the explanation for a few delicious minutes; during which he had flourished, in the very zenith of a brief reputation for undaunted courage.

'Rose wished to see the man,' said Mrs. Maylie, 'but I wouldn't hear of it.'

'Humph!' rejoined the doctor. 'There is nothing very alarming in his appearance. Have you any objection to see him in my presence?'

'If it be necessary,' replied the old lady, 'certainly not.'

'Then I think it is necessary,' said the doctor; 'at all events, I am quite sure that you would deeply regret not having done so, if you postponed it. He is perfectly quiet and comfortable now. Allow me—Miss Rose, will you permit me? Not the slightest fear, I pledge you my honour!'

CHAPTER XXX — RELATES WHAT OLIVER'S NEW VISITORS THOUGHT OF HIM

With many loquacious assurances that they would be agreeably surprised in the aspect of the criminal, the doctor drew the young lady's arm through one of his; and offering his disengaged hand to Mrs. Maylie, led them, with much ceremony and stateliness, upstairs.

'Now,' said the doctor, in a whisper, as he softly turned the handle of a bedroom-door, 'let us hear what you think of him. He has not been shaved very recently, but he don't look at all ferocious notwithstanding. Stop, though! Let me first see that he is in visiting order.'

Stepping before them, he looked into the room. Motioning them to advance, he closed the door when they had entered; and gently drew back the curtains of the bed. Upon it, in lieu of the dogged, black-visaged ruffian they had expected to behold, there lay a mere child: worn with pain and exhaustion, and sunk into a deep sleep. His wounded arm, bound and splintered up, was crossed upon his breast; his head reclined upon the other arm, which was half hidden by his long hair, as it streamed over the pillow.

The honest gentleman held the curtain in his hand, and looked on, for a minute or so, in silence. Whilst he was watching the patient thus, the younger lady glided softly past, and seating herself in a chair by the bedside, gathered Oliver's hair from his face. As she stooped over him, her tears fell upon his forehead.

The boy stirred, and smiled in his sleep, as though these marks of pity and compassion had awakened some pleasant dream of a love and affection he had never known. Thus, a strain of gentle music, or the rippling of water in a silent place, or the odour of a flower, or the mention of a familiar word, will sometimes call up sudden dim remembrances of scenes that never were, in this life; which vanish like a breath; which some brief memory of a happier existence, long gone by, would seem to have awakened; which no voluntary exertion of the mind can ever recall.

'What can this mean?' exclaimed the elder lady. 'This poor child can never have been the pupil of robbers!'

'Vice,' said the surgeon, replacing the curtain, 'takes up her abode in many temples; and who can say that a fair outside shell not enshrine her?'

'But at so early an age!' urged Rose.

'My dear young lady,' rejoined the surgeon, mournfully shaking his head; 'crime, like death, is not confined to the old and withered alone. The youngest and fairest are too often its chosen victims.'

'But, can you—oh! can you really believe that this delicate boy has been the voluntary associate of the worst outcasts of society?' said Rose.

The surgeon shook his head, in a manner which intimated that he feared it was very possible; and observing that they might disturb the patient, led the way into an adjoining apartment.

'But even if he has been wicked,' pursued Rose, 'think how young he is; think that he may never have known a mother's love, or the comfort of a home; that ill-usage and blows, or the want of bread, may have

driven him to herd with men who have forced him to guilt. Aunt, dear aunt, for mercy's sake, think of this, before you let them drag this sick child to a prison, which in any case must be the grave of all his chances of amendment. Oh! as you love me, and know that I have never felt the want of parents in your goodness and affection, but that I might have done so, and might have been equally helpless and unprotected with this poor child, have pity upon him before it is too late!'

'My dear love,' said the elder lady, as she folded the weeping girl to her bosom, 'do you think I would harm a hair of his head?'

'Oh, no!' replied Rose, eagerly.

'No, surely,' said the old lady; 'my days are drawing to their close: and may mercy be shown to me as I show it to others! What can I do to save him, sir?'

'Let me think, ma'am,' said the doctor; 'let me think.'

Mr. Losberne thrust his hands into his pockets, and took several turns up and down the room; often stopping, and balancing himself on his toes, and frowning frightfully. After various exclamations of 'I've got it now' and 'no, I haven't,' and as many renewals of the walking and frowning, he at length made a dead halt, and spoke as follows:

'I think if you give me a full and unlimited commission to bully Giles, and that little boy, Brittles, I can manage it. Giles is a faithful fellow and an old servant, I know; but you can make it up to him in a thousand ways, and reward him for being such a good shot besides. You don't object to that?'

'Unless there is some other way of preserving the child,' replied Mrs. Maylie.

'There is no other,' said the doctor. 'No other, take my word for it.'

'Then my aunt invests you with full power,' said Rose, smiling through her tears; 'but pray don't be harder upon the poor fellows than is indispensably necessary.'

'You seem to think,' retorted the doctor, 'that everybody is disposed to be hard-hearted to-day, except yourself, Miss Rose. I only hope, for the sake of the rising male sex generally, that you may be found in as vulnerable and soft-hearted a mood by the first eligible young fellow who appeals to your compassion; and I wish I were a young fellow, that I might avail myself, on the spot, of such a favourable opportunity for doing so, as the present.'

'You are as great a boy as poor Brittles himself,' returned Rose, blushing.

'Well,' said the doctor, laughing heartily, 'that is no very difficult matter. But to return to this boy. The great point of our agreement is yet to come. He will wake in an hour or so, I dare say; and although I have told that thick-headed constable-fellow downstairs that he musn't be moved or spoken to, on peril of his life, I think we may converse with him without danger. Now I make this stipulation—that I shall examine him in your presence, and that, if, from what he says, we judge, and I can show to the satisfaction of your cool reason, that he is a real and thorough bad one (which is more than possible), he shall be left to his fate, without any farther interference on my part, at all events.'

'Oh no, aunt!' entreated Rose.

'Oh yes, aunt!' said the doctor. 'Is is a bargain?'

'He cannot be hardened in vice,' said Rose; 'It is impossible.'

'Very good,' retorted the doctor; 'then so much the more reason for acceding to my proposition.'

Finally the treaty was entered into; and the parties thereunto sat down to wait, with some impatience, until Oliver should awake.

The patience of the two ladies was destined to undergo a longer trial than Mr. Losberne had led them to expect; for hour after hour passed on, and still Oliver slumbered heavily. It was evening, indeed, before the kind-hearted doctor brought them the intelligence, that he was at length sufficiently restored to be spoken to. The boy was very ill, he said, and weak from the loss of blood; but his mind was so troubled with anxiety to disclose something, that he deemed it better to give him the opportunity, than to insist upon his remaining quiet until next morning: which he should otherwise have done.

The conference was a long one. Oliver told them all his simple history, and was often compelled to stop, by pain and want of strength. It was a solemn thing, to hear, in the darkened room, the feeble voice of the sick child recounting a weary catalogue of evils and calamities which hard men had brought upon him. Oh! if when we oppress and grind our fellow-creatures, we bestowed but one thought on the dark evidences of human error, which, like dense and heavy clouds, are rising, slowly it is true, but not less surely, to Heaven, to pour their after-vengeance on our heads; if we heard but one instant, in imagination, the deep testimony of dead men's voices, which no power can stifle, and no pride shut out; where would be the injury and injustice, the suffering, misery, cruelty, and wrong, that each day's life brings with it!

Oliver's pillow was smoothed by gentle hands that night; and loveliness and virtue watched him as he slept. He felt calm and happy, and could have died without a murmur.

The momentous interview was no sooner concluded, and Oliver composed to rest again, than the doctor, after wiping his eyes, and condemning them for being weak all at once, betook himself downstairs to open upon Mr. Giles. And finding nobody about the parlours, it occurred to him, that he could perhaps originate the proceedings with better effect in the kitchen; so into the kitchen he went.

There were assembled, in that lower house of the domestic parliament, the women-servants, Mr. Brittles, Mr. Giles, the tinker (who had received a special invitation to regale himself for the remainder of the day, in consideration of his services), and the constable. The latter gentleman had a large staff, a large head, large features, and large half-boots; and he looked as if he had been taking a proportionate allowance of ale—as indeed he had.

The adventures of the previous night were still under discussion; for Mr. Giles was expatiating upon his presence of mind, when the doctor entered; Mr. Brittles, with a mug of ale in his hand, was corroborating everything, before his superior said it.

'Sit still!' said the doctor, waving his hand.

‘Thank you, sir, said Mr. Giles. ‘Misses wished some ale to be given out, sir; and as I felt no ways inclined for my own little room, sir, and was disposed for company, I am taking mine among ‘em here.’

Brittles headed a low murmur, by which the ladies and gentlemen generally were understood to express the gratification they derived from Mr. Giles’s condescension. Mr. Giles looked round with a patronising air, as much as to say that so long as they behaved properly, he would never desert them.

‘How is the patient to-night, sir?’ asked Giles.

‘So-so’; returned the doctor. ‘I am afraid you have got yourself into a scrape there, Mr. Giles.’

‘I hope you don’t mean to say, sir,’ said Mr. Giles, trembling, ‘that he’s going to die. If I thought it, I should never be happy again. I wouldn’t cut a boy off: no, not even Brittles here; not for all the plate in the county, sir.’

‘That’s not the point,’ said the doctor, mysteriously. ‘Mr. Giles, are you a Protestant?’

‘Yes, sir, I hope so,’ faltered Mr. Giles, who had turned very pale.

‘And what are *you*, boy?’ said the doctor, turning sharply upon Brittles.

‘Lord bless me, sir!’ replied Brittles, starting violently; ‘I’m the same as Mr. Giles, sir.’

‘Then tell me this,’ said the doctor, ‘both of you, both of you! Are you going to take upon yourselves to swear, that that boy upstairs is the boy that was put through the little window last night? Out with it! Come! We are prepared for you!’

The doctor, who was universally considered one of the best-tempered creatures on earth, made this demand in such a dreadful tone of anger, that Giles and Brittles, who were considerably muddled by ale and excitement, stared at each other in a state of stupefaction.

‘Pay attention to the reply, constable, will you?’ said the doctor, shaking his forefinger with great solemnity of manner, and tapping the bridge of his nose with it, to bespeak the exercise of that worthy’s utmost acuteness. ‘Something may come of this before long.’

The constable looked as wise as he could, and took up his staff of office: which had been reclining indolently in the chimney-corner.

‘It’s a simple question of identity, you will observe,’ said the doctor.

‘That’s what it is, sir,’ replied the constable, coughing with great violence; for he had finished his ale in a hurry, and some of it had gone the wrong way.

‘Here’s the house broken into,’ said the doctor, ‘and a couple of men catch one moment’s glimpse of a boy, in the midst of gunpowder smoke, and in all the distraction of alarm and darkness. Here’s a boy comes to that very same house, next morning, and because he happens to have his arm tied up, these men lay violent hands upon him—by doing which, they place his life in great danger—and swear he is the thief. Now, the question is, whether these men are justified by the fact; if not, in what situation do they place themselves?’

The constable nodded profoundly. He said, if that wasn’t law, he would be glad to know what was.

‘I ask you again,’ thundered the doctor, ‘are you, on your solemn oaths, able to identify that boy?’

Brittles looked doubtfully at Mr. Giles; Mr. Giles looked doubtfully at Brittles; the constable put his hand behind his ear, to catch the reply; the two women and the tinker leaned forward to listen; the doctor glanced keenly round; when a ring was heard at the gate, and at the same moment, the sound of wheels.

‘It’s the runners!’ cried Brittles, to all appearance much relieved.

‘The what?’ exclaimed the doctor, aghast in his turn.

‘The Bow Street officers, sir,’ replied Brittles, taking up a candle; ‘me and Mr. Giles sent for ‘em this morning.’

‘What?’ cried the doctor.

‘Yes,’ replied Brittles; ‘I sent a message up by the coachman, and I only wonder they weren’t here before, sir.’

‘You did, did you? Then confound your—slow coaches down here; that’s all,’ said the doctor, walking away.

CHAPTER XXXI — INVOLVES A CRITICAL POSITION

‘Who’s that?’ inquired Brittles, opening the door a little way, with the chain up, and peeping out, shading the candle with his hand.

‘Open the door,’ replied a man outside; ‘it’s the officers from Bow Street, as was sent to to-day.’

Much comforted by this assurance, Brittles opened the door to its full width, and confronted a portly man in a great-coat; who walked in, without saying anything more, and wiped his shoes on the mat, as coolly as if he lived there.

‘Just send somebody out to relieve my mate, will you, young man?’ said the officer; ‘he’s in the gig, a-minding the prad. Have you got a coach ‘us here, that you could put it up in, for five or ten minutes?’

Brittles replying in the affirmative, and pointing out the building, the portly man stepped back to the garden-gate, and helped his companion to put up the gig: while Brittles lighted them, in a state of great admiration. This done, they returned to the house, and, being shown into a parlour, took off their great-coats and hats, and showed like what they were.

The man who had knocked at the door, was a stout personage of middle height, aged about fifty: with shiny black hair, cropped pretty close; half-whiskers, a round face, and sharp eyes. The other was a red-headed, bony man, in top-boots; with a rather ill-favoured countenance, and a turned-up sinister-looking nose.

'Tell your governor that Blathers and Duff is here, will you?' said the stouter man, smoothing down his hair, and laying a pair of handcuffs on the table. 'Oh! Good-evening, master. Can I have a word or two with you in private, if you please?'

This was addressed to Mr. Losberne, who now made his appearance; that gentleman, motioning Brittles to retire, brought in the two ladies, and shut the door.

'This is the lady of the house,' said Mr. Losberne, motioning towards Mrs. Maylie.

Mr. Blathers made a bow. Being desired to sit down, he put his hat on the floor, and taking a chair, motioned to Duff to do the same. The latter gentleman, who did not appear quite so much accustomed to good society, or quite so much at his ease in it—one of the two—seated himself, after undergoing several muscular affections of the limbs, and the head of his stick into his mouth, with some embarrassment.

'Now, with regard to this here robbery, master,' said Blathers. 'What are the circumstances?'

Mr. Losberne, who appeared desirous of gaining time, recounted them at great length, and with much circumlocution. Messrs. Blathers and Duff looked very knowing meanwhile, and occasionally exchanged a nod.

'I can't say, for certain, till I see the work, of course,' said Blathers; 'but my opinion at once is,—I don't mind committing myself to that extent,—that this wasn't done by a yokel; eh, Duff?'

'Certainly not,' replied Duff.

'And, translating the word yokel for the benefit of the ladies, I apprehend your meaning to be, that this attempt was not made by a countryman?' said Mr. Losberne, with a smile.

'That's it, master,' replied Blathers. 'This is all about the robbery, is it?'

'All,' replied the doctor.

'Now, what is this, about this here boy that the servants are a-talking on?' said Blathers.

'Nothing at all,' replied the doctor. 'One of the frightened servants chose to take it into his head, that he had something to do with this attempt to break into the house; but it's nonsense: sheer absurdity.'

'Wery easy disposed of, if it is,' remarked Duff.

'What he says is quite correct,' observed Blathers, nodding his head in a confirmatory way, and playing carelessly with the handcuffs, as if they were a pair of castanets. 'Who is the boy? What account does he give of himself? Where did he come from? He didn't drop out of the clouds, did he, master?'

'Of course not,' replied the doctor, with a nervous glance at the two ladies. 'I know his whole history: but we can talk about that presently. You would like, first, to see the place where the thieves made their attempt, I suppose?'

'Certainly,' rejoined Mr. Blathers. 'We had better inspect the premises first, and examine the servants

afterwards. That's the usual way of doing business.'

Lights were then procured; and Messrs. Blathers and Duff, attended by the native constable, Brittles, Giles, and everybody else in short, went into the little room at the end of the passage and looked out at the window; and afterwards went round by way of the lawn, and looked in at the window; and after that, had a candle handed out to inspect the shutter with; and after that, a lantern to trace the footsteps with; and after that, a pitchfork to poke the bushes with. This done, amidst the breathless interest of all beholders, they came in again; and Mr. Giles and Brittles were put through a melodramatic representation of their share in the previous night's adventures: which they performed some six times over: contradicting each other, in not more than one important respect, the first time, and in not more than a dozen the last. This consummation being arrived at, Blathers and Duff cleared the room, and held a long council together, compared with which, for secrecy and solemnity, a consultation of great doctors on the knottiest point in medicine, would be mere child's play.

Meanwhile, the doctor walked up and down the next room in a very uneasy state; and Mrs. Maylie and Rose looked on, with anxious faces.

'Upon my word,' he said, making a halt, after a great number of very rapid turns, 'I hardly know what to do.'

'Surely,' said Rose, 'the poor child's story, faithfully repeated to these men, will be sufficient to exonerate him.'

'I doubt it, my dear young lady,' said the doctor, shaking his head. 'I don't think it would exonerate him, either with them, or with legal functionaries of a higher grade. What is he, after all, they would say? A runaway. Judged by mere worldly considerations and probabilities, his story is a very doubtful one.'

'You believe it, surely?' interrupted Rose.

'*I* believe it, strange as it is; and perhaps I may be an old fool for doing so,' rejoined the doctor; 'but I don't think it is exactly the tale for a practical police-officer, nevertheless.'

'Why not?' demanded Rose.

'Because, my pretty cross-examiner,' replied the doctor: 'because, viewed with their eyes, there are many ugly points about it; he can only prove the parts that look ill, and none of those that look well. Confound the fellows, they *will* have the why and the wherefore, and will take nothing for granted. On his own showing, you see, he has been the companion of thieves for some time past; he has been carried to a police-officer, on a charge of picking a gentleman's pocket; he has been taken away, forcibly, from that gentleman's house, to a place which he cannot describe or point out, and of the situation of which he has not the remotest idea. He is brought down to Chertsey, by men who seem to have taken a violent fancy to him, whether he will or no; and is put through a window to rob a house; and then, just at the very moment when he is going to alarm the inmates, and so do the very thing that would set him all to rights, there rushes into the way, a blundering dog of a half-bred butler, and shoots him! As if on purpose to prevent his doing any good for himself! Don't you see all this?'

'I see it, of course,' replied Rose, smiling at the doctor's impetuosity; 'but still I do not see anything in it, to criminate the poor child.'

'No,' replied the doctor; 'of course not! Bless the bright eyes of your sex! They never see, whether for good or bad, more than one side of any question; and that is, always, the one which first presents itself to them.'

Having given vent to this result of experience, the doctor put his hands into his pockets, and walked up and down the room with even greater rapidity than before.

'The more I think of it,' said the doctor, 'the more I see that it will occasion endless trouble and difficulty if we put these men in possession of the boy's real story. I am certain it will not be believed; and even if they can do nothing to him in the end, still the dragging it forward, and giving publicity to all the doubts that will be cast upon it, must interfere, materially, with your benevolent plan of rescuing him from misery.'

'Oh! what is to be done?' cried Rose. 'Dear, dear! why did they send for these people?'

'Why, indeed!' exclaimed Mrs. Maylie. 'I would not have had them here, for the world.'

'All I know is,' said Mr. Losberne, at last: sitting down with a kind of desperate calmness, 'that we must try and carry it off with a bold face. The object is a good one, and that must be our excuse. The boy has strong symptoms of fever upon him, and is in no condition to be talked to any more; that's one comfort. We must make the best of it; and if bad be the best, it is no fault of ours. Come in!'

'Well, master,' said Blathers, entering the room followed by his colleague, and making the door fast, before he said any more. 'This warn't a put-up thing.'

'And what the devil's a put-up thing?' demanded the doctor, impatiently.

'We call it a put-up robbery, ladies,' said Blathers, turning to them, as if he pitied their ignorance, but had a contempt for the doctor's, 'when the servants is in it.'

'Nobody suspected them, in this case,' said Mrs. Maylie.

'Wery likely not, ma'am,' replied Blathers; 'but they might have been in it, for all that.'

'More likely on that wery account,' said Duff.

'We find it was a town hand,' said Blathers, continuing his report; 'for the style of work is first-rate.'

'Wery pretty indeed it is,' remarked Duff, in an undertone.

'There was two of 'em in it,' continued Blathers; 'and they had a boy with 'em; that's plain from the size of the window. That's all to be said at present. We'll see this lad that you've got upstairs at once, if you please.'

'Perhaps they will take something to drink first, Mrs. Maylie?' said the doctor: his face brightening, as if some new thought had occurred to him.

'Oh! to be sure!' exclaimed Rose, eagerly. 'You shall have it immediately, if you will.'

'Why, thank you, miss!' said Blathers, drawing his coat-sleeve across his mouth; 'it's dry work, this sort of duty. Anythink that's handy, miss; don't put yourself out of the way, on our accounts.'

‘What shall it be?’ asked the doctor, following the young lady to the sideboard.

‘A little drop of spirits, master, if it’s all the same,’ replied Blathers. ‘It’s a cold ride from London, ma’am; and I always find that spirits comes home warmer to the feelings.’

This interesting communication was addressed to Mrs. Maylie, who received it very graciously. While it was being conveyed to her, the doctor slipped out of the room.

‘Ah!’ said Mr. Blathers: not holding his wine-glass by the stem, but grasping the bottom between the thumb and forefinger of his left hand: and placing it in front of his chest; ‘I have seen a good many pieces of business like this, in my time, ladies.’

‘That crack down in the back lane at Edmonton, Blathers,’ said Mr. Duff, assisting his colleague’s memory.

‘That was something in this way, warn’t it?’ rejoined Mr. Blathers; ‘that was done by Conkey Chickweed, that was.’

‘You always gave that to him’ replied Duff. ‘It was the Family Pet, I tell you. Conkey hadn’t any more to do with it than I had.’

‘Get out!’ retorted Mr. Blathers; ‘I know better. Do you mind that time when Conkey was robbed of his money, though? What a start that was! Better than any novel-book *I* ever see!’

‘What was that?’ inquired Rose: anxious to encourage any symptoms of good-humour in the unwelcome visitors.

‘It was a robbery, miss, that hardly anybody would have been down upon,’ said Blathers. ‘This here Conkey Chickweed—’

‘Conkey means Nosey, ma’am,’ interposed Duff.

‘Of course the lady knows that, don’t she?’ demanded Mr. Blathers. ‘Always interrupting, you are, partner! This here Conkey Chickweed, miss, kept a public-house over Battlebridge way, and he had a cellar, where a good many young lords went to see cock-fighting, and badger-drawing, and that; and a wery intellectual manner the sports was conducted in, for I’ve seen ‘em off’en. He warn’t one of the family, at that time; and one night he was robbed of three hundred and twenty-seven guineas in a canvas bag, that was stole out of his bedroom in the dead of night, by a tall man with a black patch over his eye, who had concealed himself under the bed, and after committing the robbery, jumped slap out of window: which was only a story high. He was wery quick about it. But Conkey was quick, too; for he fired a blunderbuss arter him, and roused the neighbourhood. They set up a hue-and-cry, directly, and when they came to look about ‘em, found that Conkey had hit the robber; for there was traces of blood, all the way to some palings a good distance off; and there they lost ‘em. However, he had made off with the blunt; and, consequently, the name of Mr. Chickweed, licensed witler, appeared in the Gazette among the other bankrupts; and all manner of benefits and subscriptions, and I don’t know what all, was got up for the poor man, who was in a wery low state of mind about his loss, and went up and down the streets, for three or four days, a pulling his hair off in such a desperate manner that many people was afraid he might be going to make away with himself. One day he came up to the office, all in a hurry, and had a private interview with the magistrate, who, after a deal of talk, rings the bell, and orders Jem Spyers in (Jem was a active officer), and tells him to go and assist Mr. Chickweed in apprehending the man as robbed his house. “I see him, Spyers,” said Chickweed, “pass my house yesterday morning,” “Why didn’t you up, and collar him!” says Spyers. “I was so struck all of a heap, that you might have fractured my skull with a toothpick,” says the poor man; “but we’re sure to have him; for between ten and eleven o’clock at night he passed again.” Spyers no sooner heard this, than he put some clean linen and a comb, in his pocket, in case he should have to stop a day or two; and away he goes, and sets himself down at one of the public-house windows behind the little red curtain, with his hat on, all ready to bolt out, at a moment’s notice. He was smoking his pipe here, late at night, when all of a sudden Chickweed roars out, “Here he is! Stop thief! Murder!” Jem Spyers dashes out; and there he sees Chickweed, a-tearing down the street full cry. Away goes Spyers; on goes Chickweed; round turns the people; everybody roars out, “Thieves!” and Chickweed himself keeps on shouting, all the time, like mad. Spyers loses sight of him a minute as he turns a corner; shoots round; sees a little crowd; dives in; “Which is the man?” “D—me!” says Chickweed, “I’ve lost him again!” It was a remarkable occurrence, but he warn’t to be seen nowhere, so they went back to the public-house. Next morning, Spyers took his old place, and looked out, from behind the curtain, for a tall man with a black patch over his eye, till his own two eyes ached again. At last, he couldn’t help shutting ‘em, to ease ‘em a minute; and the very moment he did so, he hears Chickweed a-roaring out, “Here he is!” Off he starts once more, with Chickweed half-way down the street ahead of him; and after twice as long a run as the yesterday’s one, the man’s lost again! This was done, once or twice more, till one-half the neighbours gave out that Mr. Chickweed had been robbed by the devil, who was playing tricks with him arterwards; and the other half, that poor Mr. Chickweed had gone mad with grief.’

‘What did Jem Spyers say?’ inquired the doctor; who had returned to the room shortly after the commencement of the story.

‘Jem Spyers,’ resumed the officer, ‘for a long time said nothing at all, and listened to everything without seeming to, which showed he understood his business. But, one morning, he walked into the bar, and taking out his snuffbox, says “Chickweed, I’ve found out who done this here robbery.” “Have you?” said Chickweed. “Oh, my dear Spyers, only let me have wengeance, and I shall die contented! Oh, my dear Spyers, where is the villain!” “Come!” said Spyers, offering him a pinch of snuff, “none of that gammon! You did it yourself.” So he had; and a good bit of money he had made by it, too; and nobody would never have found it out, if he hadn’t been so precious anxious to keep up appearances!’ said Mr. Blathers, putting down his wine-glass, and clinking the handcuffs together.

‘Very curious, indeed,’ observed the doctor. ‘Now, if you please, you can walk upstairs.’

‘If *you* please, sir,’ returned Mr. Blathers. Closely following Mr. Losberne, the two officers ascended to Oliver’s bedroom; Mr. Giles preceding the party, with a lighted candle.

Oliver had been dozing; but looked worse, and was more feverish than he had appeared yet. Being assisted by the doctor, he managed to sit up in bed for a minute or so; and looked at the strangers without at all

understanding what was going forward—in fact, without seeming to recollect where he was, or what had been passing.

'This,' said Mr. Losberne, speaking softly, but with great vehemence notwithstanding, 'this is the lad, who, being accidently wounded by a spring-gun in some boyish trespass on Mr. What-d' ye-call-him's grounds, at the back here, comes to the house for assistance this morning, and is immediately laid hold of and maltreated, by that ingenious gentleman with the candle in his hand: who has placed his life in considerable danger, as I can professionally certify.'

Messrs. Blathers and Duff looked at Mr. Giles, as he was thus recommended to their notice. The bewildered butler gazed from them towards Oliver, and from Oliver towards Mr. Losberne, with a most ludicrous mixture of fear and perplexity.

'You don't mean to deny that, I suppose?' said the doctor, laying Oliver gently down again.

'It was all done for the—for the best, sir,' answered Giles. 'I am sure I thought it was the boy, or I wouldn't have meddled with him. I am not of an inhuman disposition, sir.'

'Thought it was what boy?' inquired the senior officer.

'The housebreaker's boy, sir!' replied Giles. 'They—they certainly had a boy.'

'Well? Do you think so now?' inquired Blathers.

'Think what, now?' replied Giles, looking vacantly at his questioner.

'Think it's the same boy, Stupid-head?' rejoined Blathers, impatiently.

'I don't know; I really don't know,' said Giles, with a rueful countenance. 'I couldn't swear to him.'

'What do you think?' asked Mr. Blathers.

'I don't know what to think,' replied poor Giles. 'I don't think it is the boy; indeed, I'm almost certain that it isn't. You know it can't be.'

'Has this man been a-drinking, sir?' inquired Blathers, turning to the doctor.

'What a precious muddle-headed chap you are!' said Duff, addressing Mr. Giles, with supreme contempt.

Mr. Losberne had been feeling the patient's pulse during this short dialogue; but he now rose from the chair by the bedside, and remarked, that if the officers had any doubts upon the subject, they would perhaps like to step into the next room, and have Brittles before them.

Acting upon this suggestion, they adjourned to a neighbouring apartment, where Mr. Brittles, being called in, involved himself and his respected superior in such a wonderful maze of fresh contradictions and impossibilities, as tended to throw no particular light on anything, but the fact of his own strong mystification; except, indeed, his declarations that he shouldn't know the real boy, if he were put before him that instant; that he had only taken Oliver to be he, because Mr. Giles had said he was; and that Mr. Giles had, five minutes previously, admitted in the kitchen, that he began to be very much afraid he had been a little too hasty.

Among other ingenious surmises, the question was then raised, whether Mr. Giles had really hit anybody; and upon examination of the fellow pistol to that which he had fired, it turned out to have no more destructive loading than gunpowder and brown paper: a discovery which made a considerable impression on everybody but the doctor, who had drawn the ball about ten minutes before. Upon no one, however, did it make a greater impression than on Mr. Giles himself; who, after labouring, for some hours, under the fear of having mortally wounded a fellow-creature, eagerly caught at this new idea, and favoured it to the utmost. Finally, the officers, without troubling themselves very much about Oliver, left the Chertsey constable in the house, and took up their rest for that night in the town; promising to return the next morning.

With the next morning, there came a rumour, that two men and a boy were in the cage at Kingston, who had been apprehended over night under suspicious circumstances; and to Kingston Messrs. Blathers and Duff journeyed accordingly. The suspicious circumstances, however, resolving themselves, on investigation, into the one fact, that they had been discovered sleeping under a haystack; which, although a great crime, is only punishable by imprisonment, and is, in the merciful eye of the English law, and its comprehensive love of all the King's subjects, held to be no satisfactory proof, in the absence of all other evidence, that the sleeper, or sleepers, have committed burglary accompanied with violence, and have therefore rendered themselves liable to the punishment of death; Messrs. Blathers and Duff came back again, as wise as they went.

In short, after some more examination, and a great deal more conversation, a neighbouring magistrate was readily induced to take the joint bail of Mrs. Maylie and Mr. Losberne for Oliver's appearance if he should ever be called upon; and Blathers and Duff, being rewarded with a couple of guineas, returned to town with divided opinions on the subject of their expedition: the latter gentleman on a mature consideration of all the circumstances, inclining to the belief that the burglarious attempt had originated with the Family Pet; and the former being equally disposed to concede the full merit of it to the great Mr. Conkey Chickweed.

Meanwhile, Oliver gradually throve and prospered under the united care of Mrs. Maylie, Rose, and the kind-hearted Mr. Losberne. If fervent prayers, gushing from hearts overcharged with gratitude, be heard in heaven—and if they be not, what prayers are!—the blessings which the orphan child called down upon them, sunk into their souls, diffusing peace and happiness.

CHAPTER XXXII — OF THE HAPPY LIFE OLIVER BEGAN TO LEAD WITH HIS KIND

FRIENDS

Oliver's ailings were neither slight nor few. In addition to the pain and delay attendant on a broken limb, his exposure to the wet and cold had brought on fever and ague: which hung about him for many weeks, and reduced him sadly. But, at length, he began, by slow degrees, to get better, and to be able to say sometimes, in a few tearful words, how deeply he felt the goodness of the two sweet ladies, and how ardently he hoped that when he grew strong and well again, he could do something to show his gratitude; only something, which would let them see the love and duty with which his breast was full; something, however slight, which would prove to them that their gentle kindness had not been cast away; but that the poor boy whom their charity had rescued from misery, or death, was eager to serve them with his whole heart and soul.

'Poor fellow!' said Rose, when Oliver had been one day feebly endeavouring to utter the words of thankfulness that rose to his pale lips; 'you shall have many opportunities of serving us, if you will. We are going into the country, and my aunt intends that you shall accompany us. The quiet place, the pure air, and all the pleasure and beauties of spring, will restore you in a few days. We will employ you in a hundred ways, when you can bear the trouble.'

'The trouble!' cried Oliver. 'Oh! dear lady, if I could but work for you; if I could only give you pleasure by watering your flowers, or watching your birds, or running up and down the whole day long, to make you happy; what would I give to do it!'

'You shall give nothing at all,' said Miss Maylie, smiling; 'for, as I told you before, we shall employ you in a hundred ways; and if you only take half the trouble to please us, that you promise now, you will make me very happy indeed.'

'Happy, ma'am!' cried Oliver; 'how kind of you to say so!'

'You will make me happier than I can tell you,' replied the young lady. 'To think that my dear good aunt should have been the means of rescuing any one from such sad misery as you have described to us, would be an unspeakable pleasure to me; but to know that the object of her goodness and compassion was sincerely grateful and attached, in consequence, would delight me, more than you can well imagine. Do you understand me?' she inquired, watching Oliver's thoughtful face.

'Oh yes, ma'am, yes!' replied Oliver eagerly; 'but I was thinking that I am ungrateful now.'

'To whom?' inquired the young lady.

'To the kind gentleman, and the dear old nurse, who took so much care of me before,' rejoined Oliver. 'If they knew how happy I am, they would be pleased, I am sure.'

'I am sure they would,' rejoined Oliver's benefactress; 'and Mr. Losberne has already been kind enough to promise that when you are well enough to bear the journey, he will carry you to see them.'

'Has he, ma'am?' cried Oliver, his face brightening with pleasure. 'I don't know what I shall do for joy when I see their kind faces once again!'

In a short time Oliver was sufficiently recovered to undergo the fatigue of this expedition. One morning he and Mr. Losberne set out, accordingly, in a little carriage which belonged to Mrs. Maylie. When they came to Chertsey Bridge, Oliver turned very pale, and uttered a loud exclamation.

'What's the matter with the boy?' cried the doctor, as usual, all in a bustle. 'Do you see anything—hear anything—feel anything—eh?'

'That, sir,' cried Oliver, pointing out of the carriage window. 'That house!'

'Yes; well, what of it? Stop coachman. Pull up here,' cried the doctor. 'What of the house, my man; eh?'

'The thieves—the house they took me to!' whispered Oliver.

'The devil it is!' cried the doctor. 'Hallo, there! let me out!'

But, before the coachman could dismount from his box, he had tumbled out of the coach, by some means or other; and, running down to the deserted tenement, began kicking at the door like a madman.

'Halloa?' said a little ugly hump-backed man: opening the door so suddenly, that the doctor, from the very impetus of his last kick, nearly fell forward into the passage. 'What's the matter here?'

'Matter!' exclaimed the other, collaring him, without a moment's reflection. 'A good deal. Robbery is the matter.'

'There'll be Murder the matter, too,' replied the hump-backed man, coolly, 'if you don't take your hands off. Do you hear me?'

'I hear you,' said the doctor, giving his captive a hearty shake.

'Where's—confound the fellow, what's his rascally name—Sikes; that's it. Where's Sikes, you thief?'

The hump-backed man stared, as if in excess of amazement and indignation; then, twisting himself, dexterously, from the doctor's grasp, growled forth a volley of horrid oaths, and retired into the house. Before he could shut the door, however, the doctor had passed into the parlour, without a word of parley.

He looked anxiously round; not an article of furniture; not a vestige of anything, animate or inanimate; not even the position of the cupboards; answered Oliver's description!

'Now!' said the hump-backed man, who had watched him keenly, 'what do you mean by coming into my house, in this violent way? Do you want to rob me, or to murder me? Which is it?'

'Did you ever know a man come out to do either, in a chariot and pair, you ridiculous old vampire?' said the irritable doctor.

'What do you want, then?' demanded the hunchback. 'Will you take yourself off, before I do you a mischief? Curse you!'

'As soon as I think proper,' said Mr. Losberne, looking into the other parlour; which, like the first, bore no resemblance whatever to Oliver's account of it. 'I shall find you out, some day, my friend.'

'Will you?' sneered the ill-favoured cripple. 'If you ever want me, I'm here. I haven't lived here mad and all

alone, for five-and-twenty years, to be scared by you. You shall pay for this; you shall pay for this.' And so saying, the mis-shapen little demon set up a yell, and danced upon the ground, as if wild with rage.

'Stupid enough, this,' muttered the doctor to himself; 'the boy must have made a mistake. Here! Put that in your pocket, and shut yourself up again.' With these words he flung the hunchback a piece of money, and returned to the carriage.

The man followed to the chariot door, uttering the wildest imprecations and curses all the way; but as Mr. Losberne turned to speak to the driver, he looked into the carriage, and eyed Oliver for an instant with a glance so sharp and fierce and at the same time so furious and vindictive, that, waking or sleeping, he could not forget it for months afterwards. He continued to utter the most fearful imprecations, until the driver had resumed his seat; and when they were once more on their way, they could see him some distance behind: beating his feet upon the ground, and tearing his hair, in transports of real or pretended rage.

'I am an ass!' said the doctor, after a long silence. 'Did you know that before, Oliver?'

'No, sir.'

'Then don't forget it another time.'

'An ass,' said the doctor again, after a further silence of some minutes. 'Even if it had been the right place, and the right fellows had been there, what could I have done, single-handed? And if I had had assistance, I see no good that I should have done, except leading to my own exposure, and an unavoidable statement of the manner in which I have hushed up this business. That would have served me right, though. I am always involving myself in some scrape or other, by acting on impulse. It might have done me good.'

Now, the fact was that the excellent doctor had never acted upon anything but impulse all through his life, and it was no bad compliment to the nature of the impulses which governed him, that so far from being involved in any peculiar troubles or misfortunes, he had the warmest respect and esteem of all who knew him. If the truth must be told, he was a little out of temper, for a minute or two, at being disappointed in procuring corroborative evidence of Oliver's story on the very first occasion on which he had a chance of obtaining any. He soon came round again, however; and finding that Oliver's replies to his questions, were still as straightforward and consistent, and still delivered with as much apparent sincerity and truth, as they had ever been, he made up his mind to attach full credence to them, from that time forth.

As Oliver knew the name of the street in which Mr. Brownlow resided, they were enabled to drive straight thither. When the coach turned into it, his heart beat so violently, that he could scarcely draw his breath.

'Now, my boy, which house is it?' inquired Mr. Losberne.

'That! That!' replied Oliver, pointing eagerly out of the window. 'The white house. Oh! make haste! Pray make haste! I feel as if I should die: it makes me tremble so.'

'Come, come!' said the good doctor, patting him on the shoulder. 'You will see them directly, and they will be overjoyed to find you safe and well.'

'Oh! I hope so!' cried Oliver. 'They were so good to me; so very, very good to me.'

The coach rolled on. It stopped. No; that was the wrong house; the next door. It went on a few paces, and stopped again. Oliver looked up at the windows, with tears of happy expectation coursing down his face.

Alas! the white house was empty, and there was a bill in the window. 'To Let.'

'Knock at the next door,' cried Mr. Losberne, taking Oliver's arm in his. 'What has become of Mr. Brownlow, who used to live in the adjoining house, do you know?'

The servant did not know; but would go and inquire. She presently returned, and said, that Mr. Brownlow had sold off his goods, and gone to the West Indies, six weeks before. Oliver clasped his hands, and sank feebly backward.

'Has his housekeeper gone too?' inquired Mr. Losberne, after a moment's pause.

'Yes, sir'; replied the servant. 'The old gentleman, the housekeeper, and a gentleman who was a friend of Mr. Brownlow's, all went together.'

'Then turn towards home again,' said Mr. Losberne to the driver; 'and don't stop to bait the horses, till you get out of this confounded London!'

'The book-stall keeper, sir?' said Oliver. 'I know the way there. See him, pray, sir! Do see him!'

'My poor boy, this is disappointment enough for one day,' said the doctor. 'Quite enough for both of us. If we go to the book-stall keeper's, we shall certainly find that he is dead, or has set his house on fire, or run away. No; home again straight!' And in obedience to the doctor's impulse, home they went.

This bitter disappointment caused Oliver much sorrow and grief, even in the midst of his happiness; for he had pleased himself, many times during his illness, with thinking of all that Mr. Brownlow and Mrs. Bedwin would say to him: and what delight it would be to tell them how many long days and nights he had passed in reflecting on what they had done for him, and in bewailing his cruel separation from them. The hope of eventually clearing himself with them, too, and explaining how he had been forced away, had buoyed him up, and sustained him, under many of his recent trials; and now, the idea that they should have gone so far, and carried with them the belief that he was an impostor and a robber—a belief which might remain uncontradicted to his dying day—was almost more than he could bear.

The circumstance occasioned no alteration, however, in the behaviour of his benefactors. After another fortnight, when the fine warm weather had fairly begun, and every tree and flower was putting forth its young leaves and rich blossoms, they made preparations for quitting the house at Chertsey, for some months.

Sending the plate, which had so excited Fagin's cupidity, to the banker's; and leaving Giles and another servant in care of the house, they departed to a cottage at some distance in the country, and took Oliver with them.

Who can describe the pleasure and delight, the peace of mind and soft tranquillity, the sickly boy felt in the balmy air, and among the green hills and rich woods, of an inland village! Who can tell how scenes of peace and quietude sink into the minds of pain-worn dwellers in close and noisy places, and carry their own

freshness, deep into their jaded hearts! Men who have lived in crowded, pent-up streets, through lives of toil, and who have never wished for change; men, to whom custom has indeed been second nature, and who have come almost to love each brick and stone that formed the narrow boundaries of their daily walks; even they, with the hand of death upon them, have been known to yearn at last for one short glimpse of Nature's face; and, carried far from the scenes of their old pains and pleasures, have seemed to pass at once into a new state of being. Crawling forth, from day to day, to some green sunny spot, they have had such memories wakened up within them by the sight of the sky, and hill and plain, and glistening water, that a foretaste of heaven itself has soothed their quick decline, and they have sunk into their tombs, as peacefully as the sun whose setting they watched from their lonely chamber window but a few hours before, faded from their dim and feeble sight! The memories which peaceful country scenes call up, are not of this world, nor of its thoughts and hopes. Their gentle influence may teach us how to weave fresh garlands for the graves of those we loved: may purify our thoughts, and bear down before it old enmity and hatred; but beneath all this, there lingers, in the least reflective mind, a vague and half-formed consciousness of having held such feelings long before, in some remote and distant time, which calls up solemn thoughts of distant times to come, and bends down pride and worldliness beneath it.

It was a lovely spot to which they repaired. Oliver, whose days had been spent among squalid crowds, and in the midst of noise and brawling, seemed to enter on a new existence there. The rose and honeysuckle clung to the cottage walls; the ivy crept round the trunks of the trees; and the garden-flowers perfumed the air with delicious odours. Hard by, was a little churchyard; not crowded with tall unsightly gravestones, but full of humble mounds, covered with fresh turf and moss: beneath which, the old people of the village lay at rest. Oliver often wandered here; and, thinking of the wretched grave in which his mother lay, would sometimes sit him down and sob unseen; but, when he raised his eyes to the deep sky overhead, he would cease to think of her as lying in the ground, and would weep for her, sadly, but without pain.

It was a happy time. The days were peaceful and serene; the nights brought with them neither fear nor care; no languishing in a wretched prison, or associating with wretched men; nothing but pleasant and happy thoughts. Every morning he went to a white-headed old gentleman, who lived near the little church: who taught him to read better, and to write: and who spoke so kindly, and took such pains, that Oliver could never try enough to please him. Then, he would walk with Mrs. Maylie and Rose, and hear them talk of books; or perhaps sit near them, in some shady place, and listen whilst the young lady read: which he could have done, until it grew too dark to see the letters. Then, he had his own lesson for the next day to prepare; and at this, he would work hard, in a little room which looked into the garden, till evening came slowly on, when the ladies would walk out again, and he with them: listening with such pleasure to all they said: and so happy if they wanted a flower that he could climb to reach, or had forgotten anything he could run to fetch: that he could never be quick enough about it. When it became quite dark, and they returned home, the young lady would sit down to the piano, and play some pleasant air, or sing, in a low and gentle voice, some old song which it pleased her aunt to hear. There would be no candles lighted at such times as these; and Oliver would sit by one of the windows, listening to the sweet music, in a perfect rapture.

And when Sunday came, how differently the day was spent, from any way in which he had ever spent it yet! and how happily too; like all the other days in that most happy time! There was the little church, in the morning, with the green leaves fluttering at the windows: the birds singing without: and the sweet-smelling air stealing in at the low porch, and filling the homely building with its fragrance. The poor people were so neat and clean, and knelt so reverently in prayer, that it seemed a pleasure, not a tedious duty, their assembling there together; and though the singing might be rude, it was real, and sounded more musical (to Oliver's ears at least) than any he had ever heard in church before. Then, there were the walks as usual, and many calls at the clean houses of the labouring men; and at night, Oliver read a chapter or two from the Bible, which he had been studying all the week, and in the performance of which duty he felt more proud and pleased, than if he had been the clergyman himself.

In the morning, Oliver would be a-foot by six o'clock, roaming the fields, and plundering the hedges, far and wide, for nosegays of wild flowers, with which he would return laden, home; and which it took great care and consideration to arrange, to the best advantage, for the embellishment of the breakfast-table. There was fresh groundsel, too, for Miss Maylie's birds, with which Oliver, who had been studying the subject under the able tuition of the village clerk, would decorate the cages, in the most approved taste. When the birds were made all spruce and smart for the day, there was usually some little commission of charity to execute in the village; or, failing that, there was rare cricket-playing, sometimes, on the green; or, failing that, there was always something to do in the garden, or about the plants, to which Oliver (who had studied this science also, under the same master, who was a gardener by trade,) applied himself with hearty good-will, until Miss Rose made her appearance: when there were a thousand commendations to be bestowed on all he had done.

So three months glided away; three months which, in the life of the most blessed and favoured of mortals, might have been unmingled happiness, and which, in Oliver's were true felicity. With the purest and most amiable generosity on one side; and the truest, warmest, soul-felt gratitude on the other; it is no wonder that, by the end of that short time, Oliver Twist had become completely domesticated with the old lady and her niece, and that the fervent attachment of his young and sensitive heart, was repaid by their pride in, and attachment to, himself.

CHAPTER XXXIII — WHEREIN THE HAPPINESS OF OLIVER AND HIS FRIENDS,

EXPERIENCES A SUDDEN CHECK

Spring flew swiftly by, and summer came. If the village had been beautiful at first it was now in the full glow and luxuriance of its richness. The great trees, which had looked shrunken and bare in the earlier months, had now burst into strong life and health; and stretching forth their green arms over the thirsty ground, converted open and naked spots into choice nooks, where was a deep and pleasant shade from which to look upon the wide prospect, steeped in sunshine, which lay stretched beyond. The earth had donned her mantle of brightest green; and shed her richest perfumes abroad. It was the prime and vigour of the year; all things were glad and flourishing.

Still, the same quiet life went on at the little cottage, and the same cheerful serenity prevailed among its inmates. Oliver had long since grown stout and healthy; but health or sickness made no difference in his warm feelings of a great many people. He was still the same gentle, attached, affectionate creature that he had been when pain and suffering had wasted his strength, and when he was dependent for every slight attention, and comfort on those who tended him.

One beautiful night, when they had taken a longer walk than was customary with them: for the day had been unusually warm, and there was a brilliant moon, and a light wind had sprung up, which was unusually refreshing. Rose had been in high spirits, too, and they had walked on, in merry conversation, until they had far exceeded their ordinary bounds. Mrs. Maylie being fatigued, they returned more slowly home. The young lady merely throwing off her simple bonnet, sat down to the piano as usual. After running abstractedly over the keys for a few minutes, she fell into a low and very solemn air; and as she played it, they heard a sound as if she were weeping.

‘Rose, my dear!’ said the elder lady.

Rose made no reply, but played a little quicker, as though the words had roused her from some painful thoughts.

‘Rose, my love!’ cried Mrs. Maylie, rising hastily, and bending over her. ‘What is this? In tears! My dear child, what distresses you?’

‘Nothing, aunt; nothing,’ replied the young lady. ‘I don’t know what it is; I can’t describe it; but I feel—’

‘Not ill, my love?’ interposed Mrs. Maylie.

‘No, no! Oh, not ill!’ replied Rose: shuddering as though some deadly chillness were passing over her, while she spoke; ‘I shall be better presently. Close the window, pray!’

Oliver hastened to comply with her request. The young lady, making an effort to recover her cheerfulness, strove to play some livelier tune; but her fingers dropped powerless over the keys. Covering her face with her hands, she sank upon a sofa, and gave vent to the tears which she was now unable to repress.

‘My child!’ said the elderly lady, folding her arms about her, ‘I never saw you so before.’

‘I would not alarm you if I could avoid it,’ rejoined Rose; ‘but indeed I have tried very hard, and cannot help this. I fear I *am* ill, aunt.’

She was, indeed; for, when candles were brought, they saw that in the very short time which had elapsed since their return home, the hue of her countenance had changed to a marble whiteness. Its expression had lost nothing of its beauty; but it was changed; and there was an anxious haggard look about the gentle face, which it had never worn before. Another minute, and it was suffused with a crimson flush: and a heavy wildness came over the soft blue eye. Again this disappeared, like the shadow thrown by a passing cloud; and she was once more deadly pale.

Oliver, who watched the old lady anxiously, observed that she was alarmed by these appearances; and so in truth, was he; but seeing that she affected to make light of them, he endeavoured to do the same, and they so far succeeded, that when Rose was persuaded by her aunt to retire for the night, she was in better spirits; and appeared even in better health: assuring them that she felt certain she should rise in the morning, quite well.

‘I hope,’ said Oliver, when Mrs. Maylie returned, ‘that nothing is the matter? She don’t look well to-night, but—’

The old lady motioned to him not to speak; and sitting herself down in a dark corner of the room, remained silent for some time. At length, she said, in a trembling voice:

‘I hope not, Oliver. I have been very happy with her for some years: too happy, perhaps. It may be time that I should meet with some misfortune; but I hope it is not this.’

‘What?’ inquired Oliver.

‘The heavy blow,’ said the old lady, ‘of losing the dear girl who has so long been my comfort and happiness.’

‘Oh! God forbid!’ exclaimed Oliver, hastily.

‘Amen to that, my child!’ said the old lady, wringing her hands.

‘Surely there is no danger of anything so dreadful?’ said Oliver. ‘Two hours ago, she was quite well.’

‘She is very ill now,’ rejoined Mrs. Maylies; ‘and will be worse, I am sure. My dear, dear Rose! Oh, what shall I do without her!’

She gave way to such great grief, that Oliver, suppressing his own emotion, ventured to remonstrate with her; and to beg, earnestly, that, for the sake of the dear young lady herself, she would be more calm.

‘And consider, ma’am,’ said Oliver, as the tears forced themselves into his eyes, despite of his efforts to the contrary. ‘Oh! consider how young and good she is, and what pleasure and comfort she gives to all about her. I am sure—certain—quite certain—that, for your sake, who are so good yourself; and for her own; and for the sake of all she makes so happy; she will not die. Heaven will never let her die so young.’

‘Hush!’ said Mrs. Maylie, laying her hand on Oliver’s head. ‘You think like a child, poor boy. But you teach me my duty, notwithstanding. I had forgotten it for a moment, Oliver, but I hope I may be pardoned, for I am old, and have seen enough of illness and death to know the agony of separation from the objects of our love. I

have seen enough, too, to know that it is not always the youngest and best who are spared to those that love them; but this should give us comfort in our sorrow; for Heaven is just; and such things teach us, impressively, that there is a brighter world than this; and that the passage to it is speedy. God's will be done! I love her; and He knows how well!'

Oliver was surprised to see that as Mrs. Maylie said these words, she checked her lamentations as though by one effort; and drawing herself up as she spoke, became composed and firm. He was still more astonished to find that this firmness lasted; and that, under all the care and watching which ensued, Mrs. Maylie was ever ready and collected: performing all the duties which had devolved upon her, steadily, and, to all external appearances, even cheerfully. But he was young, and did not know what strong minds are capable of, under trying circumstances. How should he, when their possessors so seldom know themselves?

An anxious night ensued. When morning came, Mrs. Maylie's predictions were but too well verified. Rose was in the first stage of a high and dangerous fever.

'We must be active, Oliver, and not give way to useless grief,' said Mrs. Maylie, laying her finger on her lip, as she looked steadily into his face; 'this letter must be sent, with all possible expedition, to Mr. Losberne. It must be carried to the market-town: which is not more than four miles off, by the footpath across the field: and thence dispatched, by an express on horseback, straight to Chertsey. The people at the inn will undertake to do this: and I can trust to you to see it done, I know.'

Oliver could make no reply, but looked his anxiety to be gone at once.

'Here is another letter,' said Mrs. Maylie, pausing to reflect; 'but whether to send it now, or wait until I see how Rose goes on, I scarcely know. I would not forward it, unless I feared the worst.'

'Is it for Chertsey, too, ma'am?' inquired Oliver; impatient to execute his commission, and holding out his trembling hand for the letter.

'No,' replied the old lady, giving it to him mechanically. Oliver glanced at it, and saw that it was directed to Harry Maylie, Esquire, at some great lord's house in the country; where, he could not make out.

'Shall it go, ma'am?' asked Oliver, looking up, impatiently.

'I think not,' replied Mrs. Maylie, taking it back. 'I will wait until to-morrow.'

With these words, she gave Oliver her purse, and he started off, without more delay, at the greatest speed he could muster.

Swiftly he ran across the fields, and down the little lanes which sometimes divided them: now almost hidden by the high corn on either side, and now emerging on an open field, where the mowers and haymakers were busy at their work: nor did he stop once, save now and then, for a few seconds, to recover breath, until he came, in a great heat, and covered with dust, on the little market-place of the market-town.

Here he paused, and looked about for the inn. There were a white bank, and a red brewery, and a yellow town-hall; and in one corner there was a large house, with all the wood about it painted green: before which was the sign of 'The George.' To this he hastened, as soon as it caught his eye.

He spoke to a postboy who was dozing under the gateway; and who, after hearing what he wanted, referred him to the ostler; who after hearing all he had to say again, referred him to the landlord; who was a tall gentleman in a blue neckcloth, a white hat, drab breeches, and boots with tops to match, leaning against a pump by the stable-door, picking his teeth with a silver toothpick.

This gentleman walked with much deliberation into the bar to make out the bill: which took a long time making out: and after it was ready, and paid, a horse had to be saddled, and a man to be dressed, which took up ten good minutes more. Meanwhile Oliver was in such a desperate state of impatience and anxiety, that he felt as if he could have jumped upon the horse himself, and galloped away, full tear, to the next stage. At length, all was ready; and the little parcel having been handed up, with many injunctions and entreaties for its speedy delivery, the man set spurs to his horse, and rattling over the uneven paving of the market-place, was out of the town, and galloping along the turnpike-road, in a couple of minutes.

As it was something to feel certain that assistance was sent for, and that no time had been lost, Oliver hurried up the inn-yard, with a somewhat lighter heart. He was turning out of the gateway when he accidently stumbled against a tall man wrapped in a cloak, who was at that moment coming out of the inn door.

'Hah!' cried the man, fixing his eyes on Oliver, and suddenly recoiling. 'What the devil's this?'

'I beg your pardon, sir,' said Oliver; 'I was in a great hurry to get home, and didn't see you were coming.'

'Death!' muttered the man to himself, glaring at the boy with his large dark eyes. 'Who would have thought it! Grind him to ashes! He'd start up from a stone coffin, to come in my way!'

'I am sorry,' stammered Oliver, confused by the strange man's wild look. 'I hope I have not hurt you!'

'Rot you!' murmured the man, in a horrible passion; between his clenched teeth; 'if I had only had the courage to say the word, I might have been free of you in a night. Curses on your head, and black death on your heart, you imp! What are you doing here?'

The man shook his fist, as he uttered these words incoherently. He advanced towards Oliver, as if with the intention of aiming a blow at him, but fell violently on the ground: writhing and foaming, in a fit.

Oliver gazed, for a moment, at the struggles of the madman (for such he supposed him to be); and then darted into the house for help. Having seen him safely carried into the hotel, he turned his face homewards, running as fast as he could, to make up for lost time: and recalling with a great deal of astonishment and some fear, the extraordinary behaviour of the person from whom he had just parted.

The circumstance did not dwell in his recollection long, however: for when he reached the cottage, there was enough to occupy his mind, and to drive all considerations of self completely from his memory.

Rose Maylie had rapidly grown worse; before mid-night she was delirious. A medical practitioner, who resided on the spot, was in constant attendance upon her; and after first seeing the patient, he had taken Mrs. Maylie aside, and pronounced her disorder to be one of a most alarming nature. 'In fact,' he said, 'it would be little short of a miracle, if she recovered.'

How often did Oliver start from his bed that night, and stealing out, with noiseless footstep, to the staircase, listen for the slightest sound from the sick chamber! How often did a tremble shake his frame, and cold drops of terror start upon his brow, when a sudden trampling of feet caused him to fear that something too dreadful to think of, had even then occurred! And what had been the fervency of all the prayers he had ever muttered, compared with those he poured forth, now, in the agony and passion of his supplication for the life and health of the gentle creature, who was tottering on the deep grave's verge!

Oh! the suspense, the fearful, acute suspense, of standing idly by while the life of one we dearly love, is trembling in the balance! Oh! the racking thoughts that crowd upon the mind, and make the heart beat violently, and the breath come thick, by the force of the images they conjure up before it; the desperate anxiety *to be doing something* to relieve the pain, or lessen the danger, which we have no power to alleviate; the sinking of soul and spirit, which the sad remembrance of our helplessness produces; what tortures can equal these; what reflections or endeavours can, in the full tide and fever of the time, allay them!

Morning came; and the little cottage was lonely and still. People spoke in whispers; anxious faces appeared at the gate, from time to time; women and children went away in tears. All the livelong day, and for hours after it had grown dark, Oliver paced softly up and down the garden, raising his eyes every instant to the sick chamber, and shuddering to see the darkened window, looking as if death lay stretched inside. Late that night, Mr. Losberne arrived. 'It is hard,' said the good doctor, turning away as he spoke; 'so young; so much beloved; but there is very little hope.'

Another morning. The sun shone brightly; as brightly as if it looked upon no misery or care; and, with every leaf and flower in full bloom about her; with life, and health, and sounds and sights of joy, surrounding her on every side: the fair young creature lay, wasting fast. Oliver crept away to the old churchyard, and sitting down on one of the green mounds, wept and prayed for her, in silence.

There was such peace and beauty in the scene; so much of brightness and mirth in the sunny landscape; such blithesome music in the songs of the summer birds; such freedom in the rapid flight of the rook, careering overhead; so much of life and joyousness in all; that, when the boy raised his aching eyes, and looked about, the thought instinctively occurred to him, that this was not a time for death; that Rose could surely never die when humbler things were all so glad and gay; that graves were for cold and cheerless winter: not for sunlight and fragrance. He almost thought that shrouds were for the old and shrunken; and that they never wrapped the young and graceful form in their ghastly folds.

A knell from the church bell broke harshly on these youthful thoughts. Another! Again! It was tolling for the funeral service. A group of humble mourners entered the gate: wearing white favours; for the corpse was young. They stood uncovered by a grave; and there was a mother—a mother once—among the weeping train. But the sun shone brightly, and the birds sang on.

Oliver turned homeward, thinking on the many kindnesses he had received from the young lady, and wishing that the time could come again, that he might never cease showing her how grateful and attached he was. He had no cause for self-reproach on the score of neglect, or want of thought, for he had been devoted to her service; and yet a hundred little occasions rose up before him, on which he fancied he might have been more zealous, and more earnest, and wished he had been. We need be careful how we deal with those about us, when every death carries to some small circle of survivors, thoughts of so much omitted, and so little done —of so many things forgotten, and so many more which might have been repaired! There is no remorse so deep as that which is unavailing; if we would be spared its tortures, let us remember this, in time.

When he reached home Mrs. Maylie was sitting in the little parlour. Oliver's heart sank at sight of her; for she had never left the bedside of her niece; and he trembled to think what change could have driven her away. He learnt that she had fallen into a deep sleep, from which she would waken, either to recovery and life, or to bid them farewell, and die.

They sat, listening, and afraid to speak, for hours. The untasted meal was removed, with looks which showed that their thoughts were elsewhere, they watched the sun as he sank lower and lower, and, at length, cast over sky and earth those brilliant hues which herald his departure. Their quick ears caught the sound of an approaching footstep. They both involuntarily darted to the door, as Mr. Losberne entered.

'What of Rose?' cried the old lady. 'Tell me at once! I can bear it; anything but suspense! Oh, tell me! in the name of Heaven!'

'You must compose yourself,' said the doctor supporting her. 'Be calm, my dear ma'am, pray.'

'Let me go, in God's name! My dear child! She is dead! She is dying!'

'No!' cried the doctor, passionately. 'As He is good and merciful, she will live to bless us all, for years to come.'

The lady fell upon her knees, and tried to fold her hands together; but the energy which had supported her so long, fled up to Heaven with her first thanksgiving; and she sank into the friendly arms which were extended to receive her.

CHAPTER XXXIV — CONTAINS SOME INTRODUCTORY PARTICULARS RELATIVE TO A YOUNG GENTLEMAN WHO NOW ARRIVES UPON THE SCENE; AND A NEW

ADVENTURE WHICH HAPPENED TO OLIVER

It was almost too much happiness to bear. Oliver felt stunned and stupefied by the unexpected intelligence; he could not weep, or speak, or rest. He had scarcely the power of understanding anything that had passed, until, after a long ramble in the quiet evening air, a burst of tears came to his relief, and he seemed to awaken, all at once, to a full sense of the joyful change that had occurred, and the almost insupportable load of anguish which had been taken from his breast.

The night was fast closing in, when he returned homeward: laden with flowers which he had culled, with peculiar care, for the adornment of the sick chamber. As he walked briskly along the road, he heard behind him, the noise of some vehicle, approaching at a furious pace. Looking round, he saw that it was a post-chaise, driven at great speed; and as the horses were galloping, and the road was narrow, he stood leaning against a gate until it should have passed him.

As it dashed on, Oliver caught a glimpse of a man in a white nightcap, whose face seemed familiar to him, although his view was so brief that he could not identify the person. In another second or two, the nightcap was thrust out of the chaise-window, and a stentorian voice bellowed to the driver to stop: which he did, as soon as he could pull up his horses. Then, the nightcap once again appeared: and the same voice called Oliver by his name.

'Here!' cried the voice. 'Oliver, what's the news? Miss Rose! Master O-li-ver!'

'Is is you, Giles?' cried Oliver, running up to the chaise-door.

Giles popped out his nightcap again, preparatory to making some reply, when he was suddenly pulled back by a young gentleman who occupied the other corner of the chaise, and who eagerly demanded what was the news.

'In a word!' cried the gentleman, 'Better or worse?'

'Better—much better!' replied Oliver, hastily.

'Thank Heaven!' exclaimed the gentleman. 'You are sure?'

'Quite, sir,' replied Oliver. 'The change took place only a few hours ago; and Mr. Losberne says, that all danger is at an end.'

The gentleman said not another word, but, opening the chaise-door, leaped out, and taking Oliver hurriedly by the arm, led him aside.

'You are quite certain? There is no possibility of any mistake on your part, my boy, is there?' demanded the gentleman in a tremulous voice. 'Do not deceive me, by awakening hopes that are not to be fulfilled.'

'I would not for the world, sir,' replied Oliver. 'Indeed you may believe me. Mr. Losberne's words were, that she would live to bless us all for many years to come. I heard him say so.'

The tears stood in Oliver's eyes as he recalled the scene which was the beginning of so much happiness; and the gentleman turned his face away, and remained silent, for some minutes. Oliver thought he heard him sob, more than once; but he feared to interrupt him by any fresh remark—for he could well guess what his feelings were—and so stood apart, feigning to be occupied with his nosegay.

All this time, Mr. Giles, with the white nightcap on, had been sitting on the steps of the chaise, supporting an elbow on each knee, and wiping his eyes with a blue cotton pocket-handkerchief dotted with white spots. That the honest fellow had not been feigning emotion, was abundantly demonstrated by the very red eyes with which he regarded the young gentleman, when he turned round and addressed him.

'I think you had better go on to my mother's in the chaise, Giles,' said he. 'I would rather walk slowly on, so as to gain a little time before I see her. You can say I am coming.'

'I beg your pardon, Mr. Harry,' said Giles: giving a final polish to his ruffled countenance with the handkerchief; 'but if you would leave the postboy to say that, I should be very much obliged to you. It wouldn't be proper for the maids to see me in this state, sir; I should never have any more authority with them if they did.'

'Well,' rejoined Harry Maylie, smiling, 'you can do as you like. Let him go on with the luggage, if you wish it, and do you follow with us. Only first exchange that nightcap for some more appropriate covering, or we shall be taken for madmen.'

Mr. Giles, reminded of his unbecoming costume, snatched off and pocketed his nightcap; and substituted a hat, of grave and sober shape, which he took out of the chaise. This done, the postboy drove off; Giles, Mr. Maylie, and Oliver, followed at their leisure.

As they walked along, Oliver glanced from time to time with much interest and curiosity at the new comer. He seemed about five-and-twenty years of age, and was of the middle height; his countenance was frank and handsome; and his demeanor easy and prepossessing. Notwithstanding the difference between youth and age, he bore so strong a likeness to the old lady, that Oliver would have had no great difficulty in imagining their relationship, if he had not already spoken of her as his mother.

Mrs. Maylie was anxiously waiting to receive her son when he reached the cottage. The meeting did not take place without great emotion on both sides.

'Mother!' whispered the young man; 'why did you not write before?'

'I did,' replied Mrs. Maylie; 'but, on reflection, I determined to keep back the letter until I had heard Mr. Losberne's opinion.'

'But why,' said the young man, 'why run the chance of that occurring which so nearly happened? If Rose had—I cannot utter that word now—if this illness had terminated differently, how could you ever have forgiven yourself! How could I ever have know happiness again!'

'If that *had* been the case, Harry,' said Mrs. Maylie, 'I fear your happiness would have been effectually blighted, and that your arrival here, a day sooner or a day later, would have been of very, very little import.'

'And who can wonder if it be so, mother?' rejoined the young man; 'or why should I say, *if*?—It is—it is—you

know it, mother—you must know it!'

'I know that she deserves the best and purest love the heart of man can offer,' said Mrs. Maylie; 'I know that the devotion and affection of her nature require no ordinary return, but one that shall be deep and lasting. If I did not feel this, and know, besides, that a changed behaviour in one she loved would break her heart, I should not feel my task so difficult of performance, or have to encounter so many struggles in my own bosom, when I take what seems to me to be the strict line of duty.'

'This is unkind, mother,' said Harry. 'Do you still suppose that I am a boy ignorant of my own mind, and mistaking the impulses of my own soul?'

'I think, my dear son,' returned Mrs. Maylie, laying her hand upon his shoulder, 'that youth has many generous impulses which do not last; and that among them are some, which, being gratified, become only the more fleeting. Above all, I think' said the lady, fixing her eyes on her son's face, 'that if an enthusiastic, ardent, and ambitious man marry a wife on whose name there is a stain, which, though it originate in no fault of hers, may be visited by cold and sordid people upon her, and upon his children also: and, in exact proportion to his success in the world, be cast in his teeth, and made the subject of sneers against him: he may, no matter how generous and good his nature, one day repent of the connection he formed in early life. And she may have the pain of knowing that he does so.'

'Mother,' said the young man, impatiently, 'he would be a selfish brute, unworthy alike of the name of man and of the woman you describe, who acted thus.'

'You think so now, Harry,' replied his mother.

'And ever will!' said the young man. 'The mental agony I have suffered, during the last two days, wrings from me the avowal to you of a passion which, as you well know, is not one of yesterday, nor one I have lightly formed. On Rose, sweet, gentle girl! my heart is set, as firmly as ever heart of man was set on woman. I have no thought, no view, no hope in life, beyond her; and if you oppose me in this great stake, you take my peace and happiness in your hands, and cast them to the wind. Mother, think better of this, and of me, and do not disregard the happiness of which you seem to think so little.'

'Harry,' said Mrs. Maylie, 'it is because I think so much of warm and sensitive hearts, that I would spare them from being wounded. But we have said enough, and more than enough, on this matter, just now.'

'Let it rest with Rose, then,' interposed Harry. 'You will not press these overstrained opinions of yours, so far, as to throw any obstacle in my way?'

'I will not,' rejoined Mrs. Maylie; 'but I would have you consider—'

'I *have* considered!' was the impatient reply; 'Mother, I have considered, years and years. I have considered, ever since I have been capable of serious reflection. My feelings remain unchanged, as they ever will; and why should I suffer the pain of a delay in giving them vent, which can be productive of no earthly good? No! Before I leave this place, Rose shall hear me.'

'She shall,' said Mrs. Maylie.

'There is something in your manner, which would almost imply that she will hear me coldly, mother,' said the young man.

'Not coldly,' rejoined the old lady; 'far from it.'

'How then?' urged the young man. 'She has formed no other attachment?'

'No, indeed,' replied his mother; 'you have, or I mistake, too strong a hold on her affections already. What I would say,' resumed the old lady, stopping her son as he was about to speak, 'is this. Before you stake your all on this chance; before you suffer yourself to be carried to the highest point of hope; reflect for a few moments, my dear child, on Rose's history, and consider what effect the knowledge of her doubtful birth may have on her decision: devoted as she is to us, with all the intensity of her noble mind, and with that perfect sacrifice of self which, in all matters, great or trifling, has always been her characteristic.'

'What do you mean?'

'That I leave you to discover,' replied Mrs. Maylie. 'I must go back to her. God bless you!'

'I shall see you again to-night?' said the young man, eagerly.

'By and by,' replied the lady; 'when I leave Rose.'

'You will tell her I am here?' said Harry.

'Of course,' replied Mrs. Maylie.

'And say how anxious I have been, and how much I have suffered, and how I long to see her. You will not refuse to do this, mother?'

'No,' said the old lady; 'I will tell her all.' And pressing her son's hand, affectionately, she hastened from the room.

Mr. Losberne and Oliver had remained at another end of the apartment while this hurried conversation was proceeding. The former now held out his hand to Harry Maylie; and hearty salutations were exchanged between them. The doctor then communicated, in reply to multifarious questions from his young friend, a precise account of his patient's situation; which was quite as consolatory and full of promise, as Oliver's statement had encouraged him to hope; and to the whole of which, Mr. Giles, who affected to be busy about the luggage, listened with greedy ears.

'Have you shot anything particular, lately, Giles?' inquired the doctor, when he had concluded.

'Nothing particular, sir,' replied Mr. Giles, colouring up to the eyes.

'Nor catching any thieves, nor identifying any house-breakers?' said the doctor.

'None at all, sir,' replied Mr. Giles, with much gravity.

'Well,' said the doctor, 'I am sorry to hear it, because you do that sort of thing admirably. Pray, how is Brittles?'

'The boy is very well, sir,' said Mr. Giles, recovering his usual tone of patronage; 'and sends his respectful

duty, sir.'

'That's well,' said the doctor. 'Seeing you here, reminds me, Mr. Giles, that on the day before that on which I was called away so hurriedly, I executed, at the request of your good mistress, a small commission in your favour. Just step into this corner a moment, will you?'

Mr. Giles walked into the corner with much importance, and some wonder, and was honoured with a short whispering conference with the doctor, on the termination of which, he made a great many bows, and retired with steps of unusual stateliness. The subject matter of this conference was not disclosed in the parlour, but the kitchen was speedily enlightened concerning it; for Mr. Giles walked straight thither, and having called for a mug of ale, announced, with an air of majesty, which was highly effective, that it had pleased his mistress, in consideration of his gallant behaviour on the occasion of that attempted robbery, to deposit, in the local savings-bank, the sum of five-and-twenty pounds, for his sole use and benefit. At this, the two women-servants lifted up their hands and eyes, and supposed that Mr. Giles, pulling out his shirt-frill, replied, 'No, no'; and that if they observed that he was at all haughty to his inferiors, he would thank them to tell him so. And then he made a great many other remarks, no less illustrative of his humility, which were received with equal favour and applause, and were, withal, as original and as much to the purpose, as the remarks of great men commonly are.

Above stairs, the remainder of the evening passed cheerfully away; for the doctor was in high spirits; and however fatigued or thoughtful Harry Maylie might have been at first, he was not proof against the worthy gentleman's good humour, which displayed itself in a great variety of sallies and professional recollections, and an abundance of small jokes, which struck Oliver as being the drollest things he had ever heard, and caused him to laugh proportionately; to the evident satisfaction of the doctor, who laughed immoderately at himself, and made Harry laugh almost as heartily, by the very force of sympathy. So, they were as pleasant a party as, under the circumstances, they could well have been; and it was late before they retired, with light and thankful hearts, to take that rest of which, after the doubt and suspense they had recently undergone, they stood much in need.

Oliver rose next morning, in better heart, and went about his usual occupations, with more hope and pleasure than he had known for many days. The birds were once more hung out, to sing, in their old places; and the sweetest wild flowers that could be found, were once more gathered to gladden Rose with their beauty. The melancholy which had seemed to the sad eyes of the anxious boy to hang, for days past, over every object, beautiful as all were, was dispelled by magic. The dew seemed to sparkle more brightly on the green leaves; the air to rustle among them with a sweeter music; and the sky itself to look more blue and bright. Such is the influence which the condition of our own thoughts, exercise, even over the appearance of external objects. Men who look on nature, and their fellow-men, and cry that all is dark and gloomy, are in the right; but the sombre colours are reflections from their own jaundiced eyes and hearts. The real hues are delicate, and need a clearer vision.

It is worthy of remark, and Oliver did not fail to note it at the time, that his morning expeditions were no longer made alone. Harry Maylie, after the very first morning when he met Oliver coming laden home, was seized with such a passion for flowers, and displayed such a taste in their arrangement, as left his young companion far behind. If Oliver were behindhand in these respects, he knew where the best were to be found; and morning after morning they scoured the country together, and brought home the fairest that blossomed. The window of the young lady's chamber was opened now; for she loved to feel the rich summer air stream in, and revive her with its freshness; but there always stood in water, just inside the lattice, one particular little bunch, which was made up with great care, every morning. Oliver could not help noticing that the withered flowers were never thrown away, although the little vase was regularly replenished; nor, could he help observing, that whenever the doctor came into the garden, he invariably cast his eyes up to that particular corner, and nodded his head most expressively, as he set forth on his morning's walk. Pending these observations, the days were flying by; and Rose was rapidly recovering.

Nor did Oliver's time hang heavy on his hands, although the young lady had not yet left her chamber, and there were no evening walks, save now and then, for a short distance, with Mrs. Maylie. He applied himself, with redoubled assiduity, to the instructions of the white-headed old gentleman, and laboured so hard that his quick progress surprised even himself. It was while he was engaged in this pursuit, that he was greatly startled and distressed by a most unexpected occurrence.

The little room in which he was accustomed to sit, when busy at his books, was on the ground-floor, at the back of the house. It was quite a cottage-room, with a lattice-window: around which were clusters of jessamine and honeysuckle, that crept over the casement, and filled the place with their delicious perfume. It looked into a garden, whence a wicket-gate opened into a small paddock; all beyond, was fine meadow-land and wood. There was no other dwelling near, in that direction; and the prospect it commanded was very extensive.

One beautiful evening, when the first shades of twilight were beginning to settle upon the earth, Oliver sat at this window, intent upon his books. He had been poring over them for some time; and, as the day had been uncommonly sultry, and he had exerted himself a great deal, it is no disparagement to the authors, whoever they may have been, to say, that gradually and by slow degrees, he fell asleep.

There is a kind of sleep that steals upon us sometimes, which, while it holds the body prisoner, does not free the mind from a sense of things about it, and enable it to ramble at its pleasure. So far as an overpowering heaviness, a prostration of strength, and an utter inability to control our thoughts or power of motion, can be called sleep, this is it; and yet, we have a consciousness of all that is going on about us, and, if we dream at such a time, words which are really spoken, or sounds which really exist at the moment, accommodate themselves with surprising readiness to our visions, until reality and imagination become so strangely blended that it is afterwards almost matter of impossibility to separate the two. Nor is this, the most striking phenomenon incidental to such a state. It is an undoubted fact, that although our senses of touch and sight be for the time dead, yet our sleeping thoughts, and the visionary scenes that pass before us, will be influenced and materially influenced, by the *mere silent presence* of some external object; which may not have been near us when we closed our eyes: and of whose vicinity we have had no waking consciousness.

Oliver knew, perfectly well, that he was in his own little room; that his books were lying on the table before him; that the sweet air was stirring among the creeping plants outside. And yet he was asleep. Suddenly, the scene changed; the air became close and confined; and he thought, with a glow of terror, that he was in the Jew's house again. There sat the hideous old man, in his accustomed corner, pointing at him, and whispering to another man, with his face averted, who sat beside him.

'Hush, my dear!' he thought he heard the Jew say; 'it is he, sure enough. Come away.'

'He!' the other man seemed to answer; 'could I mistake him, think you? If a crowd of ghosts were to put themselves into his exact shape, and he stood amongst them, there is something that would tell me how to point him out. If you buried him fifty feet deep, and took me across his grave, I fancy I should know, if there wasn't a mark above it, that he lay buried there?'

The man seemed to say this, with such dreadful hatred, that Oliver awoke with the fear, and started up.

Good Heaven! what was that, which sent the blood tingling to his heart, and deprived him of his voice, and of power to move! There—there—at the window—close before him—so close, that he could have almost touched him before he started back: with his eyes peering into the room, and meeting his: there stood the Jew! And beside him, white with rage or fear, or both, were the scowling features of the man who had accosted him in the inn-yard.

It was but an instant, a glance, a flash, before his eyes; and they were gone. But they had recognised him, and he them; and their look was as firmly impressed upon his memory, as if it had been deeply carved in stone, and set before him from his birth. He stood transfixed for a moment; then, leaping from the window into the garden, called loudly for help.

CHAPTER XXXV — CONTAINING THE UNSATISFACTORY RESULT OF OLIVER'S ADVENTURE; AND A CONVERSATION OF SOME IMPORTANCE BETWEEN HARRY MAYLIE AND ROSE

When the inmates of the house, attracted by Oliver's cries, hurried to the spot from which they proceeded, they found him, pale and agitated, pointing in the direction of the meadows behind the house, and scarcely able to articulate the words, 'The Jew! the Jew!'

Mr. Giles was at a loss to comprehend what this outcry meant; but Harry Maylie, whose perceptions were something quicker, and who had heard Oliver's history from his mother, understood it at once.

‘What direction did he take?’ he asked, catching up a heavy stick which was standing in a corner.

‘That,’ replied Oliver, pointing out the course the man had taken; ‘I missed them in an instant.’

‘Then, they are in the ditch!’ said Harry. ‘Follow! And keep as near me, as you can.’ So saying, he sprang over the hedge, and darted off with a speed which rendered it matter of exceeding difficulty for the others to keep near him.

Giles followed as well as he could; and Oliver followed too; and in the course of a minute or two, Mr. Losberne, who had been out walking, and just then returned, tumbled over the hedge after them, and picking himself up with more agility than he could have been supposed to possess, struck into the same course at no contemptible speed, shouting all the while, most prodigiously, to know what was the matter.

On they all went; nor stopped they once to breathe, until the leader, striking off into an angle of the field indicated by Oliver, began to search, narrowly, the ditch and hedge adjoining; which afforded time for the remainder of the party to come up; and for Oliver to communicate to Mr. Losberne the circumstances that had led to so vigorous a pursuit.

The search was all in vain. There were not even the traces of recent footsteps, to be seen. They stood now, on the summit of a little hill, commanding the open fields in every direction for three or four miles. There was the village in the hollow on the left; but, in order to gain that, after pursuing the track Oliver had pointed out, the men must have made a circuit of open ground, which it was impossible they could have accomplished in so short a time. A thick wood skirted the meadow-land in another direction; but they could not have gained that covert for the same reason.

‘It must have been a dream, Oliver,’ said Harry Maylie.

‘Oh no, indeed, sir,’ replied Oliver, shuddering at the very recollection of the old wretch’s countenance; ‘I saw him too plainly for that. I saw them both, as plainly as I see you now.’

‘Who was the other?’ inquired Harry and Mr. Losberne, together.

‘The very same man I told you of, who came so suddenly upon me at the inn,’ said Oliver. ‘We had our eyes fixed full upon each other; and I could swear to him.’

‘They took this way?’ demanded Harry: ‘are you sure?’

‘As I am that the men were at the window,’ replied Oliver, pointing down, as he spoke, to the hedge which divided the cottage-garden from the meadow. ‘The tall man leaped over, just there; and the Jew, running a few paces to the right, crept through that gap.’

The two gentlemen watched Oliver’s earnest face, as he spoke, and looking from him to each other, seemed to feel satisfied of the accuracy of what he said. Still, in no direction were there any appearances of the trampling of men in hurried flight. The grass was long; but it was trodden down nowhere, save where their own feet had crushed it. The sides and brinks of the ditches were of damp clay; but in no one place could they discern the print of men’s shoes, or the slightest mark which would indicate that any feet had pressed the ground for hours before.

‘This is strange!’ said Harry.

‘Strange?’ echoed the doctor. ‘Blathers and Duff, themselves, could make nothing of it.’

Notwithstanding the evidently useless nature of their search, they did not desist until the coming on of night rendered its further prosecution hopeless; and even then, they gave it up with reluctance. Giles was dispatched to the different ale-houses in the village, furnished with the best description Oliver could give of the appearance and dress of the strangers. Of these, the Jew was, at all events, sufficiently remarkable to be remembered, supposing he had been seen drinking, or loitering about; but Giles returned without any intelligence, calculated to dispel or lessen the mystery.

On the next day, fresh search was made, and the inquiries renewed; but with no better success. On the day following, Oliver and Mr. Maylie repaired to the market-town, in the hope of seeing or hearing something of the men there; but this effort was equally fruitless. After a few days, the affair began to be forgotten, as most affairs are, when wonder, having no fresh food to support it, dies away of itself.

Meanwhile, Rose was rapidly recovering. She had left her room: was able to go out; and mixing once more with the family, carried joy into the hearts of all.

But, although this happy change had a visible effect on the little circle; and although cheerful voices and merry laughter were once more heard in the cottage; there was at times, an unwonted restraint upon some there: even upon Rose herself: which Oliver could not fail to remark. Mrs. Maylie and her son were often closeted together for a long time; and more than once Rose appeared with traces of tears upon her face. After Mr. Losberne had fixed a day for his departure to Chertsey, these symptoms increased; and it became evident that something was in progress which affected the peace of the young lady, and of somebody else besides.

At length, one morning, when Rose was alone in the breakfast-parlour, Harry Maylie entered; and, with some hesitation, begged permission to speak with her for a few moments.

‘A few—a very few—will suffice, Rose,’ said the young man, drawing his chair towards her. ‘What I shall have to say, has already presented itself to your mind; the most cherished hopes of my heart are not unknown to you, though from my lips you have not heard them stated.’

Rose had been very pale from the moment of his entrance; but that might have been the effect of her recent illness. She merely bowed; and bending over some plants that stood near, waited in silence for him to proceed.

‘I—I—ought to have left here, before,’ said Harry.

‘You should, indeed,’ replied Rose. ‘Forgive me for saying so, but I wish you had.’

‘I was brought here, by the most dreadful and agonising of all apprehensions,’ said the young man; ‘the fear of losing the one dear being on whom my every wish and hope are fixed. You had been dying; trembling between earth and heaven. We know that when the young, the beautiful, and good, are visited with sickness, their pure spirits insensibly turn towards their bright home of lasting rest; we know, Heaven help us! that the best and fairest of our kind, too often fade in blooming.’

There were tears in the eyes of the gentle girl, as these words were spoken; and when one fell upon the flower over which she bent, and glistened brightly in its cup, making it more beautiful, it seemed as though the outpouring of her fresh young heart, claimed kindred naturally, with the loveliest things in nature.

'A creature,' continued the young man, passionately, 'a creature as fair and innocent of guile as one of God's own angels, fluttered between life and death. Oh! who could hope, when the distant world to which she was akin, half opened to her view, that she would return to the sorrow and calamity of this! Rose, Rose, to know that you were passing away like some soft shadow, which a light from above, casts upon the earth; to have no hope that you would be spared to those who linger here; hardly to know a reason why you should be; to feel that you belonged to that bright sphere whither so many of the fairest and the best have winged their early flight; and yet to pray, amid all these consolations, that you might be restored to those who loved you—these were distractions almost too great to bear. They were mine, by day and night; and with them, came such a rushing torrent of fears, and apprehensions, and selfish regrets, lest you should die, and never know how devotedly I loved you, as almost bore down sense and reason in its course. You recovered. Day by day, and almost hour by hour, some drop of health came back, and mingling with the spent and feeble stream of life which circulated languidly within you, swelled it again to a high and rushing tide. I have watched you change almost from death, to life, with eyes that turned blind with their eagerness and deep affection. Do not tell me that you wish I had lost this; for it has softened my heart to all mankind.'

'I did not mean that,' said Rose, weeping; 'I only wish you had left here, that you might have turned to high and noble pursuits again; to pursuits well worthy of you.'

'There is no pursuit more worthy of me: more worthy of the highest nature that exists: than the struggle to win such a heart as yours,' said the young man, taking her hand. 'Rose, my own dear Rose! For years—for years—I have loved you; hoping to win my way to fame, and then come proudly home and tell you it had been pursued only for you to share; thinking, in my daydreams, how I would remind you, in that happy moment, of the many silent tokens I had given of a boy's attachment, and claim your hand, as in redemption of some old mute contract that had been sealed between us! That time has not arrived; but here, with not fame won, and no young vision realised, I offer you the heart so long your own, and stake my all upon the words with which you greet the offer.'

'Your behaviour has ever been kind and noble.' said Rose, mastering the emotions by which she was agitated. 'As you believe that I am not insensible or ungrateful, so hear my answer.'

'It is, that I may endeavour to deserve you; it is, dear Rose?'

'It is,' replied Rose, 'that you must endeavour to forget me; not as your old and dearly-attached companion, for that would wound me deeply; but, as the object of your love. Look into the world; think how many hearts you would be proud to gain, are there. Confide some other passion to me, if you will; I will be the truest, warmest, and most faithful friend you have.'

There was a pause, during which, Rose, who had covered her face with one hand, gave free vent to her tears. Harry still retained the other.

'And your reasons, Rose,' he said, at length, in a low voice; 'your reasons for this decision?'

'You have a right to know them,' rejoined Rose. 'You can say nothing to alter my resolution. It is a duty that I must perform. I owe it, alike to others, and to myself.'

'To yourself?'

'Yes, Harry. I owe it to myself, that I, a friendless, portionless, girl, with a blight upon my name, should not give your friends reason to suspect that I had sordidly yielded to your first passion, and fastened myself, a clog, on all your hopes and projects. I owe it to you and yours, to prevent you from opposing, in the warmth of your generous nature, this great obstacle to your progress in the world.'

'If your inclinations chime with your sense of duty—' Harry began.

'They do not,' replied Rose, colouring deeply.

'Then you return my love?' said Harry. 'Say but that, dear Rose; say but that; and soften the bitterness of this hard disappointment!'

'If I could have done so, without doing heavy wrong to him I loved,' rejoined Rose, 'I could have—'

'Have received this declaration very differently?' said Harry. 'Do not conceal that from me, at least, Rose.'

'I could,' said Rose. 'Stay!' she added, disengaging her hand, 'why should we prolong this painful interview? Most painful to me, and yet productive of lasting happiness, notwithstanding; for it *will* be happiness to know that I once held the high place in your regard which I now occupy, and every triumph you achieve in life will animate me with new fortitude and firmness. Farewell, Harry! As we have met to-day, we meet no more; but in other relations than those in which this conversation have placed us, we may be long and happily entwined; and may every blessing that the prayers of a true and earnest heart can call down from the source of all truth and sincerity, cheer and prosper you!'

'Another word, Rose,' said Harry. 'Your reason in your own words. From your own lips, let me hear it!'

'The prospect before you,' answered Rose, firmly, 'is a brilliant one. All the honours to which great talents and powerful connections can help men in public life, are in store for you. But those connections are proud; and I will neither mingle with such as may hold in scorn the mother who gave me life; nor bring disgrace or failure on the son of her who has so well supplied that mother's place. In a word,' said the young lady, turning away, as her temporary firmness forsook her, 'there is a stain upon my name, which the world visits on innocent heads. I will carry it into no blood but my own; and the reproach shall rest alone on me.'

'One word more, Rose. Dearest Rose! one more!' cried Harry, throwing himself before her. 'If I had been less—less fortunate, the world would call it—if some obscure and peaceful life had been my destiny—if I had been poor, sick, helpless—would you have turned from me then? Or has my probable advancement to riches and honour, given this scruple birth?'

'Do not press me to reply,' answered Rose. 'The question does not arise, and never will. It is unfair, almost unkind, to urge it.'

‘If your answer be what I almost dare to hope it is,’ retorted Harry, ‘it will shed a gleam of happiness upon my lonely way, and light the path before me. It is not an idle thing to do so much, by the utterance of a few brief words, for one who loves you beyond all else. Oh, Rose: in the name of my ardent and enduring attachment; in the name of all I have suffered for you, and all you doom me to undergo; answer me this one question!’

‘Then, if your lot had been differently cast,’ rejoined Rose; ‘if you had been even a little, but not so far, above me; if I could have been a help and comfort to you in any humble scene of peace and retirement, and not a blot and drawback in ambitious and distinguished crowds; I should have been spared this trial. I have every reason to be happy, very happy, now; but then, Harry, I own I should have been happier.’

Busy recollections of old hopes, cherished as a girl, long ago, crowded into the mind of Rose, while making this avowal; but they brought tears with them, as old hopes will when they come back withered; and they relieved her.

‘I cannot help this weakness, and it makes my purpose stronger,’ said Rose, extending her hand. ‘I must leave you now, indeed.’

‘I ask one promise,’ said Harry. ‘Once, and only once more,—say within a year, but it may be much sooner,—I may speak to you again on this subject, for the last time.’

‘Not to press me to alter my right determination,’ replied Rose, with a melancholy smile; ‘it will be useless.’

‘No,’ said Harry; ‘to hear you repeat it, if you will—finally repeat it! I will lay at your feet, whatever of station of fortune I may possess; and if you still adhere to your present resolution, will not seek, by word or act, to change it.’

‘Then let it be so,’ rejoined Rose; ‘it is but one pang the more, and by that time I may be enabled to bear it better.’

She extended her hand again. But the young man caught her to his bosom; and imprinting one kiss on her beautiful forehead, hurried from the room.

CHAPTER XXXVI — IS A VERY SHORT ONE, AND MAY APPEAR OF NO GREAT IMPORTANCE IN ITS PLACE, BUT IT SHOULD BE READ NOTWITHSTANDING, AS A SEQUEL TO THE LAST, AND A KEY TO ONE THAT WILL FOLLOW WHEN ITS

TIME ARRIVES

‘And so you are resolved to be my travelling companion this morning; eh?’ said the doctor, as Harry Maylie joined him and Oliver at the breakfast-table. ‘Why, you are not in the same mind or intention two half-hours together!’

‘You will tell me a different tale one of these days,’ said Harry, colouring without any perceptible reason.

‘I hope I may have good cause to do so,’ replied Mr. Losberne; ‘though I confess I don’t think I shall. But yesterday morning you had made up your mind, in a great hurry, to stay here, and to accompany your mother, like a dutiful son, to the sea-side. Before noon, you announce that you are going to do me the honour of accompanying me as far as I go, on your road to London. And at night, you urge me, with great mystery, to start before the ladies are stirring; the consequence of which is, that young Oliver here is pinned down to his breakfast when he ought to be ranging the meadows after botanical phenomena of all kinds. Too bad, isn’t it, Oliver?’

‘I should have been very sorry not to have been at home when you and Mr. Maylie went away, sir,’ rejoined Oliver.

‘That’s a fine fellow,’ said the doctor; ‘you shall come and see me when you return. But, to speak seriously, Harry; has any communication from the great nobs produced this sudden anxiety on your part to be gone?’

‘The great nobs,’ replied Harry, ‘under which designation, I presume, you include my most stately uncle, have not communicated with me at all, since I have been here; nor, at this time of the year, is it likely that anything would occur to render necessary my immediate attendance among them.’

‘Well,’ said the doctor, ‘you are a queer fellow. But of course they will get you into parliament at the election before Christmas, and these sudden shiftings and changes are no bad preparation for political life. There’s something in that. Good training is always desirable, whether the race be for place, cup, or sweepstakes.’

Harry Maylie looked as if he could have followed up this short dialogue by one or two remarks that would have staggered the doctor not a little; but he contented himself with saying, ‘We shall see,’ and pursued the subject no farther. The post-chaise drove up to the door shortly afterwards; and Giles coming in for the luggage, the good doctor bustled out, to see it packed.

‘Oliver,’ said Harry Maylie, in a low voice, ‘let me speak a word with you.’

Oliver walked into the window-recess to which Mr. Maylie beckoned him; much surprised at the mixture of sadness and boisterous spirits, which his whole behaviour displayed.

'You can write well now?' said Harry, laying his hand upon his arm.

'I hope so, sir,' replied Oliver.

'I shall not be at home again, perhaps for some time; I wish you would write to me—say once a fort-night: every alternate Monday: to the General Post Office in London. Will you?'

'Oh! certainly, sir; I shall be proud to do it,' exclaimed Oliver, greatly delighted with the commission.

'I should like to know how—how my mother and Miss Maylie are,' said the young man; 'and you can fill up a sheet by telling me what walks you take, and what you talk about, and whether she—they, I mean—seem happy and quite well. You understand me?'

'Oh! quite, sir, quite,' replied Oliver.

'I would rather you did not mention it to them,' said Harry, hurrying over his words; 'because it might make my mother anxious to write to me oftener, and it is a trouble and worry to her. Let it be a secret between you and me; and mind you tell me everything! I depend upon you.'

Oliver, quite elated and honoured by a sense of his importance, faithfully promised to be secret and explicit in his communications. Mr. Maylie took leave of him, with many assurances of his regard and protection.

The doctor was in the chaise; Giles (who, it had been arranged, should be left behind) held the door open in his hand; and the women-servants were in the garden, looking on. Harry cast one slight glance at the latticed window, and jumped into the carriage.

'Drive on!' he cried, 'hard, fast, full gallop! Nothing short of flying will keep pace with me, to-day.'

'Halloa!' cried the doctor, letting down the front glass in a great hurry, and shouting to the postillion; 'something very short of flying will keep pace with *me*. Do you hear?'

Jingling and clattering, till distance rendered its noise inaudible, and its rapid progress only perceptible to the eye, the vehicle wound its way along the road, almost hidden in a cloud of dust: now wholly disappearing, and now becoming visible again, as intervening objects, or the intricacies of the way, permitted. It was not until even the dusty cloud was no longer to be seen, that the gazers dispersed.

And there was one looker-on, who remained with eyes fixed upon the spot where the carriage had disappeared, long after it was many miles away; for, behind the white curtain which had shrouded her from view when Harry raised his eyes towards the window, sat Rose herself.

'He seems in high spirits and happy,' she said, at length. 'I feared for a time he might be otherwise. I was mistaken. I am very, very glad.'

Tears are signs of gladness as well as grief; but those which coursed down Rose's face, as she sat pensively at the window, still gazing in the same direction, seemed to tell more of sorrow than of joy.

CHAPTER XXXVII — IN WHICH THE READER MAY PERCEIVE A CONTRAST, NOT UNCOMMON IN MATRIMONIAL CASES

Mr. Bumble sat in the workhouse parlour, with his eyes moodily fixed on the cheerless grate, whence, as it was summer time, no brighter gleam proceeded, than the reflection of certain sickly rays of the sun, which were sent back from its cold and shining surface. A paper fly-cage dangled from the ceiling, to which he occasionally raised his eyes in gloomy thought; and, as the heedless insects hovered round the gaudy net-work, Mr. Bumble would heave a deep sigh, while a more gloomy shadow overspread his countenance. Mr. Bumble was meditating; it might be that the insects brought to mind, some painful passage in his own past life.

Nor was Mr. Bumble's gloom the only thing calculated to awaken a pleasing melancholy in the bosom of a spectator. There were not wanting other appearances, and those closely connected with his own person, which announced that a great change had taken place in the position of his affairs. The laced coat, and the cocked hat; where were they? He still wore knee-breeches, and dark cotton stockings on his nether limbs; but they were not *the* breeches. The coat was wide-skirted; and in that respect like *the* coat, but, oh how different! The mighty cocked hat was replaced by a modest round one. Mr. Bumble was no longer a beadle.

There are some promotions in life, which, independent of the more substantial rewards they offer, require peculiar value and dignity from the coats and waistcoats connected with them. A field-marshal has his uniform; a bishop his silk apron; a counsellor his silk gown; a beadle his cocked hat. Strip the bishop of his apron, or the beadle of his hat and lace; what are they? Men. Mere men. Dignity, and even holiness too, sometimes, are more questions of coat and waistcoat than some people imagine.

Mr. Bumble had married Mrs. Corney, and was master of the workhouse. Another beadle had come into power. On him the cocked hat, gold-laced coat, and staff, had all three descended.

'And to-morrow two months it was done!' said Mr. Bumble, with a sigh. 'It seems a age.'

Mr. Bumble might have meant that he had concentrated a whole existence of happiness into the short space of eight weeks; but the sigh—there was a vast deal of meaning in the sigh.

'I sold myself,' said Mr. Bumble, pursuing the same train of relection, 'for six teaspoons, a pair of sugar-

tongs, and a milk-pot; with a small quantity of second-hand furniture, and twenty pound in money. I went very reasonable. Cheap, dirt cheap!'

'Cheap!' cried a shrill voice in Mr. Bumble's ear: 'you would have been dear at any price; and dear enough I paid for you, Lord above knows that!'

Mr. Bumble turned, and encountered the face of his interesting consort, who, imperfectly comprehending the few words she had overheard of his complaint, had hazarded the foregoing remark at a venture.

'Mrs. Bumble, ma'am!' said Mr. Bumble, with a sentimental sternness.

'Well!' cried the lady.

'Have the goodness to look at me,' said Mr. Bumble, fixing his eyes upon her. (If she stands such a eye as that,' said Mr. Bumble to himself, 'she can stand anything. It is a eye I never knew to fail with paupers. If it fails with her, my power is gone.')

Whether an exceedingly small expansion of eye be sufficient to quell paupers, who, being lightly fed, are in no very high condition; or whether the late Mrs. Corney was particularly proof against eagle glances; are matters of opinion. The matter of fact, is, that the matron was in no way overpowered by Mr. Bumble's scowl, but, on the contrary, treated it with great disdain, and even raised a laugh thereat, which sounded as though it were genuine.

On hearing this most unexpected sound, Mr. Bumble looked, first incredulous, and afterwards amazed. He then relapsed into his former state; nor did he rouse himself until his attention was again awakened by the voice of his partner.

'Are you going to sit snoring there, all day?' inquired Mrs. Bumble.

'I am going to sit here, as long as I think proper, ma'am,' rejoined Mr. Bumble; 'and although I was *not* snoring, I shall snore, gape, sneeze, laugh, or cry, as the humour strikes me; such being my prerogative.'

'*Your* prerogative!' sneered Mrs. Bumble, with ineffable contempt.

'I said the word, ma'am,' said Mr. Bumble. 'The prerogative of a man is to command.'

'And what's the prerogative of a woman, in the name of Goodness?' cried the relict of Mr. Corney deceased.

'To obey, ma'am,' thundered Mr. Bumble. 'Your late unfortunate husband should have taught it you; and then, perhaps, he might have been alive now. I wish he was, poor man!'

Mrs. Bumble, seeing at a glance, that the decisive moment had now arrived, and that a blow struck for the mastership on one side or other, must necessarily be final and conclusive, no sooner heard this allusion to the dead and gone, than she dropped into a chair, and with a loud scream that Mr. Bumble was a hard-hearted brute, fell into a paroxysm of tears.

But, tears were not the things to find their way to Mr. Bumble's soul; his heart was waterproof. Like washable beaver hats that improve with rain, his nerves were rendered stouter and more vigorous, by showers of tears, which, being tokens of weakness, and so far tacit admissions of his own power, pleased and exalted him. He eyed his good lady with looks of great satisfaction, and begged, in an encouraging manner, that she should cry her hardest: the exercise being looked upon, by the faculty, as strongly conducive to health.

'It opens the lungs, washes the countenance, exercises the eyes, and softens down the temper,' said Mr. Bumble. 'So cry away.'

As he discharged himself of this pleasantry, Mr. Bumble took his hat from a peg, and putting it on, rather rakishly, on one side, as a man might, who felt he had asserted his superiority in a becoming manner, thrust his hands into his pockets, and sauntered towards the door, with much ease and waggishness depicted in his whole appearance.

Now, Mrs. Corney that was, had tried the tears, because they were less troublesome than a manual assault; but, she was quite prepared to make trial of the latter mode of proceeding, as Mr. Bumble was not long in discovering.

The first proof he experienced of the fact, was conveyed in a hollow sound, immediately succeeded by the sudden flying off of his hat to the opposite end of the room. This preliminary proceeding laying bare his head, the expert lady, clasping him tightly round the throat with one hand, inflicted a shower of blows (dealt with singular vigour and dexterity) upon it with the other. This done, she created a little variety by scratching his face, and tearing his hair; and, having, by this time, inflicted as much punishment as she deemed necessary for the offence, she pushed him over a chair, which was luckily well situated for the purpose: and defied him to talk about his prerogative again, if he dared.

'Get up!' said Mrs. Bumble, in a voice of command. 'And take yourself away from here, unless you want me to do something desperate.'

Mr. Bumble rose with a very rueful countenance: wondering much what something desperate might be. Picking up his hat, he looked towards the door.

'Are you going?' demanded Mrs. Bumble.

'Certainly, my dear, certainly,' rejoined Mr. Bumble, making a quicker motion towards the door. 'I didn't intend to—I'm going, my dear! You are so very violent, that really I—'

At this instant, Mrs. Bumble stepped hastily forward to replace the carpet, which had been kicked up in the scuffle. Mr. Bumble immediately darted out of the room, without bestowing another thought on his unfinished sentence: leaving the late Mrs. Corney in full possession of the field.

Mr. Bumble was fairly taken by surprise, and fairly beaten. He had a decided propensity for bullying: derived no inconsiderable pleasure from the exercise of petty cruelty; and, consequently, was (it is needless to say) a coward. This is by no means a disparagement to his character; for many official personages, who are held in high respect and admiration, are the victims of similar infirmities. The remark is made, indeed, rather in his favour than otherwise, and with a view of impressing the reader with a just sense of his qualifications for office.

But, the measure of his degradation was not yet full. After making a tour of the house, and thinking, for the first time, that the poor-laws really were too hard on people; and that men who ran away from their wives, leaving them chargeable to the parish, ought, in justice to be visited with no punishment at all, but rather rewarded as meritorious individuals who had suffered much; Mr. Bumble came to a room where some of the female paupers were usually employed in washing the parish linen: when the sound of voices in conversation, now proceeded.

'Hem!' said Mr. Bumble, summoning up all his native dignity. 'These women at least shall continue to respect the prerogative. Hallo! hallo there! What do you mean by this noise, you hussies?'

With these words, Mr. Bumble opened the door, and walked in with a very fierce and angry manner: which was at once exchanged for a most humiliated and cowering air, as his eyes unexpectedly rested on the form of his lady wife.

'My dear,' said Mr. Bumble, 'I didn't know you were here.'

'Didn't know I was here!' repeated Mrs. Bumble. 'What do *you* do here?'

'I thought they were talking rather too much to be doing their work properly, my dear,' replied Mr. Bumble: glancing distractedly at a couple of old women at the wash-tub, who were comparing notes of admiration at the workhouse-master's humility.

'*You* thought they were talking too much?' said Mrs. Bumble. 'What business is it of yours?'

'Why, my dear—' urged Mr. Bumble submissively.

'What business is it of yours?' demanded Mrs. Bumble, again.

'It's very true, you're matron here, my dear,' submitted Mr. Bumble; 'but I thought you mightn't be in the way just then.'

'I'll tell you what, Mr. Bumble,' returned his lady. 'We don't want any of your interference. You're a great deal too fond of poking your nose into things that don't concern you, making everybody in the house laugh, the moment your back is turned, and making yourself look like a fool every hour in the day. Be off; come!'

Mr. Bumble, seeing with excruciating feelings, the delight of the two old paupers, who were tittering together most rapturously, hesitated for an instant. Mrs. Bumble, whose patience brooked no delay, caught up a bowl of soap-suds, and motioning him towards the door, ordered him instantly to depart, on pain of receiving the contents upon his portly person.

What could Mr. Bumble do? He looked dejectedly round, and slunk away; and, as he reached the door, the titterings of the paupers broke into a shrill chuckle of irrepressible delight. It wanted but this. He was degraded in their eyes; he had lost caste and station before the very paupers; he had fallen from all the height and pomp of beadleship, to the lowest depth of the most snubbed hen-peckery.

'All in two months!' said Mr. Bumble, filled with dismal thoughts. 'Two months! No more than two months ago, I was not only my own master, but everybody else's, so far as the porochial workhouse was concerned,

and now!—’

It was too much. Mr. Bumble boxed the ears of the boy who opened the gate for him (for he had reached the portal in his reverie); and walked, distractedly, into the street.

He walked up one street, and down another, until exercise had abated the first passion of his grief; and then the revulsion of feeling made him thirsty. He passed a great many public-houses; but, at length paused before one in a by-way, whose parlour, as he gathered from a hasty peep over the blinds, was deserted, save by one solitary customer. It began to rain, heavily, at the moment. This determined him. Mr. Bumble stepped in; and ordering something to drink, as he passed the bar, entered the apartment into which he had looked from the street.

The man who was seated there, was tall and dark, and wore a large cloak. He had the air of a stranger; and seemed, by a certain haggardness in his look, as well as by the dusty soils on his dress, to have travelled some distance. He eyed Bumble askance, as he entered, but scarcely deigned to nod his head in acknowledgment of his salutation.

Mr. Bumble had quite dignity enough for two; supposing even that the stranger had been more familiar: so he drank his gin-and-water in silence, and read the paper with great show of pomp and circumstance.

It so happened, however: as it will happen very often, when men fall into company under such circumstances: that Mr. Bumble felt, every now and then, a powerful inducement, which he could not resist, to steal a look at the stranger: and that whenever he did so, he withdrew his eyes, in some confusion, to find that the stranger was at that moment stealing a look at him. Mr. Bumble’s awkwardness was enhanced by the very remarkable expression of the stranger’s eye, which was keen and bright, but shadowed by a scowl of distrust and suspicion, unlike anything he had ever observed before, and repulsive to behold.

When they had encountered each other’s glance several times in this way, the stranger, in a harsh, deep voice, broke silence.

‘Were you looking for me,’ he said, ‘when you peered in at the window?’

‘Not that I am aware of, unless you’re Mr.—’ Here Mr. Bumble stopped short; for he was curious to know the stranger’s name, and thought in his impatience, he might supply the blank.

‘I see you were not,’ said the stranger; an expression of quiet sarcasm playing about his mouth; ‘or you have known my name. You don’t know it. I would recommend you not to ask for it.’

‘I meant no harm, young man,’ observed Mr. Bumble, majestically.

‘And have done none,’ said the stranger.

Another silence succeeded this short dialogue: which was again broken by the stranger.

‘I have seen you before, I think?’ said he. ‘You were differently dressed at that time, and I only passed you in the street, but I should know you again. You were beadle here, once; were you not?’

‘I was,’ said Mr. Bumble, in some surprise; ‘porochial beadle.’

‘Just so,’ rejoined the other, nodding his head. ‘It was in that character I saw you. What are you now?’

‘Master of the workhouse,’ rejoined Mr. Bumble, slowly and impressively, to check any undue familiarity the stranger might otherwise assume. ‘Master of the workhouse, young man!’

‘You have the same eye to your own interest, that you always had, I doubt not?’ resumed the stranger, looking keenly into Mr. Bumble’s eyes, as he raised them in astonishment at the question.

‘Don’t scruple to answer freely, man. I know you pretty well, you see.’

‘I suppose, a married man,’ replied Mr. Bumble, shading his eyes with his hand, and surveying the stranger, from head to foot, in evident perplexity, ‘is not more averse to turning an honest penny when he can, than a single one. Porochial officers are not so well paid that they can afford to refuse any little extra fee, when it comes to them in a civil and proper manner.’

The stranger smiled, and nodded his head again: as much to say, he had not mistaken his man; then rang the bell.

‘Fill this glass again,’ he said, handing Mr. Bumble’s empty tumbler to the landlord. ‘Let it be strong and hot. You like it so, I suppose?’

‘Not too strong,’ replied Mr. Bumble, with a delicate cough.

‘You understand what that means, landlord!’ said the stranger, drily.

The host smiled, disappeared, and shortly afterwards returned with a steaming jorum: of which, the first gulp brought the water into Mr. Bumble’s eyes.

‘Now listen to me,’ said the stranger, after closing the door and window. ‘I came down to this place, to-day, to find you out; and, by one of those chances which the devil throws in the way of his friends sometimes, you walked into the very room I was sitting in, while you were uppermost in my mind. I want some information from you. I don’t ask you to give it for nothing, slight as it is. Put up that, to begin with.’

As he spoke, he pushed a couple of sovereigns across the table to his companion, carefully, as though unwilling that the chinking of money should be heard without. When Mr. Bumble had scrupulously examined the coins, to see that they were genuine, and had put them up, with much satisfaction, in his waistcoat-pocket, he went on:

‘Carry your memory back—let me see—twelve years, last winter.’

‘It’s a long time,’ said Mr. Bumble. ‘Very good. I’ve done it.’

‘The scene, the workhouse.’

‘Good!’

‘And the time, night.’

‘Yes.’

‘And the place, the crazy hole, wherever it was, in which miserable drabs brought forth the life and health so often denied to themselves—gave birth to puling children for the parish to rear; and hid their shame, rot

‘em in the grave!’

‘The lying-in room, I suppose?’ said Mr. Bumble, not quite following the stranger’s excited description.

‘Yes,’ said the stranger. ‘A boy was born there.’

‘A many boys,’ observed Mr. Bumble, shaking his head, despondingly.

‘A murrain on the young devils!’ cried the stranger; ‘I speak of one; a meek-looking, pale-faced boy, who was apprenticed down here, to a coffin-maker—I wish he had made his coffin, and screwed his body in it—and who afterwards ran away to London, as it was supposed.

‘Why, you mean Oliver! Young Twist!’ said Mr. Bumble; ‘I remember him, of course. There wasn’t a obstinater young rascal—’

‘It’s not of him I want to hear; I’ve heard enough of him,’ said the stranger, stopping Mr. Bumble in the outset of a tirade on the subject of poor Oliver’s vices. ‘It’s of a woman; the hag that nursed his mother. Where is she?’

‘Where is she?’ said Mr. Bumble, whom the gin-and-water had rendered facetious. ‘It would be hard to tell. There’s no midwifery there, whichever place she’s gone to; so I suppose she’s out of employment, anyway.’

‘What do you mean?’ demanded the stranger, sternly.

‘That she died last winter,’ rejoined Mr. Bumble.

The man looked fixedly at him when he had given this information, and although he did not withdraw his eyes for some time afterwards, his gaze gradually became vacant and abstracted, and he seemed lost in thought. For some time, he appeared doubtful whether he ought to be relieved or disappointed by the intelligence; but at length he breathed more freely; and withdrawing his eyes, observed that it was no great matter. With that he rose, as if to depart.

But Mr. Bumble was cunning enough; and he at once saw that an opportunity was opened, for the lucrative disposal of some secret in the possession of his better half. He well remembered the night of old Sally’s death, which the occurrences of that day had given him good reason to recollect, as the occasion on which he had proposed to Mrs. Corney; and although that lady had never confided to him the disclosure of which she had been the solitary witness, he had heard enough to know that it related to something that had occurred in the old woman’s attendance, as workhouse nurse, upon the young mother of Oliver Twist. Hastily calling this circumstance to mind, he informed the stranger, with an air of mystery, that one woman had been closeted with the old harridan shortly before she died; and that she could, as he had reason to believe, throw some light on the subject of his inquiry.

‘How can I find her?’ said the stranger, thrown off his guard; and plainly showing that all his fears (whatever they were) were aroused afresh by the intelligence.

‘Only through me,’ rejoined Mr. Bumble.

‘When?’ cried the stranger, hastily.

‘To-morrow,’ rejoined Bumble.

‘At nine in the evening,’ said the stranger, producing a scrap of paper, and writing down upon it, an obscure address by the water-side, in characters that betrayed his agitation; ‘at nine in the evening, bring her to me there. I needn’t tell you to be secret. It’s your interest.’

With these words, he led the way to the door, after stopping to pay for the liquor that had been drunk. Shortly remarking that their roads were different, he departed, without more ceremony than an emphatic repetition of the hour of appointment for the following night.

On glancing at the address, the parochial functionary observed that it contained no name. The stranger had not gone far, so he made after him to ask it.

‘What do you want?’ cried the man, turning quickly round, as Bumble touched him on the arm. ‘Following me?’

‘Only to ask a question,’ said the other, pointing to the scrap of paper. ‘What name am I to ask for?’

‘Monks!’ rejoined the man; and strode hastily, away.

CHAPTER XXXVIII — CONTAINING AN ACCOUNT OF WHAT PASSED BETWEEN MR. AND MRS. BUMBLE, AND MR. MONKS, AT THEIR NOCTURNAL INTERVIEW

It was a dull, close, overcast summer evening. The clouds, which had been threatening all day, spread out in a dense and sluggish mass of vapour, already yielded large drops of rain, and seemed to presage a violent thunder-storm, when Mr. and Mrs. Bumble, turning out of the main street of the town, directed their course towards a scattered little colony of ruinous houses, distant from it some mile and a-half, or thereabouts, and erected on a low unwholesome swamp, bordering upon the river.

They were both wrapped in old and shabby outer garments, which might, perhaps, serve the double purpose of protecting their persons from the rain, and sheltering them from observation. The husband carried a lantern, from which, however, no light yet shone; and trudged on, a few paces in front, as though—the way

being dirty—to give his wife the benefit of treading in his heavy footprints. They went on, in profound silence; every now and then, Mr. Bumble relaxed his pace, and turned his head as if to make sure that his helpmate was following; then, discovering that she was close at his heels, he mended his rate of walking, and proceeded, at a considerable increase of speed, towards their place of destination.

This was far from being a place of doubtful character; for it had long been known as the residence of none but low ruffians, who, under various pretences of living by their labour, subsisted chiefly on plunder and crime. It was a collection of mere hovels: some, hastily built with loose bricks: others, of old worm-eaten ship-timber: jumbled together without any attempt at order or arrangement, and planted, for the most part, within a few feet of the river's bank. A few leaky boats drawn up on the mud, and made fast to the dwarf wall which skirted it: and here and there an oar or coil of rope: appeared, at first, to indicate that the inhabitants of these miserable cottages pursued some avocation on the river; but a glance at the shattered and useless condition of the articles thus displayed, would have led a passer-by, without much difficulty, to the conjecture that they were disposed there, rather for the preservation of appearances, than with any view to their being actually employed.

In the heart of this cluster of huts; and skirting the river, which its upper stories overhung; stood a large building, formerly used as a manufactory of some kind. It had, in its day, probably furnished employment to the inhabitants of the surrounding tenements. But it had long since gone to ruin. The rat, the worm, and the action of the damp, had weakened and rotted the piles on which it stood; and a considerable portion of the building had already sunk down into the water; while the remainder, tottering and bending over the dark stream, seemed to wait a favourable opportunity of following its old companion, and involving itself in the same fate.

It was before this ruinous building that the worthy couple paused, as the first peal of distant thunder reverberated in the air, and the rain commenced pouring violently down.

'The place should be somewhere here,' said Bumble, consulting a scrap of paper he held in his hand.

'Halloa there!' cried a voice from above.

Following the sound, Mr. Bumble raised his head and descried a man looking out of a door, breast-high, on the second story.

'Stand still, a minute,' cried the voice; 'I'll be with you directly.' With which the head disappeared, and the door closed.

'Is that the man?' asked Mr. Bumble's good lady.

Mr. Bumble nodded in the affirmative.

'Then, mind what I told you,' said the matron: 'and be careful to say as little as you can, or you'll betray us at once.'

Mr. Bumble, who had eyed the building with very rueful looks, was apparently about to express some doubts relative to the advisability of proceeding any further with the enterprise just then, when he was prevented by the appearance of Monks: who opened a small door, near which they stood, and beckoned them inwards.

'Come in!' he cried impatiently, stamping his foot upon the ground. 'Don't keep me here!'

The woman, who had hesitated at first, walked boldly in, without any other invitation. Mr. Bumble, who was ashamed or afraid to lag behind, followed: obviously very ill at ease and with scarcely any of that remarkable dignity which was usually his chief characteristic.

'What the devil made you stand lingering there, in the wet?' said Monks, turning round, and addressing Bumble, after he had bolted the door behind them.

'We—we were only cooling ourselves,' stammered Bumble, looking apprehensively about him.

'Cooling yourselves!' retorted Monks. 'Not all the rain that ever fell, or ever will fall, will put as much of hell's fire out, as a man can carry about with him. You won't cool yourself so easily; don't think it!'

With this agreeable speech, Monks turned short upon the matron, and bent his gaze upon her, till even she, who was not easily cowed, was fain to withdraw her eyes, and turn them towards the ground.

'This is the woman, is it?' demanded Monks.

'Hem! That is the woman,' replied Mr. Bumble, mindful of his wife's caution.

'You think women never can keep secrets, I suppose?' said the matron, interposing, and returning, as she spoke, the searching look of Monks.

'I know they will always keep *one* till it's found out,' said Monks.

'And what may that be?' asked the matron.

'The loss of their own good name,' replied Monks. 'So, by the same rule, if a woman's a party to a secret that might hang or transport her, I'm not afraid of her telling it to anybody; not I! Do you understand, mistress?'

'No,' rejoined the matron, slightly colouring as she spoke.

'Of course you don't!' said Monks. 'How should you?'

Bestowing something half-way between a smile and a frown upon his two companions, and again beckoning them to follow him, the man hastened across the apartment, which was of considerable extent, but low in the roof. He was preparing to ascend a steep staircase, or rather ladder, leading to another floor of warehouses above: when a bright flash of lightning streamed down the aperture, and a peal of thunder followed, which shook the crazy building to its centre.

'Hear it!' he cried, shrinking back. 'Hear it! Rolling and crashing on as if it echoed through a thousand caverns where the devils were hiding from it. I hate the sound!'

He remained silent for a few moments; and then, removing his hands suddenly from his face, showed, to the unspeakable discomposure of Mr. Bumble, that it was much distorted and discoloured.

‘These fits come over me, now and then,’ said Monks, observing his alarm; ‘and thunder sometimes brings them on. Don’t mind me now; it’s all over for this once.’

Thus speaking, he led the way up the ladder; and hastily closing the window-shutter of the room into which it led, lowered a lantern which hung at the end of a rope and pulley passed through one of the heavy beams in the ceiling: and which cast a dim light upon an old table and three chairs that were placed beneath it.

‘Now,’ said Monks, when they had all three seated themselves, ‘the sooner we come to our business, the better for all. The woman know what it is, does she?’

The question was addressed to Bumble; but his wife anticipated the reply, by intimating that she was perfectly acquainted with it.

‘He is right in saying that you were with this hag the night she died; and that she told you something—’

‘About the mother of the boy you named,’ replied the matron interrupting him. ‘Yes.’

‘The first question is, of what nature was her communication?’ said Monks.

‘That’s the second,’ observed the woman with much deliberation. ‘The first is, what may the communication be worth?’

‘Who the devil can tell that, without knowing of what kind it is?’ asked Monks.

‘Nobody better than you, I am persuaded,’ answered Mrs. Bumble: who did not want for spirit, as her yoke-fellow could abundantly testify.

‘Humph!’ said Monks significantly, and with a look of eager inquiry; ‘there may be money’s worth to get, eh?’

‘Perhaps there may,’ was the composed reply.

‘Something that was taken from her,’ said Monks. ‘Something that she wore. Something that—’

‘You had better bid,’ interrupted Mrs. Bumble. ‘I have heard enough, already, to assure me that you are the man I ought to talk to.’

Mr. Bumble, who had not yet been admitted by his better half into any greater share of the secret than he had originally possessed, listened to this dialogue with outstretched neck and distended eyes: which he directed towards his wife and Monks, by turns, in undisguised astonishment; increased, if possible, when the latter sternly demanded, what sum was required for the disclosure.

‘What’s it worth to you?’ asked the woman, as collectedly as before.

‘It may be nothing; it may be twenty pounds,’ replied Monks. ‘Speak out, and let me know which.’

‘Add five pounds to the sum you have named; give me five-and-twenty pounds in gold,’ said the woman; ‘and I’ll tell you all I know. Not before.’

‘Five-and-twenty pounds!’ exclaimed Monks, drawing back.

‘I spoke as plainly as I could,’ replied Mrs. Bumble. ‘It’s not a large sum, either.’

‘Not a large sum for a paltry secret, that may be nothing when it’s told!’ cried Monks impatiently; ‘and which has been lying dead for twelve years past or more!’

‘Such matters keep well, and, like good wine, often double their value in course of time,’ answered the matron, still preserving the resolute indifference she had assumed. ‘As to lying dead, there are those who will lie dead for twelve thousand years to come, or twelve million, for anything you or I know, who will tell strange tales at last!’

‘What if I pay it for nothing?’ asked Monks, hesitating.

‘You can easily take it away again,’ replied the matron. ‘I am but a woman; alone here; and unprotected.’

‘Not alone, my dear, nor unprotected, neither,’ submitted Mr. Bumble, in a voice tremulous with fear: ‘*I* am here, my dear. And besides,’ said Mr. Bumble, his teeth chattering as he spoke, ‘Mr. Monks is too much of a gentleman to attempt any violence on porochial persons. Mr. Monks is aware that I am not a young man, my dear, and also that I am a little run to seed, as I may say; bu he has heerd: I say I have no doubt Mr. Monks has heerd, my dear: that I am a very determined officer, with very uncommon strength, if I’m once roused. I only want a little rousing; that’s all.’

As Mr. Bumble spoke, he made a melancholy feint of grasping his lantern with fierce determination; and plainly showed, by the alarmed expression of every feature, that he *did* want a little rousing, and not a little, prior to making any very warlike demonstration: unless, indeed, against paupers, or other person or persons trained down for the purpose.

‘You are a fool,’ said Mrs. Bumble, in reply; ‘and had better hold your tongue.’

‘He had better have cut it out, before he came, if he can’t speak in a lower tone,’ said Monks, grimly. ‘So! He’s your husband, eh?’

‘He my husband!’ tittered the matron, parrying the question.

‘I thought as much, when you came in,’ rejoined Monks, marking the angry glance which the lady darted at her spouse as she spoke. ‘So much the better; I have less hesitation in dealing with two people, when I find that there’s only one will between them. I’m in earnest. See here!’

He thrust his hand into a side-pocket; and producing a canvas bag, told out twenty-five sovereigns on the table, and pushed them over to the woman.

‘Now,’ he said, ‘gather them up; and when this cursed peal of thunder, which I feel is coming up to break over the house-top, is gone, let’s hear your story.’

The thunder, which seemed in fact much nearer, and to shiver and break almost over their heads, having subsided, Monks, raising his face from the table, bent forward to listen to what the woman should say. The faces of the three nearly touched, as the two men leant over the small table in their eagerness to hear, and the woman also leant forward to render her whisper audible. The sickly rays of the suspended lantern falling directly upon them, aggravated the paleness and anxiety of their countenances: which, encircled by the deepest gloom and darkness, looked ghastly in the extreme.

‘When this woman, that we called old Sally, died,’ the matron began, ‘she and I were alone.’

‘Was there no one by?’ asked Monks, in the same hollow whisper; ‘No sick wretch or idiot in some other bed? No one who could hear, and might, by possibility, understand?’

‘Not a soul,’ replied the woman; ‘we were alone. *I* stood alone beside the body when death came over it.’

‘Good,’ said Monks, regarding her attentively. ‘Go on.’

‘She spoke of a young creature,’ resumed the matron, ‘who had brought a child into the world some years before; not merely in the same room, but in the same bed, in which she then lay dying.’

‘Ay?’ said Monks, with quivering lip, and glancing over his shoulder, ‘Blood! How things come about!’

‘The child was the one you named to him last night,’ said the matron, nodding carelessly towards her husband; ‘the mother this nurse had robbed.’

‘In life?’ asked Monks.

‘In death,’ replied the woman, with something like a shudder. ‘She stole from the corpse, when it had hardly turned to one, that which the dead mother had prayed her, with her last breath, to keep for the infant’s sake.’

‘She sold it,’ cried Monks, with desperate eagerness; ‘did she sell it? Where? When? To whom? How long before?’

‘As she told me, with great difficulty, that she had done this,’ said the matron, ‘she fell back and died.’

‘Without saying more?’ cried Monks, in a voice which, from its very suppression, seemed only the more furious. ‘It’s a lie! I’ll not be played with. She said more. I’ll tear the life out of you both, but I’ll know what it was.’

‘She didn’t utter another word,’ said the woman, to all appearance unmoved (as Mr. Bumble was very far from being) by the strange man’s violence; ‘but she clutched my gown, violently, with one hand, which was partly closed; and when I saw that she was dead, and so removed the hand by force, I found it clasped a scrap of dirty paper.’

‘Which contained—’ interposed Monks, stretching forward.

‘Nothing,’ replied the woman; ‘it was a pawnbroker’s duplicate.’

‘For what?’ demanded Monks.

‘In good time I’ll tell you.’ said the woman. ‘I judge that she had kept the trinket, for some time, in the hope of turning it to better account; and then had pawned it; and had saved or scraped together money to pay the pawnbroker’s interest year by year, and prevent its running out; so that if anything came of it, it could still be redeemed. Nothing had come of it; and, as I tell you, she died with the scrap of paper, all worn and tattered, in her hand. The time was out in two days; I thought something might one day come of it too; and so redeemed the pledge.’

‘Where is it now?’ asked Monks quickly.

‘*There*,’ replied the woman. And, as if glad to be relieved of it, she hastily threw upon the table a small kid bag scarcely large enough for a French watch, which Monks pouncing upon, tore open with trembling hands. It contained a little gold locket: in which were two locks of hair, and a plain gold wedding-ring.

‘It has the word “Agnes” engraved on the inside,’ said the woman.

‘There is a blank left for the surname; and then follows the date; which is within a year before the child was born. I found out that.’

‘And this is all?’ said Monks, after a close and eager scrutiny of the contents of the little packet.

‘All,’ replied the woman.

Mr. Bumble drew a long breath, as if he were glad to find that the story was over, and no mention made of taking the five-and-twenty pounds back again; and now he took courage to wipe the perspiration which had been trickling over his nose, unchecked, during the whole of the previous dialogue.

‘I know nothing of the story, beyond what I can guess at,’ said his wife addressing Monks, after a short silence; ‘and I want to know nothing; for it’s safer not. But I may ask you two questions, may I?’

‘You may ask,’ said Monks, with some show of surprise; ‘but whether I answer or not is another question.’

‘—Which makes three,’ observed Mr. Bumble, essaying a stroke of facetiousness.

‘Is that what you expected to get from me?’ demanded the matron.

‘It is,’ replied Monks. ‘The other question?’

‘What do you propose to do with it? Can it be used against me?’

‘Never,’ rejoined Monks; ‘nor against me either. See here! But don’t move a step forward, or your life is not worth a bulrush.’

With these words, he suddenly wheeled the table aside, and pulling an iron ring in the boarding, threw back a large trap-door which opened close at Mr. Bumble’s feet, and caused that gentleman to retire several paces backward, with great precipitation.

‘Look down,’ said Monks, lowering the lantern into the gulf. ‘Don’t fear me. I could have let you down, quietly enough, when you were seated over it, if that had been my game.’

Thus encouraged, the matron drew near to the brink; and even Mr. Bumble himself, impelled by curiousity, ventured to do the same. The turbid water, swollen by the heavy rain, was rushing rapidly on below; and all other sounds were lost in the noise of its plashing and eddying against the green and slimy piles. There had once been a water-mill beneath; the tide foaming and chafing round the few rotten stakes, and fragments of machinery that yet remained, seemed to dart onward, with a new impulse, when freed from the obstacles which had unavailingly attempted to stem its headlong course.

‘If you flung a man’s body down there, where would it be to-morrow morning?’ said Monks, swinging the lantern to and fro in the dark well.

‘Twelve miles down the river, and cut to pieces besides,’ replied Bumble, recoiling at the thought.

Monks drew the little packet from his breast, where he had hurriedly thrust it; and tying it to a leaden weight, which had formed a part of some pulley, and was lying on the floor, dropped it into the stream. It fell straight, and true as a die; clove the water with a scarcely audible splash; and was gone.

The three looking into each other’s faces, seemed to breathe more freely.

‘There!’ said Monks, closing the trap-door, which fell heavily back into its former position. ‘If the sea ever gives up its dead, as books say it will, it will keep its gold and silver to itself, and that trash among it. We have nothing more to say, and may break up our pleasant party.’

‘By all means,’ observed Mr. Bumble, with great alacrity.

‘You’ll keep a quiet tongue in your head, will you?’ said Monks, with a threatening look. ‘I am not afraid of your wife.’

‘You may depend upon me, young man,’ answered Mr. Bumble, bowing himself gradually towards the ladder, with excessive politeness. ‘On everybody’s account, young man; on my own, you know, Mr. Monks.’

‘I am glad, for your sake, to hear it,’ remarked Monks. ‘Light your lantern! And get away from here as fast as you can.’

It was fortunate that the conversation terminated at this point, or Mr. Bumble, who had bowed himself to within six inches of the ladder, would infallibly have pitched headlong into the room below. He lighted his lantern from that which Monks had detached from the rope, and now carried in his hand; and making no effort to prolong the discourse, descended in silence, followed by his wife. Monks brought up the rear, after pausing on the steps to satisfy himself that there were no other sounds to be heard than the beating of the rain without, and the rushing of the water.

They traversed the lower room, slowly, and with caution; for Monks started at every shadow; and Mr. Bumble, holding his lantern a foot above the ground, walked not only with remarkable care, but with a marvellously light step for a gentleman of his figure: looking nervously about him for hidden trap-doors. The gate at which they had entered, was softly unfastened and opened by Monks; merely exchanging a nod with their mysterious acquaintance, the married couple emerged into the wet and darkness outside.

They were no sooner gone, than Monks, who appeared to entertain an invincible repugnance to being left alone, called to a boy who had been hidden somewhere below. Bidding him go first, and bear the light, he

returned to the chamber he had just quitted.

CHAPTER XXXIX — INTRODUCES SOME RESPECTABLE CHARACTERS WITH WHOM THE READER IS ALREADY ACQUAINTED, AND SHOWS HOW MONKS AND THE JEW LAID THEIR WORTHY HEADS TOGETHER

On the evening following that upon which the three worthies mentioned in the last chapter, disposed of their little matter of business as therein narrated, Mr. William Sikes, awakening from a nap, drowsily growled forth an inquiry what time of night it was.

The room in which Mr. Sikes propounded this question, was not one of those he had tenanted, previous to the Chertsey expedition, although it was in the same quarter of the town, and was situated at no great distance from his former lodgings. It was not, in appearance, so desirable a habitation as his old quarters: being a mean and badly-furnished apartment, of very limited size; lighted only by one small window in the shelving roof, and abutting on a close and dirty lane. Nor were there wanting other indications of the good gentleman's having gone down in the world of late: for a great scarcity of furniture, and total absence of comfort, together with the disappearance of all such small moveables as spare clothes and linen, bespoke a state of extreme poverty; while the meagre and attenuated condition of Mr. Sikes himself would have fully confirmed these symptoms, if they had stood in any need of corroboration.

The housebreaker was lying on the bed, wrapped in his white great-coat, by way of dressing-gown, and displaying a set of features in no degree improved by the cadaverous hue of illness, and the addition of a soiled nightcap, and a stiff, black beard of a week's growth. The dog sat at the bedside: now eyeing his master with a wistful look, and now pricking his ears, and uttering a low growl as some noise in the street, or in the lower part of the house, attracted his attention. Seated by the window, busily engaged in patching an old waistcoat which formed a portion of the robber's ordinary dress, was a female: so pale and reduced with watching and privation, that there would have been considerable difficulty in recognising her as the same Nancy who has already figured in this tale, but for the voice in which she replied to Mr. Sikes's question.

'Not long gone seven,' said the girl. 'How do you feel to-night, Bill?'

'As weak as water,' replied Mr. Sikes, with an imprecation on his eyes and limbs. 'Here; lend us a hand, and let me get off this thundering bed anyhow.'

Illness had not improved Mr. Sikes's temper; for, as the girl raised him up and led him to a chair, he muttered various curses on her awkwardness, and struck her.

'Whining are you?' said Sikes. 'Come! Don't stand snivelling there. If you can't do anything better than that, cut off altogether. D'ye hear me?'

'I hear you,' replied the girl, turning her face aside, and forcing a laugh. 'What fancy have you got in your head now?'

'Oh! you've thought better of it, have you?' growled Sikes, marking the tear which trembled in her eye. 'All the better for you, you have.'

'Why, you don't mean to say, you'd be hard upon me to-night, Bill,' said the girl, laying her hand upon his shoulder.

'No!' cried Mr. Sikes. 'Why not?'

'Such a number of nights,' said the girl, with a touch of woman's tenderness, which communicated something like sweetness of tone, even to her voice: 'such a number of nights as I've been patient with you, nursing and caring for you, as if you had been a child: and this the first that I've seen you like yourself; you wouldn't have served me as you did just now, if you'd thought of that, would you? Come, come; say you wouldn't.'

'Well, then,' rejoined Mr. Sikes, 'I wouldn't. Why, damme, now, the girls's whining again!'

'It's nothing,' said the girl, throwing herself into a chair. 'Don't you seem to mind me. It'll soon be over.'

'What'll be over?' demanded Mr. Sikes in a savage voice. 'What foolery are you up to, now, again? Get up and bustle about, and don't come over me with your woman's nonsense.'

At any other time, this remonstrance, and the tone in which it was delivered, would have had the desired effect; but the girl being really weak and exhausted, dropped her head over the back of the chair, and fainted, before Mr. Sikes could get out a few of the appropriate oaths with which, on similar occasions, he was accustomed to garnish his threats. Not knowing, very well, what to do, in this uncommon emergency; for Miss Nancy's hysterics were usually of that violent kind which the patient fights and struggles out of, without much assistance; Mr. Sikes tried a little blasphemy: and finding that mode of treatment wholly ineffectual, called for assistance.

'What's the matter here, my dear?' said Fagin, looking in.

'Lend a hand to the girl, can't you?' replied Sikes impatiently. 'Don't stand chattering and grinning at me!'

With an exclamation of surprise, Fagin hastened to the girl's assistance, while Mr. John Dawkins (otherwise the Artful Dodger), who had followed his venerable friend into the room, hastily deposited on the floor a

bundle with which he was laden; and snatching a bottle from the grasp of Master Charles Bates who came close at his heels, uncorked it in a twinkling with his teeth, and poured a portion of its contents down the patient's throat: previously taking a taste, himself, to prevent mistakes.

'Give her a whiff of fresh air with the bellows, Charley,' said Mr. Dawkins; 'and you slap her hands, Fagin, while Bill undoes the petticuts.'

These united restoratives, administered with great energy: especially that department consigned to Master Bates, who appeared to consider his share in the proceedings, a piece of unexampled pleasantry: were not long in producing the desired effect. The girl gradually recovered her senses; and, staggering to a chair by the bedside, hid her face upon the pillow: leaving Mr. Sikes to confront the new comers, in some astonishment at their unlooked-for appearance.

'Why, what evil wind has blowed you here?' he asked Fagin.

'No evil wind at all, my dear, for evil winds blow nobody any good; and I've brought something good with me, that you'll be glad to see. Dodger, my dear, open the bundle; and give Bill the little trifles that we spent all our money on, this morning.'

In compliance with Mr. Fagin's request, the Artful untied this bundle, which was of large size, and formed of an old table-cloth; and handed the articles it contained, one by one, to Charley Bates: who placed them on the table, with various encomiums on their rarity and excellence.

'Sitch a rabbit pie, Bill,' exclaimed that young gentleman, disclosing to view a huge pasty; 'sitch delicate creeturs, with sitch tender limbs, Bill, that the wery bones melt in your mouth, and there's no occasion to pick 'em; half a pound of seven and six-penny green, so precious strong that if you mix it with biling water, it'll go nigh to blow the lid of the tea-pot off; a pound and a half of moist sugar that the niggers didn't work at all at, afore they got it up to sitch a pitch of goodness,—oh no! Two half-quartern brans; pound of best fresh; piece of double Glo'ster; and, to wind up all, some of the richest sort you ever lushed!'

Uttering this last panegyric, Master Bates produced, from one of his extensive pockets, a full-sized wine-bottle, carefully corked; while Mr. Dawkins, at the same instant, poured out a wine-glassful of raw spirits from the bottle he carried: which the invalid tossed down his throat without a moment's hesitation.

'Ah!' said Fagin, rubbing his hands with great satisfaction. 'You'll do, Bill; you'll do now.'

'Do!' exclaimed Mr. Sikes; 'I might have been done for, twenty times over, afore you'd have done anything to help me. What do you mean by leaving a man in this state, three weeks and more, you false-hearted wagabond?'

'Only hear him, boys!' said Fagin, shrugging his shoulders. 'And us come to bring him all these beau-ti-ful things.'

'The things is well enough in their way,' observed Mr. Sikes: a little soothed as he glanced over the table; 'but what have you got to say for yourself, why you should leave me here, down in the mouth, health, blunt, and everything else; and take no more notice of me, all this mortal time, than if I was that 'ere dog.—Drive him down, Charley!'

'I never see such a jolly dog as that,' cried Master Bates, doing as he was desired. 'Smelling the grub like a old lady a going to market! He'd make his fortun' on the stage that dog would, and rewive the drama besides.'

'Hold your din,' cried Sikes, as the dog retreated under the bed: still growling angrily. 'What have you got

to say for yourself, you withered old fence, eh?'

'I was away from London, a week and more, my dear, on a plant,' replied the Jew.

'And what about the other fortnight?' demanded Sikes. 'What about the other fortnight that you've left me lying here, like a sick rat in his hole?'

'I couldn't help it, Bill. I can't go into a long explanation before company; but I couldn't help it, upon my honour.'

'Upon your what?' growled Sikes, with excessive disgust. 'Here! Cut me off a piece of that pie, one of you boys, to take the taste of that out of my mouth, or it'll choke me dead.'

'Don't be out of temper, my dear,' urged Fagin, submissively. 'I have never forgot you, Bill; never once.'

'No! I'll pound it that you han't,' replied Sikes, with a bitter grin. 'You've been scheming and plotting away, every hour that I have laid shivering and burning here; and Bill was to do this; and Bill was to do that; and Bill was to do it all, dirt cheap, as soon as he got well: and was quite poor enough for your work. If it hadn't been for the girl, I might have died.'

'There now, Bill,' remonstrated Fagin, eagerly catching at the word. 'If it hadn't been for the girl! Who but poor ould Fagin was the means of your having such a handy girl about you?'

'He says true enough there!' said Nancy, coming hastily forward. 'Let him be; let him be.'

Nancy's appearance gave a new turn to the conversation; for the boys, receiving a sly wink from the wary old Jew, began to ply her with liquor: of which, however, she took very sparingly; while Fagin, assuming an unusual flow of spirits, gradually brought Mr. Sikes into a better temper, by affecting to regard his threats as a little pleasant banter; and, moreover, by laughing very heartily at one or two rough jokes, which, after repeated applications to the spirit-bottle, he condescended to make.

'It's all very well,' said Mr. Sikes; 'but I must have some blunt from you to-night.'

'I haven't a piece of coin about me,' replied the Jew.

'Then you've got lots at home,' retorted Sikes; 'and I must have some from there.'

'Lots!' cried Fagin, holding up is hands. 'I haven't so much as would—'

'I don't know how much you've got, and I dare say you hardly know yourself, as it would take a pretty long time to count it,' said Sikes; 'but I must have some to-night; and that's flat.'

'Well, well,' said Fagin, with a sigh, 'I'll send the Artful round presently.'

'You won't do nothing of the kind,' rejoined Mr. Sikes. 'The Artful's a deal too artful, and would forget to come, or lose his way, or get dodged by traps and so be perwented, or anything for an excuse, if you put him up to it. Nancy shall go to the ken and fetch it, to make all sure; and I'll lie down and have a snooze while she's gone.'

After a great deal of haggling and squabbling, Fagin beat down the amount of the required advance from five pounds to three pounds four and sixpence: protesting with many solemn asseverations that that would only leave him eighteen-pence to keep house with; Mr. Sikes sullenly remarking that if he couldn't get any more he must accompany him home; with the Dodger and Master Bates put the eatables in the cupboard. The Jew then, taking leave of his affectionate friend, returned homeward, attended by Nancy and the boys: Mr. Sikes, meanwhile, flinging himself on the bed, and composing himself to sleep away the time until the young lady's return.

In due course, they arrived at Fagin's abode, where they found Toby Crackit and Mr. Chitling intent upon their fifteenth game at cribbage, which it is scarcely necessary to say the latter gentleman lost, and with it, his fifteenth and last sixpence: much to the amusement of his young friends. Mr. Crackit, apparently somewhat ashamed at being found relaxing himself with a gentleman so much his inferior in station and mental endowments, yawned, and inquiring after Sikes, took up his hat to go.

'Has nobody been, Toby?' asked Fagin.

'Not a living leg,' answered Mr. Crackit, pulling up his collar; 'it's been as dull as swipes. You ought to stand something handsome, Fagin, to recompense me for keeping house so long. Damme, I'm as flat as a juryman; and should have gone to sleep, as fast as Newgate, if I hadn't had the good natur' to amuse this youngster. Horrid dull, I'm blessed if I an't!'

With these and other ejaculations of the same kind, Mr. Toby Crackit swept up his winnings, and crammed them into his waistcoat pocket with a haughty air, as though such small pieces of silver were wholly beneath the consideration of a man of his figure; this done, he swaggered out of the room, with so much elegance and gentility, that Mr. Chitling, bestowing numerous admiring glances on his legs and boots till they were out of sight, assured the company that he considered his acquaintance cheap at fifteen sixpences an interview, and that he didn't value his losses the snap of his little finger.

'Wot a rum chap you are, Tom!' said Master Bates, highly amused by this declaration.

'Not a bit of it,' replied Mr. Chitling. 'Am I, Fagin?'

'A very clever fellow, my dear,' said Fagin, patting him on the shoulder, and winking to his other pupils.

'And Mr. Crackit is a heavy swell; an't he, Fagin?' asked Tom.

'No doubt at all of that, my dear.'

'And it is a creditable thing to have his acquaintance; an't it, Fagin?' pursued Tom.

'Very much so, indeed, my dear. They're only jealous, Tom, because he won't give it to them.'

'Ah!' cried Tom, triumphantly, 'that's where it is! He has cleaned me out. But I can go and earn some more, when I like; can't I, Fagin?'

'To be sure you can, and the sooner you go the better, Tom; so make up your loss at once, and don't lose any more time. Dodger! Charley! It's time you were on the lay. Come! It's near ten, and nothing done yet.'

In obedience to this hint, the boys, nodding to Nancy, took up their hats, and left the room; the Dodger and his vivacious friend indulging, as they went, in many witticisms at the expense of Mr. Chitling; in whose

conduct, it is but justice to say, there was nothing very conspicuous or peculiar: inasmuch as there are a great number of spirited young bloods upon town, who pay a much higher price than Mr. Chitling for being seen in good society: and a great number of fine gentlemen (composing the good society aforesaid) who established their reputation upon very much the same footing as flash Toby Crackit.

'Now,' said Fagin, when they had left the room, 'I'll go and get you that cash, Nancy. This is only the key of a little cupboard where I keep a few odd things the boys get, my dear. I never lock up my money, for I've got none to lock up, my dear—ha! ha! ha!—none to lock up. It's a poor trade, Nancy, and no thanks; but I'm fond of seeing the young people about me; and I bear it all, I bear it all. Hush!' he said, hastily concealing the key in his breast; 'who's that? Listen!'

The girl, who was sitting at the table with her arms folded, appeared in no way interested in the arrival: or to care whether the person, whoever he was, came or went: until the murmur of a man's voice reached her ears. The instant she caught the sound, she tore off her bonnet and shawl, with the rapidity of lightning, and thrust them under the table. The Jew, turning round immediately afterwards, she muttered a complaint of the heat: in a tone of languor that contrasted, very remarkably, with the extreme haste and violence of this action: which, however, had been unobserved by Fagin, who had his back towards her at the time.

'Bah!' he whispered, as though nettled by the interruption; 'it's the man I expected before; he's coming downstairs. Not a word about the money while he's here, Nance. He won't stop long. Not ten minutes, my dear.'

Laying his skinny forefinger upon his lip, the Jew carried a candle to the door, as a man's step was heard upon the stairs without. He reached it, at the same moment as the visitor, who, coming hastily into the room, was close upon the girl before he observed her.

It was Monks.

'Only one of my young people,' said Fagin, observing that Monks drew back, on beholding a stranger. 'Don't move, Nancy.'

The girl drew closer to the table, and glancing at Monks with an air of careless levity, withdrew her eyes; but as he turned towards Fagin, she stole another look; so keen and searching, and full of purpose, that if there had been any bystander to observe the change, he could hardly have believed the two looks to have proceeded from the same person.

'Any news?' inquired Fagin.

'Great.'

'And—and—good?' asked Fagin, hesitating as though he feared to vex the other man by being too sanguine.

'Not bad, any way,' replied Monks with a smile. 'I have been prompt enough this time. Let me have a word with you.'

The girl drew closer to the table, and made no offer to leave the room, although she could see that Monks was pointing to her. The Jew: perhaps fearing she might say something aloud about the money, if he endeavoured to get rid of her: pointed upward, and took Monks out of the room.

'Not that infernal hole we were in before,' she could hear the man say as they went upstairs. Fagin laughed; and making some reply which did not reach her, seemed, by the creaking of the boards, to lead his companion to the second story.

Before the sound of their footsteps had ceased to echo through the house, the girl had slipped off her shoes; and drawing her gown loosely over her head, and muffling her arms in it, stood at the door, listening with breathless interest. The moment the noise ceased, she glided from the room; ascended the stairs with incredible softness and silence; and was lost in the gloom above.

The room remained deserted for a quarter of an hour or more; the girl glided back with the same unearthly tread; and, immediately afterwards, the two men were heard descending. Monks went at once into the street; and the Jew crawled upstairs again for the money. When he returned, the girl was adjusting her shawl and bonnet, as if preparing to be gone.

'Why, Nance!' exclaimed the Jew, starting back as he put down the candle, 'how pale you are!'

'Pale!' echoed the girl, shading her eyes with her hands, as if to look steadily at him.

'Quite horrible. What have you been doing to yourself?'

'Nothing that I know of, except sitting in this close place for I don't know how long and all,' replied the girl carelessly. 'Come! Let me get back; that's a dear.'

With a sigh for every piece of money, Fagin told the amount into her hand. They parted without more conversation, merely interchanging a 'good-night.'

When the girl got into the open street, she sat down upon a doorstep; and seemed, for a few moments, wholly bewildered and unable to pursue her way. Suddenly she arose; and hurrying on, in a direction quite opposite to that in which Sikes was awaiting her returned, quickened her pace, until it gradually resolved into a violent run. After completely exhausting herself, she stopped to take breath: and, as if suddenly recollecting herself, and deploring her inability to do something she was bent upon, wrung her hands, and burst into tears.

It might be that her tears relieved her, or that she felt the full hopelessness of her condition; but she turned back; and hurrying with nearly as great rapidity in the contrary direction; partly to recover lost time, and partly to keep pace with the violent current of her own thoughts: soon reached the dwelling where she had left the housebreaker.

If she betrayed any agitation, when she presented herself to Mr. Sikes, he did not observe it; for merely inquiring if she had brought the money, and receiving a reply in the affirmative, he uttered a growl of satisfaction, and replacing his head upon the pillow, resumed the slumbers which her arrival had interrupted.

It was fortunate for her that the possession of money occasioned him so much employment next day in the way of eating and drinking; and withal had so beneficial an effect in smoothing down the asperities of his temper; that he had neither time nor inclination to be very critical upon her behaviour and deportment. That

she had all the abstracted and nervous manner of one who is on the eve of some bold and hazardous step, which it has required no common struggle to resolve upon, would have been obvious to the lynx-eyed Fagin, who would most probably have taken the alarm at once; but Mr. Sikes lacking the niceties of discrimination, and being troubled with no more subtle misgivings than those which resolve themselves into a dogged roughness of behaviour towards everybody; and being, furthermore, in an unusually amiable condition, as has been already observed; saw nothing unusual in her demeanor, and indeed, troubled himself so little about her, that, had her agitation been far more perceptible than it was, it would have been very unlikely to have awakened his suspicions.

As that day closed in, the girl's excitement increased; and, when night came on, and she sat by, watching until the housebreaker should drink himself asleep, there was an unusual paleness in her cheek, and a fire in her eye, that even Sikes observed with astonishment.

Mr. Sikes being weak from the fever, was lying in bed, taking hot water with his gin to render it less inflammatory; and had pushed his glass towards Nancy to be replenished for the third or fourth time, when these symptoms first struck him.

'Why, burn my body!' said the man, raising himself on his hands as he stared the girl in the face. 'You look like a corpse come to life again. What's the matter?'

'Matter!' replied the girl. 'Nothing. What do you look at me so hard for?'

'What foolery is this?' demanded Sikes, grasping her by the arm, and shaking her roughly. 'What is it? What do you mean? What are you thinking of?'

'Of many things, Bill,' replied the girl, shivering, and as she did so, pressing her hands upon her eyes. 'But, Lord! What odds in that?'

The tone of forced gaiety in which the last words were spoken, seemed to produce a deeper impression on Sikes than the wild and rigid look which had preceded them.

'I tell you wot it is,' said Sikes; 'if you haven't caught the fever, and got it comin' on, now, there's something more than usual in the wind, and something dangerous too. You're not a-going to—. No, damme! you wouldn't do that!'

'Do what?' asked the girl.

'There ain't,' said Sikes, fixing his eyes upon her, and muttering the words to himself; 'there ain't a stauncher-hearted gal going, or I'd have cut her throat three months ago. She's got the fever coming on; that's it.'

Fortifying himself with this assurance, Sikes drained the glass to the bottom, and then, with many grumbling oaths, called for his physic. The girl jumped up, with great alacrity; poured it quickly out, but with her back towards him; and held the vessel to his lips, while he drank off the contents.

'Now,' said the robber, 'come and sit aside of me, and put on your own face; or I'll alter it so, that you won't know it agin when you do want it.'

The girl obeyed. Sikes, locking her hand in his, fell back upon the pillow: turning his eyes upon her face. They closed; opened again; closed once more; again opened. He shifted his position restlessly; and, after dozing again, and again, for two or three minutes, and as often springing up with a look of terror, and gazing vacantly about him, was suddenly stricken, as it were, while in the very attitude of rising, into a deep and heavy sleep. The grasp of his hand relaxed; the upraised arm fell languidly by his side; and he lay like one in a profound trance.

'The laudanum has taken effect at last,' murmured the girl, as she rose from the bedside. 'I may be too late, even now.'

She hastily dressed herself in her bonnet and shawl: looking fearfully round, from time to time, as if, despite the sleeping draught, she expected every moment to feel the pressure of Sikes's heavy hand upon her shoulder; then, stooping softly over the bed, she kissed the robber's lips; and then opening and closing the room-door with noiseless touch, hurried from the house.

A watchman was crying half-past nine, down a dark passage through which she had to pass, in gaining the main thoroughfare.

'Has it long gone the half-hour?' asked the girl.

'It'll strike the hour in another quarter,' said the man: raising his lantern to her face.

'And I cannot get there in less than an hour or more,' muttered Nancy: brushing swiftly past him, and gliding rapidly down the street.

Many of the shops were already closing in the back lanes and avenues through which she tracked her way, in making from Spitalfields towards the West-End of London. The clock struck ten, increasing her impatience. She tore along the narrow pavement: elbowing the passengers from side to side; and darting almost under the horses' heads, crossed crowded streets, where clusters of persons were eagerly watching their opportunity to do the like.

'The woman is mad!' said the people, turning to look after her as she rushed away.

When she reached the more wealthy quarter of the town, the streets were comparatively deserted; and here her headlong progress excited a still greater curiosity in the stragglers whom she hurried past. Some quickened their pace behind, as though to see whither she was hastening at such an unusual rate; and a few made head upon her, and looked back, surprised at her undiminished speed; but they fell off one by one; and when she neared her place of destination, she was alone.

It was a family hotel in a quiet but handsome street near Hyde Park. As the brilliant light of the lamp which burnt before its door, guided her to the spot, the clock struck eleven. She had loitered for a few paces as though irresolute, and making up her mind to advance; but the sound determined her, and she stepped into the hall. The porter's seat was vacant. She looked round with an air of incertitude, and advanced towards the stairs.

'Now, young woman!' said a smartly-dressed female, looking out from a door behind her, 'who do you want

here?’

‘A lady who is stopping in this house,’ answered the girl.

‘A lady!’ was the reply, accompanied with a scornful look. ‘What lady?’

‘Miss Maylie,’ said Nancy.

The young woman, who had by this time, noted her appearance, replied only by a look of virtuous disdain; and summoned a man to answer her. To him, Nancy repeated her request.

‘What name am I to say?’ asked the waiter.

‘It’s of no use saying any,’ replied Nancy.

‘Nor business?’ said the man.

‘No, nor that neither,’ rejoined the girl. ‘I must see the lady.’

‘Come!’ said the man, pushing her towards the door. ‘None of this. Take yourself off.’

‘I shall be carried out if I go!’ said the girl violently; ‘and I can make that a job that two of you won’t like to do. Isn’t there anybody here,’ she said, looking round, ‘that will see a simple message carried for a poor wretch like me?’

This appeal produced an effect on a good-tempered-faced man-cook, who with some of the other servants was looking on, and who stepped forward to interfere.

‘Take it up for her, Joe; can’t you?’ said this person.

‘What’s the good?’ replied the man. ‘You don’t suppose the young lady will see such as her; do you?’

This allusion to Nancy’s doubtful character, raised a vast quantity of chaste wrath in the bosoms of four housemaids, who remarked, with great fervour, that the creature was a disgrace to her sex; and strongly advocated her being thrown, ruthlessly, into the kennel.

‘Do what you like with me,’ said the girl, turning to the men again; ‘but do what I ask you first, and I ask you to give this message for God Almighty’s sake.’

The soft-hearted cook added his intercession, and the result was that the man who had first appeared undertook its delivery.

‘What’s it to be?’ said the man, with one foot on the stairs.

‘That a young woman earnestly asks to speak to Miss Maylie alone,’ said Nancy; ‘and that if the lady will only hear the first word she has to say, she will know whether to hear her business, or to have her turned out of doors as an impostor.’

‘I say,’ said the man, ‘you’re coming it strong!’

‘You give the message,’ said the girl firmly; ‘and let me hear the answer.’

The man ran upstairs. Nancy remained, pale and almost breathless, listening with quivering lip to the very audible expressions of scorn, of which the chaste housemaids were very prolific; and of which they became still more so, when the man returned, and said the young woman was to walk upstairs.

‘It’s no good being proper in this world,’ said the first housemaid.

‘Brass can do better than the gold what has stood the fire,’ said the second.

The third contented herself with wondering ‘what ladies was made of’; and the fourth took the first in a quartette of ‘Shameful!’ with which the Dianas concluded.

Regardless of all this: for she had weightier matters at heart: Nancy followed the man, with trembling limbs, to a small ante-chamber, lighted by a lamp from the ceiling. Here he left her, and retired.

CHAPTER XL — A STRANGE INTERVIEW, WHICH IS A SEQUEL TO THE LAST CHAMBER

The girl’s life had been squandered in the streets, and among the most noisome of the stews and dens of London, but there was something of the woman’s original nature left in her still; and when she heard a light step approaching the door opposite to that by which she had entered, and thought of the wide contrast which the small room would in another moment contain, she felt burdened with the sense of her own deep shame, and shrunk as though she could scarcely bear the presence of her with whom she had sought this interview.

But struggling with these better feelings was pride,—the vice of the lowest and most debased creatures no less than of the high and self-assured. The miserable companion of thieves and ruffians, the fallen outcast of low haunts, the associate of the scourings of the jails and hulks, living within the shadow of the gallows itself,—even this degraded being felt too proud to betray a feeble gleam of the womanly feeling which she thought a weakness, but which alone connected her with that humanity, of which her wasting life had obliterated so many, many traces when a very child.

She raised her eyes sufficiently to observe that the figure which presented itself was that of a slight and beautiful girl; then, bending them on the ground, she tossed her head with affected carelessness as she said:

‘It’s a hard matter to get to see you, lady. If I had taken offence, and gone away, as many would have done, you’d have been sorry for it one day, and not without reason either.’

‘I am very sorry if any one has behaved harshly to you,’ replied Rose. ‘Do not think of that. Tell me why you wished to see me. I am the person you inquired for.’

The kind tone of this answer, the sweet voice, the gentle manner, the absence of any accent of haughtiness or displeasure, took the girl completely by surprise, and she burst into tears.

‘Oh, lady, lady!’ she said, clasping her hands passionately before her face, ‘if there was more like you, there would be fewer like me,—there would—there would!’

‘Sit down,’ said Rose, earnestly. ‘If you are in poverty or affliction I shall be truly glad to relieve you if I can,—I shall indeed. Sit down.’

‘Let me stand, lady,’ said the girl, still weeping, ‘and do not speak to me so kindly till you know me better. It is growing late. Is—is—that door shut?’

‘Yes,’ said Rose, recoiling a few steps, as if to be nearer assistance in case she should require it. ‘Why?’

‘Because,’ said the girl, ‘I am about to put my life and the lives of others in your hands. I am the girl that dragged little Oliver back to old Fagin’s on the night he went out from the house in Pentonville.’

‘You!’ said Rose Maylie.

‘I, lady!’ replied the girl. ‘I am the infamous creature you have heard of, that lives among the thieves, and that never from the first moment I can recollect my eyes and senses opening on London streets have known any better life, or kinder words than they have given me, so help me God! Do not mind shrinking openly from me, lady. I am younger than you would think, to look at me, but I am well used to it. The poorest women fall back, as I make my way along the crowded pavement.’

‘What dreadful things are these!’ said Rose, involuntarily falling from her strange companion.

‘Thank Heaven upon your knees, dear lady,’ cried the girl, ‘that you had friends to care for and keep you in your childhood, and that you were never in the midst of cold and hunger, and riot and drunkenness, and—and—something worse than all—as I have been from my cradle. I may use the word, for the alley and the gutter were mine, as they will be my deathbed.’

‘I pity you!’ said Rose, in a broken voice. ‘It wrings my heart to hear you!’

‘Heaven bless you for your goodness!’ rejoined the girl. ‘If you knew what I am sometimes, you would pity me, indeed. But I have stolen away from those who would surely murder me, if they knew I had been here, to tell you what I have overheard. Do you know a man named Monks?’

‘No,’ said Rose.

‘He knows you,’ replied the girl; ‘and knew you were here, for it was by hearing him tell the place that I found you out.’

‘I never heard the name,’ said Rose.

‘Then he goes by some other amongst us,’ rejoined the girl, ‘which I more than thought before. Some time ago, and soon after Oliver was put into your house on the night of the robbery, I—suspecting this man—listened to a conversation held between him and Fagin in the dark. I found out, from what I heard, that Monks—the man I asked you about, you know—’

‘Yes,’ said Rose, ‘I understand.’

‘—That Monks,’ pursued the girl, ‘had seen him accidently with two of our boys on the day we first lost him, and had known him directly to be the same child that he was watching for, though I couldn’t make out why. A bargain was struck with Fagin, that if Oliver was got back he should have a certain sum; and he was to have more for making him a thief, which this Monks wanted for some purpose of his own.’

‘For what purpose?’ asked Rose.

‘He caught sight of my shadow on the wall as I listened, in the hope of finding out,’ said the girl; ‘and there are not many people besides me that could have got out of their way in time to escape discovery. But I did; and I saw him no more till last night.’

‘And what occurred then?’

‘I’ll tell you, lady. Last night he came again. Again they went upstairs, and I, wrapping myself up so that my shadow would not betray me, again listened at the door. The first words I heard Monks say were these: “So the only proofs of the boy’s identity lie at the bottom of the river, and the old hag that received them from the mother is rotting in her coffin.” They laughed, and talked of his success in doing this; and Monks, talking on about the boy, and getting very wild, said that though he had got the young devil’s money safely now, he’d rather have had it the other way; for, what a game it would have been to have brought down the boast of the father’s will, by driving him through every jail in town, and then hauling him up for some capital felony which Fagin could easily manage, after having made a good profit of him besides.’

‘What is all this!’ said Rose.

‘The truth, lady, though it comes from my lips,’ replied the girl. ‘Then, he said, with oaths common enough in my ears, but strange to yours, that if he could gratify his hatred by taking the boy’s life without bringing his own neck in danger, he would; but, as he couldn’t, he’d be upon the watch to meet him at every turn in life; and if he took advantage of his birth and history, he might harm him yet. “In short, Fagin,” he says, “Jew as you are, you never laid such snares as I’ll contrive for my young brother, Oliver.”’

‘His brother!’ exclaimed Rose.

‘Those were his words,’ said Nancy, glancing uneasily round, as she had scarcely ceased to do, since she began to speak, for a vision of Sikes haunted her perpetually. ‘And more. When he spoke of you and the other lady, and said it seemed contrived by Heaven, or the devil, against him, that Oliver should come into your hands, he laughed, and said there was some comfort in that too, for how many thousands and hundreds of thousands of pounds would you not give, if you had them, to know who your two-legged spaniel was.’

‘You do not mean,’ said Rose, turning very pale, ‘to tell me that this was said in earnest?’

‘He spoke in hard and angry earnest, if a man ever did,’ replied the girl, shaking her head. ‘He is an earnest man when his hatred is up. I know many who do worse things; but I’d rather listen to them all a dozen times,

than to that Monks once. It is growing late, and I have to reach home without suspicion of having been on such an errand as this. I must get back quickly.'

'But what can I do?' said Rose. 'To what use can I turn this communication without you? Back! Why do you wish to return to companions you paint in such terrible colors? If you repeat this information to a gentleman whom I can summon in an instant from the next room, you can be consigned to some place of safety without half an hour's delay.'

'I wish to go back,' said the girl. 'I must go back, because—how can I tell such things to an innocent lady like you?—because among the men I have told you of, there is one: the most desperate among them all; that I can't leave: no, not even to be saved from the life I am leading now.'

'Your having interfered in this dear boy's behalf before,' said Rose; 'your coming here, at so great a risk, to tell me what you have heard; your manner, which convinces me of the truth of what you say; your evident contrition, and sense of shame; all lead me to believe that you might yet be reclaimed. Oh!' said the earnest girl, folding her hands as the tears coursed down her face, 'do not turn a deaf ear to the entreaties of one of your own sex; the first—the first, I do believe, who ever appealed to you in the voice of pity and compassion. Do hear my words, and let me save you yet, for better things.'

'Lady,' cried the girl, sinking on her knees, 'dear, sweet, angel lady, you *are* the first that ever blessed me with such words as these, and if I had heard them years ago, they might have turned me from a life of sin and sorrow; but it is too late, it is too late!'

'It is never too late,' said Rose, 'for penitence and atonement.'

'It is,' cried the girl, writhing in agony of her mind; 'I cannot leave him now! I could not be his death.'

'Why should you be?' asked Rose.

'Nothing could save him,' cried the girl. 'If I told others what I have told you, and led to their being taken, he would be sure to die. He is the boldest, and has been so cruel!'

'Is it possible,' cried Rose, 'that for such a man as this, you can resign every future hope, and the certainty of immediate rescue? It is madness.'

'I don't know what it is,' answered the girl; 'I only know that it is so, and not with me alone, but with hundreds of others as bad and wretched as myself. I must go back. Whether it is God's wrath for the wrong I have done, I do not know; but I am drawn back to him through every suffering and ill usage; and I should be, I believe, if I knew that I was to die by his hand at last.'

'What am I to do?' said Rose. 'I should not let you depart from me thus.'

'You should, lady, and I know you will,' rejoined the girl, rising. 'You will not stop my going because I have trusted in your goodness, and forced no promise from you, as I might have done.'

'Of what use, then, is the communication you have made?' said Rose. 'This mystery must be investigated, or how will its disclosure to me, benefit Oliver, whom you are anxious to serve?'

'You must have some kind gentleman about you that will hear it as a secret, and advise you what to do,' rejoined the girl.

'But where can I find you again when it is necessary?' asked Rose. 'I do not seek to know where these dreadful people live, but where will you be walking or passing at any settled period from this time?'

'Will you promise me that you will have my secret strictly kept, and come alone, or with the only other person that knows it; and that I shall not be watched or followed?' asked the girl.

'I promise you solemnly,' answered Rose.

'Every Sunday night, from eleven until the clock strikes twelve,' said the girl without hesitation, 'I will walk on London Bridge if I am alive.'

'Stay another moment,' interposed Rose, as the girl moved hurriedly towards the door. 'Think once again on your own condition, and the opportunity you have of escaping from it. You have a claim on me: not only as the voluntary bearer of this intelligence, but as a woman lost almost beyond redemption. Will you return to this gang of robbers, and to this man, when a word can save you? What fascination is it that can take you back, and make you cling to wickedness and misery? Oh! is there no chord in your heart that I can touch! Is there nothing left, to which I can appeal against this terrible infatuation!'

'When ladies as young, and good, and beautiful as you are,' replied the girl steadily, 'give away your hearts, love will carry you all lengths—even such as you, who have home, friends, other admirers, everything, to fill them. When such as I, who have no certain roof but the coffin-lid, and no friend in sickness or death but the hospital nurse, set our rotten hearts on any man, and let him fill the place that has been a blank through all our wretched lives, who can hope to cure us? Pity us, lady—pity us for having only one feeling of the woman left, and for having that turned, by a heavy judgment, from a comfort and a pride, into a new means of violence and suffering.'

'You will,' said Rose, after a pause, 'take some money from me, which may enable you to live without dishonesty—at all events until we meet again?'

'Not a penny,' replied the girl, waving her hand.

'Do not close your heart against all my efforts to help you,' said Rose, stepping gently forward. 'I wish to serve you indeed.'

'You would serve me best, lady,' replied the girl, wringing her hands, 'if you could take my life at once; for I have felt more grief to think of what I am, to-night, than I ever did before, and it would be something not to die in the hell in which I have lived. God bless you, sweet lady, and send as much happiness on your head as I have brought shame on mine!'

Thus speaking, and sobbing aloud, the unhappy creature turned away; while Rose Maylie, overpowered by this extraordinary interview, which had more the semblance of a rapid dream than an actual occurrence, sank into a chair, and endeavoured to collect her wandering thoughts.

CHAPTER XLI — CONTAINING FRESH DISCOVERIES, AND SHOWING THAT SUPRISES, LIKE MISFORTUNES, SELDOM COME ALONE

Her situation was, indeed, one of no common trial and difficulty. While she felt the most eager and burning desire to penetrate the mystery in which Oliver's history was enveloped, she could not but hold sacred the confidence which the miserable woman with whom she had just conversed, had reposed in her, as a young and guileless girl. Her words and manner had touched Rose Maylie's heart; and, mingled with her love for her young charge, and scarcely less intense in its truth and fervour, was her fond wish to win the outcast back to repentance and hope.

They purposed remaining in London only three days, prior to departing for some weeks to a distant part of the coast. It was now midnight of the first day. What course of action could she determine upon, which could be adopted in eight-and-forty hours? Or how could she postpone the journey without exciting suspicion?

Mr. Losberne was with them, and would be for the next two days; but Rose was too well acquainted with the excellent gentleman's impetuosity, and foresaw too clearly the wrath with which, in the first explosion of his indignation, he would regard the instrument of Oliver's recapture, to trust him with the secret, when her representations in the girl's behalf could be seconded by no experienced person. These were all reasons for the greatest caution and most circumspect behaviour in communicating it to Mrs. Maylie, whose first impulse would infallibly be to hold a conference with the worthy doctor on the subject. As to resorting to any legal adviser, even if she had known how to do so, it was scarcely to be thought of, for the same reason. Once the thought occurred to her of seeking assistance from Harry; but this awakened the recollection of their last parting, and it seemed unworthy of her to call him back, when—the tears rose to her eyes as she pursued this train of reflection—he might have by this time learnt to forget her, and to be happier away.

Disturbed by these different reflections; inclining now to one course and then to another, and again recoiling from all, as each successive consideration presented itself to her mind; Rose passed a sleepless and anxious night. After more communing with herself next day, she arrived at the desperate conclusion of consulting Harry.

'If it be painful to him,' she thought, 'to come back here, how painful it will be to me! But perhaps he will not come; he may write, or he may come himself, and studiously abstain from meeting me—he did when he went away. I hardly thought he would; but it was better for us both.' And here Rose dropped the pen, and turned away, as though the very paper which was to be her messenger should not see her weep.

She had taken up the same pen, and laid it down again fifty times, and had considered and reconsidered the first line of her letter without writing the first word, when Oliver, who had been walking in the streets, with Mr. Giles for a body-guard, entered the room in such breathless haste and violent agitation, as seemed to betoken some new cause of alarm.

'What makes you look so flurried?' asked Rose, advancing to meet him.

'I hardly know how; I feel as if I should be choked,' replied the boy. 'Oh dear! To think that I should see him at last, and you should be able to know that I have told you the truth!'

'I never thought you had told us anything but the truth,' said Rose, soothing him. 'But what is this?—of whom do you speak?'

'I have seen the gentleman,' replied Oliver, scarcely able to articulate, 'the gentleman who was so good to me—Mr. Brownlow, that we have so often talked about.'

'Where?' asked Rose.

'Getting out of a coach,' replied Oliver, shedding tears of delight, 'and going into a house. I didn't speak to him—I couldn't speak to him, for he didn't see me, and I trembled so, that I was not able to go up to him. But Giles asked, for me, whether he lived there, and they said he did. Look here,' said Oliver, opening a scrap of paper, 'here it is; here's where he lives—I'm going there directly! Oh, dear me, dear me! What shall I do when I come to see him and hear him speak again!'

With her attention not a little distracted by these and a great many other incoherent exclamations of joy, Rose read the address, which was Craven Street, in the Strand. She very soon determined upon turning the discovery to account.

'Quick!' she said. 'Tell them to fetch a hackney-coach, and be ready to go with me. I will take you there directly, without a minute's loss of time. I will only tell my aunt that we are going out for an hour, and be ready as soon as you are.'

Oliver needed no prompting to despatch, and in little more than five minutes they were on their way to Craven Street. When they arrived there, Rose left Oliver in the coach, under pretence of preparing the old gentleman to receive him; and sending up her card by the servant, requested to see Mr. Brownlow on very pressing business. The servant soon returned, to beg that she would walk upstairs; and following him into an upper room, Miss Maylie was presented to an elderly gentleman of benevolent appearance, in a bottle-green coat. At no great distance from whom, was seated another old gentleman, in nankeen breeches and gaiters; who did not look particularly benevolent, and who was sitting with his hands clasped on the top of a thick stick, and his chin propped thereupon.

‘Dear me,’ said the gentleman, in the bottle-green coat, hastily rising with great politeness, ‘I beg your pardon, young lady—I imagined it was some importunate person who—I beg you will excuse me. Be seated, pray.’

‘Mr. Brownlow, I believe, sir?’ said Rose, glancing from the other gentleman to the one who had spoken.

‘That is my name,’ said the old gentleman. ‘This is my friend, Mr. Grimwig. Grimwig, will you leave us for a few minutes?’

‘I believe,’ interposed Miss Maylie, ‘that at this period of our interview, I need not give that gentleman the trouble of going away. If I am correctly informed, he is cognizant of the business on which I wish to speak to you.’

Mr. Brownlow inclined his head. Mr. Grimwig, who had made one very stiff bow, and risen from his chair, made another very stiff bow, and dropped into it again.

‘I shall surprise you very much, I have no doubt,’ said Rose, naturally embarrassed; ‘but you once showed great benevolence and goodness to a very dear young friend of mine, and I am sure you will take an interest in hearing of him again.’

‘Indeed!’ said Mr. Brownlow.

‘Oliver Twist you knew him as,’ replied Rose.

The words no sooner escaped her lips, than Mr. Grimwig, who had been affecting to dip into a large book that lay on the table, upset it with a great crash, and falling back in his chair, discharged from his features every expression but one of unmitigated wonder, and indulged in a prolonged and vacant stare; then, as if ashamed of having betrayed so much emotion, he jerked himself, as it were, by a convulsion into his former attitude, and looking out straight before him emitted a long deep whistle, which seemed, at last, not to be discharged on empty air, but to die away in the innermost recesses of his stomach.

Mr. Browlow was no less surprised, although his astonishment was not expressed in the same eccentric manner. He drew his chair nearer to Miss Maylie’s, and said,

‘Do me the favour, my dear young lady, to leave entirely out of the question that goodness and benevolence of which you speak, and of which nobody else knows anything; and if you have it in your power to produce any evidence which will alter the unfavourable opinion I was once induced to entertain of that poor child, in Heaven’s name put me in possession of it.’

‘A bad one! I’ll eat my head if he is not a bad one,’ growled Mr. Grimwig, speaking by some ventriloquial power, without moving a muscle of his face.

‘He is a child of a noble nature and a warm heart,’ said Rose, colouring; ‘and that Power which has thought fit to try him beyond his years, has planted in his breast affections and feelings which would do honour to many who have numbered his days six times over.’

‘I’m only sixty-one,’ said Mr. Grimwig, with the same rigid face. ‘And, as the devil’s in it if this Oliver is not twelve years old at least, I don’t see the application of that remark.’

‘Do not heed my friend, Miss Maylie,’ said Mr. Brownlow; ‘he does not mean what he says.’

‘Yes, he does,’ growled Mr. Grimwig.

‘No, he does not,’ said Mr. Brownlow, obviously rising in wrath as he spoke.

‘He’ll eat his head, if he doesn’t,’ growled Mr. Grimwig.

‘He would deserve to have it knocked off, if he does,’ said Mr. Brownlow.

‘And he’d uncommonly like to see any man offer to do it,’ responded Mr. Grimwig, knocking his stick upon the floor.

Having gone thus far, the two old gentlemen severally took snuff, and afterwards shook hands, according to their invariable custom.

‘Now, Miss Maylie,’ said Mr. Brownlow, ‘to return to the subject in which your humanity is so much interested. Will you let me know what intelligence you have of this poor child: allowing me to promise that I exhausted every means in my power of discovering him, and that since I have been absent from this country, my first impression that he had imposed upon me, and had been persuaded by his former associates to rob me, has been considerably shaken.’

Rose, who had had time to collect her thoughts, at once related, in a few natural words, all that had befallen Oliver since he left Mr. Brownlow’s house; reserving Nancy’s information for that gentleman’s private ear, and concluding with the assurance that his only sorrow, for some months past, had been not being able to meet with his former benefactor and friend.

‘Thank God!’ said the old gentleman. ‘This is great happiness to me, great happiness. But you have not told me where he is now, Miss Maylie. You must pardon my finding fault with you,—but why not have brought him?’

‘He is waiting in a coach at the door,’ replied Rose.

‘At this door!’ cried the old gentleman. With which he hurried out of the room, down the stairs, up the coach-steps, and into the coach, without another word.

When the room-door closed behind him, Mr. Grimwig lifted up his head, and converting one of the hind legs of his chair into a pivot, described three distinct circles with the assistance of his stick and the table; sitting in it all the time. After performing this evolution, he rose and limped as fast as he could up and down the room at least a dozen times, and then stopping suddenly before Rose, kissed her without the slightest preface.

‘Hush!’ he said, as the young lady rose in some alarm at this unusual proceeding. ‘Don’t be afraid. I’m old enough to be your grandfather. You’re a sweet girl. I like you. Here they are!’

In fact, as he threw himself at one dexterous dive into his former seat, Mr. Brownlow returned, accompanied by Oliver, whom Mr. Grimwig received very graciously; and if the gratification of that moment had been the only reward for all her anxiety and care in Oliver’s behalf, Rose Maylie would have been well

repaid.

‘There is somebody else who should not be forgotten, by the bye,’ said Mr. Brownlow, ringing the bell. ‘Send Mrs. Bedwin here, if you please.’

The old housekeeper answered the summons with all dispatch; and dropping a curtsey at the door, waited for orders.

‘Why, you get blinder every day, Bedwin,’ said Mr. Brownlow, rather testily.

‘Well, that I do, sir,’ replied the old lady. ‘People’s eyes, at my time of life, don’t improve with age, sir.’

‘I could have told you that,’ rejoined Mr. Brownlow; ‘but put on your glasses, and see if you can’t find out what you were wanted for, will you?’

The old lady began to rummage in her pocket for her spectacles. But Oliver’s patience was not proof against this new trial; and yielding to his first impulse, he sprang into her arms.

‘God be good to me!’ cried the old lady, embracing him; ‘it is my innocent boy!’

‘My dear old nurse!’ cried Oliver.

‘He would come back—I knew he would,’ said the old lady, holding him in her arms. ‘How well he looks, and how like a gentleman’s son he is dressed again! Where have you been, this long, long while? Ah! the same sweet face, but not so pale; the same soft eye, but not so sad. I have never forgotten them or his quiet smile, but have seen them every day, side by side with those of my own dear children, dead and gone since I was a lightsome young creature.’ Running on thus, and now holding Oliver from her to mark how he had grown, now clasping him to her and passing her fingers fondly through his hair, the good soul laughed and wept upon his neck by turns.

Leaving her and Oliver to compare notes at leisure, Mr. Brownlow led the way into another room; and there, heard from Rose a full narration of her interview with Nancy, which occasioned him no little surprise and perplexity. Rose also explained her reasons for not confiding in her friend Mr. Losberne in the first instance. The old gentleman considered that she had acted prudently, and readily undertook to hold solemn conference with the worthy doctor himself. To afford him an early opportunity for the execution of this design, it was arranged that he should call at the hotel at eight o’clock that evening, and that in the meantime Mrs. Maylie should be cautiously informed of all that had occurred. These preliminaries adjusted, Rose and Oliver returned home.

Rose had by no means overrated the measure of the good doctor’s wrath. Nancy’s history was no sooner unfolded to him, than he poured forth a shower of mingled threats and execrations; threatened to make her the first victim of the combined ingenuity of Messrs. Blathers and Duff; and actually put on his hat preparatory to sallying forth to obtain the assistance of those worthies. And, doubtless, he would, in this first outbreak, have carried the intention into effect without a moment’s consideration of the consequences, if he had not been restrained, in part, by corresponding violence on the side of Mr. Brownlow, who was himself of an irascible temperament, and party by such arguments and representations as seemed best calculated to dissuade him from his hotbrained purpose.

‘Then what the devil is to be done?’ said the impetuous doctor, when they had rejoined the two ladies. ‘Are we to pass a vote of thanks to all these vagabonds, male and female, and beg them to accept a hundred pounds, or so, apiece, as a trifling mark of our esteem, and some slight acknowledgment of their kindness to Oliver?’

‘Not exactly that,’ rejoined Mr. Brownlow, laughing; ‘but we must proceed gently and with great care.’

‘Gentleness and care,’ exclaimed the doctor. ‘I’d send them one and all to—’

‘Never mind where,’ interposed Mr. Brownlow. ‘But reflect whether sending them anywhere is likely to attain the object we have in view.’

‘What object?’ asked the doctor.

‘Simply, the discovery of Oliver’s parentage, and regaining for him the inheritance of which, if this story be true, he has been fraudulently deprived.’

‘Ah!’ said Mr. Losberne, cooling himself with his pocket-handkerchief; ‘I almost forgot that.’

‘You see,’ pursued Mr. Brownlow; ‘placing this poor girl entirely out of the question, and supposing it were possible to bring these scoundrels to justice without compromising her safety, what good should we bring about?’

‘Hanging a few of them at least, in all probability,’ suggested the doctor, ‘and transporting the rest.’

‘Very good,’ replied Mr. Brownlow, smiling; ‘but no doubt they will bring that about for themselves in the fulness of time, and if we step in to forestall them, it seems to me that we shall be performing a very Quixotic act, in direct opposition to our own interest—or at least to Oliver’s, which is the same thing.’

‘How?’ inquired the doctor.

‘Thus. It is quite clear that we shall have extreme difficulty in getting to the bottom of this mystery, unless we can bring this man, Monks, upon his knees. That can only be done by stratagem, and by catching him when he is not surrounded by these people. For, suppose he were apprehended, we have no proof against him. He is not even (so far as we know, or as the facts appear to us) concerned with the gang in any of their robberies. If he were not discharged, it is very unlikely that he could receive any further punishment than being committed to prison as a rogue and vagabond; and of course ever afterwards his mouth would be so obstinately closed that he might as well, for our purposes, be deaf, dumb, blind, and an idiot.’

‘Then,’ said the doctor impetuously, ‘I put it to you again, whether you think it reasonable that this promise to the girl should be considered binding; a promise made with the best and kindest intentions, but really—’

‘Do not discuss the point, my dear young lady, pray,’ said Mr. Brownlow, interrupting Rose as she was about to speak. ‘The promise shall be kept. I don’t think it will, in the slightest degree, interfere with our proceedings. But, before we can resolve upon any precise course of action, it will be necessary to see the girl; to ascertain from her whether she will point out this Monks, on the understanding that he is to be dealt with

by us, and not by the law; or, if she will not, or cannot do that, to procure from her such an account of his haunts and description of his person, as will enable us to identify him. She cannot be seen until next Sunday night; this is Tuesday. I would suggest that in the meantime, we remain perfectly quiet, and keep these matters secret even from Oliver himself.'

Although Mr. Losberne received with many wry faces a proposal involving a delay of five whole days, he was fain to admit that no better course occurred to him just then; and as both Rose and Mrs. Maylie sided very strongly with Mr. Brownlow, that gentleman's proposition was carried unanimously.

'I should like,' he said, 'to call in the aid of my friend Grimwig. He is a strange creature, but a shrewd one, and might prove of material assistance to us; I should say that he was bred a lawyer, and quitted the Bar in disgust because he had only one brief and a motion of course, in twenty years, though whether that is recommendation or not, you must determine for yourselves.'

'I have no objection to your calling in your friend if I may call in mine,' said the doctor.

'We must put it to the vote,' replied Mr. Brownlow, 'who may he be?'

'That lady's son, and this young lady's—very old friend,' said the doctor, motioning towards Mrs. Maylie, and concluding with an expressive glance at her niece.

Rose blushed deeply, but she did not make any audible objection to this motion (possibly she felt in a hopeless minority); and Harry Maylie and Mr. Grimwig were accordingly added to the committee.

'We stay in town, of course,' said Mrs. Maylie, 'while there remains the slightest prospect of prosecuting this inquiry with a chance of success. I will spare neither trouble nor expense in behalf of the object in which we are all so deeply interested, and I am content to remain here, if it be for twelve months, so long as you assure me that any hope remains.'

'Good!' rejoined Mr. Brownlow. 'And as I see on the faces about me, a disposition to inquire how it happened that I was not in the way to corroborate Oliver's tale, and had so suddenly left the kingdom, let me stipulate that I shall be asked no questions until such time as I may deem it expedient to forestall them by telling my own story. Believe me, I make this request with good reason, for I might otherwise excite hopes destined never to be realised, and only increase difficulties and disappointments already quite numerous enough. Come! Supper has been announced, and young Oliver, who is all alone in the next room, will have begun to think, by this time, that we have wearied of his company, and entered into some dark conspiracy to thrust him forth upon the world.'

With these words, the old gentleman gave his hand to Mrs. Maylie, and escorted her into the supper-room. Mr. Losberne followed, leading Rose; and the council was, for the present, effectually broken up.

CHAPTER XLII — AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE OF OLIVER'S, EXHIBITING DECIDED MARKS OF GENIUS, BECOMES A PUBLIC CHARACTER IN THE METROPOLIS

Upon the night when Nancy, having lulled Mr. Sikes to sleep, hurried on her self-imposed mission to Rose Maylie, there advanced towards London, by the Great North Road, two persons, upon whom it is expedient that this history should bestow some attention.

They were a man and woman; or perhaps they would be better described as a male and female: for the former was one of those long-limbed, knock-kneed, shambling, bony people, to whom it is difficult to assign any precise age,—looking as they do, when they are yet boys, like undergrown men, and when they are almost men, like overgrown boys. The woman was young, but of a robust and hardy make, as she need have been to bear the weight of the heavy bundle which was strapped to her back. Her companion was not encumbered with much luggage, as there merely dangled from a stick which he carried over his shoulder, a small parcel wrapped in a common handkerchief, and apparently light enough. This circumstance, added to the length of his legs, which were of unusual extent, enabled him with much ease to keep some half-dozen paces in advance of his companion, to whom he occasionally turned with an impatient jerk of the head: as if reproaching her tardiness, and urging her to greater exertion.

Thus, they had toiled along the dusty road, taking little heed of any object within sight, save when they stepped aside to allow a wider passage for the mail-coaches which were whirling out of town, until they passed through Highgate archway; when the foremost traveller stopped and called impatiently to his companion,

'Come on, can't yer? What a lazybones yer are, Charlotte.'

'It's a heavy load, I can tell you,' said the female, coming up, almost breathless with fatigue.

'Heavy! What are yer talking about? What are yer made for?' rejoined the male traveller, changing his own little bundle as he spoke, to the other shoulder. 'Oh, there yer are, resting again! Well, if yer ain't enough to tire anybody's patience out, I don't know what is!'

'Is it much farther?' asked the woman, resting herself against a bank, and looking up with the perspiration streaming from her face.

'Much farther! Yer as good as there,' said the long-legged tramper, pointing out before him. 'Look there!

Those are the lights of London.'

'They're a good two mile off, at least,' said the woman despondingly.

'Never mind whether they're two mile off, or twenty,' said Noah Claypole; for he it was; 'but get up and come on, or I'll kick yer, and so I give yer notice.'

As Noah's red nose grew redder with anger, and as he crossed the road while speaking, as if fully prepared to put his threat into execution, the woman rose without any further remark, and trudged onward by his side.

'Where do you mean to stop for the night, Noah?' she asked, after they had walked a few hundred yards.

'How should I know?' replied Noah, whose temper had been considerably impaired by walking.

'Near, I hope,' said Charlotte.

'No, not near,' replied Mr. Claypole. 'There! Not near; so don't think it.'

'Why not?'

'When I tell yer that I don't mean to do a thing, that's enough, without any why or because either,' replied Mr. Claypole with dignity.

'Well, you needn't be so cross,' said his companion.

'A pretty thing it would be, wouldn't it to go and stop at the very first public-house outside the town, so that Sowerberry, if he come up after us, might poke in his old nose, and have us taken back in a cart with handcuffs on,' said Mr. Claypole in a jeering tone. 'No! I shall go and lose myself among the narrowest streets I can find, and not stop till we come to the very out-of-the-wayest house I can set eyes on. 'Cod, yer may thanks yer stars I've got a head; for if we hadn't gone, at first, the wrong road a purpose, and come back across country, yer'd have been locked up hard and fast a week ago, my lady. And serve yer right for being a fool.'

'I know I ain't as cunning as you are,' replied Charlotte; 'but don't put all the blame on me, and say I should have been locked up. You would have been if I had been, any way.'

'Yer took the money from the till, yer know yer did,' said Mr. Claypole.

'I took it for you, Noah, dear,' rejoined Charlotte.

'Did I keep it?' asked Mr. Claypole.

'No; you trusted in me, and let me carry it like a dear, and so you are,' said the lady, chucking him under the chin, and drawing her arm through his.

This was indeed the case; but as it was not Mr. Claypole's habit to repose a blind and foolish confidence in anybody, it should be observed, in justice to that gentleman, that he had trusted Charlotte to this extent, in order that, if they were pursued, the money might be found on her: which would leave him an opportunity of asserting his innocence of any theft, and would greatly facilitate his chances of escape. Of course, he entered at this juncture, into no explanation of his motives, and they walked on very lovingly together.

In pursuance of this cautious plan, Mr. Claypole went on, without halting, until he arrived at the Angel at Islington, where he wisely judged, from the crowd of passengers and numbers of vehicles, that London began in earnest. Just pausing to observe which appeared the most crowded streets, and consequently the most to be avoided, he crossed into Saint John's Road, and was soon deep in the obscurity of the intricate and dirty ways, which, lying between Gray's Inn Lane and Smithfield, render that part of the town one of the lowest and worst that improvement has left in the midst of London.

Through these streets, Noah Claypole walked, dragging Charlotte after him; now stepping into the kennel to embrace at a glance the whole external character of some small public-house; now jogging on again, as some fancied appearance induced him to believe it too public for his purpose. At length, he stopped in front of one, more humble in appearance and more dirty than any he had yet seen; and, having crossed over and surveyed it from the opposite pavement, graciously announced his intention of putting up there, for the night.

'So give us the bundle,' said Noah, unstrapping it from the woman's shoulders, and slinging it over his own; 'and don't yer speak, except when yer spoke to. What's the name of the house—t-h-r—three what?'

'Cripples,' said Charlotte.

'Three Cripples,' repeated Noah, 'and a very good sign too. Now, then! Keep close at my heels, and come along.' With these injunctions, he pushed the rattling door with his shoulder, and entered the house, followed by his companion.

There was nobody in the bar but a young Jew, who, with his two elbows on the counter, was reading a dirty newspaper. He stared very hard at Noah, and Noah stared very hard at him.

If Noah had been attired in his charity-boy's dress, there might have been some reason for the Jew opening his eyes so wide; but as he had discarded the coat and badge, and wore a short smock-frock over his leathers, there seemed no particular reason for his appearance exciting so much attention in a public-house.

'Is this the Three Cripples?' asked Noah.

'That is the dabe of this 'ouse,' replied the Jew.

'A gentleman we met on the road, coming up from the country, recommended us here,' said Noah, nudging Charlotte, perhaps to call her attention to this most ingenious device for attracting respect, and perhaps to warn her to betray no surprise. 'We want to sleep here to-night.'

'I'b dot certaid you cad,' said Barney, who was the attendant sprite; 'but I'll idquire.'

'Show us the tap, and give us a bit of cold meat and a drop of beer while yer inquiring, will yer?' said Noah.

Barney complied by ushering them into a small back-room, and setting the required viands before them; having done which, he informed the travellers that they could be lodged that night, and left the amiable couple to their refreshment.

Now, this back-room was immediately behind the bar, and some steps lower, so that any person connected with the house, undrawing a small curtain which concealed a single pane of glass fixed in the wall of the last-named apartment, about five feet from its flooring, could not only look down upon any guests in the back-room without any great hazard of being observed (the glass being in a dark angle of the wall, between which and a large upright beam the observer had to thrust himself), but could, by applying his ear to the partition, ascertain with tolerable distinctness, their subject of conversation. The landlord of the house had not withdrawn his eye from this place of espial for five minutes, and Barney had only just returned from making the communication above related, when Fagin, in the course of his evening's business, came into the bar to inquire after some of his young pupils.

'Hush!' said Barney: 'stradegers id the next roob.'

'Strangers!' repeated the old man in a whisper.

'Ah! Ad rub uds too,' added Barney. 'Frob the cuttry, but subthig in your way, or I'b bistaked.'

Fagin appeared to receive this communication with great interest.

Mounting a stool, he cautiously applied his eye to the pane of glass, from which secret post he could see Mr. Claypole taking cold beef from the dish, and porter from the pot, and administering homeopathic doses of both to Charlotte, who sat patiently by, eating and drinking at his pleasure.

'Aha!' he whispered, looking round to Barney, 'I like that fellow's looks. He'd be of use to us; he knows how to train the girl already. Don't make as much noise as a mouse, my dear, and let me hear 'em talk—let me hear 'em.'

He again applied his eye to the glass, and turning his ear to the partition, listened attentively: with a subtle and eager look upon his face, that might have appertained to some old goblin.

'So I mean to be a gentleman,' said Mr. Claypole, kicking out his legs, and continuing a conversation, the commencement of which Fagin had arrived too late to hear. 'No more jolly old coffins, Charlotte, but a gentleman's life for me: and, if yer like, yer shall be a lady.'

'I should like that well enough, dear,' replied Charlotte; 'but tills ain't to be emptied every day, and people to get clear off after it.'

'Tills be blowed!' said Mr. Claypole; 'there's more things besides tills to be emptied.'

'What do you mean?' asked his companion.

'Pockets, women's ridicules, houses, mail-coaches, banks!' said Mr. Claypole, rising with the porter.

'But you can't do all that, dear,' said Charlotte.

'I shall look out to get into company with them as can,' replied Noah. 'They'll be able to make us useful some way or another. Why, you yourself are worth fifty women; I never see such a precious sly and deceitful creetur as yer can be when I let yer.'

'Lor, how nice it is to hear yer say so!' exclaimed Charlotte, imprinting a kiss upon his ugly face.

'There, that'll do: don't yer be too affectionate, in case I'm cross with yer,' said Noah, disengaging himself with great gravity. 'I should like to be the captain of some band, and have the whopping of 'em, and follering 'em about, unbeknown to themselves. That would suit me, if there was good profit; and if we could only get in with some gentleman of this sort, I say it would be cheap at that twenty-pound note you've got,—especially as we don't very well know how to get rid of it ourselves.'

After expressing this opinion, Mr. Claypole looked into the porter-pot with an aspect of deep wisdom; and

having well shaken its contents, nodded condescendingly to Charlotte, and took a draught, wherewith he appeared greatly refreshed. He was meditating another, when the sudden opening of the door, and the appearance of a stranger, interrupted him.

The stranger was Mr. Fagin. And very amiable he looked, and a very low bow he made, as he advanced, and setting himself down at the nearest table, ordered something to drink of the grinning Barney.

'A pleasant night, sir, but cool for the time of year,' said Fagin, rubbing his hands. 'From the country, I see, sir?'

'How do yer see that?' asked Noah Claypole.

'We have not so much dust as that in London,' replied Fagin, pointing from Noah's shoes to those of his companion, and from them to the two bundles.

'Yer a sharp feller,' said Noah. 'Ha! ha! only hear that, Charlotte!'

'Why, one need be sharp in this town, my dear,' replied the Jew, sinking his voice to a confidential whisper; 'and that's the truth.'

Fagin followed up this remark by striking the side of his nose with his right forefinger,—a gesture which Noah attempted to imitate, though not with complete success, in consequence of his own nose not being large enough for the purpose. However, Mr. Fagin seemed to interpret the endeavour as expressing a perfect coincidence with his opinion, and put about the liquor which Barney reappeared with, in a very friendly manner.

'Good stuff that,' observed Mr. Claypole, smacking his lips.

'Dear!' said Fagin. 'A man need be always emptying a till, or a pocket, or a woman's reticule, or a house, or a mail-coach, or a bank, if he drinks it regularly.'

Mr. Claypole no sooner heard this extract from his own remarks than he fell back in his chair, and looked from the Jew to Charlotte with a countenance of ashy paleness and excessive terror.

'Don't mind me, my dear,' said Fagin, drawing his chair closer. 'Ha! ha! it was lucky it was only me that heard you by chance. It was very lucky it was only me.'

'I didn't take it,' stammered Noah, no longer stretching out his legs like an independent gentleman, but coiling them up as well as he could under his chair; 'it was all her doing; yer've got it now, Charlotte, yer know yer have.'

'No matter who's got it, or who did it, my dear,' replied Fagin, glancing, nevertheless, with a hawk's eye at the girl and the two bundles. 'I'm in that way myself, and I like you for it.'

'In what way?' asked Mr. Claypole, a little recovering.

'In that way of business,' rejoined Fagin; 'and so are the people of the house. You've hit the right nail upon the head, and are as safe here as you could be. There is not a safer place in all this town than is the Cripples; that is, when I like to make it so. And I have taken a fancy to you and the young woman; so I've said the word, and you may make your minds easy.'

Noah Claypole's mind might have been at ease after this assurance, but his body certainly was not; for he shuffled and writhed about, into various uncouth positions: eyeing his new friend meanwhile with mingled fear and suspicion.

'I'll tell you more,' said Fagin, after he had reassured the girl, by dint of friendly nods and muttered encouragements. 'I have got a friend that I think can gratify your darling wish, and put you in the right way, where you can take whatever department of the business you think will suit you best at first, and be taught all the others.'

'Yer speak as if yer were in earnest,' replied Noah.

'What advantage would it be to me to be anything else?' inquired Fagin, shrugging his shoulders. 'Here! Let me have a word with you outside.'

'There's no occasion to trouble ourselves to move,' said Noah, getting his legs by gradual degrees abroad again. 'She'll take the luggage upstairs the while. Charlotte, see to them bundles.'

This mandate, which had been delivered with great majesty, was obeyed without the slightest demur; and Charlotte made the best of her way off with the packages while Noah held the door open and watched her out.

'She's kept tolerably well under, ain't she?' he asked as he resumed his seat: in the tone of a keeper who had tamed some wild animal.

'Quite perfect,' rejoined Fagin, clapping him on the shoulder. 'You're a genius, my dear.'

'Why, I suppose if I wasn't, I shouldn't be here,' replied Noah. 'But, I say, she'll be back if yer lose time.'

'Now, what do you think?' said Fagin. 'If you was to like my friend, could you do better than join him?'

'Is he in a good way of business; that's where it is!' responded Noah, winking one of his little eyes.

'The top of the tree; employs a power of hands; has the very best society in the profession.'

'Regular town-maders?' asked Mr. Claypole.

'Not a countryman among 'em; and I don't think he'd take you, even on my recommendation, if he didn't run rather short of assistants just now,' replied Fagin.

'Should I have to hand over?' said Noah, slapping his breeches-pocket.

'It couldn't possibly be done without,' replied Fagin, in a most decided manner.

'Twenty pound, though—it's a lot of money!'

'Not when it's in a note you can't get rid of,' retorted Fagin. 'Number and date taken, I suppose? Payment stopped at the Bank? Ah! It's not worth much to him. It'll have to go abroad, and he couldn't sell it for a great deal in the market.'

'When could I see him?' asked Noah doubtfully.

‘To-morrow morning.’

‘Where?’

‘Here.’

‘Um!’ said Noah. ‘What’s the wages?’

‘Live like a gentleman—board and lodging, pipes and spirits free—half of all you earn, and half of all the young woman earns,’ replied Mr. Fagin.

Whether Noah Claypole, whose rapacity was none of the least comprehensive, would have acceded even to these glowing terms, had he been a perfectly free agent, is very doubtful; but as he recollected that, in the event of his refusal, it was in the power of his new acquaintance to give him up to justice immediately (and more unlikely things had come to pass), he gradually relented, and said he thought that would suit him.

‘But, yer see,’ observed Noah, ‘as she will be able to do a good deal, I should like to take something very light.’

‘A little fancy work?’ suggested Fagin.

‘Ah! something of that sort,’ replied Noah. ‘What do you think would suit me now? Something not too trying for the strength, and not very dangerous, you know. That’s the sort of thing!’

‘I heard you talk of something in the spy way upon the others, my dear,’ said Fagin. ‘My friend wants somebody who would do that well, very much.’

‘Why, I did mention that, and I shouldn’t mind turning my hand to it sometimes,’ rejoined Mr. Claypole slowly; ‘but it wouldn’t pay by itself, you know.’

‘That’s true!’ observed the Jew, ruminating or pretending to ruminate. ‘No, it might not.’

‘What do you think, then?’ asked Noah, anxiously regarding him. ‘Something in the sneaking way, where it was pretty sure work, and not much more risk than being at home.’

‘What do you think of the old ladies?’ asked Fagin. ‘There’s a good deal of money made in snatching their bags and parcels, and running round the corner.’

‘Don’t they holler out a good deal, and scratch sometimes?’ asked Noah, shaking his head. ‘I don’t think that would answer my purpose. Ain’t there any other line open?’

‘Stop!’ said Fagin, laying his hand on Noah’s knee. ‘The kinchin lay.’

‘What’s that?’ demanded Mr. Claypole.

‘The kinchins, my dear,’ said Fagin, ‘is the young children that’s sent on errands by their mothers, with sixpences and shillings; and the lay is just to take their money away—they’ve always got it ready in their hands,—then knock ‘em into the kennel, and walk off very slow, as if there were nothing else the matter but a child fallen down and hurt itself. Ha! ha! ha!’

‘Ha! ha!’ roared Mr. Claypole, kicking up his legs in an ecstasy. ‘Lord, that’s the very thing!’

‘To be sure it is,’ replied Fagin; ‘and you can have a few good beats chalked out in Camden Town, and Battle Bridge, and neighborhoods like that, where they’re always going errands; and you can upset as many kinchins as you want, any hour in the day. Ha! ha! ha!’

With this, Fagin poked Mr. Claypole in the side, and they joined in a burst of laughter both long and loud.

‘Well, that’s all right!’ said Noah, when he had recovered himself, and Charlotte had returned. ‘What time to-morrow shall we say?’

‘Will ten do?’ asked Fagin, adding, as Mr. Claypole nodded assent, ‘What name shall I tell my good friend.’

‘Mr. Bolter,’ replied Noah, who had prepared himself for such emergency. ‘Mr. Morris Bolter. This is Mrs. Bolter.’

‘Mrs. Bolter’s humble servant,’ said Fagin, bowing with grotesque politeness. ‘I hope I shall know her better very shortly.’

‘Do you hear the gentleman, Charlotte?’ thundered Mr. Claypole.

‘Yes, Noah, dear!’ replied Mrs. Bolter, extending her hand.

‘She calls me Noah, as a sort of fond way of talking,’ said Mr. Morris Bolter, late Claypole, turning to Fagin. ‘You understand?’

‘Oh yes, I understand—perfectly,’ replied Fagin, telling the truth for once. ‘Good-night! Good-night!’

With many adieus and good wishes, Mr. Fagin went his way. Noah Claypole, bespeaking his good lady’s attention, proceeded to enlighten her relative to the arrangement he had made, with all that haughtiness and air of superiority, becoming, not only a member of the sterner sex, but a gentleman who appreciated the dignity of a special appointment on the kinchin lay, in London and its vicinity.

CHAPTER XLIII — WHEREIN IS SHOWN HOW THE ARTFUL DODGER GOT INTO TROUBLE

‘And so it was you that was your own friend, was it?’ asked Mr. Claypole, otherwise Bolter, when, by virtue of the compact entered into between them, he had removed next day to Fagin’s house. ‘’Cod, I thought as much last night!’

‘Every man’s his own friend, my dear,’ replied Fagin, with his most insinuating grin. ‘He hasn’t as good a

one as himself anywhere.'

'Except sometimes,' replied Morris Bolter, assuming the air of a man of the world. 'Some people are nobody's enemies but their own, yer know.'

'Don't believe that,' said Fagin. 'When a man's his own enemy, it's only because he's too much his own friend; not because he's careful for everybody but himself. Pooh! pooh! There ain't such a thing in nature.'

'There oughn't to be, if there is,' replied Mr. Bolter.

'That stands to reason. Some conjurers say that number three is the magic number, and some say number seven. It's neither, my friend, neither. It's number one.

'Ha! ha!' cried Mr. Bolter. 'Number one for ever.'

'In a little community like ours, my dear,' said Fagin, who felt it necessary to qualify this position, 'we have a general number one, without considering me too as the same, and all the other young people.'

'Oh, the devil!' exclaimed Mr. Bolter.

'You see,' pursued Fagin, affecting to disregard this interruption, 'we are so mixed up together, and identified in our interests, that it must be so. For instance, it's your object to take care of number one—meaning yourself.'

'Certainly,' replied Mr. Bolter. 'Yer about right there.'

'Well! You can't take care of yourself, number one, without taking care of me, number one.'

'Number two, you mean,' said Mr. Bolter, who was largely endowed with the quality of selfishness.

'No, I don't!' retorted Fagin. 'I'm of the same importance to you, as you are to yourself.'

'I say,' interrupted Mr. Bolter, 'yer a very nice man, and I'm very fond of yer; but we ain't quite so thick together, as all that comes to.'

'Only think,' said Fagin, shrugging his shoulders, and stretching out his hands; 'only consider. You've done what's a very pretty thing, and what I love you for doing; but what at the same time would put the cravat round your throat, that's so very easily tied and so very difficult to unloose—in plain English, the halter!'

Mr. Bolter put his hand to his neckerchief, as if he felt it inconveniently tight; and murmured an assent, qualified in tone but not in substance.

'The gallows,' continued Fagin, 'the gallows, my dear, is an ugly finger-post, which points out a very short and sharp turning that has stopped many a bold fellow's career on the broad highway. To keep in the easy road, and keep it at a distance, is object number one with you.'

'Of course it is,' replied Mr. Bolter. 'What do yer talk about such things for?'

'Only to show you my meaning clearly,' said the Jew, raising his eyebrows. 'To be able to do that, you depend upon me. To keep my little business all snug, I depend upon you. The first is your number one, the second my number one. The more you value your number one, the more careful you must be of mine; so we come at last to what I told you at first—that a regard for number one holds us all together, and must do so, unless we would all go to pieces in company.'

'That's true,' rejoined Mr. Bolter, thoughtfully. 'Oh! yer a cunning old codger!'

Mr. Fagin saw, with delight, that this tribute to his powers was no mere compliment, but that he had really impressed his recruit with a sense of his wily genius, which it was most important that he should entertain in the outset of their acquaintance. To strengthen an impression so desirable and useful, he followed up the blow by acquainting him, in some detail, with the magnitude and extent of his operations; blending truth and fiction together, as best served his purpose; and bringing both to bear, with so much art, that Mr. Bolter's respect visibly increased, and became tempered, at the same time, with a degree of wholesome fear, which it was highly desirable to awaken.

'It's this mutual trust we have in each other that consoles me under heavy losses,' said Fagin. 'My best hand was taken from me, yesterday morning.'

'You don't mean to say he died?' cried Mr. Bolter.

'No, no,' replied Fagin, 'not so bad as that. Not quite so bad.'

'What, I suppose he was—'

'Wanted,' interposed Fagin. 'Yes, he was wanted.'

'Very particular?' inquired Mr. Bolter.

'No,' replied Fagin, 'not very. He was charged with attempting to pick a pocket, and they found a silver snuff-box on him,—his own, my dear, his own, for he took snuff himself, and was very fond of it. They remanded him till to-day, for they thought they knew the owner. Ah! he was worth fifty boxes, and I'd give the price of as many to have him back. You should have known the Dodger, my dear; you should have known the Dodger.'

'Well, but I shall know him, I hope; don't yer think so?' said Mr. Bolter.

'I'm doubtful about it,' replied Fagin, with a sigh. 'If they don't get any fresh evidence, it'll only be a summary conviction, and we shall have him back again after six weeks or so; but, if they do, it's a case of lagging. They know what a clever lad he is; he'll be a lifer. They'll make the Artful nothing less than a lifer.'

'What do you mean by lagging and a lifer?' demanded Mr. Bolter. 'What's the good of talking in that way to me; why don't yer speak so as I can understand yer?'

Fagin was about to translate these mysterious expressions into the vulgar tongue; and, being interpreted, Mr. Bolter would have been informed that they represented that combination of words, 'transportation for life,' when the dialogue was cut short by the entry of Master Bates, with his hands in his breeches-pockets, and his face twisted into a look of semi-comical woe.

'It's all up, Fagin,' said Charley, when he and his new companion had been made known to each other.

'What do you mean?'

‘They’ve found the gentleman as owns the box; two or three more’s a coming to ‘dentify him; and the Artful’s booked for a passage out,’ replied Master Bates. ‘I must have a full suit of mourning, Fagin, and a hatband, to wisit him in, afore he sets out upon his travels. To think of Jack Dawkins—lummy Jack—the Dodger—the Artful Dodger—going abroad for a common twopenny-halfpenny sneeze-box! I never thought he’d a done it under a gold watch, chain, and seals, at the lowest. Oh, why didn’t he rob some rich old gentleman of all his walables, and go out as a gentleman, and not like a common prig, without no honour nor glory!’

With this expression of feeling for his unfortunate friend, Master Bates sat himself on the nearest chair with an aspect of chagrin and despondency.

‘What do you talk about his having neither honour nor glory for!’ exclaimed Fagin, darting an angry look at his pupil. ‘Wasn’t he always the top-sawyer among you all! Is there one of you that could touch him or come near him on any scent! Eh?’

‘Not one,’ replied Master Bates, in a voice rendered husky by regret; ‘not one.’

‘Then what do you talk of?’ replied Fagin angrily; ‘what are you blubbering for?’

‘’Cause it isn’t on the rec-ord, is it?’ said Charley, chafed into perfect defiance of his venerable friend by the current of his regrets; ‘’cause it can’t come out in the ‘dictment; ‘cause nobody will never know half of what he was. How will he stand in the Newgate Calendar? P’raps not be there at all. Oh, my eye, my eye, wot a blow it is!’

‘Ha! ha!’ cried Fagin, extending his right hand, and turning to Mr. Bolter in a fit of chuckling which shook him as though he had the palsy; ‘see what a pride they take in their profession, my dear. Ain’t it beautiful?’

Mr. Bolter nodded assent, and Fagin, after contemplating the grief of Charley Bates for some seconds with evident satisfaction, stepped up to that young gentleman and patted him on the shoulder.

‘Never mind, Charley,’ said Fagin soothingly; ‘it’ll come out, it’ll be sure to come out. They’ll all know what a clever fellow he was; he’ll show it himself, and not disgrace his old pals and teachers. Think how young he is too! What a distinction, Charley, to be lagged at his time of life!’

‘Well, it is a honour that is!’ said Charley, a little consoled.

‘He shall have all he wants,’ continued the Jew. ‘He shall be kept in the Stone Jug, Charley, like a gentleman. Like a gentleman! With his beer every day, and money in his pocket to pitch and toss with, if he can’t spend it.’

‘No, shall he though?’ cried Charley Bates.

‘Ay, that he shall,’ replied Fagin, ‘and we’ll have a big-wig, Charley: one that’s got the greatest gift of the gab: to carry on his defence; and he shall make a speech for himself too, if he likes; and we’ll read it all in the papers—“Artful Dodger—shrieks of laughter—here the court was convulsed”—eh, Charley, eh?’

‘Ha! ha!’ laughed Master Bates, ‘what a lark that would be, wouldn’t it, Fagin? I say, how the Artful would bother ‘em wouldn’t he?’

‘Would!’ cried Fagin. ‘He shall—he will!’

‘Ah, to be sure, so he will,’ repeated Charley, rubbing his hands.

‘I think I see him now,’ cried the Jew, bending his eyes upon his pupil.

‘So do I,’ cried Charley Bates. ‘Ha! ha! ha! so do I. I see it all afore me, upon my soul I do, Fagin. What a game! What a regular game! All the big-wigs trying to look solemn, and Jack Dawkins addressing of ‘em as intimate and comfortable as if he was the judge’s own son making a speech arter dinner—ha! ha! ha!’

In fact, Mr. Fagin had so well humoured his young friend’s eccentric disposition, that Master Bates, who had at first been disposed to consider the imprisoned Dodger rather in the light of a victim, now looked upon him as the chief actor in a scene of most uncommon and exquisite humour, and felt quite impatient for the arrival of the time when his old companion should have so favourable an opportunity of displaying his abilities.

‘We must know how he gets on to-day, by some handy means or other,’ said Fagin. ‘Let me think.’

‘Shall I go?’ asked Charley.

‘Not for the world,’ replied Fagin. ‘Are you mad, my dear, stark mad, that you’d walk into the very place where—No, Charley, no. One is enough to lose at a time.’

‘You don’t mean to go yourself, I suppose?’ said Charley with a humorous leer.

‘That wouldn’t quite fit,’ replied Fagin shaking his head.

‘Then why don’t you send this new cove?’ asked Master Bates, laying his hand on Noah’s arm. ‘Nobody knows him.’

‘Why, if he didn’t mind—’ observed Fagin.

‘Mind!’ interposed Charley. ‘What should he have to mind?’

‘Really nothing, my dear,’ said Fagin, turning to Mr. Bolter, ‘really nothing.’

‘Oh, I dare say about that, yer know,’ observed Noah, backing towards the door, and shaking his head with a kind of sober alarm. ‘No, no—none of that. It’s not in my department, that ain’t.’

‘Wot department has he got, Fagin?’ inquired Master Bates, surveying Noah’s lank form with much disgust. ‘The cutting away when there’s anything wrong, and the eating all the wittles when there’s everything right; is that his branch?’

‘Never mind,’ retorted Mr. Bolter; ‘and don’t yer take liberties with yer superiors, little boy, or yer’ll find yerself in the wrong shop.’

Master Bates laughed so vehemently at this magnificent threat, that it was some time before Fagin could interpose, and represent to Mr. Bolter that he incurred no possible danger in visiting the police-office; that, inasmuch as no account of the little affair in which he had engaged, nor any description of his person, had yet been forwarded to the metropolis, it was very probable that he was not even suspected of having resorted to

it for shelter; and that, if he were properly disguised, it would be as safe a spot for him to visit as any in London, inasmuch as it would be, of all places, the very last, to which he could be supposed likely to resort of his own free will.

Persuaded, in part, by these representations, but overborne in a much greater degree by his fear of Fagin, Mr. Bolter at length consented, with a very bad grace, to undertake the expedition. By Fagin's directions, he immediately substituted for his own attire, a waggoner's frock, velveteen breeches, and leather leggings: all of which articles the Jew had at hand. He was likewise furnished with a felt hat well garnished with turnpike tickets; and a carter's whip. Thus equipped, he was to saunter into the office, as some country fellow from Covent Garden market might be supposed to do for the gratification of his curiousity; and as he was as awkward, ungainly, and raw-boned a fellow as need be, Mr. Fagin had no fear but that he would look the part to perfection.

These arrangements completed, he was informed of the necessary signs and tokens by which to recognise the Artful Dodger, and was conveyed by Master Bates through dark and winding ways to within a very short distance of Bow Street. Having described the precise situation of the office, and accompanied it with copious directions how he was to walk straight up the passage, and when he got into the side, and pull off his hat as he went into the room, Charley Bates bade him hurry on alone, and promised to bide his return on the spot of their parting.

Noah Claypole, or Morris Bolter as the reader pleases, punctually followed the directions he had received, which—Master Bates being pretty well acquainted with the locality—were so exact that he was enabled to gain the magisterial presence without asking any question, or meeting with any interruption by the way.

He found himself jostled among a crowd of people, chiefly women, who were huddled together in a dirty frowsy room, at the upper end of which was a raised platform railed off from the rest, with a dock for the prisoners on the left hand against the wall, a box for the witnesses in the middle, and a desk for the magistrates on the right; the awful locality last named, being screened off by a partition which concealed the bench from the common gaze, and left the vulgar to imagine (if they could) the full majesty of justice.

There were only a couple of women in the dock, who were nodding to their admiring friends, while the clerk read some depositions to a couple of policemen and a man in plain clothes who leant over the table. A jailer stood reclining against the dock-rail, tapping his nose listlessly with a large key, except when he repressed an undue tendency to conversation among the idlers, by proclaiming silence; or looked sternly up to bid some woman 'Take that baby out,' when the gravity of justice was disturbed by feeble cries, half-smothered in the mother's shawl, from some meagre infant. The room smelt close and unwholesome; the walls were dirt-discoloured; and the ceiling blackened. There was an old smoky bust over the mantel-shelf, and a dusty clock above the dock—the only thing present, that seemed to go on as it ought; for depravity, or poverty, or an habitual acquaintance with both, had left a taint on all the animate matter, hardly less unpleasant than the thick greasy scum on every inanimate object that frowned upon it.

Noah looked eagerly about him for the Dodger; but although there were several women who would have done very well for that distinguished character's mother or sister, and more than one man who might be supposed to bear a strong resemblance to his father, nobody at all answering the description given him of Mr. Dawkins was to be seen. He waited in a state of much suspense and uncertainty until the women, being committed for trial, went flaunting out; and then was quickly relieved by the appearance of another prisoner who he felt at once could be no other than the object of his visit.

It was indeed Mr. Dawkins, who, shuffling into the office with the big coat sleeves tucked up as usual, his left hand in his pocket, and his hat in his right hand, preceded the jailer, with a rolling gait altogether indescribable, and, taking his place in the dock, requested in an audible voice to know what he was placed in that 'ere disgraceful sitivation for.

'Hold your tongue, will you?' said the jailer.

'I'm an Englishman, ain't I?' rejoined the Dodger. 'Where are my priwileges?'

'You'll get your privileges soon enough,' retorted the jailer, 'and pepper with 'em.'

'We'll see wot the Secretary of State for the Home Affairs has got to say to the beaks, if I don't,' replied Mr. Dawkins. 'Now then! Wot is this here business? I shall thank the madg'strates to dispose of this here little affair, and not to keep me while they read the paper, for I've got an appointment with a genelman in the City, and as I am a man of my word and wery punctual in business matters, he'll go away if I ain't there to my time, and then pr'aps ther won't be an action for damage against them as kep me away. Oh no, certainly not!'

At this point, the Dodger, with a show of being very particular with a view to proceedings to be had thereafter, desired the jailer to communicate 'the names of them two files as was on the bench.' Which so tickled the spectators, that they laughed almost as heartily as Master Bates could have done if he had heard the request.

'Silence there!' cried the jailer.

'What is this?' inquired one of the magistrates.

'A pick-pocketing case, your worship.'

'Has the boy ever been here before?'

'He ought to have been, a many times,' replied the jailer. 'He has been pretty well everywhere else. *I* know him well, your worship.'

'Oh! you know me, do you?' cried the Artful, making a note of the statement. 'Wery good. That's a case of deformation of character, any way.'

Here there was another laugh, and another cry of silence.

'Now then, where are the witnesses?' said the clerk.

'Ah! that's right,' added the Dodger. 'Where are they? I should like to see 'em.'

This wish was immediately gratified, for a policeman stepped forward who had seen the prisoner attempt the pocket of an unknown gentleman in a crowd, and indeed take a handkerchief therefrom, which, being a

very old one, he deliberately put back again, after trying it on his own countenance. For this reason, he took the Dodger into custody as soon as he could get near him, and the said Dodger, being searched, had upon his person a silver snuff-box, with the owner's name engraved upon the lid. This gentleman had been discovered on reference to the Court Guide, and being then and there present, swore that the snuff-box was his, and that he had missed it on the previous day, the moment he had disengaged himself from the crowd before referred to. He had also remarked a young gentleman in the throng, particularly active in making his way about, and that young gentleman was the prisoner before him.

'Have you anything to ask this witness, boy?' said the magistrate.

'I wouldn't abase myself by descending to hold no conversation with him,' replied the Dodger.

'Have you anything to say at all?'

'Do you hear his worship ask if you've anything to say?' inquired the jailer, nudging the silent Dodger with his elbow.

'I beg your pardon,' said the Dodger, looking up with an air of abstraction. 'Did you redress yourself to me, my man?'

'I never see such an out-and-out young wagabond, your worship,' observed the officer with a grin. 'Do you mean to say anything, you young shaver?'

'No,' replied the Dodger, 'not here, for this ain't the shop for justice: besides which, my attorney is a-breakfasting this morning with the Wice President of the House of Commons; but I shall have something to say elsewhere, and so will he, and so will a wery numerous and 'spectable circle of acquaintance as'll make them beaks wish they'd never been born, or that they'd got their footmen to hang 'em up to their own hat-pegs, afore they let 'em come out this morning to try it on upon me. I'll—'

'There! He's fully committed!' interposed the clerk. 'Take him away.'

'Come on,' said the jailer.

'Oh ah! I'll come on,' replied the Dodger, brushing his hat with the palm of his hand. 'Ah! (to the Bench) it's no use your looking frightened; I won't show you no mercy, not a ha'porth of it. *You'll* pay for this, my fine fellers. I wouldn't be you for something! I wouldn't go free, now, if you was to fall down on your knees and ask me. Here, carry me off to prison! Take me away!'

With these last words, the Dodger suffered himself to be led off by the collar; threatening, till he got into the yard, to make a parliamentary business of it; and then grinning in the officer's face, with great glee and self-approval.

Having seen him locked up by himself in a little cell, Noah made the best of his way back to where he had left Master Bates. After waiting here some time, he was joined by that young gentleman, who had prudently abstained from showing himself until he had looked carefully abroad from a snug retreat, and ascertained that his new friend had not been followed by any impertinent person.

The two hastened back together, to bear to Mr. Fagin the animating news that the Dodger was doing full justice to his bringing-up, and establishing for himself a glorious reputation.

CHAPTER XLIV — THE TIME ARRIVES FOR NANCY TO REDEEM HER PLEDGE TO ROSE MAYLIE. SHE FAILS.

Adept as she was, in all the arts of cunning and dissimulation, the girl Nancy could not wholly conceal the effect which the knowledge of the step she had taken, wrought upon her mind. She remembered that both the crafty Jew and the brutal Sikes had confided to her schemes, which had been hidden from all others: in the full confidence that she was trustworthy and beyond the reach of their suspicion. Vile as those schemes were, desperate as were their originators, and bitter as were her feelings towards Fagin, who had led her, step by step, deeper and deeper down into an abyss of crime and misery, whence was no escape; still, there were times when, even towards him, she felt some relenting, lest her disclosure should bring him within the iron grasp he had so long eluded, and he should fall at last—richly as he merited such a fate—by her hand.

But, these were the mere wanderings of a mind unable wholly to detach itself from old companions and associations, though enabled to fix itself steadily on one object, and resolved not to be turned aside by any consideration. Her fears for Sikes would have been more powerful inducements to recoil while there was yet time; but she had stipulated that her secret should be rigidly kept, she had dropped no clue which could lead to his discovery, she had refused, even for his sake, a refuge from all the guilt and wretchedness that encompasses her—and what more could she do! She was resolved.

Though all her mental struggles terminated in this conclusion, they forced themselves upon her, again and again, and left their traces too. She grew pale and thin, even within a few days. At times, she took no heed of what was passing before her, or no part in conversations where once, she would have been the loudest. At other times, she laughed without merriment, and was noisy without a moment afterwards—she sat silent and dejected, brooding with her head upon her hands, while the very effort by which she roused herself, told, more forcibly than even these indications, that she was ill at ease, and that her thoughts were occupied with matters very different and distant from those in the course of discussion by her companions.

It was Sunday night, and the bell of the nearest church struck the hour. Sikes and the Jew were talking, but

they paused to listen. The girl looked up from the low seat on which she crouched, and listened too. Eleven.

'An hour this side of midnight,' said Sikes, raising the blind to look out and returning to his seat. 'Dark and heavy it is too. A good night for business this.'

'Ah!' replied Fagin. 'What a pity, Bill, my dear, that there's none quite ready to be done.'

'You're right for once,' replied Sikes gruffly. 'It is a pity, for I'm in the humour too.'

Fagin sighed, and shook his head despondingly.

'We must make up for lost time when we've got things into a good train. That's all I know,' said Sikes.

'That's the way to talk, my dear,' replied Fagin, venturing to pat him on the shoulder. 'It does me good to hear you.'

'Does you good, does it!' cried Sikes. 'Well, so be it.'

'Ha! ha! ha!' laughed Fagin, as if he were relieved by even this concession. 'You're like yourself to-night, Bill. Quite like yourself.'

'I don't feel like myself when you lay that withered old claw on my shoulder, so take it away,' said Sikes, casting off the Jew's hand.

'It make you nervous, Bill,—reminds you of being nabbed, does it?' said Fagin, determined not to be offended.

'Reminds me of being nabbed by the devil,' returned Sikes. 'There never was another man with such a face as yours, unless it was your father, and I suppose *he* is singeing his grizzled red beard by this time, unless you came straight from the old 'un without any father at all betwixt you; which I shouldn't wonder at, a bit.'

Fagin offered no reply to this compliment: but, pulling Sikes by the sleeve, pointed his finger towards Nancy, who had taken advantage of the foregoing conversation to put on her bonnet, and was now leaving the room.

'Hallo!' cried Sikes. 'Nance. Where's the gal going to at this time of night?'

'Not far.'

'What answer's that?' retorted Sikes. 'Do you hear me?'

'I don't know where,' replied the girl.

'Then I do,' said Sikes, more in the spirit of obstinacy than because he had any real objection to the girl going where she listed. 'Nowhere. Sit down.'

'I'm not well. I told you that before,' rejoined the girl. 'I want a breath of air.'

'Put your head out of the winder,' replied Sikes.

'There's not enough there,' said the girl. 'I want it in the street.'

'Then you won't have it,' replied Sikes. With which assurance he rose, locked the door, took the key out, and pulling her bonnet from her head, flung it up to the top of an old press. 'There,' said the robber. 'Now stop quietly where you are, will you?'

'It's not such a matter as a bonnet would keep me,' said the girl turning very pale. 'What do you mean, Bill? Do you know what you're doing?'

'Know what I'm—Oh!' cried Sikes, turning to Fagin, 'she's out of her senses, you know, or she daren't talk to me in that way.'

'You'll drive me on the something desperate,' muttered the girl placing both hands upon her breast, as though to keep down by force some violent outbreak. 'Let me go, will you,—this minute—this instant.'

'No!' said Sikes.

'Tell him to let me go, Fagin. He had better. It'll be better for him. Do you hear me?' cried Nancy stamping her foot upon the ground.

'Hear you!' repeated Sikes turning round in his chair to confront her. 'Aye! And if I hear you for half a minute longer, the dog shall have such a grip on your throat as'll tear some of that screaming voice out. Wot has come over you, you jade! Wot is it?'

'Let me go,' said the girl with great earnestness; then sitting herself down on the floor, before the door, she said, 'Bill, let me go; you don't know what you are doing. You don't, indeed. For only one hour—do—do!'

'Cut my limbs off one by one!' cried Sikes, seizing her roughly by the arm, 'If I don't think the gal's stark raving mad. Get up.'

'Not till you let me go—not till you let me go—Never—never!' screamed the girl. Sikes looked on, for a minute, watching his opportunity, and suddenly pinioning her hands dragged her, struggling and wrestling with him by the way, into a small room adjoining, where he sat himself on a bench, and thrusting her into a chair, held her down by force. She struggled and implored by turns until twelve o'clock had struck, and then, wearied and exhausted, ceased to contest the point any further. With a caution, backed by many oaths, to make no more efforts to go out that night, Sikes left her to recover at leisure and rejoined Fagin.

'Whew!' said the housebreaker wiping the perspiration from his face. 'Wot a precious strange gal that is!'

'You may say that, Bill,' replied Fagin thoughtfully. 'You may say that.'

'Wot did she take it into her head to go out to-night for, do you think?' asked Sikes. 'Come; you should know her better than me. Wot does it mean?'

'Obstinacy; woman's obstinacy, I suppose, my dear.'

'Well, I suppose it is,' growled Sikes. 'I thought I had tamed her, but she's as bad as ever.'

'Worse,' said Fagin thoughtfully. 'I never knew her like this, for such a little cause.'

'Nor I,' said Sikes. 'I think she's got a touch of that fever in her blood yet, and it won't come out—eh?'

'Like enough.'

'I'll let her a little blood, without troubling the doctor, if she's took that way again,' said Sikes.

Fagin nodded an expressive approval of this mode of treatment.

'She was hanging about me all day, and night too, when I was stretched on my back; and you, like a blackhearted wolf as you are, kept yourself aloof,' said Sikes. 'We was poor too, all the time, and I think, one way or other, it's worried and fretted her; and that being shut up here so long has made her restless—eh?'

'That's it, my dear,' replied the Jew in a whisper. 'Hush!'

As he uttered these words, the girl herself appeared and resumed her former seat. Her eyes were swollen and red; she rocked herself to and fro; tossed her head; and, after a little time, burst out laughing.

'Why, now she's on the other tack!' exclaimed Sikes, turning a look of excessive surprise on his companion.

Fagin nodded to him to take no further notice just then; and, in a few minutes, the girl subsided into her accustomed demeanour. Whispering Sikes that there was no fear of her relapsing, Fagin took up his hat and bade him good-night. He paused when he reached the room-door, and looking round, asked if somebody would light him down the dark stairs.

'Light him down,' said Sikes, who was filling his pipe. 'It's a pity he should break his neck himself, and disappoint the sight-seers. Show him a light.'

Nancy followed the old man downstairs, with a candle. When they reached the passage, he laid his finger on his lip, and drawing close to the girl, said, in a whisper.

'What is it, Nancy, dear?'

'What do you mean?' replied the girl, in the same tone.

'The reason of all this,' replied Fagin. 'If *he*'—he pointed with his skinny fore-finger up the stairs—'is so hard with you (he's a brute, Nance, a brute-beast), why don't you—'

'Well?' said the girl, as Fagin paused, with his mouth almost touching her ear, and his eyes looking into hers.

'No matter just now. We'll talk of this again. You have a friend in me, Nance; a staunch friend. I have the means at hand, quiet and close. If you want revenge on those that treat you like a dog—like a dog! worse than his dog, for he humours him sometimes—come to me. I say, come to me. He is the mere hound of a day, but you know me of old, Nance.'

'I know you well,' replied the girl, without manifesting the least emotion. 'Good-night.'

She shrank back, as Fagin offered to lay his hand on hers, but said good-night again, in a steady voice, and, answering his parting look with a nod of intelligence, closed the door between them.

Fagin walked towards his home, intent upon the thoughts that were working within his brain. He had conceived the idea—not from what had just passed though that had tended to confirm him, but slowly and by degrees—that Nancy, wearied of the housebreaker's brutality, had conceived an attachment for some new friend. Her altered manner, her repeated absences from home alone, her comparative indifference to the interests of the gang for which she had once been so zealous, and, added to these, her desperate impatience to leave home that night at a particular hour, all favoured the supposition, and rendered it, to him at least, almost matter of certainty. The object of this new liking was not among his myrmidons. He would be a valuable acquisition with such an assistant as Nancy, and must (thus Fagin argued) be secured without delay.

There was another, and a darker object, to be gained. Sikes knew too much, and his ruffian taunts had not galled Fagin the less, because the wounds were hidden. The girl must know, well, that if she shook him off, she could never be safe from his fury, and that it would be surely wreaked—to the maiming of limbs, or perhaps the loss of life—on the object of her more recent fancy.

'With a little persuasion,' thought Fagin, 'what more likely than that she would consent to poison him? Women have done such things, and worse, to secure the same object before now. There would be the dangerous villain: the man I hate: gone; another secured in his place; and my influence over the girl, with a knowledge of this crime to back it, unlimited.'

These things passed through the mind of Fagin, during the short time he sat alone, in the housebreaker's room; and with them uppermost in his thoughts, he had taken the opportunity afterwards afforded him, of sounding the girl in the broken hints he threw out at parting. There was no expression of surprise, no assumption of an inability to understand his meaning. The girl clearly comprehended it. Her glance at parting showed *that*.

But perhaps she would recoil from a plot to take the life of Sikes, and that was one of the chief ends to be attained. 'How,' thought Fagin, as he crept homeward, 'can I increase my influence with her? What new power can I acquire?'

Such brains are fertile in expedients. If, without extracting a confession from herself, he laid a watch, discovered the object of her altered regard, and threatened to reveal the whole history to Sikes (of whom she stood in no common fear) unless she entered into his designs, could he not secure her compliance?

'I can,' said Fagin, almost aloud. 'She durst not refuse me then. Not for her life, not for her life! I have it all. The means are ready, and shall be set to work. I shall have you yet!'

He cast back a dark look, and a threatening motion of the hand, towards the spot where he had left the bolder villain; and went on his way: busying his bony hands in the folds of his tattered garment, which he wrenched tightly in his grasp, as though there were a hated enemy crushed with every motion of his fingers.

CHAPTER XLV — NOAH CLAYPOLE IS

EMPLOYED BY FAGIN ON A SECRET MISSION

The old man was up, betimes, next morning, and waited impatiently for the appearance of his new associate, who after a delay that seemed interminable, at length presented himself, and commenced a voracious assault on the breakfast.

'Bolter,' said Fagin, drawing up a chair and seating himself opposite Morris Bolter.

'Well, here I am,' returned Noah. 'What's the matter? Don't yer ask me to do anything till I have done eating. That's a great fault in this place. Yer never get time enough over yer meals.'

'You can talk as you eat, can't you?' said Fagin, cursing his dear young friend's greediness from the very bottom of his heart.

'Oh yes, I can talk. I get on better when I talk,' said Noah, cutting a monstrous slice of bread. 'Where's Charlotte?'

'Out,' said Fagin. 'I sent her out this morning with the other young woman, because I wanted us to be alone.'

'Oh!' said Noah. 'I wish yer'd ordered her to make some buttered toast first. Well. Talk away. Yer won't interrupt me.'

There seemed, indeed, no great fear of anything interrupting him, as he had evidently sat down with a determination to do a great deal of business.

'You did well yesterday, my dear,' said Fagin. 'Beautiful! Six shillings and ninepence halfpenny on the very first day! The kinchin lay will be a fortune to you.'

'Don't you forget to add three pint-pots and a milk-can,' said Mr. Bolter.

'No, no, my dear. The pint-pots were great strokes of genius: but the milk-can was a perfect masterpiece.'

'Pretty well, I think, for a beginner,' remarked Mr. Bolter complacently. 'The pots I took off airy railings, and the milk-can was standing by itself outside a public-house. I thought it might get rusty with the rain, or catch cold, yer know. Eh? Ha! ha! ha!'

Fagin affected to laugh very heartily; and Mr. Bolter having had his laugh out, took a series of large bites, which finished his first hunk of bread and butter, and assisted himself to a second.

'I want you, Bolter,' said Fagin, leaning over the table, 'to do a piece of work for me, my dear, that needs great care and caution.'

'I say,' rejoined Bolter, 'don't yer go shoving me into danger, or sending me any more o' yer police-offices. That don't suit me, that don't; and so I tell yer.'

'That's not the smallest danger in it—not the very smallest,' said the Jew; 'it's only to dodge a woman.'

'An old woman?' demanded Mr. Bolter.

'A young one,' replied Fagin.

'I can do that pretty well, I know,' said Bolter. 'I was a regular cunning sneak when I was at school. What am I to dodge her for? Not to—'

'Not to do anything, but to tell me where she goes, who she sees, and, if possible, what she says; to remember the street, if it is a street, or the house, if it is a house; and to bring me back all the information you can.'

'What'll yer give me?' asked Noah, setting down his cup, and looking his employer, eagerly, in the face.

'If you do it well, a pound, my dear. One pound,' said Fagin, wishing to interest him in the scent as much as possible. 'And that's what I never gave yet, for any job of work where there wasn't valuable consideration to be gained.'

'Who is she?' inquired Noah.

'One of us.'

'Oh Lor!' cried Noah, curling up his nose. 'Yer doubtful of her, are yer?'

'She has found out some new friends, my dear, and I must know who they are,' replied Fagin.

'I see,' said Noah. 'Just to have the pleasure of knowing them, if they're respectable people, eh? Ha! ha! ha! I'm your man.'

'I knew you would be,' cried Fagin, elated by the success of his proposal.

'Of course, of course,' replied Noah. 'Where is she? Where am I to wait for her? Where am I to go?'

'All that, my dear, you shall hear from me. I'll point her out at the proper time,' said Fagin. 'You keep ready, and leave the rest to me.'

That night, and the next, and the next again, the spy sat booted and equipped in his carter's dress: ready to turn out at a word from Fagin. Six nights passed—six long weary nights—and on each, Fagin came home with a disappointed face, and briefly intimated that it was not yet time. On the seventh, he returned earlier, and with an exultation he could not conceal. It was Sunday.

'She goes abroad to-night,' said Fagin, 'and on the right errand, I'm sure; for she has been alone all day, and the man she is afraid of will not be back much before daybreak. Come with me. Quick!'

Noah started up without saying a word; for the Jew was in a state of such intense excitement that it infected him. They left the house stealthily, and hurrying through a labyrinth of streets, arrived at length before a public-house, which Noah recognised as the same in which he had slept, on the night of his arrival in London.

It was past eleven o'clock, and the door was closed. It opened softly on its hinges as Fagin gave a low whistle. They entered, without noise; and the door was closed behind them.

Scarcely venturing to whisper, but substituting dumb show for words, Fagin, and the young Jew who had admitted them, pointed out the pane of glass to Noah, and signed to him to climb up and observe the person in the adjoining room.

'Is that the woman?' he asked, scarcely above his breath.

Fagin nodded yes.

'I can't see her face well,' whispered Noah. 'She is looking down, and the candle is behind her.

'Stay there,' whispered Fagin. He signed to Barney, who withdrew. In an instant, the lad entered the room adjoining, and, under pretence of snuffing the candle, moved it in the required position, and, speaking to the girl, caused her to raise her face.

'I see her now,' cried the spy.

'Plainly?'

'I should know her among a thousand.'

He hastily descended, as the room-door opened, and the girl came out. Fagin drew him behind a small partition which was curtained off, and they held their breaths as she passed within a few feet of their place of concealment, and emerged by the door at which they had entered.

'Hist!' cried the lad who held the door. 'Dow.'

Noah exchanged a look with Fagin, and darted out.

'To the left,' whispered the lad; 'take the left had, and keep od the other side.'

He did so; and, by the light of the lamps, saw the girl's retreating figure, already at some distance before him. He advanced as near as he considered prudent, and kept on the opposite side of the street, the better to observe her motions. She looked nervously round, twice or thrice, and once stopped to let two men who were following close behind her, pass on. She seemed to gather courage as she advanced, and to walk with a steadier and firmer step. The spy preserved the same relative distance between them, and followed: with his eye upon her.

CHAPTER XLVI — THE APPOINTMENT KEPT

The church clocks chimed three quarters past eleven, as two figures emerged on London Bridge. One, which advanced with a swift and rapid step, was that of a woman who looked eagerly about her as though in quest of some expected object; the other figure was that of a man, who slunk along in the deepest shadow he could find, and, at some distance, accommodated his pace to hers: stopping when she stopped: and as she moved again, creeping stealthily on: but never allowing himself, in the ardour of his pursuit, to gain upon her footsteps. Thus, they crossed the bridge, from the Middlesex to the Surrey shore, when the woman, apparently disappointed in her anxious scrutiny of the foot-passengers, turned back. The movement was sudden; but he who watched her, was not thrown off his guard by it; for, shrinking into one of the recesses which surmount the piers of the bridge, and leaning over the parapet the better to conceal his figure, he suffered her to pass on the opposite pavement. When she was about the same distance in advance as she had been before, he slipped quietly down, and followed her again. At nearly the centre of the bridge, she stopped. The man stopped too.

It was a very dark night. The day had been unfavourable, and at that hour and place there were few people stirring. Such as there were, hurried quickly past: very possibly without seeing, but certainly without noticing, either the woman, or the man who kept her in view. Their appearance was not calculated to attract the importunate regards of such of London's destitute population, as chanced to take their way over the bridge that night in search of some cold arch or doorless hovel wherein to lay their heads; they stood there in silence: neither speaking nor spoken to, by any one who passed.

A mist hung over the river, deepening the red glare of the fires that burnt upon the small craft moored off the different wharfs, and rendering darker and more indistinct the murky buildings on the banks. The old smoke-stained storehouses on either side, rose heavy and dull from the dense mass of roofs and gables, and frowned sternly upon water too black to reflect even their lumbering shapes. The tower of old Saint Saviour's Church, and the spire of Saint Magnus, so long the giant-warders of the ancient bridge, were visible in the gloom; but the forest of shipping below bridge, and the thickly scattered spires of churches above, were nearly all hidden from sight.

The girl had taken a few restless turns to and fro—closely watched meanwhile by her hidden observer—when the heavy bell of St. Paul's tolled for the death of another day. Midnight had come upon the crowded city. The palace, the night-cellar, the jail, the madhouse: the chambers of birth and death, of health and sickness, the rigid face of the corpse and the calm sleep of the child: midnight was upon them all.

The hour had not struck two minutes, when a young lady, accompanied by a grey-haired gentleman, alighted from a hackney-carriage within a short distance of the bridge, and, having dismissed the vehicle, walked straight towards it. They had scarcely set foot upon its pavement, when the girl started, and immediately made towards them.

They walked onward, looking about them with the air of persons who entertained some very slight expectation which had little chance of being realised, when they were suddenly joined by this new associate. They halted with an exclamation of surprise, but suppressed it immediately; for a man in the garments of a countryman came close up—brushed against them, indeed—at that precise moment.

‘Not here,’ said Nancy hurriedly, ‘I am afraid to speak to you here. Come away—out of the public road—down the steps yonder!’

As she uttered these words, and indicated, with her hand, the direction in which she wished them to proceed, the countryman looked round, and roughly asking what they took up the whole pavement for, passed on.

The steps to which the girl had pointed, were those which, on the Surrey bank, and on the same side of the bridge as Saint Saviour’s Church, form a landing-stairs from the river. To this spot, the man bearing the appearance of a countryman, hastened unobserved; and after a moment’s survey of the place, he began to descend.

These stairs are a part of the bridge; they consist of three flights. Just below the end of the second, going down, the stone wall on the left terminates in an ornamental pilaster facing towards the Thames. At this point the lower steps widen: so that a person turning that angle of the wall, is necessarily unseen by any others on the stairs who chance to be above him, if only a step. The countryman looked hastily round, when he reached this point; and as there seemed no better place of concealment, and, the tide being out, there was plenty of room, he slipped aside, with his back to the pilaster, and there waited: pretty certain that they would come no lower, and that even if he could not hear what was said, he could follow them again, with safety.

So tardily stole the time in this lonely place, and so eager was the spy to penetrate the motives of an interview so different from what he had been led to expect, that he more than once gave the matter up for lost, and persuaded himself, either that they had stopped far above, or had resorted to some entirely different spot to hold their mysterious conversation. He was on the point of emerging from his hiding-place, and regaining the road above, when he heard the sound of footsteps, and directly afterwards of voices almost close at his ear.

He drew himself straight upright against the wall, and, scarcely breathing, listened attentively.

‘This is far enough,’ said a voice, which was evidently that of the gentleman. ‘I will not suffer the young lady to go any farther. Many people would have distrusted you too much to have come even so far, but you see I am willing to humour you.’

‘To humour me!’ cried the voice of the girl whom he had followed. ‘You’re considerate, indeed, sir. To humour me! Well, well, it’s no matter.’

‘Why, for what,’ said the gentleman in a kinder tone, ‘for what purpose can you have brought us to this strange place? Why not have let me speak to you, above there, where it is light, and there is something stirring, instead of bringing us to this dark and dismal hole?’

‘I told you before,’ replied Nancy, ‘that I was afraid to speak to you there. I don’t know why it is,’ said the girl, shuddering, ‘but I have such a fear and dread upon me to-night that I can hardly stand.’

‘A fear of what?’ asked the gentleman, who seemed to pity her.

‘I scarcely know of what,’ replied the girl. ‘I wish I did. Horrible thoughts of death, and shrouds with blood upon them, and a fear that has made me burn as if I was on fire, have been upon me all day. I was reading a book to-night, to wile the time away, and the same things came into the print.’

‘Imagination,’ said the gentleman, soothing her.

‘No imagination,’ replied the girl in a hoarse voice. ‘I’ll swear I saw “coffin” written in every page of the

book in large black letters,—aye, and they carried one close to me, in the streets to-night.'

'There is nothing unusual in that,' said the gentleman. 'They have passed me often.'

'*Real ones*,' rejoined the girl. 'This was not.'

There was something so uncommon in her manner, that the flesh of the concealed listener crept as he heard the girl utter these words, and the blood chilled within him. He had never experienced a greater relief than in hearing the sweet voice of the young lady as she begged her to be calm, and not allow herself to become the prey of such fearful fancies.

'Speak to her kindly,' said the young lady to her companion. 'Poor creature! She seems to need it.'

'Your haughty religious people would have held their heads up to see me as I am to-night, and preached of flames and vengeance,' cried the girl. 'Oh, dear lady, why ar'n't those who claim to be God's own folks as gentle and as kind to us poor wretches as you, who, having youth, and beauty, and all that they have lost, might be a little proud instead of so much humbler?'

'Ah!' said the gentleman. 'A Turk turns his face, after washing it well, to the East, when he says his prayers; these good people, after giving their faces such a rub against the World as to take the smiles off, turn with no less regularity, to the darkest side of Heaven. Between the Mussulman and the Pharisee, commend me to the first!'

These words appeared to be addressed to the young lady, and were perhaps uttered with the view of affording Nancy time to recover herself. The gentleman, shortly afterwards, addressed himself to her.

'You were not here last Sunday night,' he said.

'I couldn't come,' replied Nancy; 'I was kept by force.'

'By whom?'

'Him that I told the young lady of before.'

'You were not suspected of holding any communication with anybody on the subject which has brought us here to-night, I hope?' asked the old gentleman.

'No,' replied the girl, shaking her head. 'It's not very easy for me to leave him unless he knows why; I couldn't give him a drink of laudanum before I came away.'

'Did he awake before you returned?' inquired the gentleman.

'No; and neither he nor any of them suspect me.'

'Good,' said the gentleman. 'Now listen to me.'

'I am ready,' replied the girl, as he paused for a moment.

'This young lady,' the gentleman began, 'has communicated to me, and to some other friends who can be safely trusted, what you told her nearly a fortnight since. I confess to you that I had doubts, at first, whether you were to be implicitly relied upon, but now I firmly believe you are.'

'I am,' said the girl earnestly.

'I repeat that I firmly believe it. To prove to you that I am disposed to trust you, I tell you without reserve, that we propose to extort the secret, whatever it may be, from the fear of this man Monks. But if—if—' said the gentleman, 'he cannot be secured, or, if secured, cannot be acted upon as we wish, you must deliver up the Jew.'

'Fagin,' cried the girl, recoiling.

'That man must be delivered up by you,' said the gentleman.

'I will not do it! I will never do it!' replied the girl. 'Devil that he is, and worse than devil as he has been to me, I will never do that.'

'You will not?' said the gentleman, who seemed fully prepared for this answer.

'Never!' returned the girl.

'Tell me why?'

'For one reason,' rejoined the girl firmly, 'for one reason, that the lady knows and will stand by me in, I know she will, for I have her promise: and for this other reason, besides, that, bad life as he has led, I have led a bad life too; there are many of us who have kept the same courses together, and I'll not turn upon them, who might—any of them—have turned upon me, but didn't, bad as they are.'

'Then,' said the gentleman, quickly, as if this had been the point he had been aiming to attain; 'put Monks into my hands, and leave him to me to deal with.'

'What if he turns against the others?'

'I promise you that in that case, if the truth is forced from him, there the matter will rest; there must be circumstances in Oliver's little history which it would be painful to drag before the public eye, and if the truth is once elicited, they shall go scot free.'

'And if it is not?' suggested the girl.

'Then,' pursued the gentleman, 'this Fagin shall not be brought to justice without your consent. In such a case I could show you reasons, I think, which would induce you to yield it.'

'Have I the lady's promise for that?' asked the girl.

'You have,' replied Rose. 'My true and faithful pledge.'

'Monks would never learn how you knew what you do?' said the girl, after a short pause.

'Never,' replied the gentleman. 'The intelligence should be brought to bear upon him, that he could never even guess.'

'I have been a liar, and among liars from a little child,' said the girl after another interval of silence, 'but I will take your words.'

After receiving an assurance from both, that she might safely do so, she proceeded in a voice so low that it was often difficult for the listener to discover even the purport of what she said, to describe, by name and

situation, the public-house whence she had been followed that night. From the manner in which she occasionally paused, it appeared as if the gentleman were making some hasty notes of the information she communicated. When she had thoroughly explained the localities of the place, the best position from which to watch it without exciting observation, and the night and hour on which Monks was most in the habit of frequenting it, she seemed to consider for a few moments, for the purpose of recalling his features and appearances more forcibly to her recollection.

'He is tall,' said the girl, 'and a strongly made man, but not stout; he has a lurking walk; and as he walks, constantly looks over his shoulder, first on one side, and then on the other. Don't forget that, for his eyes are sunk in his head so much deeper than any other man's, that you might almost tell him by that alone. His face is dark, like his hair and eyes; and, although he can't be more than six or eight and twenty, withered and haggard. His lips are often discoloured and disfigured with the marks of teeth; for he has desperate fits, and sometimes even bites his hands and covers them with wounds—why did you start?' said the girl, stopping suddenly.

The gentleman replied, in a hurried manner, that he was not conscious of having done so, and begged her to proceed.

'Part of this,' said the girl, 'I have drawn out from other people at the house I tell you of, for I have only seen him twice, and both times he was covered up in a large cloak. I think that's all I can give you to know him by. Stay though,' she added. 'Upon his throat: so high that you can see a part of it below his neckerchief when he turns his face: there is—'

'A broad red mark, like a burn or scald?' cried the gentleman.

'How's this?' said the girl. 'You know him!'

The young lady uttered a cry of surprise, and for a few moments they were so still that the listener could distinctly hear them breathe.

'I think I do,' said the gentleman, breaking silence. 'I should by your description. We shall see. Many people are singularly like each other. It may not be the same.'

As he expressed himself to this effect, with assumed carelessness, he took a step or two nearer the concealed spy, as the latter could tell from the distinctness with which he heard him mutter, 'It must be he!'

'Now,' he said, returning: so it seemed by the sound: to the spot where he had stood before, 'you have given us most valuable assistance, young woman, and I wish you to be the better for it. What can I do to serve you?'

'Nothing,' replied Nancy.

'You will not persist in saying that,' rejoined the gentleman, with a voice and emphasis of kindness that might have touched a much harder and more obdurate heart. 'Think now. Tell me.'

'Nothing, sir,' rejoined the girl, weeping. 'You can do nothing to help me. I am past all hope, indeed.'

'You put yourself beyond its pale,' said the gentleman. 'The past has been a dreary waste with you, of youthful energies mis-spent, and such priceless treasures lavished, as the Creator bestows but once and never grants again, but, for the future, you may hope. I do not say that it is in our power to offer you peace of heart and mind, for that must come as you seek it; but a quiet asylum, either in England, or, if you fear to remain here, in some foreign country, it is not only within the compass of our ability but our most anxious wish to secure you. Before the dawn of morning, before this river wakes to the first glimpse of day-light, you shall be placed as entirely beyond the reach of your former associates, and leave as utter an absence of all trace behind you, as if you were to disappear from the earth this moment. Come! I would not have you go back to exchange one word with any old companion, or take one look at any old haunt, or breathe the very air which is pestilence and death to you. Quit them all, while there is time and opportunity!'

'She will be persuaded now,' cried the young lady. 'She hesitates, I am sure.'

'I fear not, my dear,' said the gentleman.

'No sir, I do not,' replied the girl, after a short struggle. 'I am chained to my old life. I loathe and hate it now, but I cannot leave it. I must have gone too far to turn back,—and yet I don't know, for if you had spoken to me so, some time ago, I should have laughed it off. But,' she said, looking hastily round, 'this fear comes over me again. I must go home.'

'Home!' repeated the young lady, with great stress upon the word.

'Home, lady,' rejoined the girl. 'To such a home as I have raised for myself with the work of my whole life. Let us part. I shall be watched or seen. Go! Go! If I have done you any service all I ask is, that you leave me, and let me go my way alone.'

'It is useless,' said the gentleman, with a sigh. 'We compromise her safety, perhaps, by staying here. We may have detained her longer than she expected already.'

'Yes, yes,' urged the girl. 'You have.'

'What,' cried the young lady, 'can be the end of this poor creature's life!'

'What!' repeated the girl. 'Look before you, lady. Look at that dark water. How many times do you read of such as I who spring into the tide, and leave no living thing, to care for, or bewail them. It may be years hence, or it may be only months, but I shall come to that at last.'

'Do not speak thus, pray,' returned the young lady, sobbing.

'It will never reach your ears, dear lady, and God forbid such horrors should!' replied the girl. 'Good-night, good-night!'

The gentleman turned away.

'This purse,' cried the young lady. 'Take it for my sake, that you may have some resource in an hour of need and trouble.'

'No!' replied the girl. 'I have not done this for money. Let me have that to think of. And yet—give me something that you have worn: I should like to have something—no, no, not a ring—your gloves or handkerchief—anything that I can keep, as having belonged to you, sweet lady. There. Bless you! God bless

you. Good-night, good-night!'

The violent agitation of the girl, and the apprehension of some discovery which would subject her to ill-usage and violence, seemed to determine the gentleman to leave her, as she requested.

The sound of retreating footsteps were audible and the voices ceased.

The two figures of the young lady and her companion soon afterwards appeared upon the bridge. They stopped at the summit of the stairs.

'Hark!' cried the young lady, listening. 'Did she call! I thought I heard her voice.'

'No, my love,' replied Mr. Brownlow, looking sadly back. 'She has not moved, and will not till we are gone.'

Rose Maylie lingered, but the old gentleman drew her arm through his, and led her, with gentle force, away. As they disappeared, the girl sunk down nearly at her full length upon one of the stone stairs, and vented the anguish of her heart in bitter tears.

After a time she arose, and with feeble and tottering steps ascended the street. The astonished listener remained motionless on his post for some minutes afterwards, and having ascertained, with many cautious glances round him, that he was again alone, crept slowly from his hiding-place, and returned, stealthily and in the shade of the wall, in the same manner as he had descended.

Peeping out, more than once, when he reached the top, to make sure that he was unobserved, Noah Claypole darted away at his utmost speed, and made for the Jew's house as fast as his legs would carry him.

CHAPTER XLVII — FATAL CONSEQUENCES

It was nearly two hours before day-break; that time which in the autumn of the year, may be truly called the dead of night; when the streets are silent and deserted; when even sounds appear to slumber, and profligacy and riot have staggered home to dream; it was at this still and silent hour, that Fagin sat watching in his old lair, with face so distorted and pale, and eyes so red and blood-shot, that he looked less like a man, than like some hideous phantom, moist from the grave, and worried by an evil spirit.

He sat crouching over a cold hearth, wrapped in an old torn coverlet, with his face turned towards a wasting candle that stood upon a table by his side. His right hand was raised to his lips, and as, absorbed in thought, he hit his long black nails, he disclosed among his toothless gums a few such fangs as should have been a dog's or rat's.

Stretched upon a mattress on the floor, lay Noah Claypole, fast asleep. Towards him the old man sometimes directed his eyes for an instant, and then brought them back again to the candle; which with a long-burnt wick drooping almost double, and hot grease falling down in clots upon the table, plainly showed that his thoughts were busy elsewhere.

Indeed they were. Mortification at the overthrow of his notable scheme; hatred of the girl who had dared to palter with strangers; and utter distrust of the sincerity of her refusal to yield him up; bitter disappointment at the loss of his revenge on Sikes; the fear of detection, and ruin, and death; and a fierce and deadly rage kindled by all; these were the passionate considerations which, following close upon each other with rapid and ceaseless whirl, shot through the brain of Fagin, as every evil thought and blackest purpose lay working at his heart.

He sat without changing his attitude in the least, or appearing to take the smallest heed of time, until his quick ear seemed to be attracted by a footstep in the street.

'At last,' he muttered, wiping his dry and fevered mouth. 'At last!'

The bell rang gently as he spoke. He crept upstairs to the door, and presently returned accompanied by a man muffled to the chin, who carried a bundle under one arm. Sitting down and throwing back his outer coat, the man displayed the burly frame of Sikes.

'There!' he said, laying the bundle on the table. 'Take care of that, and do the most you can with it. It's been trouble enough to get; I thought I should have been here, three hours ago.'

Fagin laid his hand upon the bundle, and locking it in the cupboard, sat down again without speaking. But he did not take his eyes off the robber, for an instant, during this action; and now that they sat over against each other, face to face, he looked fixedly at him, with his lips quivering so violently, and his face so altered by the emotions which had mastered him, that the housebreaker involuntarily drew back his chair, and surveyed him with a look of real affright.

'Wot now?' cried Sikes. 'Wot do you look at a man so for?'

Fagin raised his right hand, and shook his trembling forefinger in the air; but his passion was so great, that the power of speech was for the moment gone.

'Damme!' said Sikes, feeling in his breast with a look of alarm. 'He's gone mad. I must look to myself here.'

'No, no,' rejoined Fagin, finding his voice. 'It's not—you're not the person, Bill. I've no—no fault to find with you.'

'Oh, you haven't, haven't you?' said Sikes, looking sternly at him, and ostentatiously passing a pistol into a more convenient pocket. 'That's lucky—for one of us. Which one that is, don't matter.'

'I've got that to tell you, Bill,' said Fagin, drawing his chair nearer, 'will make you worse than me.'

'Aye?' returned the robber with an incredulous air. 'Tell away! Look sharp, or Nance will think I'm lost.'

‘Lost!’ cried Fagin. ‘She has pretty well settled that, in her own mind, already.’

Sikes looked with an aspect of great perplexity into the Jew’s face, and reading no satisfactory explanation of the riddle there, clenched his coat collar in his huge hand and shook him soundly.

‘Speak, will you!’ he said; ‘or if you don’t, it shall be for want of breath. Open your mouth and say wot you’ve got to say in plain words. Out with it, you thundering old cur, out with it!’

‘Suppose that lad that’s laying there—’ Fagin began.

Sikes turned round to where Noah was sleeping, as if he had not previously observed him. ‘Well!’ he said, resuming his former position.

‘Suppose that lad,’ pursued Fagin, ‘was to peach—to blow upon us all—first seeking out the right folks for the purpose, and then having a meeting with ‘em in the street to paint our likenesses, describe every mark that they might know us by, and the crib where we might be most easily taken. Suppose he was to do all this, and besides to blow upon a plant we’ve all been in, more or less—of his own fancy; not grabbed, trapped, tried, earwigged by the parson and brought to it on bread and water,—but of his own fancy; to please his own taste; stealing out at nights to find those most interested against us, and peaching to them. Do you hear me?’ cried the Jew, his eyes flashing with rage. ‘Suppose he did all this, what then?’

‘What then!’ replied Sikes; with a tremendous oath. ‘If he was left alive till I came, I’d grind his skull under the iron heel of my boot into as many grains as there are hairs upon his head.’

‘What if I did it!’ cried Fagin almost in a yell. ‘I, that knows so much, and could hang so many besides myself!’

‘I don’t know,’ replied Sikes, clenching his teeth and turning white at the mere suggestion. ‘I’d do something in the jail that ‘ud get me put in irons; and if I was tried along with you, I’d fall upon you with them in the open court, and beat your brains out afore the people. I should have such strength,’ muttered the robber, poising his brawny arm, ‘that I could smash your head as if a loaded waggon had gone over it.’

‘You would?’

‘Would I!’ said the housebreaker. ‘Try me.’

‘If it was Charley, or the Dodger, or Bet, or—’

‘I don’t care who,’ replied Sikes impatiently. ‘Whoever it was, I’d serve them the same.’

Fagin looked hard at the robber; and, motioning him to be silent, stooped over the bed upon the floor, and shook the sleeper to rouse him. Sikes leant forward in his chair: looking on with his hands upon his knees, as if wondering much what all this questioning and preparation was to end in.

‘Bolter, Bolter! Poor lad!’ said Fagin, looking up with an expression of devilish anticipation, and speaking slowly and with marked emphasis. ‘He’s tired—tired with watching for her so long,—watching for *her*, Bill.’

‘Wot d’ye mean?’ asked Sikes, drawing back.

Fagin made no answer, but bending over the sleeper again, hauled him into a sitting posture. When his assumed name had been repeated several times, Noah rubbed his eyes, and, giving a heavy yawn, looked sleepily about him.

‘Tell me that again—once again, just for him to hear,’ said the Jew, pointing to Sikes as he spoke.

‘Tell yer what?’ asked the sleepy Noah, shaking himself pettishly.

‘That about— *Nancy*,’ said Fagin, clutching Sikes by the wrist, as if to prevent his leaving the house before he had heard enough. ‘You followed her?’

‘Yes.’

‘To London Bridge?’

‘Yes.’

‘Where she met two people.’

‘So she did.’

‘A gentleman and a lady that she had gone to of her own accord before, who asked her to give up all her pals, and Monks first, which she did—and to describe him, which she did—and to tell her what house it was that we meet at, and go to, which she did—and where it could be best watched from, which she did—and what time the people went there, which she did. She did all this. She told it all every word without a threat, without a murmur—she did—did she not?’ cried Fagin, half mad with fury.

‘All right,’ replied Noah, scratching his head. ‘That’s just what it was!’

‘What did they say, about last Sunday?’

‘About last Sunday!’ replied Noah, considering. ‘Why I told yer that before.’

‘Again. Tell it again!’ cried Fagin, tightening his grasp on Sikes, and brandishing his other hand aloft, as the foam flew from his lips.

‘They asked her,’ said Noah, who, as he grew more wakeful, seemed to have a dawning perception who Sikes was, ‘they asked her why she didn’t come, last Sunday, as she promised. She said she couldn’t.’

‘Why—why? Tell him that.’

‘Because she was forcibly kept at home by Bill, the man she had told them of before,’ replied Noah.

‘What more of him?’ cried Fagin. ‘What more of the man she had told them of before? Tell him that, tell him that.’

‘Why, that she couldn’t very easily get out of doors unless he knew where she was going to,’ said Noah; ‘and so the first time she went to see the lady, she—ha! ha! ha! it made me laugh when she said it, that it did—she gave him a drink of laudanum.’

‘Hell’s fire!’ cried Sikes, breaking fiercely from the Jew. ‘Let me go!’

Flinging the old man from him, he rushed from the room, and darted, wildly and furiously, up the stairs.

‘Bill, Bill!’ cried Fagin, following him hastily. ‘A word. Only a word.’

The word would not have been exchanged, but that the housebreaker was unable to open the door: on which he was expending fruitless oaths and violence, when the Jew came panting up.

'Let me out,' said Sikes. 'Don't speak to me; it's not safe. Let me out, I say!'

'Hear me speak a word,' rejoined Fagin, laying his hand upon the lock. 'You won't be—'

'Well,' replied the other.

'You won't be—too—violent, Bill?'

The day was breaking, and there was light enough for the men to see each other's faces. They exchanged one brief glance; there was a fire in the eyes of both, which could not be mistaken.

'I mean,' said Fagin, showing that he felt all disguise was now useless, 'not too violent for safety. Be crafty, Bill, and not too bold.'

Sikes made no reply; but, pulling open the door, of which Fagin had turned the lock, dashed into the silent streets.

Without one pause, or moment's consideration; without once turning his head to the right or left, or raising his eyes to the sky, or lowering them to the ground, but looking straight before him with savage resolution: his teeth so tightly compressed that the strained jaw seemed starting through his skin; the robber held on his headlong course, nor muttered a word, nor relaxed a muscle, until he reached his own door. He opened it, softly, with a key; strode lightly up the stairs; and entering his own room, double-locked the door, and lifting a heavy table against it, drew back the curtain of the bed.

The girl was lying, half-dressed, upon it. He had roused her from her sleep, for she raised herself with a hurried and startled look.

'Get up!' said the man.

'It is you, Bill!' said the girl, with an expression of pleasure at his return.

'It is,' was the reply. 'Get up.'

There was a candle burning, but the man hastily drew it from the candlestick, and hurled it under the grate. Seeing the faint light of early day without, the girl rose to undraw the curtain.

'Let it be,' said Sikes, thrusting his hand before her. 'There's enough light for wot I've got to do.'

'Bill,' said the girl, in the low voice of alarm, 'why do you look like that at me!'

The robber sat regarding her, for a few seconds, with dilated nostrils and heaving breast; and then, grasping her by the head and throat, dragged her into the middle of the room, and looking once towards the door, placed his heavy hand upon her mouth.

'Bill, Bill!' gasped the girl, wrestling with the strength of mortal fear,—'I—I won't scream or cry—not once—hear me—speak to me—tell me what I have done!'

'You know, you she devil!' returned the robber, suppressing his breath. 'You were watched to-night; every word you said was heard.'

'Then spare my life for the love of Heaven, as I spared yours,' rejoined the girl, clinging to him. 'Bill, dear Bill, you cannot have the heart to kill me. Oh! think of all I have given up, only this one night, for you. You *shall* have time to think, and save yourself this crime; I will not loose my hold, you cannot throw me off. Bill, Bill, for dear God's sake, for your own, for mine, stop before you spill my blood! I have been true to you, upon my guilty soul I have!'

The man struggled violently, to release his arms; but those of the girl were clasped round his, and tear her as he would, he could not tear them away.

'Bill,' cried the girl, striving to lay her head upon his breast, 'the gentleman and that dear lady, told me to-night of a home in some foreign country where I could end my days in solitude and peace. Let me see them again, and beg them, on my knees, to show the same mercy and goodness to you; and let us both leave this dreadful place, and far apart lead better lives, and forget how we have lived, except in prayers, and never see each other more. It is never too late to repent. They told me so—I feel it now—but we must have time—a little, little time!'

The housebreaker freed one arm, and grasped his pistol. The certainty of immediate detection if he fired, flashed across his mind even in the midst of his fury; and he beat it twice with all the force he could summon, upon the upturned face that almost touched his own.

She staggered and fell: nearly blinded with the blood that rained down from a deep gash in her forehead; but raising herself, with difficulty, on her knees, drew from her bosom a white handkerchief—Rose Maylie's own—and holding it up, in her folded hands, as high towards Heaven as her feeble strength would allow, breathed one prayer for mercy to her Maker.

It was a ghastly figure to look upon. The murderer staggering backward to the wall, and shutting out the sight with his hand, seized a heavy club and struck her down.

CHAPTER XLVIII — THE FLIGHT OF SIKES

Of all bad deeds that, under cover of the darkness, had been committed within wide London's bounds since night hung over it, that was the worst. Of all the horrors that rose with an ill scent upon the morning air, that was the foulest and most cruel.

The sun—the bright sun, that brings back, not light alone, but new life, and hope, and freshness to man—burst upon the crowded city in clear and radiant glory. Through costly-coloured glass and paper-mended window, through cathedral dome and rotten crevice, it shed its equal ray. It lighted up the room where the murdered woman lay. It did. He tried to shut it out, but it would stream in. If the sight had been a ghastly one in the dull morning, what was it, now, in all that brilliant light!

He had not moved; he had been afraid to stir. There had been a moan and motion of the hand; and, with terror added to rage, he had struck and struck again. Once he threw a rug over it; but it was worse to fancy the eyes, and imagine them moving towards him, than to see them glaring upward, as if watching the reflection of the pool of gore that quivered and danced in the sunlight on the ceiling. He had plucked it off again. And there was the body—mere flesh and blood, no more—but such flesh, and so much blood!

He struck a light, kindled a fire, and thrust the club into it. There was hair upon the end, which blazed and shrunk into a light cinder, and, caught by the air, whirled up the chimney. Even that frightened him, sturdy as he was; but he held the weapon till it broke, and then piled it on the coals to burn away, and smoulder into ashes. He washed himself, and rubbed his clothes; there were spots that would not be removed, but he cut the pieces out, and burnt them. How those stains were dispersed about the room! The very feet of the dog were bloody.

All this time he had, never once, turned his back upon the corpse; no, not for a moment. Such preparations completed, he moved, backward, towards the door: dragging the dog with him, lest he should soil his feet anew and carry out new evidence of the crime into the streets. He shut the door softly, locked it, took the key, and left the house.

He crossed over, and glanced up at the window, to be sure that nothing was visible from the outside. There was the curtain still drawn, which she would have opened to admit the light she never saw again. It lay nearly under there. *He* knew that. God, how the sun poured down upon the very spot!

The glance was instantaneous. It was a relief to have got free of the room. He whistled on the dog, and walked rapidly away.

He went through Islington; strode up the hill at Highgate on which stands the stone in honour of Whittington; turned down to Highgate Hill, unsteady of purpose, and uncertain where to go; struck off to the right again, almost as soon as he began to descend it; and taking the foot-path across the fields, skirted Caen Wood, and so came on Hampstead Heath. Traversing the hollow by the Vale of Heath, he mounted the opposite bank, and crossing the road which joins the villages of Hampstead and Highgate, made along the remaining portion of the heath to the fields at North End, in one of which he laid himself down under a hedge, and slept.

Soon he was up again, and away,—not far into the country, but back towards London by the high-road—then back again—then over another part of the same ground as he already traversed—then wandering up and down in fields, and lying on ditches' brinks to rest, and starting up to make for some other spot, and do the same, and ramble on again.

Where could he go, that was near and not too public, to get some meat and drink? Hendon. That was a good place, not far off, and out of most people's way. Thither he directed his steps,—running sometimes, and sometimes, with a strange perversity, loitering at a snail's pace, or stopping altogether and idly breaking the hedges with a stick. But when he got there, all the people he met—the very children at the doors—seemed to

view him with suspicion. Back he turned again, without the courage to purchase bit or drop, though he had tasted no food for many hours; and once more he lingered on the Heath, uncertain where to go.

He wandered over miles and miles of ground, and still came back to the old place. Morning and noon had passed, and the day was on the wane, and still he rambled to and fro, and up and down, and round and round, and still lingered about the same spot. At last he got away, and shaped his course for Hatfield.

It was nine o'clock at night, when the man, quite tired out, and the dog, limping and lame from the unaccustomed exercise, turned down the hill by the church of the quiet village, and plodding along the little street, crept into a small public-house, whose scanty light had guided them to the spot. There was a fire in the tap-room, and some country-labourers were drinking before it.

They made room for the stranger, but he sat down in the furthest corner, and ate and drank alone, or rather with his dog: to whom he cast a morsel of food from time to time.

The conversation of the men assembled here, turned upon the neighbouring land, and farmers; and when those topics were exhausted, upon the age of some old man who had been buried on the previous Sunday; the young men present considering him very old, and the old men present declaring him to have been quite young—not older, one white-haired grandfather said, than he was—with ten or fifteen year of life in him at least—if he had taken care; if he had taken care.

There was nothing to attract attention, or excite alarm in this. The robber, after paying his reckoning, sat silent and unnoticed in his corner, and had almost dropped asleep, when he was half wakened by the noisy entrance of a new comer.

This was an antic fellow, half pedlar and half mountebank, who travelled about the country on foot to vend hones, strops, razors, wash-balls, harness-paste, medicine for dogs and horses, cheap perfumery, cosmetics, and such-like wares, which he carried in a case slung to his back. His entrance was the signal for various homely jokes with the countrymen, which slackened not until he had made his supper, and opened his box of treasures, when he ingeniously contrived to unite business with amusement.

'And what be that stoof? Good to eat, Harry?' asked a grinning countryman, pointing to some composition-cakes in one corner.

'This,' said the fellow, producing one, 'this is the infallible and invaluable composition for removing all sorts of stain, rust, dirt, mildew, spick, speck, spot, or spatter, from silk, satin, linen, cambric, cloth, crape, stuff, carpet, merino, muslin, bombazeen, or woollen stuff. Wine-stains, fruit-stains, beer-stains, water-stains, paint-stains, pitch-stains, any stains, all come out at one rub with the infallible and invaluable composition. If a lady stains her honour, she has only need to swallow one cake and she's cured at once—for it's poison. If a gentleman wants to prove this, he has only need to bolt one little square, and he has put it beyond question—for it's quite as satisfactory as a pistol-bullet, and a great deal nastier in the flavour, consequently the more credit in taking it. One penny a square. With all these virtues, one penny a square!'

There were two buyers directly, and more of the listeners plainly hesitated. The vendor observing this, increased in loquacity.

'It's all bought up as fast as it can be made,' said the fellow. 'There are fourteen water-mills, six steam-engines, and a galvanic battery, always a-working upon it, and they can't make it fast enough, though the men work so hard that they die off, and the widows is pensioned directly, with twenty pound a-year for each of the children, and a premium of fifty for twins. One penny a square! Two half-pence is all the same, and four farthings is received with joy. One penny a square! Wine-stains, fruit-stains, beer-stains, water-stains, paint-stains, pitch-stains, mud-stains, blood-stains! Here is a stain upon the hat of a gentleman in company, that I'll take clean out, before he can order me a pint of ale.'

'Hah!' cried Sikes starting up. 'Give that back.'

'I'll take it clean out, sir,' replied the man, winking to the company, 'before you can come across the room to get it. Gentlemen all, observe the dark stain upon this gentleman's hat, no wider than a shilling, but thicker than a half-crown. Whether it is a wine-stain, fruit-stain, beer-stain, water-stain, paint-stain, pitch-stain, mud-stain, or blood-stain—'

The man got no further, for Sikes with a hideous imprecation overthrew the table, and tearing the hat from him, burst out of the house.

With the same perversity of feeling and irresolution that had fastened upon him, despite himself, all day, the murderer, finding that he was not followed, and that they most probably considered him some drunken sullen fellow, turned back up the town, and getting out of the glare of the lamps of a stage-coach that was standing in the street, was walking past, when he recognised the mail from London, and saw that it was standing at the little post-office. He almost knew what was to come; but he crossed over, and listened.

The guard was standing at the door, waiting for the letter-bag. A man, dressed like a game-keeper, came up at the moment, and he handed him a basket which lay ready on the pavement.

'That's for your people,' said the guard. 'Now, look alive in there, will you. Damn that 'ere bag, it warn't ready night afore last; this won't do, you know!'

'Anything new up in town, Ben?' asked the game-keeper, drawing back to the window-shutters, the better to admire the horses.

'No, nothing that I knows on,' replied the man, pulling on his gloves. 'Corn's up a little. I heerd talk of a murder, too, down Spitalfields way, but I don't reckon much upon it.'

'Oh, that's quite true,' said a gentleman inside, who was looking out of the window. 'And a dreadful murder it was.'

'Was it, sir?' rejoined the guard, touching his hat. 'Man or woman, pray, sir?'

'A woman,' replied the gentleman. 'It is supposed—'

'Now, Ben,' replied the coachman impatiently.

'Damn that 'ere bag,' said the guard; 'are you gone to sleep in there?'

'Coming!' cried the office keeper, running out.

‘Coming,’ growled the guard. ‘Ah, and so’s the young ‘ooman of property that’s going to take a fancy to me, but I don’t know when. Here, give hold. All ri—ight!’

The horn sounded a few cheerful notes, and the coach was gone.

Sikes remained standing in the street, apparently unmoved by what he had just heard, and agitated by no stronger feeling than a doubt where to go. At length he went back again, and took the road which leads from Hatfield to St. Albans.

He went on doggedly; but as he left the town behind him, and plunged into the solitude and darkness of the road, he felt a dread and awe creeping upon him which shook him to the core. Every object before him, substance or shadow, still or moving, took the semblance of some fearful thing; but these fears were nothing compared to the sense that haunted him of that morning’s ghastly figure following at his heels. He could trace its shadow in the gloom, supply the smallest item of the outline, and note how stiff and solemn it seemed to stalk along. He could hear its garments rustling in the leaves, and every breath of wind came laden with that last low cry. If he stopped it did the same. If he ran, it followed—not running too: that would have been a relief: but like a corpse endowed with the mere machinery of life, and borne on one slow melancholy wind that never rose or fell.

At times, he turned, with desperate determination, resolved to beat this phantom off, though it should look him dead; but the hair rose on his head, and his blood stood still, for it had turned with him and was behind him then. He had kept it before him that morning, but it was behind now—always. He leaned his back against a bank, and felt that it stood above him, visibly out against the cold night-sky. He threw himself upon the road—on his back upon the road. At his head it stood, silent, erect, and still—a living grave-stone, with its epitaph in blood.

Let no man talk of murderers escaping justice, and hint that Providence must sleep. There were twenty score of violent deaths in one long minute of that agony of fear.

There was a shed in a field he passed, that offered shelter for the night. Before the door, were three tall poplar trees, which made it very dark within; and the wind moaned through them with a dismal wail. He *could not* walk on, till daylight came again; and here he stretched himself close to the wall—to undergo new torture.

For now, a vision came before him, as constant and more terrible than that from which he had escaped. Those widely staring eyes, so lustreless and so glassy, that he had better borne to see them than think upon them, appeared in the midst of the darkness: light in themselves, but giving light to nothing. There were but two, but they were everywhere. If he shut out the sight, there came the room with every well-known object—some, indeed, that he would have forgotten, if he had gone over its contents from memory—each in its accustomed place. The body was in *its* place, and its eyes were as he saw them when he stole away. He got up, and rushed into the field without. The figure was behind him. He re-entered the shed, and shrunk down once more. The eyes were there, before he had laid himself along.

And here he remained in such terror as none but he can know, trembling in every limb, and the cold sweat starting from every pore, when suddenly there arose upon the night-wind the noise of distant shouting, and the roar of voices mingled in alarm and wonder. Any sound of men in that lonely place, even though it conveyed a real cause of alarm, was something to him. He regained his strength and energy at the prospect of personal danger; and springing to his feet, rushed into the open air.

The broad sky seemed on fire. Rising into the air with showers of sparks, and rolling one above the other, were sheets of flame, lighting the atmosphere for miles round, and driving clouds of smoke in the direction where he stood. The shouts grew louder as new voices swelled the roar, and he could hear the cry of Fire! mingled with the ringing of an alarm-bell, the fall of heavy bodies, and the crackling of flames as they twined round some new obstacle, and shot aloft as though refreshed by food. The noise increased as he looked. There were people there—men and women—light, bustle. It was like new life to him. He darted onward—straight, headlong—dashing through brier and brake, and leaping gate and fence as madly as his dog, who careered with loud and sounding bark before him.

He came upon the spot. There were half-dressed figures tearing to and fro, some endeavouring to drag the frightened horses from the stables, others driving the cattle from the yard and out-houses, and others coming laden from the burning pile, amidst a shower of falling sparks, and the tumbling down of red-hot beams. The apertures, where doors and windows stood an hour ago, disclosed a mass of raging fire; walls rocked and crumbled into the burning well; the molten lead and iron poured down, white hot, upon the ground. Women and children shrieked, and men encouraged each other with noisy shouts and cheers. The clanking of the engine-pumps, and the spurting and hissing of the water as it fell upon the blazing wood, added to the tremendous roar. He shouted, too, till he was hoarse; and flying from memory and himself, plunged into the thickest of the throng. Hither and thither he dived that night: now working at the pumps, and now hurrying through the smoke and flame, but never ceasing to engage himself wherever noise and men were thickest. Up and down the ladders, upon the roofs of buildings, over floors that quaked and trembled with his weight, under the lee of falling bricks and stones, in every part of that great fire was he; but he bore a charmed life, and had neither scratch nor bruise, nor weariness nor thought, till morning dawned again, and only smoke and blackened ruins remained.

This mad excitement over, there returned, with ten-fold force, the dreadful consciousness of his crime. He looked suspiciously about him, for the men were conversing in groups, and he feared to be the subject of their talk. The dog obeyed the significant beck of his finger, and they drew off, stealthily, together. He passed near an engine where some men were seated, and they called to him to share in their refreshment. He took some bread and meat; and as he drank a draught of beer, heard the firemen, who were from London, talking about the murder. ‘He has gone to Birmingham, they say,’ said one: ‘but they’ll have him yet, for the scouts are out, and by to-morrow night there’ll be a cry all through the country.’

He hurried off, and walked till he almost dropped upon the ground; then lay down in a lane, and had a long, but broken and uneasy sleep. He wandered on again, irresolute and undecided, and oppressed with the fear of another solitary night.

Suddenly, he took the desperate resolution to going back to London.

‘There’s somebody to speak to there, at all event,’ he thought. ‘A good hiding-place, too. They’ll never expect to nab me there, after this country scent. Why can’t I lie by for a week or so, and, forcing blunt from Fagin, get abroad to France? Damme, I’ll risk it.’

He acted upon this impulse without delay, and choosing the least frequented roads began his journey back, resolved to lie concealed within a short distance of the metropolis, and, entering it at dusk by a circuitous route, to proceed straight to that part of it which he had fixed on for his destination.

The dog, though. If any description of him were out, it would not be forgotten that the dog was missing, and had probably gone with him. This might lead to his apprehension as he passed along the streets. He resolved to drown him, and walked on, looking about for a pond: picking up a heavy stone and tying it to his handkerchief as he went.

The animal looked up into his master’s face while these preparations were making; whether his instinct apprehended something of their purpose, or the robber’s sidelong look at him was sterner than ordinary, he skulked a little farther in the rear than usual, and cowered as he came more slowly along. When his master halted at the brink of a pool, and looked round to call him, he stopped outright.

‘Do you hear me call? Come here!’ cried Sikes.

The animal came up from the very force of habit; but as Sikes stooped to attach the handkerchief to his throat, he uttered a low growl and started back.

‘Come back!’ said the robber.

The dog wagged his tail, but moved not. Sikes made a running noose and called him again.

The dog advanced, retreated, paused an instant, and scoured away at his hardest speed.

The man whistled again and again, and sat down and waited in the expectation that he would return. But no dog appeared, and at length he resumed his journey.

CHAPTER XLIX — MONKS AND MR. BROWNLOW AT LENGTH MEET. THEIR CONVERSATION, AND THE INTELLIGENCE THAT INTERRUPTS IT

The twilight was beginning to close in, when Mr. Brownlow alighted from a hackney-coach at his own door, and knocked softly. The door being opened, a sturdy man got out of the coach and stationed himself on one side of the steps, while another man, who had been seated on the box, dismounted too, and stood upon the other side. At a sign from Mr. Brownlow, they helped out a third man, and taking him between them, hurried him into the house. This man was Monks.

They walked in the same manner up the stairs without speaking, and Mr. Brownlow, preceding them, led the way into a back-room. At the door of this apartment, Monks, who had ascended with evident reluctance, stopped. The two men looked at the old gentleman as if for instructions.

‘He knows the alternative,’ said Mr. Browlow. ‘If he hesitates or moves a finger but as you bid him, drag him into the street, call for the aid of the police, and impeach him as a felon in my name.’

‘How dare you say this of me?’ asked Monks.

‘How dare you urge me to it, young man?’ replied Mr. Brownlow, confronting him with a steady look. ‘Are you mad enough to leave this house? Unhand him. There, sir. You are free to go, and we to follow. But I warn you, by all I hold most solemn and most sacred, that instant will have you apprehended on a charge of fraud and robbery. I am resolute and immoveable. If you are determined to be the same, your blood be upon your own head!’

‘By what authority am I kidnapped in the street, and brought here by these dogs?’ asked Monks, looking from one to the other of the men who stood beside him.

‘By mine,’ replied Mr. Brownlow. ‘Those persons are indemnified by me. If you complain of being deprived of your liberty—you had power and opportunity to retrieve it as you came along, but you deemed it advisable to remain quiet—I say again, throw yourself for protection on the law. I will appeal to the law too; but when you have gone too far to recede, do not sue to me for leniency, when the power will have passed into other hands; and do not say I plunged you down the gulf into which you rushed, yourself.’

Monks was plainly disconcerted, and alarmed besides. He hesitated.

‘You will decide quickly,’ said Mr. Brownlow, with perfect firmness and composure. ‘If you wish me to prefer my charges publicly, and consign you to a punishment the extent of which, although I can, with a shudder, foresee, I cannot control, once more, I say, for you know the way. If not, and you appeal to my forbearance, and the mercy of those you have deeply injured, seat yourself, without a word, in that chair. It has waited for you two whole days.’

Monks muttered some unintelligible words, but wavered still.

‘You will be prompt,’ said Mr. Brownlow. ‘A word from me, and the alternative has gone for ever.’

Still the man hesitated.

‘I have not the inclination to parley,’ said Mr. Brownlow, ‘and, as I advocate the dearest interests of others, I have not the right.’

‘Is there—’ demanded Monks with a faltering tongue,—‘is there—no middle course?’

‘None.’

Monks looked at the old gentleman, with an anxious eye; but, reading in his countenance nothing but severity and determination, walked into the room, and, shrugging his shoulders, sat down.

‘Lock the door on the outside,’ said Mr. Brownlow to the attendants, ‘and come when I ring.’

The men obeyed, and the two were left alone together.

‘This is pretty treatment, sir,’ said Monks, throwing down his hat and cloak, ‘from my father’s oldest friend.’

‘It is because I was your father’s oldest friend, young man,’ returned Mr. Brownlow; ‘it is because the hopes and wishes of young and happy years were bound up with him, and that fair creature of his blood and kindred who rejoined her God in youth, and left me here a solitary, lonely man: it is because he knelt with me beside his only sisters’ death-bed when he was yet a boy, on the morning that would—but Heaven willed otherwise—have made her my young wife; it is because my seared heart clung to him, from that time forth, through all his trials and errors, till he died; it is because old recollections and associations filled my heart, and even the sight of you brings with it old thoughts of him; it is because of all these things that I am moved to treat you gently now—yes, Edward Leeford, even now—and blush for your unworthiness who bear the name.’

‘What has the name to do with it?’ asked the other, after contemplating, half in silence, and half in dogged wonder, the agitation of his companion. ‘What is the name to me?’

‘Nothing,’ replied Mr. Brownlow, ‘nothing to you. But it was *hers*, and even at this distance of time brings back to me, an old man, the glow and thrill which I once felt, only to hear it repeated by a stranger. I am very glad you have changed it—very—very.’

‘This is all mighty fine,’ said Monks (to retain his assumed designation) after a long silence, during which he had jerked himself in sullen defiance to and fro, and Mr. Brownlow had sat, shading his face with his hand. ‘But what do you want with me?’

‘You have a brother,’ said Mr. Brownlow, rousing himself: ‘a brother, the whisper of whose name in your ear when I came behind you in the street, was, in itself, almost enough to make you accompany me hither, in wonder and alarm.’

‘I have no brother,’ replied Monks. ‘You know I was an only child. Why do you talk to me of brothers? You know that, as well as I.’

‘Attend to what I do know, and you may not,’ said Mr. Brownlow. ‘I shall interest you by and by. I know that of the wretched marriage, into which family pride, and the most sordid and narrowest of all ambition, forced your unhappy father when a mere boy, you were the sole and most unnatural issue.’

‘I don’t care for hard names,’ interrupted Monks with a jeering laugh. ‘You know the fact, and that’s enough for me.’

‘But I also know,’ pursued the old gentleman, ‘the misery, the slow torture, the protracted anguish of that ill-assorted union. I know how listlessly and wearily each of that wretched pair dragged on their heavy chain through a world that was poisoned to them both. I know how cold formalities were succeeded by open taunts; how indifference gave place to dislike, dislike to hate, and hate to loathing, until at last they wrenched the clanking bond asunder, and retiring a wide space apart, carried each a galling fragment, of which nothing but death could break the rivets, to hide it in new society beneath the gayest looks they could assume. Your mother succeeded; she forgot it soon. But it rusted and cankered at your father’s heart for years.’

‘Well, they were separated,’ said Monks, ‘and what of that?’

‘When they had been separated for some time,’ returned Mr. Brownlow, ‘and your mother, wholly given up to continental frivolities, had utterly forgotten the young husband ten good years her junior, who, with prospects blighted, lingered on at home, he fell among new friends. This circumstance, at least, you know already.’

‘Not I,’ said Monks, turning away his eyes and beating his foot upon the ground, as a man who is determined to deny everything. ‘Not I.’

‘Your manner, no less than your actions, assures me that you have never forgotten it, or ceased to think of it with bitterness,’ returned Mr. Brownlow. ‘I speak of fifteen years ago, when you were not more than eleven years old, and your father but one-and-thirty—for he was, I repeat, a boy, when *his* father ordered him to marry. Must I go back to events which cast a shade upon the memory of your parent, or will you spare it, and disclose to me the truth?’

‘I have nothing to disclose,’ rejoined Monks. ‘You must talk on if you will.’

‘These new friends, then,’ said Mr. Brownlow, ‘were a naval officer retired from active service, whose wife had died some half-a-year before, and left him with two children—there had been more, but, of all their family, happily but two survived. They were both daughters; one a beautiful creature of nineteen, and the other a mere child of two or three years old.’

‘What’s this to me?’ asked Monks.

‘They resided,’ said Mr. Brownlow, without seeming to hear the interruption, ‘in a part of the country to which your father in his wandering had repaired, and where he had taken up his abode. Acquaintance, intimacy, friendship, fast followed on each other. Your father was gifted as few men are. He had his sister’s soul and person. As the old officer knew him more and more, he grew to love him. I would that it had ended there. His daughter did the same.’

The old gentleman paused; Monks was biting his lips, with his eyes fixed upon the floor; seeing this, he immediately resumed:

‘The end of a year found him contracted, solemnly contracted, to that daughter; the object of the first, true, ardent, only passion of a guileless girl.’

‘Your tale is of the longest,’ observed Monks, moving restlessly in his chair.

‘It is a true tale of grief and trial, and sorrow, young man,’ returned Mr. Brownlow, ‘and such tales usually are; if it were one of unmixed joy and happiness, it would be very brief. At length one of those rich relations to strengthen whose interest and importance your father had been sacrificed, as others are often—it is no uncommon case—died, and to repair the misery he had been instrumental in occasioning, left him his panacea for all griefs—Money. It was necessary that he should immediately repair to Rome, whither this man had sped for health, and where he had died, leaving his affairs in great confusion. He went; was seized with mortal illness there; was followed, the moment the intelligence reached Paris, by your mother who carried you with her; he died the day after her arrival, leaving no will—*no will*—so that the whole property fell to her and you.’

At this part of the recital Monks held his breath, and listened with a face of intense eagerness, though his eyes were not directed towards the speaker. As Mr. Brownlow paused, he changed his position with the air of one who has experienced a sudden relief, and wiped his hot face and hands.

‘Before he went abroad, and as he passed through London on his way,’ said Mr. Brownlow, slowly, and fixing his eyes upon the other’s face, ‘he came to me.’

‘I never heard of that,’ interrupted Monks in a tone intended to appear incredulous, but savouring more of disagreeable surprise.

‘He came to me, and left with me, among some other things, a picture—a portrait painted by himself—a likeness of this poor girl—which he did not wish to leave behind, and could not carry forward on his hasty journey. He was worn by anxiety and remorse almost to a shadow; talked in a wild, distracted way, of ruin and dishonour worked by himself; confided to me his intention to convert his whole property, at any loss, into money, and, having settled on his wife and you a portion of his recent acquisition, to fly the country—I guessed too well he would not fly alone—and never see it more. Even from me, his old and early friend, whose strong attachment had taken root in the earth that covered one most dear to both—even from me he withheld any more particular confession, promising to write and tell me all, and after that to see me once again, for the last time on earth. Alas! *That* was the last time. I had no letter, and I never saw him more.’

‘I went,’ said Mr. Brownlow, after a short pause, ‘I went, when all was over, to the scene of his—I will use the term the world would freely use, for worldly harshness or favour are now alike to him—of his guilty love, resolved that if my fears were realised that erring child should find one heart and home to shelter and compassionate her. The family had left that part a week before; they had called in such trifling debts as were outstanding, discharged them, and left the place by night. Why, or whither, none can tell.’

Monks drew his breath yet more freely, and looked round with a smile of triumph.

‘When your brother,’ said Mr. Brownlow, drawing nearer to the other’s chair, ‘When your brother: a feeble, ragged, neglected child: was cast in my way by a stronger hand than chance, and rescued by me from a life of vice and infamy—’

‘What?’ cried Monks.

‘By me,’ said Mr. Brownlow. ‘I told you I should interest you before long. I say by me—I see that your cunning associate suppressed my name, although for ought he knew, it would be quite strange to your ears. When he was rescued by me, then, and lay recovering from sickness in my house, his strong resemblance to this picture I have spoken of, struck me with astonishment. Even when I first saw him in all his dirt and misery, there was a lingering expression in his face that came upon me like a glimpse of some old friend flashing on one in a vivid dream. I need not tell you he was snared away before I knew his history—’

‘Why not?’ asked Monks hastily.

‘Because you know it well.’

‘I!’

‘Denial to me is vain,’ replied Mr. Brownlow. ‘I shall show you that I know more than that.’

‘You—you—can’t prove anything against me,’ stammered Monks. ‘I defy you to do it!’

‘We shall see,’ returned the old gentleman with a searching glance. ‘I lost the boy, and no efforts of mine could recover him. Your mother being dead, I knew that you alone could solve the mystery if anybody could, and as when I had last heard of you you were on your own estate in the West Indies—whither, as you well know, you retired upon your mother’s death to escape the consequences of vicious courses here—I made the voyage. You had left it, months before, and were supposed to be in London, but no one could tell where. I returned. Your agents had no clue to your residence. You came and went, they said, as strangely as you had ever done: sometimes for days together and sometimes not for months: keeping to all appearance the same low haunts and mingling with the same infamous herd who had been your associates when a fierce ungovernable boy. I wearied them with new applications. I paced the streets by night and day, but until two hours ago, all my efforts were fruitless, and I never saw you for an instant.’

‘And now you do see me,’ said Monks, rising boldly, ‘what then? Fraud and robbery are high-sounding words—justified, you think, by a fancied resemblance in some young imp to an idle daub of a dead man’s Brother! You don’t even know that a child was born of this maudlin pair; you don’t even know that.’

‘I *did not*,’ replied Mr. Brownlow, rising too; ‘but within the last fortnight I have learnt it all. You have a brother; you know it, and him. There was a will, which your mother destroyed, leaving the secret and the gain to you at her own death. It contained a reference to some child likely to be the result of this sad connection, which child was born, and accidentally encountered by you, when your suspicions were first awakened by his resemblance to your father. You repaired to the place of his birth. There existed proofs—proofs long suppressed—of his birth and parentage. Those proofs were destroyed by you, and now, in your own words to your accomplice the Jew, “*the only proofs of the boy’s identity lie at the bottom of the river, and the old hag that received them from the mother is rotting in her coffin.*” Unworthy son, coward, liar,—you, who hold your councils with thieves and murderers in dark rooms at night,—you, whose plots and wiles have brought a violent death upon the head of one worth millions such as you,—you, who from your cradle were gall and bitterness to your own father’s heart, and in whom all evil passions, vice, and profligacy, festered, till they

found a vent in a hideous disease which had made your face an index even to your mind—you, Edward Leeford, do you still brave me!'

'No, no, no!' returned the coward, overwhelmed by these accumulated charges.

'Every word!' cried the gentleman, 'every word that has passed between you and this detested villain, is known to me. Shadows on the wall have caught your whispers, and brought them to my ear; the sight of the persecuted child has turned vice itself, and given it the courage and almost the attributes of virtue. Murder has been done, to which you were morally if not really a party.'

'No, no,' interposed Monks. 'I—I knew nothing of that; I was going to inquire the truth of the story when you overtook me. I didn't know the cause. I thought it was a common quarrel.'

'It was the partial disclosure of your secrets,' replied Mr. Brownlow. 'Will you disclose the whole?'

'Yes, I will.'

'Set your hand to a statement of truth and facts, and repeat it before witnesses?'

'That I promise too.'

'Remain quietly here, until such a document is drawn up, and proceed with me to such a place as I may deem most advisable, for the purpose of attesting it?'

'If you insist upon that, I'll do that also,' replied Monks.

'You must do more than that,' said Mr. Brownlow. 'Make restitution to an innocent and unoffending child, for such he is, although the offspring of a guilty and most miserable love. You have not forgotten the provisions of the will. Carry them into execution so far as your brother is concerned, and then go where you please. In this world you need meet no more.'

While Monks was pacing up and down, meditating with dark and evil looks on this proposal and the possibilities of evading it: torn by his fears on the one hand and his hatred on the other: the door was hurriedly unlocked, and a gentleman (Mr. Losberne) entered the room in violent agitation.

'The man will be taken,' he cried. 'He will be taken to-night!'

'The murderer?' asked Mr. Brownlow.

'Yes, yes,' replied the other. 'His dog has been seen lurking about some old haunt, and there seems little doubt that his master either is, or will be, there, under cover of the darkness. Spies are hovering about in every direction. I have spoken to the men who are charged with his capture, and they tell me he cannot escape. A reward of a hundred pounds is proclaimed by Government to-night.'

'I will give fifty more,' said Mr. Brownlow, 'and proclaim it with my own lips upon the spot, if I can reach it. Where is Mr. Maylie?'

'Harry? As soon as he had seen your friend here, safe in a coach with you, he hurried off to where he heard this,' replied the doctor, 'and mounting his horse sallied forth to join the first party at some place in the outskirts agreed upon between them.'

'Fagin,' said Mr. Brownlow; 'what of him?'

'When I last heard, he had not been taken, but he will be, or is, by this time. They're sure of him.'

'Have you made up your mind?' asked Mr. Brownlow, in a low voice, of Monks.

'Yes,' he replied. 'You—you—will be secret with me?'

'I will. Remain here till I return. It is your only hope of safety.'

They left the room, and the door was again locked.

'What have you done?' asked the doctor in a whisper.

'All that I could hope to do, and even more. Coupling the poor girl's intelligence with my previous knowledge, and the result of our good friend's inquiries on the spot, I left him no loophole of escape, and laid bare the whole villainy which by these lights became plain as day. Write and appoint the evening after to-morrow, at seven, for the meeting. We shall be down there, a few hours before, but shall require rest: especially the young lady, who *may* have greater need of firmness than either you or I can quite foresee just now. But my blood boils to avenge this poor murdered creature. Which way have they taken?'

'Drive straight to the office and you will be in time,' replied Mr. Losberne. 'I will remain here.'

The two gentlemen hastily separated; each in a fever of excitement wholly uncontrollable.

CHAPTER L — THE PURSUIT AND ESCAPE

Near to that part of the Thames on which the church at Rotherhithe abuts, where the buildings on the banks are dirtiest and the vessels on the river blackest with the dust of colliers and the smoke of close-built low-roofed houses, there exists the filthiest, the strangest, the most extraordinary of the many localities that are hidden in London, wholly unknown, even by name, to the great mass of its inhabitants.

To reach this place, the visitor has to penetrate through a maze of close, narrow, and muddy streets, thronged by the roughest and poorest of waterside people, and devoted to the traffic they may be supposed to occasion. The cheapest and least delicate provisions are heaped in the shops; the coarsest and commonest articles of wearing apparel dangle at the salesman's door, and stream from the house-parapet and windows. Jostling with unemployed labourers of the lowest class, ballast-heavers, coal-whippers, brazen women, ragged children, and the raff and refuse of the river, he makes his way with difficulty along, assailed by offensive

sights and smells from the narrow alleys which branch off on the right and left, and deafened by the clash of ponderous waggons that bear great piles of merchandise from the stacks of warehouses that rise from every corner. Arriving, at length, in streets remoter and less-frequented than those through which he has passed, he walks beneath tottering house-fronts projecting over the pavement, dismantled walls that seem to totter as he passes, chimneys half crushed half hesitating to fall, windows guarded by rusty iron bars that time and dirt have almost eaten away, every imaginable sign of desolation and neglect.

In such a neighborhood, beyond Dockhead in the Borough of Southwark, stands Jacob's Island, surrounded by a muddy ditch, six or eight feet deep and fifteen or twenty wide when the tide is in, once called Mill Pond, but known in the days of this story as Folly Ditch. It is a creek or inlet from the Thames, and can always be filled at high water by opening the sluices at the Lead Mills from which it took its old name. At such times, a stranger, looking from one of the wooden bridges thrown across it at Mill Lane, will see the inhabitants of the houses on either side lowering from their back doors and windows, buckets, pails, domestic utensils of all kinds, in which to haul the water up; and when his eye is turned from these operations to the houses themselves, his utmost astonishment will be excited by the scene before him. Crazy wooden galleries common to the backs of half a dozen houses, with holes from which to look upon the slime beneath; windows, broken and patched, with poles thrust out, on which to dry the linen that is never there; rooms so small, so filthy, so confined, that the air would seem too tainted even for the dirt and squalor which they shelter; wooden chambers thrusting themselves out above the mud, and threatening to fall into it—as some have done; dirt-besmeared walls and decaying foundations; every repulsive lineament of poverty, every loathsome indication of filth, rot, and garbage; all these ornament the banks of Folly Ditch.

In Jacob's Island, the warehouses are roofless and empty; the walls are crumbling down; the windows are windows no more; the doors are falling into the streets; the chimneys are blackened, but they yield no smoke. Thirty or forty years ago, before losses and chancery suits came upon it, it was a thriving place; but now it is a desolate island indeed. The houses have no owners; they are broken open, and entered upon by those who have the courage; and there they live, and there they die. They must have powerful motives for a secret residence, or be reduced to a destitute condition indeed, who seek a refuge in Jacob's Island.

In an upper room of one of these houses—a detached house of fair size, ruinous in other respects, but strongly defended at door and window: of which house the back commanded the ditch in manner already described—there were assembled three men, who, regarding each other every now and then with looks expressive of perplexity and expectation, sat for some time in profound and gloomy silence. One of these was Toby Crackit, another Mr. Chitling, and the third a robber of fifty years, whose nose had been almost beaten in, in some old scuffle, and whose face bore a frightful scar which might probably be traced to the same occasion. This man was a returned transport, and his name was Kags.

'I wish,' said Toby turning to Mr. Chitling, 'that you had picked out some other crib when the two old ones got too warm, and had not come here, my fine feller.'

'Why didn't you, blunder-head!' said Kags.

'Well, I thought you'd have been a little more glad to see me than this,' replied Mr. Chitling, with a melancholy air.

'Why, look'ee, young gentleman,' said Toby, 'when a man keeps himself so very exclusive as I have done, and by that means has a snug house over his head with nobody a prying and smelling about it, it's rather a startling thing to have the honour of a wisit from a young gentleman (however respectable and pleasant a person he may be to play cards with at conweniency) circumstanced as you are.'

'Especially, when the exclusive young man has got a friend stopping with him, that's arrived sooner than was expected from foreign parts, and is too modest to want to be presented to the Judges on his return,' added Mr. Kags.

There was a short silence, after which Toby Crackit, seeming to abandon as hopeless any further effort to maintain his usual devil-may-care swagger, turned to Chitling and said,

'When was Fagin took then?'

'Just at dinner-time—two o'clock this afternoon. Charley and I made our lucky up the wash-us chimney, and Bolter got into the empty water-butt, head downwards; but his legs were so precious long that they stuck out at the top, and so they took him too.'

'And Bet?'

'Poor Bet! She went to see the Body, to speak to who it was,' replied Chitling, his countenance falling more and more, 'and went off mad, screaming and raving, and beating her head against the boards; so they put a strait-weskut on her and took her to the hospital—and there she is.'

'Wot's come of young Bates?' demanded Kags.

'He hung about, not to come over here afore dark, but he'll be here soon,' replied Chitling. 'There's nowhere else to go to now, for the people at the Cripples are all in custody, and the bar of the ken—I went up there and see it with my own eyes—is filled with traps.'

'This is a smash,' observed Toby, biting his lips. 'There's more than one will go with this.'

'The sessions are on,' said Kags: 'if they get the inquest over, and Bolter turns King's evidence: as of course he will, from what he's said already: they can prove Fagin an accessory before the fact, and get the trial on on Friday, and he'll swing in six days from this, by G—!'

'You should have heard the people groan,' said Chitling; 'the officers fought like devils, or they'd have torn him away. He was down once, but they made a ring round him, and fought their way along. You should have seen how he looked about him, all muddy and bleeding, and clung to them as if they were his dearest friends. I can see 'em now, not able to stand upright with the pressing of the mob, and draggin him along amongst 'em; I can see the people jumping up, one behind another, and snarling with their teeth and making at him; I can see the blood upon his hair and beard, and hear the cries with which the women worked themselves into the centre of the crowd at the street corner, and swore they'd tear his heart out!'

The horror-stricken witness of this scene pressed his hands upon his ears, and with his eyes closed got up

and paced violently to and fro, like one distracted.

While he was thus engaged, and the two men sat by in silence with their eyes fixed upon the floor, a pattering noise was heard upon the stairs, and Sikes's dog bounded into the room. They ran to the window, downstairs, and into the street. The dog had jumped in at an open window; he made no attempt to follow them, nor was his master to be seen.

'What's the meaning of this?' said Toby when they had returned. 'He can't be coming here. I—I—hope not.'

'If he was coming here, he'd have come with the dog,' said Kags, stooping down to examine the animal, who lay panting on the floor. 'Here! Give us some water for him; he has run himself faint.'

'He's drunk it all up, every drop,' said Chitling after watching the dog some time in silence. 'Covered with mud—lame—half blind—he must have come a long way.'

'Where can he have come from!' exclaimed Toby. 'He's been to the other kens of course, and finding them filled with strangers come on here, where he's been many a time and often. But where can he have come from first, and how comes he here alone without the other!'

'He'—(none of them called the murderer by his old name)—'He can't have made away with himself. What do you think?' said Chitling.

Toby shook his head.

'If he had,' said Kags, 'the dog 'ud want to lead us away to where he did it. No. I think he's got out of the country, and left the dog behind. He must have given him the slip somehow, or he wouldn't be so easy.'

This solution, appearing the most probable one, was adopted as the right; the dog, creeping under a chair, coiled himself up to sleep, without more notice from anybody.

It being now dark, the shutter was closed, and a candle lighted and placed upon the table. The terrible events of the last two days had made a deep impression on all three, increased by the danger and uncertainty of their own position. They drew their chairs closer together, starting at every sound. They spoke little, and that in whispers, and were as silent and awe-stricken as if the remains of the murdered woman lay in the next room.

They had sat thus, some time, when suddenly was heard a hurried knocking at the door below.

'Young Bates,' said Kags, looking angrily round, to check the fear he felt himself.

The knocking came again. No, it wasn't he. He never knocked like that.

Crackit went to the window, and shaking all over, drew in his head. There was no need to tell them who it was; his pale face was enough. The dog too was on the alert in an instant, and ran whining to the door.

'We must let him in,' he said, taking up the candle.

'Isn't there any help for it?' asked the other man in a hoarse voice.

'None. He *must* come in.'

'Don't leave us in the dark,' said Kags, taking down a candle from the chimney-piece, and lighting it, with such a trembling hand that the knocking was twice repeated before he had finished.

Crackit went down to the door, and returned followed by a man with the lower part of his face buried in a handkerchief, and another tied over his head under his hat. He drew them slowly off. Blanched face, sunken eyes, hollow cheeks, beard of three days' growth, wasted flesh, short thick breath; it was the very ghost of Sikes.

He laid his hand upon a chair which stood in the middle of the room, but shuddering as he was about to drop into it, and seeming to glance over his shoulder, dragged it back close to the wall—as close as it would go—and ground it against it—and sat down.

Not a word had been exchanged. He looked from one to another in silence. If an eye were furtively raised and met his, it was instantly averted. When his hollow voice broke silence, they all three started. They seemed never to have heard its tones before.

'How came that dog here?' he asked.

'Alone. Three hours ago.'

'To-night's paper says that Fagin's took. Is it true, or a lie?'

'True.'

They were silent again.

'Damn you all!' said Sikes, passing his hand across his forehead.

'Have you nothing to say to me?'

There was an uneasy movement among them, but nobody spoke.

'You that keep this house,' said Sikes, turning his face to Crackit, 'do you mean to sell me, or to let me lie here till this hunt is over?'

'You may stop here, if you think it safe,' returned the person addressed, after some hesitation.

Sikes carried his eyes slowly up the wall behind him: rather trying to turn his head than actually doing it: and said, 'Is—it—the body—is it buried?'

They shook their heads.

'Why isn't it!' he retorted with the same glance behind him. 'Wot do they keep such ugly things above the ground for?—Who's that knocking?'

Crackit intimated, by a motion of his hand as he left the room, that there was nothing to fear; and directly came back with Charley Bates behind him. Sikes sat opposite the door, so that the moment the boy entered the room he encountered his figure.

'Toby,' said the boy falling back, as Sikes turned his eyes towards him, 'why didn't you tell me this, downstairs?'

There had been something so tremendous in the shrinking off of the three, that the wretched man was

willing to propitiate even this lad. Accordingly he nodded, and made as though he would shake hands with him.

'Let me go into some other room,' said the boy, retreating still farther.

'Charley!' said Sikes, stepping forward. 'Don't you—don't you know me?'

'Don't come nearer me,' answered the boy, still retreating, and looking, with horror in his eyes, upon the murderer's face. 'You monster!'

The man stopped half-way, and they looked at each other; but Sikes's eyes sunk gradually to the ground.

'Witness you three,' cried the boy shaking his clenched fist, and becoming more and more excited as he spoke. 'Witness you three—I'm not afraid of him—if they come here after him, I'll give him up; I will. I tell you out at once. He may kill me for it if he likes, or if he dares, but if I am here I'll give him up. I'd give him up if he was to be boiled alive. Murder! Help! If there's the pluck of a man among you three, you'll help me. Murder! Help! Down with him!'

Pouring out these cries, and accompanying them with violent gesticulation, the boy actually threw himself, single-handed, upon the strong man, and in the intensity of his energy and the suddenness of his surprise, brought him heavily to the ground.

The three spectators seemed quite stupefied. They offered no interference, and the boy and man rolled on the ground together; the former, heedless of the blows that showered upon him, wrenching his hands tighter and tighter in the garments about the murderer's breast, and never ceasing to call for help with all his might.

The contest, however, was too unequal to last long. Sikes had him down, and his knee was on his throat, when Crackit pulled him back with a look of alarm, and pointed to the window. There were lights gleaming below, voices in loud and earnest conversation, the tramp of hurried footsteps—endless they seemed in number—crossing the nearest wooden bridge. One man on horseback seemed to be among the crowd; for there was the noise of hoofs rattling on the uneven pavement. The gleam of lights increased; the footsteps came more thickly and noisily on. Then, came a loud knocking at the door, and then a hoarse murmur from such a multitude of angry voices as would have made the boldest quail.

'Help!' shrieked the boy in a voice that rent the air.

'He's here! Break down the door!'

'In the King's name,' cried the voices without; and the hoarse cry arose again, but louder.

'Break down the door!' screamed the boy. 'I tell you they'll never open it. Run straight to the room where the light is. Break down the door!'

Strokes, thick and heavy, rattled upon the door and lower window-shutters as he ceased to speak, and a loud huzzah burst from the crowd; giving the listener, for the first time, some adequate idea of its immense extent.

'Open the door of some place where I can lock this screeching Hell-babe,' cried Sikes fiercely; running to and fro, and dragging the boy, now, as easily as if he were an empty sack. 'That door. Quick!' He flung him in, bolted it, and turned the key. 'Is the downstairs door fast?'

'Double-locked and chained,' replied Crackit, who, with the other two men, still remained quite helpless and bewildered.

'The panels—are they strong?'

'Lined with sheet-iron.'

'And the windows too?'

'Yes, and the windows.'

'Damn you!' cried the desperate ruffian, throwing up the sash and menacing the crowd. 'Do your worst! I'll cheat you yet!'

Of all the terrific yells that ever fell on mortal ears, none could exceed the cry of the infuriated throng. Some shouted to those who were nearest to set the house on fire; others roared to the officers to shoot him dead. Among them all, none showed such fury as the man on horseback, who, throwing himself out of the saddle, and bursting through the crowd as if he were parting water, cried, beneath the window, in a voice that rose above all others, 'Twenty guineas to the man who brings a ladder!'

The nearest voices took up the cry, and hundreds echoed it. Some called for ladders, some for sledge-hammers; some ran with torches to and fro as if to seek them, and still came back and roared again; some spent their breath in impotent curses and execrations; some pressed forward with the ecstasy of madmen, and thus impeded the progress of those below; some among the boldest attempted to climb up by the water-spout and crevices in the wall; and all waved to and fro, in the darkness beneath, like a field of corn moved by an angry wind: and joined from time to time in one loud furious roar.

'The tide,' cried the murderer, as he staggered back into the room, and shut the faces out, 'the tide was in as I came up. Give me a rope, a long rope. They're all in front. I may drop into the Folly Ditch, and clear off that way. Give me a rope, or I shall do three more murders and kill myself.'

The panic-stricken men pointed to where such articles were kept; the murderer, hastily selecting the longest and strongest cord, hurried up to the house-top.

All the window in the rear of the house had been long ago bricked up, except one small trap in the room where the boy was locked, and that was too small even for the passage of his body. But, from this aperture, he had never ceased to call on those without, to guard the back; and thus, when the murderer emerged at last on the house-top by the door in the roof, a loud shout proclaimed the fact to those in front, who immediately began to pour round, pressing upon each other in an unbroken stream.

He planted a board, which he had carried up with him for the purpose, so firmly against the door that it must be matter of great difficulty to open it from the inside; and creeping over the tiles, looked over the low parapet.

The water was out, and the ditch a bed of mud.

The crowd had been hushed during these few moments, watching his motions and doubtful of his purpose, but the instant they perceived it and knew it was defeated, they raised a cry of triumphant execration to which all their previous shouting had been whispers. Again and again it rose. Those who were at too great a distance to know its meaning, took up the sound; it echoed and re-echoed; it seemed as though the whole city had poured its population out to curse him.

On pressed the people from the front—on, on, on, in a strong struggling current of angry faces, with here and there a glaring torch to lighten them up, and show them out in all their wrath and passion. The houses on the opposite side of the ditch had been entered by the mob; sashes were thrown up, or torn bodily out; there were tiers and tiers of faces in every window; cluster upon cluster of people clinging to every house-top. Each little bridge (and there were three in sight) bent beneath the weight of the crowd upon it. Still the current poured on to find some nook or hole from which to vent their shouts, and only for an instant see the wretch.

'They have him now,' cried a man on the nearest bridge. 'Hurrah!'

The crowd grew light with uncovered heads; and again the shout uprose.

'I will give fifty pounds,' cried an old gentleman from the same quarter, 'to the man who takes him alive. I will remain here, till he come to ask me for it.'

There was another roar. At this moment the word was passed among the crowd that the door was forced at last, and that he who had first called for the ladder had mounted into the room. The stream abruptly turned, as this intelligence ran from mouth to mouth; and the people at the windows, seeing those upon the bridges pouring back, quitted their stations, and running into the street, joined the concourse that now thronged pell-mell to the spot they had left: each man crushing and striving with his neighbor, and all panting with impatience to get near the door, and look upon the criminal as the officers brought him out. The cries and shrieks of those who were pressed almost to suffocation, or trampled down and trodden under foot in the confusion, were dreadful; the narrow ways were completely blocked up; and at this time, between the rush of some to regain the space in front of the house, and the unavailing struggles of others to extricate themselves from the mass, the immediate attention was distracted from the murderer, although the universal eagerness for his capture was, if possible, increased.

The man had shrunk down, thoroughly quelled by the ferocity of the crowd, and the impossibility of escape; but seeing this sudden change with no less rapidity than it had occurred, he sprang upon his feet, determined to make one last effort for his life by dropping into the ditch, and, at the risk of being stifled, endeavouring to creep away in the darkness and confusion.

Roused into new strength and energy, and stimulated by the noise within the house which announced that an entrance had really been effected, he set his foot against the stack of chimneys, fastened one end of the rope tightly and firmly round it, and with the other made a strong running noose by the aid of his hands and teeth almost in a second. He could let himself down by the cord to within a less distance of the ground than his own height, and had his knife ready in his hand to cut it then and drop.

At the very instant when he brought the loop over his head previous to slipping it beneath his arm-pits, and when the old gentleman before-mentioned (who had clung so tight to the railing of the bridge as to resist the force of the crowd, and retain his position) earnestly warned those about him that the man was about to lower himself down—at that very instant the murderer, looking behind him on the roof, threw his arms above his head, and uttered a yell of terror.

‘The eyes again!’ he cried in an unearthly screech.

Staggering as if struck by lightning, he lost his balance and tumbled over the parapet. The noose was on his neck. It ran up with his weight, tight as a bow-string, and swift as the arrow it speeds. He fell for five-and-thirty feet. There was a sudden jerk, a terrific convulsion of the limbs; and there he hung, with the open knife clenched in his stiffening hand.

The old chimney quivered with the shock, but stood it bravely. The murderer swung lifeless against the wall; and the boy, thrusting aside the dangling body which obscured his view, called to the people to come and take him out, for God’s sake.

A dog, which had lain concealed till now, ran backwards and forwards on the parapet with a dismal howl, and collecting himself for a spring, jumped for the dead man’s shoulders. Missing his aim, he fell into the ditch, turning completely over as he went; and striking his head against a stone, dashed out his brains.

CHAPTER LI — AFFORDING AN EXPLANATION OF MORE MYSTERIES THAN ONE, AND COMPREHENDING A PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE WITH NO WORD OF SETTLEMENT OR PIN-MONEY

The events narrated in the last chapter were yet but two days old, when Oliver found himself, at three o’clock in the afternoon, in a travelling-carriage rolling fast towards his native town. Mrs. Maylie, and Rose, and Mrs. Bedwin, and the good doctor were with him: and Mr. Brownlow followed in a post-chaise, accompanied by one other person whose name had not been mentioned.

They had not talked much upon the way; for Oliver was in a flutter of agitation and uncertainty which deprived him of the power of collecting his thoughts, and almost of speech, and appeared to have scarcely less effect on his companions, who shared it, in at least an equal degree. He and the two ladies had been very carefully made acquainted by Mr. Brownlow with the nature of the admissions which had been forced from Monks; and although they knew that the object of their present journey was to complete the work which had been so well begun, still the whole matter was enveloped in enough of doubt and mystery to leave them in endurance of the most intense suspense.

The same kind friend had, with Mr. Losberne’s assistance, cautiously stopped all channels of communication through which they could receive intelligence of the dreadful occurrences that so recently taken place. ‘It was quite true,’ he said, ‘that they must know them before long, but it might be at a better time than the present, and it could not be at a worse.’ So, they travelled on in silence: each busied with reflections on the object which had brought them together: and no one disposed to give utterance to the thoughts which crowded upon all.

But if Oliver, under these influences, had remained silent while they journeyed towards his birth-place by a road he had never seen, how the whole current of his recollections ran back to old times, and what a crowd of emotions were wakened up in his breast, when they turned into that which he had traversed on foot: a poor houseless, wandering boy, without a friend to help him, or a roof to shelter his head.

‘See there, there!’ cried Oliver, eagerly clasping the hand of Rose, and pointing out at the carriage window; ‘that’s the stile I came over; there are the hedges I crept behind, for fear any one should overtake me and force me back! Yonder is the path across the fields, leading to the old house where I was a little child! Oh Dick, Dick, my dear old friend, if I could only see you now!’

‘You will see him soon,’ replied Rose, gently taking his folded hands between her own. ‘You shall tell him how happy you are, and how rich you have grown, and that in all your happiness you have none so great as the coming back to make him happy too.’

‘Yes, yes,’ said Oliver, ‘and we’ll—we’ll take him away from here, and have him clothed and taught, and send him to some quiet country place where he may grow strong and well,—shall we?’

Rose nodded ‘yes,’ for the boy was smiling through such happy tears that she could not speak.

‘You will be kind and good to him, for you are to every one,’ said Oliver. ‘It will make you cry, I know, to hear what he can tell; but never mind, never mind, it will be all over, and you will smile again—I know that too—to think how changed he is; you did the same with me. He said “God bless you” to me when I ran away,’ cried the boy with a burst of affectionate emotion; ‘and I will say “God bless you” now, and show him how I love him for it!’

As they approached the town, and at length drove through its narrow streets, it became matter of no small difficulty to restrain the boy within reasonable bounds. There was Sowerberry’s the undertaker’s just as it used to be, only smaller and less imposing in appearance than he remembered it—there were all the well-known shops and houses, with almost every one of which he had some slight incident connected—there was Gamfield’s cart, the very cart he used to have, standing at the old public-house door—there was the workhouse, the dreary prison of his youthful days, with its dismal windows frowning on the street—there was the same lean porter standing at the gate, at sight of whom Oliver involuntarily shrunk back, and then laughed at himself for being so foolish, then cried, then laughed again—there were scores of faces at the doors and windows that he knew quite well—there was nearly everything as if he had left it but yesterday,

and all his recent life had been but a happy dream.

But it was pure, earnest, joyful reality. They drove straight to the door of the chief hotel (which Oliver used to stare up at, with awe, and think a mighty palace, but which had somehow fallen off in grandeur and size); and here was Mr. Grimwig all ready to receive them, kissing the young lady, and the old one too, when they got out of the coach, as if he were the grandfather of the whole party, all smiles and kindness, and not offering to eat his head—no, not once; not even when he contradicted a very old postboy about the nearest road to London, and maintained he knew it best, though he had only come that way once, and that time fast asleep. There was dinner prepared, and there were bedrooms ready, and everything was arranged as if by magic.

Notwithstanding all this, when the hurry of the first half-hour was over, the same silence and constraint prevailed that had marked their journey down. Mr. Brownlow did not join them at dinner, but remained in a separate room. The two other gentlemen hurried in and out with anxious faces, and, during the short intervals when they were present, conversed apart. Once, Mrs. Maylie was called away, and after being absent for nearly an hour, returned with eyes swollen with weeping. All these things made Rose and Oliver, who were not in any new secrets, nervous and uncomfortable. They sat wondering, in silence; or, if they exchanged a few words, spoke in whispers, as if they were afraid to hear the sound of their own voices.

At length, when nine o'clock had come, and they began to think they were to hear no more that night, Mr. Losberne and Mr. Grimwig entered the room, followed by Mr. Brownlow and a man whom Oliver almost shrieked with surprise to see; for they told him it was his brother, and it was the same man he had met at the market-town, and seen looking in with Fagin at the window of his little room. Monks cast a look of hate, which, even then, he could not dissemble, at the astonished boy, and sat down near the door. Mr. Brownlow, who had papers in his hand, walked to a table near which Rose and Oliver were seated.

'This is a painful task,' said he, 'but these declarations, which have been signed in London before many gentlemen, must be in substance repeated here. I would have spared you the degradation, but we must hear them from your own lips before we part, and you know why.'

'Go on,' said the person addressed, turning away his face. 'Quick. I have almost done enough, I think. Don't keep me here.'

'This child,' said Mr. Brownlow, drawing Oliver to him, and laying his hand upon his head, 'is your half-brother; the illegitimate son of your father, my dear friend Edwin Leeford, by poor young Agnes Fleming, who died in giving him birth.'

'Yes,' said Monks, scowling at the trembling boy: the beating of whose heart he might have heard. 'That is the bastard child.'

'The term you use,' said Mr. Brownlow, sternly, 'is a reproach to those long since passed beyond the feeble censure of the world. It reflects disgrace on no one living, except you who use it. Let that pass. He was born in this town.'

'In the workhouse of this town,' was the sullen reply. 'You have the story there.' He pointed impatiently to the papers as he spoke.

'I must have it here, too,' said Mr. Brownlow, looking round upon the listeners.

'Listen then! You!' returned Monks. 'His father being taken ill at Rome, was joined by his wife, my mother, from whom he had been long separated, who went from Paris and took me with her—to look after his property, for what I know, for she had no great affection for him, nor he for her. He knew nothing of us, for his senses were gone, and he slumbered on till next day, when he died. Among the papers in his desk, were two, dated on the night his illness first came on, directed to yourself'; he addressed himself to Mr. Brownlow; 'and enclosed in a few short lines to you, with an intimation on the cover of the package that it was not to be forwarded till after he was dead. One of these papers was a letter to this girl Agnes; the other a will.'

'What of the letter?' asked Mr. Brownlow.

'The letter?—A sheet of paper crossed and crossed again, with a penitent confession, and prayers to God to help her. He had palmed a tale on the girl that some secret mystery—to be explained one day—prevented his marrying her just then; and so she had gone on, trusting patiently to him, until she trusted too far, and lost what none could ever give her back. She was, at that time, within a few months of her confinement. He told her all he had meant to do, to hide her shame, if he had lived, and prayed her, if he died, not to curse his memory, or think the consequences of their sin would be visited on her or their young child; for all the guilt was his. He reminded her of the day he had given her the little locket and the ring with her christian name engraved upon it, and a blank left for that which he hoped one day to have bestowed upon her—prayed her yet to keep it, and wear it next her heart, as she had done before—and then ran on, wildly, in the same words, over and over again, as if he had gone distracted. I believe he had.'

'The will,' said Mr. Brownlow, as Oliver's tears fell fast.

Monks was silent.

'The will,' said Mr. Brownlow, speaking for him, 'was in the same spirit as the letter. He talked of miseries which his wife had brought upon him; of the rebellious disposition, vice, malice, and premature bad passions of you his only son, who had been trained to hate him; and left you, and your mother, each an annuity of eight hundred pounds. The bulk of his property he divided into two equal portions—one for Agnes Fleming, and the other for their child, if it should be born alive, and ever come of age. If it were a girl, it was to inherit the money unconditionally; but if a boy, only on the stipulation that in his minority he should never have stained his name with any public act of dishonour, meanness, cowardice, or wrong. He did this, he said, to mark his confidence in the other, and his conviction—only strengthened by approaching death—that the child would share her gentle heart, and noble nature. If he were disappointed in this expectation, then the money was to come to you: for then, and not till then, when both children were equal, would he recognise your prior claim upon his purse, who had none upon his heart, but had, from an infant, repulsed him with coldness and aversion.'

'My mother,' said Monks, in a louder tone, 'did what a woman should have done. She burnt this will. The

letter never reached its destination; but that, and other proofs, she kept, in case they ever tried to lie away the blot. The girl's father had the truth from her with every aggravation that her violent hate—I love her for it now—could add. Goaded by shame and dishonour he fled with his children into a remote corner of Wales, changing his very name that his friends might never know of his retreat; and here, no great while afterwards, he was found dead in his bed. The girl had left her home, in secret, some weeks before; he had searched for her, on foot, in every town and village near; it was on the night when he returned home, assured that she had destroyed herself, to hide her shame and his, that his old heart broke.'

There was a short silence here, until Mr. Brownlow took up the thread of the narrative.

'Years after this,' he said, 'this man's—Edward Leeford's—mother came to me. He had left her, when only eighteen; robbed her of jewels and money; gambled, squandered, forged, and fled to London: where for two years he had associated with the lowest outcasts. She was sinking under a painful and incurable disease, and wished to recover him before she died. Inquiries were set on foot, and strict searches made. They were unavailing for a long time, but ultimately successful; and he went back with her to France.'

'There she died,' said Monks, 'after a lingering illness; and, on her death-bed, she bequeathed these secrets to me, together with her unquenchable and deadly hatred of all whom they involved—though she need not have left me that, for I had inherited it long before. She would not believe that the girl had destroyed herself, and the child too, but was filled with the impression that a male child had been born, and was alive. I swore to her, if ever it crossed my path, to hunt it down; never to let it rest; to pursue it with the bitterest and most unrelenting animosity; to vent upon it the hatred that I deeply felt, and to spit upon the empty vaunt of that insulting will by draggin it, if I could, to the very gallows-foot. She was right. He came in my way at last. I began well; and, but for babbling drabs, I would have finished as I began!'

As the villain folded his arms tight together, and muttered curses on himself in the impotence of baffled malice, Mr. Brownlow turned to the terrified group beside him, and explained that the Jew, who had been his old accomplice and confidant, had a large reward for keeping Oliver ensnared: of which some part was to be given up, in the event of his being rescued: and that a dispute on this head had led to their visit to the country house for the purpose of identifying him.

'The locket and ring?' said Mr. Brownlow, turning to Monks.

'I bought them from the man and woman I told you of, who stole them from the nurse, who stole them from the corpse,' answered Monks without raising his eyes. 'You know what became of them.'

Mr. Brownlow merely nodded to Mr. Grimwig, who disappearing with great alacrity, shortly returned, pushing in Mrs. Bumble, and dragging her unwilling consort after him.

'Do my hi's deceive me!' cried Mr. Bumble, with ill-feigned enthusiasm, 'or is that little Oliver? Oh O-li-ver, if you know'd how I've been a-grieving for you—'

'Hold your tongue, fool,' murmured Mrs. Bumble.

'Isn't natur, natur, Mrs. Bumble?' remonstrated the workhouse master. 'Can't I be supposed to feel—*I* as brought him up porochially—when I see him a-setting here among ladies and gentlemen of the very affablest description! I always loved that boy as if he'd been my—my—my own grandfather,' said Mr. Bumble, halting for an appropriate comparison. 'Master Oliver, my dear, you remember the blessed gentleman in the white waistcoat? Ah! he went to heaven last week, in a oak coffin with plated handles, Oliver.'

'Come, sir,' said Mr. Grimwig, tartly; 'suppress your feelings.'

'I will do my endeavours, sir,' replied Mr. Bumble. 'How do you do, sir? I hope you are very well.'

This salutation was addressed to Mr. Brownlow, who had stepped up to within a short distance of the respectable couple. He inquired, as he pointed to Monks,

'Do you know that person?'

'No,' replied Mrs. Bumble flatly.

'Perhaps *you* don't?' said Mr. Brownlow, addressing her spouse.

'I never saw him in all my life,' said Mr. Bumble.

'Nor sold him anything, perhaps?'

'No,' replied Mrs. Bumble.

'You never had, perhaps, a certain gold locket and ring?' said Mr. Brownlow.

'Certainly not,' replied the matron. 'Why are we brought here to answer to such nonsense as this?'

Again Mr. Brownlow nodded to Mr. Grimwig; and again that gentleman limped away with extraordinary readiness. But not again did he return with a stout man and wife; for this time, he led in two palsied women, who shook and tottered as they walked.

'You shut the door the night old Sally died,' said the foremost one, raising her shrivelled hand, 'but you couldn't shut out the sound, nor stop the chinks.'

'No, no,' said the other, looking round her and wagging her toothless jaws. 'No, no, no.'

'We heard her try to tell you what she'd done, and saw you take a paper from her hand, and watched you too, next day, to the pawnbroker's shop,' said the first.

'Yes,' added the second, 'and it was a "locket and gold ring." We found out that, and saw it given you. We were by. Oh! we were by.'

'And we know more than that,' resumed the first, 'for she told us often, long ago, that the young mother had told her that, feeling she should never get over it, she was on her way, at the time that she was taken ill, to die near the grave of the father of the child.'

'Would you like to see the pawnbroker himself?' asked Mr. Grimwig with a motion towards the door.

'No,' replied the woman; 'if he—she pointed to Monks—'has been coward enough to confess, as I see he has, and you have sounded all these hags till you have found the right ones, I have nothing more to say. I *did* sell them, and they're where you'll never get them. What then?'

‘Nothing,’ replied Mr. Brownlow, ‘except that it remains for us to take care that neither of you is employed in a situation of trust again. You may leave the room.’

‘I hope,’ said Mr. Bumble, looking about him with great ruefulness, as Mr. Grimwig disappeared with the two old women: ‘I hope that this unfortunate little circumstance will not deprive me of my porochial office?’

‘Indeed it will,’ replied Mr. Brownlow. ‘You may make up your mind to that, and think yourself well off besides.’

‘It was all Mrs. Bumble. She *would* do it,’ urged Mr. Bumble; first looking round to ascertain that his partner had left the room.

‘That is no excuse,’ replied Mr. Brownlow. ‘You were present on the occasion of the destruction of these trinkets, and indeed are the more guilty of the two, in the eye of the law; for the law supposes that your wife acts under your direction.’

‘If the law supposes that,’ said Mr. Bumble, squeezing his hat emphatically in both hands, ‘the law is a ass—a idiot. If that’s the eye of the law, the law is a bachelor; and the worst I wish the law is, that his eye may be opened by experience—by experience.’

Laying great stress on the repetition of these two words, Mr. Bumble fixed his hat on very tight, and putting his hands in his pockets, followed his helpmate downstairs.

‘Young lady,’ said Mr. Brownlow, turning to Rose, ‘give me your hand. Do not tremble. You need not fear to hear the few remaining words we have to say.’

‘If they have—I do not know how they can, but if they have—any reference to me,’ said Rose, ‘pray let me hear them at some other time. I have not strength or spirits now.’

‘Nay,’ returned the old gentlman, drawing her arm through his; ‘you have more fortitude than this, I am sure. Do you know this young lady, sir?’

‘Yes,’ replied Monks.

‘I never saw you before,’ said Rose faintly.

‘I have seen you often,’ returned Monks.

‘The father of the unhappy Agnes had *two* daughters,’ said Mr. Brownlow. ‘What was the fate of the other—the child?’

‘The child,’ replied Monks, ‘when her father died in a strange place, in a strange name, without a letter, book, or scrap of paper that yielded the faintest clue by which his friends or relatives could be traced—the child was taken by some wretched cottagers, who reared it as their own.’

‘Go on,’ said Mr. Brownlow, signing to Mrs. Maylie to approach. ‘Go on!’

‘You couldn’t find the spot to which these people had repaired,’ said Monks, ‘but where friendship fails, hatred will often force a way. My mother found it, after a year of cunning search—ay, and found the child.’

‘She took it, did she?’

‘No. The people were poor and began to sicken—at least the man did—of their fine humanity; so she left it with them, giving them a small present of money which would not last long, and promised more, which she never meant to send. She didn’t quite rely, however, on their discontent and poverty for the child’s unhappiness, but told the history of the sister’s shame, with such alterations as suited her; bade them take good heed of the child, for she came of bad blood; and told them she was illegitimate, and sure to go wrong at one time or other. The circumstances countenanced all this; the people believed it; and there the child dragged on an existence, miserable enough even to satisfy us, until a widow lady, residing, then, at Chester, saw the girl by chance, pitied her, and took her home. There was some cursed spell, I think, against us; for in spite of all our efforts she remained there and was happy. I lost sight of her, two or three years ago, and saw her no more until a few months back.’

‘Do you see her now?’

‘Yes. Leaning on your arm.’

‘But not the less my niece,’ cried Mrs. Maylie, folding the fainting girl in her arms; ‘not the less my dearest child. I would not lose her now, for all the treasures of the world. My sweet companion, my own dear girl!’

‘The only friend I ever had,’ cried Rose, clinging to her. ‘The kindest, best of friends. My heart will burst. I cannot bear all this.’

‘You have borne more, and have been, through all, the best and gentlest creature that ever shed happiness on every one she knew,’ said Mrs. Maylie, embracing her tenderly. ‘Come, come, my love, remember who this is who waits to clasp you in his arms, poor child! See here—look, look, my dear!’

‘Not aunt,’ cried Oliver, throwing his arms about her neck; ‘I’ll never call her aunt—sister, my own dear sister, that something taught my heart to love so dearly from the first! Rose, dear, darling Rose!’

Let the tears which fell, and the broken words which were exchanged in the long close embrace between the orphans, be sacred. A father, sister, and mother, were gained, and lost, in that one moment. Joy and grief were mingled in the cup; but there were no bitter tears: for even grief itself arose so softened, and clothed in such sweet and tender recollections, that it became a solemn pleasure, and lost all character of pain.

They were a long, long time alone. A soft tap at the door, at length announced that some one was without. Oliver opened it, glided away, and gave place to Harry Maylie.

‘I know it all,’ he said, taking a seat beside the lovely girl. ‘Dear Rose, I know it all.’

‘I am not here by accident,’ he added after a lengthened silence; ‘nor have I heard all this to-night, for I knew it yesterday—only yesterday. Do you guess that I have come to remind you of a promise?’

‘Stay,’ said Rose. ‘You *do* know all.’

‘All. You gave me leave, at any time within a year, to renew the subject of our last discourse.’

‘I did.’

‘Not to press you to alter your determination,’ pursued the young man, ‘but to hear you repeat it, if you

would. I was to lay whatever of station or fortune I might possess at your feet, and if you still adhered to your former determination, I pledged myself, by no word or act, to seek to change it.'

'The same reasons which influenced me then, will influence me now,' said Rose firmly. 'If I ever owed a strict and rigid duty to her, whose goodness saved me from a life of indigence and suffering, when should I ever feel it, as I should to-night? It is a struggle,' said Rose, 'but one I am proud to make; it is a pang, but one my heart shall bear.'

'The disclosure of to-night,'—Harry began.

'The disclosure of to-night,' replied Rose softly, 'leaves me in the same position, with reference to you, as that in which I stood before.'

'You harden your heart against me, Rose,' urged her lover.

'Oh Harry, Harry,' said the young lady, bursting into tears; 'I wish I could, and spare myself this pain.'

'Then why inflict it on yourself?' said Harry, taking her hand. 'Think, dear Rose, think what you have heard to-night.'

'And what have I heard! What have I heard!' cried Rose. 'That a sense of his deep disgrace so worked upon my own father that he shunned all—there, we have said enough, Harry, we have said enough.'

'Not yet, not yet,' said the young man, detaining her as she rose. 'My hopes, my wishes, prospects, feeling: every thought in life except my love for you: have undergone a change. I offer you, now, no distinction among a bustling crowd; no mingling with a world of malice and detraction, where the blood is called into honest cheeks by aught but real disgrace and shame; but a home—a heart and home—yes, dearest Rose, and those, and those alone, are all I have to offer.'

'What do you mean!' she faltered.

'I mean but this—that when I left you last, I left you with a firm determination to level all fancied barriers between yourself and me; resolved that if my world could not be yours, I would make yours mine; that no pride of birth should curl the lip at you, for I would turn from it. This I have done. Those who have shrunk from me because of this, have shrunk from you, and proved you so far right. Such power and patronage: such relatives of influence and rank: as smiled upon me then, look coldly now; but there are smiling fields and waving trees in England's richest county; and by one village church—mine, Rose, my own!—there stands a rustic dwelling which you can make me prouder of, than all the hopes I have renounced, measured a thousandfold. This is my rank and station now, and here I lay it down!'

'It's a trying thing waiting supper for lovers,' said Mr. Grimwig, waking up, and pulling his pocket-handkerchief from over his head.

Truth to tell, the supper had been waiting a most unreasonable time. Neither Mrs. Maylie, nor Harry, nor Rose (who all came in together), could offer a word in extenuation.

'I had serious thoughts of eating my head to-night,' said Mr. Grimwig, 'for I began to think I should get nothing else. I'll take the liberty, if you'll allow me, of saluting the bride that is to be.'

Mr. Grimwig lost no time in carrying this notice into effect upon the blushing girl; and the example, being contagious, was followed both by the doctor and Mr. Brownlow: some people affirm that Harry Maylie had been observed to set it, originally, in a dark room adjoining; but the best authorities consider this downright scandal: he being young and a clergyman.

'Oliver, my child,' said Mrs. Maylie, 'where have you been, and why do you look so sad? There are tears stealing down your face at this moment. What is the matter?'

It is a world of disappointment: often to the hopes we most cherish, and hopes that do our nature the greatest honour.

Poor Dick was dead!

CHAPTER LII — FAGIN'S LAST NIGHT ALIVE

The court was paved, from floor to roof, with human faces. Inquisitive and eager eyes peered from every inch of space. From the rail before the dock, away into the sharpest angle of the smallest corner in the galleries, all looks were fixed upon one man—Fagin. Before him and behind: above, below, on the right and on the left: he seemed to stand surrounded by a firmament, all bright with gleaming eyes.

He stood there, in all this glare of living light, with one hand resting on the wooden slab before him, the other held to his ear, and his head thrust forward to enable him to catch with greater distinctness every word that fell from the presiding judge, who was delivering his charge to the jury. At times, he turned his eyes sharply upon them to observe the effect of the slightest featherweight in his favour; and when the points against him were stated with terrible distinctness, looked towards his counsel, in mute appeal that he would, even then, urge something in his behalf. Beyond these manifestations of anxiety, he stirred not hand or foot. He had scarcely moved since the trial began; and now that the judge ceased to speak, he still remained in the

same strained attitude of close attention, with his gaze bent on him, as though he listened still.

A slight bustle in the court, recalled him to himself. Looking round, he saw that the juryman had turned together, to consider their verdict. As his eyes wandered to the gallery, he could see the people rising above each other to see his face: some hastily applying their glasses to their eyes: and others whispering their neighbours with looks expressive of abhorrence. A few there were, who seemed unmindful of him, and looked only to the jury, in impatient wonder how they could delay. But in no one face—not even among the women, of whom there were many there—could he read the faintest sympathy with himself, or any feeling but one of all-absorbing interest that he should be condemned.

As he saw all this in one bewildered glance, the deathlike stillness came again, and looking back he saw that the jurymen had turned towards the judge. Hush!

They only sought permission to retire.

He looked, wistfully, into their faces, one by one when they passed out, as though to see which way the greater number leant; but that was fruitless. The jailer touched him on the shoulder. He followed mechanically to the end of the dock, and sat down on a chair. The man pointed it out, or he would not have seen it.

He looked up into the gallery again. Some of the people were eating, and some fanning themselves with handkerchiefs; for the crowded place was very hot. There was one young man sketching his face in a little note-book. He wondered whether it was like, and looked on when the artist broke his pencil-point, and made another with his knife, as any idle spectator might have done.

In the same way, when he turned his eyes towards the judge, his mind began to busy itself with the fashion of his dress, and what it cost, and how he put it on. There was an old fat gentleman on the bench, too, who had gone out, some half an hour before, and now come back. He wondered within himself whether this man had been to get his dinner, what he had had, and where he had had it; and pursued this train of careless thought until some new object caught his eye and roused another.

Not that, all this time, his mind was, for an instant, free from one oppressive overwhelming sense of the grave that opened at his feet; it was ever present to him, but in a vague and general way, and he could not fix his thoughts upon it. Thus, even while he trembled, and turned burning hot at the idea of speedy death, he fell to counting the iron spikes before him, and wondering how the head of one had been broken off, and whether they would mend it, or leave it as it was. Then, he thought of all the horrors of the gallows and the scaffold—and stopped to watch a man sprinkling the floor to cool it—and then went on to think again.

At length there was a cry of silence, and a breathless look from all towards the door. The jury returned, and passed him close. He could glean nothing from their faces; they might as well have been of stone. Perfect stillness ensued—not a rustle—not a breath—Guilty.

The building rang with a tremendous shout, and another, and another, and then it echoed loud groans, that gathered strength as they swelled out, like angry thunder. It was a peal of joy from the populace outside, greeting the news that he would die on Monday.

The noise subsided, and he was asked if he had anything to say why sentence of death should not be passed upon him. He had resumed his listening attitude, and looked intently at his questioner while the demand was made; but it was twice repeated before he seemed to hear it, and then he only muttered that he was an old man—an old man—and so, dropping into a whisper, was silent again.

The judge assumed the black cap, and the prisoner still stood with the same air and gesture. A woman in the gallery, uttered some exclamation, called forth by this dread solemnity; he looked hastily up as if angry at the interruption, and bent forward yet more attentively. The address was solemn and impressive; the sentence fearful to hear. But he stood, like a marble figure, without the motion of a nerve. His haggard face was still thrust forward, his under-jaw hanging down, and his eyes staring out before him, when the jailer put his hand upon his arm, and beckoned him away. He gazed stupidly about him for an instant, and obeyed.

They led him through a paved room under the court, where some prisoners were waiting till their turns came, and others were talking to their friends, who crowded round a grate which looked into the open yard. There was nobody there to speak to *him*; but, as he passed, the prisoners fell back to render him more visible to the people who were clinging to the bars: and they assailed him with opprobrious names, and screeched and hissed. He shook his fist, and would have spat upon them; but his conductors hurried him on, through a gloomy passage lighted by a few dim lamps, into the interior of the prison.

Here, he was searched, that he might not have about him the means of anticipating the law; this ceremony performed, they led him to one of the condemned cells, and left him there—alone.

He sat down on a stone bench opposite the door, which served for seat and bedstead; and casting his blood-shot eyes upon the ground, tried to collect his thoughts. After awhile, he began to remember a few disjointed fragments of what the judge had said: though it had seemed to him, at the time, that he could not hear a word. These gradually fell into their proper places, and by degrees suggested more: so that in a little time he had the whole, almost as it was delivered. To be hanged by the neck, till he was dead—that was the end. To be hanged by the neck till he was dead.

As it came on very dark, he began to think of all the men he had known who had died upon the scaffold; some of them through his means. They rose up, in such quick succession, that he could hardly count them. He had seen some of them die,—and had joked too, because they died with prayers upon their lips. With what a rattling noise the drop went down; and how suddenly they changed, from strong and vigorous men to dangling heaps of clothes!

Some of them might have inhabited that very cell—sat upon that very spot. It was very dark; why didn't they bring a light? The cell had been built for many years. Scores of men must have passed their last hours there. It was like sitting in a vault strewn with dead bodies—the cap, the noose, the pinioned arms, the faces that he knew, even beneath that hideous veil.—Light, light!

At length, when his hands were raw with beating against the heavy door and walls, two men appeared: one bearing a candle, which he thrust into an iron candlestick fixed against the wall: the other dragging in a mattress on which to pass the night; for the prisoner was to be left alone no more.

Then came the night—dark, dismal, silent night. Other watchers are glad to hear this church-clock strike, for they tell of life and coming day. To him they brought despair. The boom of every iron bell came laden with the one, deep, hollow sound—Death. What availed the noise and bustle of cheerful morning, which penetrated even there, to him? It was another form of knell, with mockery added to the warning.

The day passed off. Day? There was no day; it was gone as soon as come—and night came on again; night so long, and yet so short; long in its dreadful silence, and short in its fleeting hours. At one time he raved and blasphemed; and at another howled and tore his hair. Venerable men of his own persuasion had come to pray beside him, but he had driven them away with curses. They renewed their charitable efforts, and he beat them off.

Saturday night. He had only one night more to live. And as he thought of this, the day broke—Sunday.

It was not until the night of this last awful day, that a withering sense of his helpless, desperate state came in its full intensity upon his blighted soul; not that he had ever held any defined or positive hope of mercy, but that he had never been able to consider more than the dim probability of dying so soon. He had spoken little to either of the two men, who relieved each other in their attendance upon him; and they, for their parts, made no effort to rouse his attention. He had sat there, awake, but dreaming. Now, he started up, every minute, and with gasping mouth and burning skin, hurried to and fro, in such a paroxysm of fear and wrath that even they—used to such sights—recoiled from him with horror. He grew so terrible, at last, in all the tortures of his evil conscience, that one man could not bear to sit there, eyeing him alone; and so the two kept watch together.

He cowered down upon his stone bed, and thought of the past. He had been wounded with some missiles from the crowd on the day of his capture, and his head was bandaged with a linen cloth. His red hair hung down upon his bloodless face; his beard was torn, and twisted into knots; his eyes shone with a terrible light; his unwashed flesh crackled with the fever that burnt him up. Eight—nine—then. If it was not a trick to frighten him, and those were the real hours treading on each other's heels, where would he be, when they came round again! Eleven! Another struck, before the voice of the previous hour had ceased to vibrate. At eight, he would be the only mourner in his own funeral train; at eleven—

Those dreadful walls of Newgate, which have hidden so much misery and such unspeakable anguish, not only from the eyes, but, too often, and too long, from the thoughts, of men, never held so dread a spectacle as

that. The few who lingered as they passed, and wondered what the man was doing who was to be hanged to-morrow, would have slept but ill that night, if they could have seen him.

From early in the evening until nearly midnight, little groups of two and three presented themselves at the lodge-gate, and inquired, with anxious faces, whether any reprieve had been received. These being answered in the negative, communicated the welcome intelligence to clusters in the street, who pointed out to one another the door from which he must come out, and showed where the scaffold would be built, and, walking with unwilling steps away, turned back to conjure up the scene. By degrees they fell off, one by one; and, for an hour, in the dead of night, the street was left to solitude and darkness.

The space before the prison was cleared, and a few strong barriers, painted black, had been already thrown across the road to break the pressure of the expected crowd, when Mr. Brownlow and Oliver appeared at the wicket, and presented an order of admission to the prisoner, signed by one of the sheriffs. They were immediately admitted into the lodge.

'Is the young gentleman to come too, sir?' said the man whose duty it was to conduct them. 'It's not a sight for children, sir.'

'It is not indeed, my friend,' rejoined Mr. Brownlow; 'but my business with this man is intimately connected with him; and as this child has seen him in the full career of his success and villainy, I think it as well—even at the cost of some pain and fear—that he should see him now.'

These few words had been said apart, so as to be inaudible to Oliver. The man touched his hat; and glancing at Oliver with some curiousity, opened another gate, opposite to that by which they had entered, and led them on, through dark and winding ways, towards the cells.

'This,' said the man, stopping in a gloomy passage where a couple of workmen were making some preparations in profound silence—'this is the place he passes through. If you step this way, you can see the door he goes out at.'

He led them into a stone kitchen, fitted with coppers for dressing the prison food, and pointed to a door. There was an open grating above it, through which came the sound of men's voices, mingled with the noise of hammering, and the throwing down of boards. There were putting up the scaffold.

From this place, they passed through several strong gates, opened by other turnkeys from the inner side; and, having entered an open yard, ascended a flight of narrow steps, and came into a passage with a row of strong doors on the left hand. Motioning them to remain where they were, the turnkey knocked at one of these with his bunch of keys. The two attendants, after a little whispering, came out into the passage, stretching themselves as if glad of the temporary relief, and motioned the visitors to follow the jailer into the cell. They did so.

The condemned criminal was seated on his bed, rocking himself from side to side, with a countenance more like that of a snared beast than the face of a man. His mind was evidently wandering to his old life, for he continued to mutter, without appearing conscious of their presence otherwise than as a part of his vision.

'Good boy, Charley—well done—' he mumbled. 'Oliver, too, ha! ha! ha! Oliver too—quite the gentleman now—quite the—take that boy away to bed!'

The jailer took the disengaged hand of Oliver; and, whispering him not to be alarmed, looked on without speaking.

'Take him away to bed!' cried Fagin. 'Do you hear me, some of you? He has been the—the—somehow the cause of all this. It's worth the money to bring him up to it—Bolter's throat, Bill; never mind the girl—Bolter's throat as deep as you can cut. Saw his head off!'

'Fagin,' said the jailer.

'That's me!' cried the Jew, falling instantly, into the attitude of listening he had assumed upon his trial. 'An old man, my Lord; a very old, old man!'

'Here,' said the turnkey, laying his hand upon his breast to keep him down. 'Here's somebody wants to see you, to ask you some questions, I suppose. Fagin, Fagin! Are you a man?'

'I shan't be one long,' he replied, looking up with a face retaining no human expression but rage and terror. 'Strike them all dead! What right have they to butcher me?'

As he spoke he caught sight of Oliver and Mr. Brownlow. Shrinking to the furthest corner of the seat, he demanded to know what they wanted there.

'Steady,' said the turnkey, still holding him down. 'Now, sir, tell him what you want. Quick, if you please, for he grows worse as the time gets on.'

'You have some papers,' said Mr. Brownlow advancing, 'which were placed in your hands, for better security, by a man called Monks.'

'It's all a lie together,' replied Fagin. 'I haven't one—not one.'

'For the love of God,' said Mr. Brownlow solemnly, 'do not say that now, upon the very verge of death; but tell me where they are. You know that Sikes is dead; that Monks has confessed; that there is no hope of any further gain. Where are those papers?'

'Oliver,' cried Fagin, beckoning to him. 'Here, here! Let me whisper to you.'

'I am not afraid,' said Oliver in a low voice, as he relinquished Mr. Brownlow's hand.

'The papers,' said Fagin, drawing Oliver towards him, 'are in a canvas bag, in a hole a little way up the chimney in the top front-room. I want to talk to you, my dear. I want to talk to you.'

'Yes, yes,' returned Oliver. 'Let me say a prayer. Do! Let me say one prayer. Say only one, upon your knees, with me, and we will talk till morning.'

'Outside, outside,' replied Fagin, pushing the boy before him towards the door, and looking vacantly over his head. 'Say I've gone to sleep—they'll believe you. You can get me out, if you take me so. Now then, now then!'

'Oh! God forgive this wretched man!' cried the boy with a burst of tears.

‘That’s right, that’s right,’ said Fagin. ‘That’ll help us on. This door first. If I shake and tremble, as we pass the gallows, don’t you mind, but hurry on. Now, now, now!’

‘Have you nothing else to ask him, sir?’ inquired the turnkey.

‘No other question,’ replied Mr. Brownlow. ‘If I hoped we could recall him to a sense of his position—’

‘Nothing will do that, sir,’ replied the man, shaking his head. ‘You had better leave him.’

The door of the cell opened, and the attendants returned.

‘Press on, press on,’ cried Fagin. ‘Softly, but not so slow. Faster, faster!’

The men laid hands upon him, and disengaging Oliver from his grasp, held him back. He struggled with the power of desperation, for an instant; and then sent up cry upon cry that penetrated even those massive walls, and rang in their ears until they reached the open yard.

It was some time before they left the prison. Oliver nearly swooned after this frightful scene, and was so weak that for an hour or more, he had not the strength to walk.

Day was dawning when they again emerged. A great multitude had already assembled; the windows were filled with people, smoking and playing cards to beguile the time; the crowd were pushing, quarrelling, joking. Everything told of life and animation, but one dark cluster of objects in the centre of all—the black stage, the cross-beam, the rope, and all the hideous apparatus of death.

CHAPTER LIII — AND LAST

The fortunes of those who have figured in this tale are nearly closed. The little that remains to their historian to relate, is told in few and simple words.

Before three months had passed, Rose Fleming and Harry Maylie were married in the village church which was henceforth to be the scene of the young clergyman’s labours; on the same day they entered into possession of their new and happy home.

Mrs. Maylie took up her abode with her son and daughter-in-law, to enjoy, during the tranquil remainder of her days, the greatest felicity that age and worth can know—the contemplation of the happiness of those on whom the warmest affections and tenderest cares of a well-spent life, have been unceasingly bestowed.

It appeared, on full and careful investigation, that if the wreck of property remaining in the custody of Monks (which had never prospered either in his hands or in those of his mother) were equally divided between himself and Oliver, it would yield, to each, little more than three thousand pounds. By the provisions of his father’s will, Oliver would have been entitled to the whole; but Mr. Brownlow, unwilling to deprive the elder son of the opportunity of retrieving his former vices and pursuing an honest career, proposed this mode of distribution, to which his young charge joyfully acceded.

Monks, still bearing that assumed name, retired with his portion to a distant part of the New World; where, having quickly squandered it, he once more fell into his old courses, and, after undergoing a long confinement for some fresh act of fraud and knavery, at length sunk under an attack of his old disorder, and died in prison. As far from home, died the chief remaining members of his friend Fagin’s gang.

Mr. Brownlow adopted Oliver as his son. Removing with him and the old housekeeper to within a mile of the parsonage-house, where his dear friends resided, he gratified the only remaining wish of Oliver’s warm and earnest heart, and thus linked together a little society, whose condition approached as nearly to one of perfect happiness as can ever be known in this changing world.

Soon after the marriage of the young people, the worthy doctor returned to Chertsey, where, bereft of the presence of his old friends, he would have been discontented if his temperament had admitted of such a feeling; and would have turned quite peevish if he had known how. For two or three months, he contented himself with hinting that he feared the air began to disagree with him; then, finding that the place really no longer was, to him, what it had been, he settled his business on his assistant, took a bachelor's cottage outside the village of which his young friend was pastor, and instantaneously recovered. Here he took to gardening, planting, fishing, carpentering, and various other pursuits of a similar kind: all undertaken with his characteristic impetuosity. In each and all he has since become famous throughout the neighborhood, as a most profound authority.

Before his removal, he had managed to contract a strong friendship for Mr. Grimwig, which that eccentric gentleman cordially reciprocated. He is accordingly visited by Mr. Grimwig a great many times in the course of the year. On all such occasions, Mr. Grimwig plants, fishes, and carpenters, with great ardour; doing everything in a very singular and unprecedented manner, but always maintaining with his favourite asseveration, that his mode is the right one. On Sundays, he never fails to criticise the sermon to the young clergyman's face: always informing Mr. Losberne, in strict confidence afterwards, that he considers it an excellent performance, but deems it as well not to say so. It is a standing and very favourite joke, for Mr. Brownlow to rally him on his old prophecy concerning Oliver, and to remind him of the night on which they sat with the watch between them, waiting his return; but Mr. Grimwig contends that he was right in the main, and, in proof thereof, remarks that Oliver did not come back after all; which always calls forth a laugh on his side, and increases his good humour.

Mr. Noah Claypole: receiving a free pardon from the Crown in consequence of being admitted approver against Fagin: and considering his profession not altogether as safe a one as he could wish: was, for some little time, at a loss for the means of a livelihood, not burdened with too much work. After some consideration, he went into business as an Informer, in which calling he realises a genteel subsistence. His plan is, to walk out once a week during church time attended by Charlotte in respectable attire. The lady faints away at the doors of charitable publicans, and the gentleman being accommodated with three-penny worth of brandy to restore her, lays an information next day, and pockets half the penalty. Sometimes Mr. Claypole faints himself, but the result is the same.

Mr. and Mrs. Bumble, deprived of their situations, were gradually reduced to great indigence and misery, and finally became paupers in that very same workhouse in which they had once lorded it over others. Mr. Bumble has been heard to say, that in this reverse and degradation, he has not even spirits to be thankful for being separated from his wife.

As to Mr. Giles and Brittles, they still remain in their old posts, although the former is bald, and the last-named boy quite grey. They sleep at the parsonage, but divide their attentions so equally among its inmates, and Oliver and Mr. Brownlow, and Mr. Losberne, that to this day the villagers have never been able to discover to which establishment they properly belong.

Master Charles Bates, appalled by Sikes's crime, fell into a train of reflection whether an honest life was not, after all, the best. Arriving at the conclusion that it certainly was, he turned his back upon the scenes of the past, resolved to amend it in some new sphere of action. He struggled hard, and suffered much, for some time; but, having a contented disposition, and a good purpose, succeeded in the end; and, from being a farmer's drudge, and a carrier's lad, he is now the merriest young grazier in all Northamptonshire.

And now, the hand that traces these words, falters, as it approaches the conclusion of its task; and would

weave, for a little longer space, the thread of these adventures.

I would fain linger yet with a few of those among whom I have so long moved, and share their happiness by endeavouring to depict it. I would show Rose Maylie in all the bloom and grace of early womanhood, shedding on her secluded path in life soft and gentle light, that fell on all who trod it with her, and shone into their hearts. I would paint her the life and joy of the fire-side circle and the lively summer group; I would follow her through the sultry fields at noon, and hear the low tones of her sweet voice in the moonlit evening walk; I would watch her in all her goodness and charity abroad, and the smiling untiring discharge of domestic duties at home; I would paint her and her dead sister's child happy in their love for one another, and passing whole hours together in picturing the friends whom they had so sadly lost; I would summon before me, once again, those joyous little faces that clustered round her knee, and listen to their merry prattle; I would recall the tones of that clear laugh, and conjure up the sympathising tear that glistened in the soft blue eye. These, and a thousand looks and smiles, and turns of thought and speech—I would fain recall them every one.

How Mr. Brownlow went on, from day to day, filling the mind of his adopted child with stores of knowledge, and becoming attached to him, more and more, as his nature developed itself, and showed the thriving seeds of all he wished him to become—how he traced in him new traits of his early friend, that awakened in his own bosom old remembrances, melancholy and yet sweet and soothing—how the two orphans, tried by adversity, remembered its lessons in mercy to others, and mutual love, and fervent thanks to Him who had protected and preserved them—these are all matters which need not to be told. I have said that they were truly happy; and without strong affection and humanity of heart, and gratitude to that Being whose code is Mercy, and whose great attribute is Benevolence to all things that breathe, happiness can never be attained.

Within the altar of the old village church there stands a white marble tablet, which bears as yet but one word: 'AGNES.' There is no coffin in that tomb; and may it be many, many years, before another name is placed above it! But, if the spirits of the Dead ever come back to earth, to visit spots hallowed by the love—the love beyond the grave—of those whom they knew in life, I believe that the shade of Agnes sometimes hovers round that solemn nook. I believe it none the less because that nook is in a Church, and she was weak and erring.

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THE MISER’S DAUGHTER

A Tale

By William Harrison Ainsworth

Author Of ‘The Tower Of London’

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‘The delineation of such characters as these I consider as very moral instruction to mankind, and a lesson more demonstrative of the perfect vanity of unused wealth, than has lately been presented to the public.’—Topham’s *Life of Elwes*.

Other and lighter portions of the Tale refer to the adventures of a young man on his first introduction to town life about the middle of the eighteenth century, when Ranelagh was in its zenith, and Vauxhall and Marylebone Gardens in vogue; when the Thames boasted its Folly; and when coffee-houses filled the place of clubs. The descriptions I believe to be tolerably accurate; and they are at all events carefully done, with the view of giving a correct idea of the manners, habits, and pursuits of our great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers. Temptations to pleasurable excess were no doubt sufficiently abundant then.

RANDULPH CREW—THE MISER’S DWELLING IN THE LITTLE SANCTUARY

In a large, crazy, old-fashioned house at the corner of the Little Sanctuary in Westminster, and facing the abbey, dwelt, in the year 1744, a person named Scarve. From his extraordinary penurious habits, he received the appellation of *Starve*, and was generally denominated by his neighbours ‘Miser Starve.’ Few, if any, of those who thus designated him, knew much about him, none of them being allowed to cross his threshold; but there was an air, even externally, about his dwelling, strongly indicative of his parsimonious character. Most of the windows in the upper stories, which, as is usual with habitations of that date, far overhung the lower, were boarded up; and those not thus closed were so covered with dust and dirt that it was impossible to discern any object through them. Many parts of the building were in a ruinous condition, and, where the dilapidations were not dangerous, were left in that state; but wherever some repairs were absolutely necessary to keep the structure together, they were made in the readiest and cheapest manner. The porch alone preserved its original character. It projected far beyond the door-way, and was ornamented with the arms of a former occupant of the habitation, carved in bold relief in oak, and supported by two mermaids sculptured in the same wood. All the lower windows were strongly grated, and darkened like the upper with long-accumulated dust. The door was kept constantly bolted and barred, even in the daytime; and the whole building had a dingy, dismal, and dungeon-like aspect.

RANDULPH CREW DELIVERING THE PACKET TO MR. SCARVE—THE MISER AND HIS DAUGHTER—-RANDULPH DELIVERS THE PACKET TO THE FORMER

Following his conductor along the passage, the boards of which, being totally destitute of carpet or cloth, sounded hollowly beneath their feet, Randulph Crew glanced at the bare walls, the dusty and cobweb-festooned ceiling, and the staircase, as devoid of covering as the passage, and could not but admit that the account given him by the barber of Mr. Scarve’s miserly habits was not exaggerated. Little time, however, was allowed him for reflection. Jacob marched quickly on, and pushing open a door on the right, ushered him into his master’s presence.

Mr. Scarve was an old man, and looked much older than he really was—being only sixty-five, whereas he appeared like eighty. His frame was pinched as if by self-denial, and preternaturally withered and shrivelled; and there was a thin, haggard, and almost hungry look about his face, extremely painful to contemplate. His features were strongly marked, and sharp, and his eye, grey, keen, and piercing. He was dressed in a thread-bare cloth robe, trimmed with sable, and wore a velvet nightcap, lined with cotton, on his head. The rest of his habiliments were darned and patched in an unseemly manner. Beside him was a small table, on which was laid a ragged and dirty cloth, covered with the remains of his scanty meal, which Randulph’s arrival had interrupted. Part of a stale loaf, a slice of cheese, and a little salt constituted the repast.

Everything in the room bespoke the avaricious character of its owner. The panelled walls were without hangings or decoration of any kind. The room itself, it was evident, had known better days and richer garniture. It was plain, but handsome in its character, and boasted a large and well-carved chimney-piece, and a window filled with stained glass displaying the armorial bearings of the former possessor of the house, though now patched in many places with paper, and stopped up in others with rags. This window was strongly grated, and the bars were secured in their turn by a large padlock, placed inside the room. Over the chimney-piece were placed a couple of large blue and white china bottles, with dried everlasting flowers stuck in the necks. There were only two chairs in the room and a stool. The best chair was appropriated by the miser himself. It was an old-fashioned affair, with great wooden arms, and a hard leathern back, polished like a well-blacked shoe by frequent use. A few coals, carefully piled into a little pyramid, burnt within the bars, as if to show the emptiness of the grate, and diffused a slight gleam, like a mocking laugh, but no sort of heat. Beside it sat Mrs. Clinton, an elderly maiden lady, almost as wintry-looking and pinched as her brother-in-law. This antiquated lady had a long thin neck and a skin as yellow as parchment; but the expression of her countenance, though rather sharp and frosty, was kindly. She wore a close-fitting gown of dark camlet, with short tight sleeves, that by no means concealed the angularities of her figure. Her hair, which was still dark as in her youth, was gathered up closely behind, and surmounted by the small muslin cap then in vogue.

The object, however, that chiefly riveted Randulph’s attention on his entrance was neither the miser himself nor his sister-in-law—it was his daughter. Her beauty was so extraordinary that it acted like a surprise upon him, occasioning a thrill of delight, mingled with a feeling of embarrassment. Rising as he entered the room, she gracefully, and with much natural dignity, returned his salutation, which, through inadvertence, he

addressed almost exclusively to her. Hilda Scarve's age might be guessed at nineteen. She was tall, exquisitely proportioned, with a pale clear complexion, set off by her rich raven tresses, which, totally unrestrained, showered down in a thick cloud over her shoulders. Her eyes were large and dark, luminous, but steady, and indicated firmness of character. Her look was grave and sedate, and there was great determination in her beautifully formed but closely compressed lips. Her aspect and deportment exhibited the most perfect self-command, and whatever effect might be produced upon her by the sudden entrance of the handsome visitor, not a glance was suffered to reveal it, while he, on the contrary, could not repress the admiration excited by her beauty. He was, however, speedily recalled to himself by the miser, who, rapping the table impatiently, exclaimed, in a querulous tone—

'Your business, sir?—your business?'

'I have come to deliver this to you, sir,' replied Randulph, producing a small packet, and handing it to the miser. 'I should tell you, sir,' he added, in a voice of emotion, 'that it was my father's wish that this packet should be given to you a year after his death—but not before.'

'And your father's name,' cried the miser, bending eagerly forward, and shading his eyes so as to enable him to see the young man more distinctly, 'was—was——'

'The same as my own, Randulph Crew,' was the reply. 'Gracious heaven!' exclaimed the miser, falling back in his chair, 'and is he dead?—my friend—my old friend!' and he pressed his hand to his face, as if to hide his emotion.

Hilda bent anxiously over him, and tried to soothe him, but he pushed her gently away.

'Having discharged my mission, I will now take my leave,' said Randulph, after a slight pause, during which he looked on in silent astonishment. 'I will call at some other time, Miss Scarve, to speak to your father respecting the packet.'

'No, stay!' cried Hilda hastily. 'Some old and secret spring of affection has been touched. I entreat you to wait till he recovers. He will be better presently.'

'He is better now,' replied the miser, uncovering his face; 'the fit is past; but it was sharp while it lasted. Randulph Crew,' he added faintly, and stretching out his thin hand to him, 'I am glad to see you. Years ago, I knew your father well. But unhappy circumstances separated us, and since then I have seen nothing of him. I fancied him alive, and well, and happy, and your sudden announcement of his death gave me a great shock. Your father was a good man, Randulph—a good man, and a kind one.'

'He was, indeed, sir,' rejoined the young man, in a broken voice, the tears starting to his eyes.

'But somewhat careless in money matters, Randulph—thoughtless and extravagant,' pursued the miser. 'Nay, I mean nothing disrespectful to his memory,' he added, seeing the young man's colour heighten. 'His faults were those of an over-generous nature. He was no man's enemy but his own. He once had a fine property, but I fear he dissipated it.'

'At all events, he greatly embarrassed it, sir,' replied Randulph; 'and I lament to say that the situation of his affairs preyed upon his spirits, and no doubt hastened his end.'

'I feared it would be so,' said the miser, shaking his head. 'But the estates were entailed. They are yours now, and unembarrassed.'

'They might have been so, sir,' replied the young man; 'but I have foregone the advantage I could have

taken of my father's creditors, and have placed the estates in their hands, and for their benefit.'

'You don't mean to say you have been guilty of such incredible folly, for I can call it nothing else?' cried the miser in a sharp and angry tone, and starting to his feet. What! give the estates to the very men who ruined your father! Have you been rash and unadvised enough to break down the barriers the law had built around you for your protection, and let in the enemy into the very heart of the citadel? It is the height of folly—of madness!'

'Folly or not, sir,' returned the young man haughtily, 'I do not repent the step I have taken. Mv first consideration was to preserve the memory of my father unblemished.'

'Unblemished!—pshaw!' cried the miser. 'You would have cleared the spots from your father's name much more effectually if you had kept fast hold of the estates, instead of reducing yourself to the condition of a beggar.'

'Father!' exclaimed Hilda uneasily—'father, you speak too strongly—much too strongly.'

'I am no beggar, sir,' replied Randulph, with difficulty repressing his anger, 'nor will I allow such a term to be applied to me by you or any man. Farewell, sir.' And he would have left the room, if he had not been detained by the imploring looks of Hilda.

RANDULPH CREW INTRODUCED TO BEAU VILLIERS ON THE MALL—ST. JAMES'S PARK

Randulph and his two uncles sallied forth, and, crossing Westminster Bridge, shaped their course towards Saint James's Park. As they passed the Little Sanctuary, Randulph could not help gazing towards the dungeon-like dwelling which enshrined her who had made so deep an impression upon him. Uncle Abel noticed his look, and partly divining the cause of it, said,

'Remember what I told you. Disobey me, and you will rue it.'

Randulph would have made some reply, but he was checked by a significant glance from uncle Trussell.

Passing through the Gate House, they entered the park by a small doorway at the end of Prince's Court. It was now noon, and a warm and genial day. The avenues of trees then extending between this point and Rosamond's Pond were crowded with persons of both sexes, and of all ranks, summoned forth by the fineness of the weather.

Amused by the scene, Randulph gazed with much curiosity at all presented to his view. Passing by the Decoy, the party skirted the great canal, and leaving Rosamond's Pond on the left, proceeded towards Buckingham House.

Just at this juncture, uncle Trussell caught sight of a gay party approaching, and exclaimed, in a joyful tone, to his nephew, 'As I live, we are most fortunate! There is the leader of fashion, Beau Villiers, coming towards us. You shall know him, nephew—you shall know him. The ladies he is walking with are Lady Brabazon and the Honourable Clementina Brabazon—a fine girl, Clementina—a remarkably fine girl; perfect in style and manners—quite a toast among the sparks. The old fellow at her side, Sir Singleton Spinke, was a great beau in his time, though never equal to Villiers, who far surpasses even his prototype, Beau Fielding, in style and taste. You shall know them all.'

'And nice acquaintances you will make!' remarked uncle Abel sneeringly.

'Never mind him, Randulph,' whispered uncle Trussell. 'If you know this set, and they like you, you may know whom you please. Beau Villiers commands all society, from the highest down to—to———'

RANDULPH CREW INTRODUCED TO BEAU VILLIERS ON THE MALL—ST. JAMES'S PARK

'Mr. Trussell Beechcroft,' replied uncle Abel.

'Well, down to me, if you please,' rejoined uncle Trussell, 'and that shows it does not extend too low. But, Randulph, I beg you to look at the beau. Did you ever see a finer man?'

'He is very handsome, certainly,' replied Randulph, 'and remarkably well dressed.'

'He is a great coxcomb, a great rake, and a great gamester, Randulph,' said uncle Abel; 'beware of him.'

'Tush, never mind what he says,' rejoined uncle Trussell, who really wished to have the éclat of introducing his handsome nephew to the beau. 'Come along!'

So saying, he took his nephew's arm and hurried him forward. Pushing their way through the throng, they soon approached the sentry-box opposite Buckingham House, near which they encountered the party in question.

Beau Villiers, who was, indeed, a remarkably handsome man, and dressed in the extremity of the mode, wore an embossed velvet coat, embroidered with silver, with broad cuffs similarly ornamented; a white waistcoat of the richest silk, likewise heed with silver; and tawny velvet breeches, partly covered with pearl-coloured silk hose, drawn above the knee, and secured with silver garters. His dress was completed by shoes of black Spanish leather, fastened by large diamond buckles, and a superb Ramillies periwig of the lightest flaxen hair, which set off his brilliant complexion and fine eyes to admiration. He carried a three-cornered hat, fringed with feathers, and a clouded cane, mounted with a valuable pebble.

Near the beau walked Lady Brabazon, a gorgeous dame of about five-and-forty, and still possessed of great personal attractions, which she omitted no means of displaying. She wore a hoop, and a blue and silver satin sack. Struck by Randulph's figure at a distance, she had pointed him out to the beau, who thereupon vouchsafed to look towards him.

Behind Lady Brabazon came her daughter, Clementina, a very pretty and very affected blonde of two-and-twenty, with an excessively delicate complexion, fair hair, summer blue eyes, and a very mincing gait. She was exquisitely dressed in the last new mode, with a small escalloped lace cap, her hair crisply curled at the sides, a triple row of pearls round her neck, and a diamond cross attached to the chain; and though she pretended to be interested in the discourse of the old knight, it was evident her regards were attracted by the handsome young stranger.

As to the old beau, he was, indeed, supremely ridiculous. He was attired in a richly embroidered cinnamon-coloured velvet coat, with fur cuffs of a preposterous size, each as large as a modern muff. His pantaloon legs were covered with pink silk hose; his wrinkled features were rouged and bepatched; and his wig was tied

with a large bow, and had such an immense queue to it, that it looked as if a Patagonian dragon-fly had perched on the back of his neck. Lady Brabazon was attended by a little black page, in a turban and eastern dress, who had charge of her favourite lap-nile. Uncle Abel drew on one side to allow the introduction to take place, and to witness it, uncle Trussell stepped forward, and bowing obsequiously to Beau Villiers, pointed to Randulph, 'Permit me,' he said, 'to introduce my nephew, Mr. Randulph Crew, to you, Mr. Villiers. He is fresh from the country. But even there, your reputation has reached him.'

'I am happy to make his acquaintance,' replied the beau, courteously returning Randulph's bow, and eyeing him curiously at the same time. 'On my faith, your ladyship,' he added aloud to Lady Brabazon, 'the young man is not amiss, but destroyed by his wretched equipments and rustic air.'

'I really think something may be made of him,' returned Lady Brabazon, in the same loud and confidential tone. 'Mr. Trussell Beechcroft, introduce your nephew.'

'With the greatest pleasure, your ladyship,' replied Trussell, obeying her behest.

'Come with us,' said Lady Brabazon to Randulph, after the ceremony had been gone through. 'My daughter —Mr. Crew,' she added, as they passed along. 'By the bye, who was that strange old man I saw walking with you just now?'

'Who?' rejoined Randulph evasively, for he felt ashamed, he knew not why, of acknowledging his uncle.

'There he is,' said Lady Brabazon, pointing her fan backwards; 'he is staring hard at us, and looks exactly like a—

'It is my uncle Abel,' replied Randulph, in some confusion. 'Your uncle Abel!' cried Lady Brabazon, with a scream of who stood on his right. 'Then the sooner you get rid of uncle Abel the better.'

Abel could not hear the words, but he heard the laugh, saw the gesture, as well as his nephew's confusion, and knew that he was the object of it. He turned away in the opposite direction, muttering to himself as he went, 'So, he has taken the first step.'

SIR BULKELEY PRICE BRINGING THE MORTGAGE MONEY TO MR. SCARVE—THE PAYMENT OF THE MORTGAGE MONEY

Nearly an hour having elapsed, Mr. Scarve arose, and called to Jacob, who had retired to the cellar. The summons not being answered as expeditiously as he desired, he called again, and Jacob made his appearance brushing the moisture from his lips, and trying to swallow down a huge morsel that stuck in his throat.

'You have been eating, rascal!' cried the miser, 'and drinking too! Faugh! how the knave smells of beer!'

'If I have been eatin' and drinkin',' said Jacob, clearing his throat by a violent effort, 'it hasn't been at your expense.'

'Well, go and see what's o'clock,' said the miser, who did not appear particularly angry.

'What's o'clock!' exclaimed Jacob, with surprise. 'Why, I've lived with you these twenty years, and never was sent on such a message before. What do you want to know what's o'clock for?'

'What's that to you, sirrah?' rejoined the miser, with more anger in his words than in his tones or looks. 'But I'll tell you thus much, I never in my life wished a day to be passed so much as I do this.'

'You excite my curiosity, father,' said Hilda. 'Why do you wish it passed?'

‘Because, if a certain sum of money is not paid to me before six o’clock, I shall be the possessor of one of the finest estates in Wales,’ replied the miser. ‘It must now be five; in another hour I shall be safe—safe, Hilda!—the mortgage will be foreclosed—the estate, mine! Mr. Diggs will be here at six. If I obtain this prize, Jacob, you shall drink my health in the glass of wine I put back in the bottle.’

‘Then it’ll be the first time I ever so drunk it,’ replied Jacob.

‘Take care it isn’t the last, you thankless varlet,’ rejoined the miser. ‘Don’t stand chattering there! Go and see what’s o’clock.’ As Jacob departed to obey his injunction, Mr. Scarve paced to and fro within the room, rubbing his hands and chuckling to himself. Five minutes nearly elapsed before Jacob returned; and when he did so, it was with a countenance of very peculiar significance. ‘Well, is it five?’ cried the miser.

‘No, it’s fourteen,’ replied Jacob.

‘Fourteen!’ exclaimed the miser. ‘What do you mean? You’re drunk, sirrah—drunk on the promise of a glass of wine.’

‘No, I’m not,’ replied Jacob. ‘I mean that there is a troop of fourteen horsemen at the door. There!—don’t you hear’em? They make noise enough, I should think.’

And as he spoke, a loud knocking, mixed with shouts and laughter, came sounding down the passage.

‘It is the mortgage money, father,’ said Hilda.

‘It is—damnation!’ cried the miser, stamping on the ground.

‘At first I took the troop for a gang of highwaymen,’ said Jacob, ‘when their leader, a fat, bloated old fellow, calls out to me, in an imperious tone, “Tell your master, the miser,” says he, “that Sir Bulkeley Price has brought him his money. He is not yet owner of an estate in Flintshire.” And then all his followers burst out a laughin’; and I don’t think they’ve done yet.’

‘Curses on them!’ cried the miser furiously, ‘and on him too! They shan’t enter my dwelling. I won’t receive the money. Send them away! Tell them I’m not at home, Jacob.’ ‘It won’t do, sir,’ replied Jacob; ‘they know you’re at home, for I told’em so. And as to refusing the money, why should you do that? They have brought it in great bags—bags of gold, of five hundred pounds each.’

‘Five hundred devils!’ cried the miser, foaming with rage. ‘What! bring such a sum as that in broad day! I shall be exposed to all my prying neighbours.’

‘That you will,’ rejoined Jacob; ‘they’re all at the windows looking on. There’s Mr. Deacle, the mercer, over the way, and his wife and daughter; and the inquisitive little barber next door; and the ironmonger’s wife and family at the Blackamoor’s Head; and the vintner’s at the Man-in-the-Moon, and——’

‘Hold your peace,’ cried the miser furiously, ‘or I’ll strangle you! I’ll not be insulted thus by any man! Fetch me my sword!’

‘Father!’ exclaimed Hilda, ‘why do you excite yourself thus? Sir Bulkeley Price has but done what was right; he has brought you back your money.’

SIR BULKELEY PRICE BRINGING THE MORTGAGE MONEY TO MR. SCARVE

‘What is it o’clock, Jacob?—did you ascertain that?’ cried the miser.

‘Not five, sir,—not five,’ replied Jacob.

‘Oh! perdition seize him! he is in time,’ cried the miser. ‘But I’ll be revenged. I’ll have his blood if I can’t have the estate. My sword, Jacob! What! you won’t move? Nay, then, I’ll fetch it myself.’ And opening a side door, he rushed up a small flight of steps leading to his bedroom.

‘Some mischief will happen, Jacob,’ cried Hilda, with a terrified look. ‘I never saw my father so agitated before. I’ll go forth myself, and entreat Sir Bulkeley to depart.’

‘Don’t expose yourself to the insults of his servants, miss,’ rejoined Jacob. ‘I did not tell master a quarter what they said of him.’ But despite his entreaties, and those of her aunt, who also endeavoured to detain her, she rushed forth, followed by Jacob.

On gaining the street, Hilda found Jacob’s statement perfectly correct. A troop of fourteen horsemen, with Sir Bulkeley Price at their head, were drawn up in front of the house. Most of them were well mounted, though a few of the number rode stout Welsh ponies. All had swords at their sides, and pistols in their holsters, as was needful from the amount of money they carried; every man having been provided with two bags, each containing five hundred pounds in gold, slung over his saddle-bow. A pile of these precious sacks lay at the door, and some of the men were now adding to the heap, while others were unslinging bags from their comrades’ saddles. The whole company were in high glee, and laughing loudly. The leader of the troop, Sir Bulkeley Price, was a stout portly gentleman, whose swollen, inflamed cheeks and mulberry nose showed he was by no means indifferent to the pleasures of the table. A claret-coloured velvet riding-coat, buttoned to the throat, displayed his full chest and rather commanding figure to advantage; while a well-powdered, full-bottomed periwig contrasted strongly with his rubicund and fiery visage. Hilda’s appearance created a great sensation among the lookers-on, and especially attracted the attention of the barber, who was chattering with Mr. Deacle about the occurrence, and of the fair Thomasine, who was leaning out of an upper window, just above her father’s sign of the Three Pigeons.

‘There’s Miss Scarve!’ cried Peter, calling to Thomasine.

‘I see her,’ replied the mercer’s daughter. ‘Poor thing, how I pity her—to be exposed to such insults! I long to fly to her assistance.’

‘Do, do!’ cried Peter. ‘I’ll fly with you.’

‘No, don’t,’ said Mr. Deacle; ‘you had better not interfere. Lord bless me! I wonder what it all means?’

Heedless of what was passing around her, for she heard her father’s furious voice in the passage, Hilda rushed toward Sir Bulkeley Price, and, in a tone of the most earnest entreaty, cried, ‘Oh, sir, I implore you to go away! My father is fearfully incensed—some mischief will happen!’

‘You are Mr. Scarve’s daughter, I presume?’ returned Sir Bulkeley, politely taking off his hat. ‘I should never have suspected him of owning aught so beautiful. But why should I go away, Miss Scarve? I am merely

come to pay your father a sum of money which I borrowed from him.’

‘But it is the manner of paying it, sir,—the public manner—the exposure that incenses him,’ cried Hilda. ‘I would not for twice the amount, that this had happened.’

‘I daresay not,’ replied Sir Bulkeley; ‘but your father has forced me into the measure. My estate would have been forfeited if I had not repaid the money by six o’clock. It is as unpleasant to me as it can be to him; but I had no alternative.’

At this moment a loud angry cry was heard at the door, and the miser appeared, brandishing his drawn sword at it. His mad career was opposed by Jacob, whose wig was knocked off in his endeavours to push him backwards.

‘Villain!’ cried the miser, shaking his hand at Sir Bulkeley, ‘villain, you shall repent your insolence! Release me, Jacob! Let me get at him!’

‘No, you shan’t!’ replied Jacob, who had to exert all his strength, such was the miser’s fury, to keep him back.

Mr. Scarve’s vociferations of rage were now drowned by the hootings and jeers of the Welsh baronet’s attendants, who did all in their power to incense him further. Terrified by the cries, Hilda clasped her hands in agony, and again addressed herself to Sir Bulkeley.

‘As you are a gentleman, sir, I beseech you to withdraw,’ she said.

‘Such an appeal, and from such lips, is irresistible,’ replied Sir Bulkeley, again raising his hat.

‘He is no gentleman, Hilda!’ shrieked her father, who overheard what was said. ‘Come away, girl, I command you—leave him to me!’

‘Well crowed, old cock!’ cried one of the attendants, in mockery. And all laughed jeeringly, as before.

‘Hold your tongues, you saucy knaves!’ cried Jacob, fiercely regarding them; ‘or as soon as I’m at liberty, I’ll break some of your addle pates.’

‘For pity’s sake—go, go!’ cried Hilda to the baronet, ‘and take the money with you. Another time will do for payment.’

‘Pardon me, Miss Scarve,’ replied Sir Bulkeley; ‘another time will *not* do. I mustn’t jeopardise my estate. Mr. Scarve,’ he shouted to the miser, ‘here is your money—fourteen thousand pounds, in gold. Friends,’ he added, looking round at the crowd of spectators in the street, and at the windows, ‘I call you all to witness that this money is paid before six o’clock. I will take your word, Miss Scarve, for a receipt, and for the delivering up of the mortgage deeds.’

‘Take hence your money, villain!’ vociferated the miser, ‘I want none of it.’

This exclamation was followed by a roar of derisive laughter from the baronet’s attendants.

‘Silence them—oh! silence them, sir!’ cried Hilda imploringly.

Sir Bulkeley looked majestically round, and his attendants became instantly mute. At the same time, Jacob forced Mr. Scarve into the house; and Hilda, hastily expressing her thanks to the baronet, withdrew. In a few seconds, the whole of the bags of money were collected, and placed on the threshold. Sir Bulkeley would not,

however, depart till Jacob returned, when he committed the heap to his custody.

‘What have you done with your master?’ he asked.

‘He has fainted, and his daughter is tending him,’ replied Jacob.

‘Well, take him that restorative,’ rejoined Sir Bulkeley, pointing to the money-bags; ‘it will speedily revive him.’

So saying, he rode off with his followers, amid the acclamation of the spectators. The same persons next began to hoot Jacob, and even seemed disposed to assail him; but being now provided with his crab-stick, he presented such a menacing and formidable appearance, that those nearest him slunk off.

HILDA’S VISIT TO ABEL BEECHCROFT

Hilda yielded at length to her aunt’s entreaties, and having put on her walking attire, quitted the house with Jacob. Instead of going over Westminster Bridge, they proceeded to Parliament Stairs, where Jacob said he had a friend a waterman, who would lend him a boat, in which they could cross the river. Nor did he assert more than the truth. On reaching the stairs, the first person he encountered was the friendly waterman in question, who, on learning his wishes, immediately ran down and got his skiff ready. Having placed Hilda within it, Jacob took off his coat, and plying the oars with as much skill as the best rower on the Thames could have done, speedily landed her at Lambeth, and secured the boat, where he inquired the way to Mr. Beechcroft’s house. A walk of a few seconds brought them to it. Hilda’s heart trembled as she knocked at the door; but she was reassured by the kindly aspect of Mr. Jukes, who answered the summons. She stated her errand to the butler, who appeared not a little surprised, and, indeed, confounded, at the announcement of her name. After a short debate with himself, Mr. Jukes said his master was at home, and she should see him; and, without more ado, he led the way to the library, and entered it, followed by the others.

Abel was seated beside an old-fashioned bookcase, the door of which was open, disclosing a collection of goodly tomes, and had placed the book-stand, supporting the volume he was reading, in such a position as to receive the full light of the window. So much was he engaged in his studies that he did not hear their approach. In the hasty glance cast by Hilda at the pictures on the wall, the most noticeable of which was a copy of Rembrandt’s ‘Good Samaritan,’ and a fine painting on the subject of ‘Timon of Athens,’ she thought she could read somewhat of the character of the owner of the house. Little time, however, was allowed her for reflection, for Mr. Jukes, advancing towards his master’s chair, leaned over it, and whispered a few words in his ear.

‘What!—who!—who did you say?’ exclaimed Abel, half-closing the book he was reading, and looking sharply and anxiously round. ‘Who did you say, Jukes?’

‘Miss Scarve, sir,’ replied the butler; ‘she has brought you a letter.’

‘Tell her I won’t receive it—won’t open it!’ cried Abel. ‘Why did you not send her away? What brings her here?’

‘You had better put that question to her yourself, sir,’ replied Mr. Jukes, ‘for she is in this room.’

‘Here!’ exclaimed Abel, starting to his feet. ‘Ah! I see—I see. O God! she is very like her mother.’

‘Calm yourself, I entreat, sir,’ said Mr. Jukes; ‘I would not have admitted her,’ he added, in a low tone, ‘but that she told me the letter was written by her mother, and left to be delivered to you under peculiar

circumstances, which have now arisen. I couldn't resist a plea like that—nor could you, sir, I'm sure.'

'A letter written to me by her mother! cried Abel, shivering, as if smitten by an ague. 'Leave us, Jukes, and take that man with you.'

'Come, friend,' said Mr. Jukes to Jacob, who, with his crab-stick under his arm, stood gazing curiously on, 'you had better adjourn with me to the butler's pantry.'

'Thank'ee kindly, sir,' replied Jacob, in tones a little less gruff than usual, for he was somewhat awestricken; 'I would rather stay with my young missis.'

'But don't you see you're in the way, my good man?' rejoined Mr. Jukes impatiently; 'they can't talk before us. Come along.' And despite his resistance, he pushed Jacob out of the room, and closed the door after him.

'You have a letter for me, young lady, I believe,' faltered Abel in a voice hollow and broken by emotion.

'I have, sir,' she replied, giving it to him.

Abel looked at the address, and another sharp convulsion passed over his frame. He, however, controlled himself by a powerful effort, and broke the seal. The perusal of the letter seemed to affect him deeply, for, staggering to his chair, he sank into it, and covering his face with his hands, wept aloud. It was some minutes before he arose. Hilda, who had watched him with much concern, was surprised to see how calm he looked. He had, indeed, regained the mastery he usually held over his feelings. 'Pray be seated, young lady,' he said, handing her a chair. 'I would have shunned this interview if it had been in my power, but as it has been brought about, I will not shrink from it. How can I serve you?'

Hilda then proceeded to explain the object of her visit. Abel listened to her recital with a quivering lip and flashing eye, and at its close got up, and took a quick turn round the room.

'This is only what might be expected from him—scoundrel!' he ejaculated. 'Sell his daughter!—but that is nothing—he would sell his soul for gold! I beg your pardon, young lady,' he added, checking himself, as he saw the pain his exclamations occasioned her, 'but if you knew the deep and irremediable injury inflicted on me by your father, you would pardon this outbreak of passion. He has sacrificed others without scruple, but he shall not sacrifice you. You may count on my assistance, my protection, if you choose to confide in me.'

'I have my mother's injunction to confide in you, sir,' she replied.

'Your mother!' exclaimed Abel, in a voice of agony. 'Oh, Hilda! what a fearful spell is there in that word!—what a host of feelings does it not summon up! I see your mother again as I remember her in her youth—beautiful as you are, more beautiful, if possible—certainly more blooming. I hear the music of her voice as I listen to yours; I feel again the charm inspired by her presence. You shall learn my history one of these days, and you will then know why your mother addressed this letter to me—why it affects me thus.'

'I can partly guess the cause,' returned Hilda mournfully; 'but be it what it may, it is plain she felt she had a strong hold on your affections, and that she thought she could rely on you, when she could rely on no one else.'

'If she thought so, she judged rightly,' replied Abel. 'I consider her request as a sacred injunction, and will strive to comply with it. And now,' he added, changing his tone, 'I must tell you that your name has been brought before me of late. My nephew, Randulph Crew, who visited your father the other night, has spoken of you.' Hilda slightly coloured. 'He will much regret not being at home this morning,' pursued Abel, 'as he might have had an opportunity of further cultivating his acquaintance with you. But he is gone out with my brother.'

'I hope it will not offend you to say I am glad of it,' replied Hilda; 'I would not willingly have met him.'

'Why so?' asked Abel, who, however, looked somewhat relieved.

'Because, sir, I will be frank with you,' she replied, 'and own that my father attributes my increased dislike of my cousin to a predilection for your nephew.'

'And may I expect equal frankness in the reply, if I ask whether there is any truth in your father's suppositions?' rejoined Abel.

'You may,' she answered. 'Your nephew appears a very amiable and pleasing young man, but having seen him only for a few minutes, I cannot possibly feel an interest in him beyond such as might be inspired by any stranger of equally prepossessing appearance and manners. My aversion to my cousin arises from various causes. I half suspect him of acting a very base part towards my father, who resolutely shuts his eyes to the deception.'

'I will not affect to deny that I am pleased with what you say of your indifference to my nephew, Hilda,' returned Abel, 'because I have other views in reference to him. As to your cousin, Philip Frewin, I will make strict inquiries about him, and if your suspicions prove correct, I will myself unmask him to your father, which may perhaps put an end to the matter. He lives in Fen-church Street, you say. It so happens that an old friend of mine, a widow lady, Mrs. Verrai—a friend of your mother's, by the bye—resides in that street. She is an excellent woman, but a little of a busy-body and a gossip, and makes it her business to know her neighbours' concerns better than her own. I'll venture to say she is acquainted with your cousin's affairs. I haven't seen the old lady of late, because, as you may perhaps have heard, I have little intercourse with your sex—my habits, and indeed feelings, unfitting me for their society—but I happen to know from my brother Trussell that she is well. You had better go to her yourself. I will give you a note of introduction—though, indeed, it is not needed, for, as I have told you, she is an old friend of your mother's. In addition to gaining all the information you may require respecting your cousin, you will make a friend with whom you may take refuge, if matters—which we will not anticipate—should unhappily render such a step necessary.'

'I will do as you suggest, sir,' replied Hilda; 'but suppose I should encounter my cousin?'

'Tell him where you are going,' replied Abel; 'and depend upon it, if he is not what he represents himself, he will be the first to take the alarm. I will myself institute inquiries about him in another quarter.' With this, he proceeded to a table on which writing materials were placed, and hastily penned a note, and gave it to Hilda. 'And now, God bless you, my dear child!' he said affectionately. 'If called upon by circumstances, you shall never want a father or protector in me!' He then rang the bell, and Mr. Jukes presently appeared, who

informed him that Jacob had just sat down to dinner with the other servants.

'I think, sir,' he added, in a low tone, 'it is the first good meal he has had for many a day, and it would be a pity to disturb him, if Miss Scarve is not in a very great hurry.'

Abel appealed to Hilda, and as she raised no objection, he proposed to her to take a turn in the garden till Jacob had finished his meal; and accordingly opened the window and led her forth. By this time Hilda had become more composed, and being quite easy with the old man, for whom indeed she felt a growing regard, she entered readily into conversation with him; and thus more than half an hour flew by, almost without their being aware of its flight. At the end of that time, Mr. Jukes made his appearance, and informed them that Jacob was ready. Abel attended his fair visitor to the door.

'If you do not find Mrs. Verrai at home,' he said, 'or if anything should occur to make you wish to see me again, do not hesitate to come back. But, in any event, you shall hear from me—perhaps see me, to-morrow. God bless you, my child!' And taking her hand, he pressed it to his lips; and when Hilda withdrew it, she found it wet with tears.

While this was passing, Jacob shook the hospitable butler warmly by the hand, and then strode on before his young mistress, towards the stairs where he had left the boat. Having placed her within it, and divested himself of his coat and hat, as before, he inquired where she meant to go, and being told to London Bridge, pulled off vigorously in that direction.

'THE FOLLY'—A FLOATING TAVERN ON THE THAMES—KITTY CONWAY—RANDULPH PLACED IN AN AWKWARD SITUATION BY PHILIP FREWIN

The Folly on the Thames, whither Beau Villiers and his party were steering their course, was a large floating house of entertainment, moored in the centre of the stream, immediately opposite old Somerset House. It was constructed in the latter part of the reign of Charles the Second; and thither the merry monarch, who was excessively fond of aquatic amusements of all kinds, would frequently repair with his courtiers and frolic dames. Thither also Queen Mary, the consort of William the Third, went on the occasion of a grand musical entertainment; and the place continued in vogue for many years, until at length, degenerating in its character, it became the haunt of a very disreputable part of the community. The Folly resembled a large one-storied house, very long in proportion to its width, built upon an immense barge. There was a platform at the top, defended by a strong wooden balustrade, and flanked at each corner by a little turret with a pointed top, surmounted by a small streamer. These turrets constituted small drinking and smoking rooms, and were fitted up with seats and tables. In the centre of the structure was a sort of open belvidere, covering the main staircase leading to the roof. On this a large flag was planted. The Folly was approached from the water by steps on three sides. It was lighted by a range of large and handsome windows, and entered by two doors, one at the end, and the other at the side. Within, it contained a long music-hall with a frescoed ceiling, gilded and painted walls, an orchestra, and the necessary complement of benches, chairs, and small tables. There was, moreover, a bar, where all sorts of liquors, materials for smoking, and other tavern luxuries were dispensed. The rest of the structure was divided into a number of small apartments for private parties, and, in short, boasted every sort of accommodation afforded by a similar place of entertainment on shore. In summer it was delightful—the view of the Thames from its summit being enchanting. The coolness and freshness, combined with the enlivening influences of beauty, wine, and music, made it, on its first establishment, a charming place of recreation; and it cannot be wondered that the merry monarch, and his merrier court, found it so much to their taste.

As the party approached the aquatic hotel, they perceived a number of persons, of both sexes, seated on the roof, and in the little turret parlours, smoking, drinking, or otherwise amusing themselves; while lively strains of music proceeded from within. Several small craft were landing their passengers, and from one, a tilt boat, there issued a very pretty young woman, though of rather bold appearance, who, as she took the hand of a young man in her ascent of the steps, displayed a remarkably neat foot and ankle. On reaching the deck, she turned for a moment to survey the scene, and her eye alighting on Randulph, his good looks appeared to rivet her regards.

This fascinating creature seemed to be about twenty; had very regular features, auburn hair, a brilliant complexion—whether wholly unindebted to art might be questioned—but there could be no question as to the natural brilliancy of her hazel eyes; and wore a pink silk hooped gown, made very low in front, so as to display her beautifully formed and radiantly white neck and shoulders. Her sleeves were very short, probably so contrived with the view of exhibiting her rounded arms, and edged with lace. A white silk apron embroidered with silver, a pretty fly-cap, and a necklace of precious stones, from which depended a diamond cross, completed her attire. The young man, by whom she was attended, had a slight thin figure, and sharp, disagreeable features, with rather an apish expression. He was dressed with much smartness, but had by no means the air of a gentleman, and seemed to be regarded with indifference, almost amounting to contempt, by his female companion.

‘Who is that young lady?’ asked Randulph of Sir Singleton, who happened to sit next him.

‘Let me see!’ exclaimed the old beau, placing his glass to his eye. ‘Ah! gadzooks! ’tis the delicious creature I mentioned to you—the little Haymarket actress, Kitty Conway!’

‘Kitty Conway! where is she?’ cried Trussell, who heard the remark, but whose back was towards the object of their admiration.

Sir Singleton pointed her out, and upon the instant every eye was directed towards her. Whether unable to stand so fierce a fire, or whether, as is more probable, dragged away by her companion, who did not appear to relish the notice she attracted, it is needless to inquire, but pretty Kitty suddenly vanished from their sight.

‘Well, isn’t she delicious?’ cried Trussell to Randulph. ‘Egad! you have made a conquest of pretty Kitty, my boy. I saw the parting glance she gave you over her shoulder as she whisked through the door. Don’t lose sight of her. You can soon put the City beau, by whom she is attended, *hors de combat*.’

Further remarks were interrupted by the arrival of the boat at the steps. A strange black-muzzled fellow, in a Guernsey shirt, with bare arms and bare legs, and who was a regular attendant at the Folly, helped them to disembark; and his request to ‘be remembered’ by the beau being met with a very munificent rejoinder, he well-nigh lost his balance in his glee, and got a tumble into the water.

The party then entered the music-hall, and just as they passed through the door, Randulph, chancing to look behind him, perceived that the stranger had likewise landed, and was mounting the steps. The novel scene, however, before him, so completely engrossed his attention, that he could think of little else. Upwards of a hundred persons of both sexes thronged the room; many of the ladies were masked, and a good deal of freedom marked their conduct. They talked and laughed loudly and recklessly. At one end of the hall, the benches were taken aside to allow Kitty Conway and her companion, with some other couples, to perform the cushion dance. At the upper end of the room stood the musicians. The party made their way towards the dancers, and the beau and Sir Singleton praised Kitty’s beauty in tones so loud, and in terms of admiration so strong, as would have occasioned confusion to any young lady troubled with a more oppressive sense of bashfulness than she was. Her partner did not know whether to look pleased or annoyed. He was evidently overpowered by the presence of Beau Villiers, whom he regarded with a species of awe; and as these applauses of Kitty gave a fancied consequence to himself, he was weak enough to be gratified by them. Towards the close of the figure, a particular step, executed by the pretty actress, elicited more than usual rapture from Sir Singleton, and he called to Randulph—‘Look at her, Mr. Randulph Crew. Is it not delicious?’

At the sound of this name, Kitty’s partner started, and stared so hard at Randulph, that he could scarcely finish the dance.

‘Upon my word, Philip Frewin, you are a very stupid partner,’ said the actress to him. ‘If you do not exert yourself more, I shall ask that handsome young fellow, who is ogling me there, to take my hand in the next set.’

‘I am quite fatigued, Kitty,’ replied Philip confusedly; ‘let us have some refreshment—a little rack punch, or a glass of champagne.’

Kitty Conway assented, and they moved off to one of the side tables, where a waiter speedily placed glasses before them, and opened a bottle of champagne. It must be confessed—unwilling as we are to admit it—that Randulph was not altogether proof against the undisguised admiration of the pretty actress, and that he could not help returning the tender glances she shot towards him.

Meanwhile the performances went forward; an Irish jig followed, in which Randulph and Sir Singleton joined; this was succeeded by some comic songs; and Mr. Villiers, who did not altogether relish the entertainment, walked forth, and was soon after followed by the others. As they all stood leaning over the sides of the bark, laughing at what had occurred, and admiring the gaiety of the scene, a skiff, impelled by a vigorous rower, as was evident by the progress it made, and containing a young female, wrapped in a black silk scarf, and with raven tresses, scarcely covered by a small bonnet, floating in the breeze, rapidly neared them. Various speculations were put forth as to whether this young female would prove as pretty on a nearer inspection as she looked at a distance; but in these Randulph took little part. To speak truth, his thoughts were running upon the fair syren within, and happening to cast his eyes towards the platform above, he perceived, leaning over the balustrade, and gazing at him, the stranger!

At this juncture, Philip Frewin came forth, to see whether his boat was in readiness, and admonished the watermen, one of whom was philandering with a buxom damsel, who was leaning over the side of the deck,

that he should start immediately. He had scarcely, however, issued the order, than his eye fell upon the skiff containing the young female before mentioned, and which was now close at hand. He started as if an apparition had met his gaze, ducked down, and would have made his escape into the music-hall, if Kitty Conway had not placed herself in his way. Retreat was now impossible, and Philip's distress was heightened by the fair actress, who exclaimed, somewhat pettishly, 'Why do you leave me here, sir? Why don't you hand me to the boat?'

Philip was almost at his wits' end. The skiff containing Hilda and Jacob—both of whom he had too clearly recognised, though he could not account for their appearance, unless it were a trick of the fiend to convict him—was so near, that if he complied with Kitty's request, discovery would be inevitable. A plan suddenly occurred to him, by which he hoped to free himself from risk, and place Randulph, whom he had reason to regard as a rival, in an awkward dilemma. Without apprising Kitty of his intention, he drew her forward, and bending down as low as he could to elude observation, said to Randulph—'Will you have the kindness, sir, to hand this lady into her boat? You will do me an infinite favour; I have dropped a pocket-book in the music-hall, and must go back to search for it.'

Randulph was a good deal surprised by the proposal, but he unhesitatingly consented; and, taking Kitty's hand, which she very graciously accorded, rewarding his attention by a slight squeeze, led her down the steps. All this occurred to the infinite amusement of Trussell, who stood a little back near the door, ogling a rather pretty damsel, and to the no slight chagrin of Sir Singleton, who, guessing the intention of Philip Frewin, had pushed forward to offer his services, but found himself supplanted. But these were not the only witnesses of the scene. By this time, the skiff-, containing Hilda, had come up, and with a pang of jealous feeling, neither to be accounted for nor controlled, she beheld Randulph handing the pretty actress, whose character she could scarcely mistake, down the steps. Jacob saw what was passing as well as herself, but, having no jealousy to divert his attention from other matters, he detected Philip Frewin even in his disguise, and, resting on his oars, exclaimed, 'Look! miss, look!—there is your cousin Philip. Is that the dress he wore yesterday? I told master he wasn't what he seemed. Look at him, I say!'

But Hilda was too much agitated to heed these exclamations. She could see nothing but Randulph and the pretty actress. Nor was she without embarrassment on her own account; for Mr. Cripps, having recognised her, pointed her out to his master, and the beau, being much struck with her beauty, favoured her with a very insolent stare. But if Randulph had been guilty of disloyalty towards the object of his affections, his punishment was not long delayed; for, as he handed Kitty into the boat, which was steadied by the black-muzzled Jack before mentioned, his gaze encountered that of Hilda, and he was instantly filled with confusion. He tried to disengage himself from the actress, who, however, sportively detained him, and, unable to retreat, he cut a most ridiculous figure. Indeed, he was a little relieved, though he felt how much he should sink in her esteem, when he saw Hilda bend forward, and order Jacob, who continued resting on his oars, to pass on. He continued gazing after the skiff till it was out of sight; but Hilda did not look back.

Meanwhile, as Philip Frewin did not make his appearance, Kitty Conway became very impatient, and turning a deaf ear to all the high-flown compliments showered upon her by Sir Singleton Spinke, entreated Randulph to go and see what her friend was doing. The young man could not very well refuse compliance with the request, and he accordingly entered the music-hall, and returned in a few minutes with Philip, who, finding the coast clear, recovered his composure, and tendering his thanks, in a very abject manner, to Randulph, got into the boat with Kitty, and ordered the men to row to Savoy Stairs. Randulph was too angry with himself, and now too indifferent to the fascinations of the pretty actress, to return the tender glance with which she favoured him on her departure.

The incident, however, afforded abundant merriment to his companions, who were greatly diverted by his looks, which they attributed to jealousy, and they endeavoured to remove the feeling by assuring him that Kitty had exhibited a decided preference for him. His uneasiness was not relieved by the admiration expressed of the miser's daughter by Beau Villiers, nor was Trussell altogether pleased to find the beau so much captivated. That Hilda should have passed at the precise juncture seemed to surprise everybody.

RANDULPH'S INTERVIEW WITH CARDWELL FIREBRAS IN THE CLOISTERS OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY

Shortly after this, the party entered their boat and returned to Whitehall Stairs. Randulph had been so much engrossed by his own feelings, that he forgot the stranger, and only called him to mind a few minutes after he had landed, and when it was too late to look for him. He did not, however, forget his appointment with the writer of the mysterious letter, and, regardless of the construction that might be put upon it, told his uncle he had a particular engagement, which he must keep, at six o'clock. Trussell smiled significantly at the announcement, but made no remark, and proposed that they should all dine at one of the French ordinaries in Suffolk Street. Beau Villiers pleaded an engagement, but Sir Singleton acquiesced, and the trio repaired to the ordinary, where an excellent dinner was set before them.

Mindful of his appointment, Randulph, in spite of the jokes of his companions, who strove to detain him, got up from table at five o'clock, and took his way past Charing Cross and Whitehall towards the Abbey. He could not resist the impulse that prompted him to pass through the Little Sanctuary, and felt half-disposed to call at the miser's and offer some explanation of his conduct to Hilda. Though the absurdity of the notion caused him to abandon it almost as soon as formed, he lingered before the house for a few minutes, in the hope of discerning some of its inmates, but was disappointed. He then entered Peter Pokerich's shop, to inquire the way to the Abbey cloisters.

It chanced that the little barber was about to take an evening stroll with the fair Thomasine, who was waiting for him, and he offered to show Randulph the way; but this the young man, who had his own reasons for not desiring the attendance of the inquisitive barber, declined, though in such a way as to excite Peter's curiosity, who secretly determined to follow him. As soon as Randulph was gone, he mentioned his design to the fair Thomasine, who was nothing loth to accompany him, and they set out together, taking special care to keep out of Randulph's view. The young man shaped his course towards the Abbey, and, skirting its western extremity, passed under the archway leading to the playground of Westminster School. Here he paused, and, addressing a porter, was directed towards another archway, through which he passed, and entered the cloisters. On seeing this, Peter, still accompanied by his fair companion, ran forward, and finding that

Randulph was walking in the south ambulatory, they struck into the west, being still able to watch him through the open columns.

Randulph, meanwhile, unconscious that he was the object of such scrutiny, slowly traversed the ambulatory, and, charmed with the exquisite groined arches of its roof, hoary with age, and the view afforded through the shafted windows looking into the quadrangle, of the reverend buttresses and of the Abbey, almost forgot the object that brought him thither. He was arrested at the eastern extremity by the ancient inscriptions and brasses, pointing out the resting-places of the old abbots, Laurentius Gislesbertus, and Vitalis, when a heavy footstep sounded on his ear, and looking up he beheld the stranger. Before he could recover his surprise at this unexpected apparition, the new-comer advanced towards him, and with a slight inclination of the head, and a singularly significant smile, said, ‘So you have kept your appointment with me, Mr. Randulph Crew.’

‘Are you, then, Mr. Cardwell Firebras?’ exclaimed Randulph in surprise.

‘I am so called,’ replied the other.

‘I was little aware, sir, when I saw you this morning at the barber’s, how soon and how strangely we should be brought together again,’ rejoined Randulph; ‘but this in some measure accounts for the manner in which you have haunted me throughout the day. Perhaps you will now explain your motive for doing so, as well as for summoning me hither.’

‘All in good time, young gentleman,’ replied Cardwell Fire-bras gravely. ‘Before I advert to my own concerns, let me say a word on yours. Answer me truly—have you not conceived an affection for Hilda Scarve? Nay, you need not answer. Your hesitation convinces me you have. Circumstances led you into acting very injudiciously this morning at the Folly, and I fear your conduct may have produced an unfavourable impression on Hilda’s mind,—for I watched her closely. But heed not this. I will set all to rights. I have much influence with her father. He designs her for another—the apish gallant of the pretty actress who fascinated you this morning. But you shall have her nevertheless,—on one condition.’

‘Despite the singularity of your address, there is an earnestness in your manner that inspires me with confidence in you, sir,’ rejoined Randulph; ‘the rather, that you told me this morning you were an old friend of my father’s. I will freely confess to you that I am captivated by the miser’s daughter, and that I would hazard much to obtain her. Now, on what condition do you propose to make her mine?’

‘You shall learn presently,’ replied Firebras evasively. ‘Let us take a turn along the cloisters,’ he added, moving slowly forward. They marched on together in silence until they reached the eastern angle of the ambulatory, when Firebras, suddenly halting, laid his heavy hand upon Randulph’s arm, and fixed a searching look upon him. ‘Young man,’ he said, ‘I will tell you what you must do to gain the miser’s daughter.’

‘What, what?’ demanded Randulph.

‘You must join the Jacobite party,’ replied Firebras; ‘to which her father belongs—to which your father belonged—and to which your mother also belongs.’

Surprise kept Randulph silent. But neither he nor his companion were aware that this treasonable proposition had been overheard by Peter Pokerich and the fair Thomasine, who, having stolen upon them

unperceived, were ensconced behind the shafts of the adjoining arches.

THE MISER DISCOVERING THE LOSS OF THE MORTGAGE MONEY

The miser, meanwhile, having obtained access to his chamber, threw his hat upon the bed, passed on, and unlocked the door of the closet. Marching up to the large chest in which he had deposited the bags of gold on the previous night, he sat down upon it, and was for some time lost in deep and painful reflection. He then rose, and taking a bunch of keys from his pocket, applied one of them to the lock of the chest. It would not turn; and imagining that he must have made some mistake, he drew it out and tried another. This, however, did not fit at all; and returning the first, he perceived, on examination, that it was the right one. Again applying it, and proceeding more carefully, he found, to his surprise and dismay, that the chest was not locked. Well knowing he had not left it in this state, he felt convinced that something must be wrong, and it was long before he could prevail upon himself to raise the lid.

When he did so, he started back with a cry of anguish and despair. The chest was empty! For some minutes he remained as if transfixed, with his hands stretched out, his mouth wide open, his eyes almost starting from their sockets, and fixed upon the void where his treasure should have been. At length he shrieked in accents of despair, ‘I have been robbed—robbed of my gold!—robbed—robbed! It is a wicked thing—a cruel thing to rob me! Others do not love gold as I love it. I love it better than wife, child, mistress,—better than life itself! Would that they had killed me, rather than take my gold! Oh! those fair shining pieces—so broad, so bright, so beautiful!—what has become of them?’

After a pause, during which he experienced the acutest mental anguish, he looked around to see how the robbery could have been effected. A moment’s examination showed him that the iron bars in front of the little window opposite the chest had been removed.

‘The villains must have found entrance here!’ he cried, rushing towards the window. And clambering up an old oaken bureau that stood near it, he pushed it wide open, and stretching his long, scraggy neck through it, gazed into the little garden beneath.

Unable to discover anything, he drew back, and casting his eyes over the bureau, perceived that the dust with which it was covered had been slightly brushed away; but whether by himself or the depredators, it was now, of course, impossible to determine.

A bottle standing on one corner of the bureau had not been removed. It was clear that the plunderers had gone direct to the chest, of which they must have possessed a key, for the lock, though strained, had not been forced. Maddened by these reflections, and unable to account for the occurrence, he again vented his fury in words. ‘I have it!’ he shrieked, ‘it is that accursed Welsh baronet who has robbed me. He paid me the money in this public way only to delude me. I’ll charge him with the robbery—I’ll prove it against him—I’ll hang him! Oh! it would delight me to hang him! I would give a thousand pounds to see it done! A thousand pounds! What is that to the fourteen thousand I have lost? I shall go mad, and it were happy for me to do so. Philip Frewin will refuse to marry my daughter. Her portion is gone—gone! Why was I tempted forth with Firebras? I ought to have taken my seat on that chest—to have eaten my meals upon it—to have slept upon it! Night nor day should I have quitted it! Fool that I have been!

I have been rightly served—rightly served! And yet it is hard upon me, an old man, to lose all I held dear—very hard!’ And falling upon his knees, with his hands clasped together, beside the vacant chest, he wept

aloud.

This paroxysm of rage and grief having subsided, he again rose and descended to the parlour, where he found Mrs. Clinton anxiously waiting his reappearance. She instantly divined what had happened, and retreated before him as he advanced, almost fearing from his looks that he would do her a violence. Shaking his clenched hand, and foaming at the mouth, he attempted to discharge a volley of imprecations against her; but rage took away the power of speech, and he stood gesticulating and shaking before her—a frightful and pitiable spectacle.

'For Heaven's sake, sir, compose yourself,' she cried, 'or you will have a fit of some dangerous illness. You terrify me to death.'

'I am glad of it,' he shrieked. 'I have been robbed—the mortgage money is gone—the fourteen thousand pounds. D'ye hear, woman? I've been robbed, I say—robbed!'

'I feared as much,' replied Mrs. Clinton; 'but the robbery cannot have been long effected, for just before you knocked at the door, I heard a window creak, as I thought, in your room.'

'You did!' screamed the miser. 'And why did you not tell me this before? I might have caught them—might have got back the spoil.'

'If you hadn't frightened me so much about Hilda, I should have told you,' replied Mrs. Clinton, in a deprecatory tone; 'but your violence put it out of my head.'

'Hell and fiends!' ejaculated the miser; 'what is Hilda—what are fifty daughters, compared with my gold? If you had enabled me to recover it I would have forgiven you all the rest. Don't stand trembling there, fool! but come with me, and let us see whether we can discover any traces of the robbers!' So saying, he hurried towards a small back door in the passage, the bolts of which were so rusty that he had considerable difficulty in removing them; and this effected, he passed into the garden.

RANDULPH REFUSING TO DRINK 'THE KING'S HEALTH OVER THE WATER'—A MEETING OF THE JACOBITE CLUB

In about a quarter of an hour the landlord entered the room, and, bowing to the company, said, 'I believe, gentlemen, you are all assembled; the room upstairs is ready, if you are disposed to adjourn to it.' The proposition being assented to, the landlord threw open the door, and a slight contest occurred between the two baronets as to which should offer the other precedence.

'I præ, Sir Bulkeley,' said Sir Norfolk; 'I will scale the staircase after you.'

Thus exhorted, Sir Bulkeley, who thought it good breeding not to dispute a point of needless ceremony, went on. Sir Norfolk marched after him with majestic steps, and the rest of the party followed. The landlord ushered them into a large room, lighted by a chandelier suspended from the ceiling, in the centre of which was a circular table covered with bottles and glasses. Having hung up their hats against the wall, the company sat down, and a few bumpers went briskly round. While they were thus carousing, a tap was heard at the door, and the landlord, opening a reconnoitring hole within it, spoke to some one without. He next proceeded to convey the information he had received in a low tone, to Cardwell Firebras, who immediately said aloud, 'Oh, yes, admit him by all means. Gentlemen, a new brother!' The door was then opened, and Randulph recognised in the gaily attired, self-possessed coxcomb who was admitted, Mr. Crackenthorpe Cripps.

'Take a glass of wine, Mr. Cripps,' said Firebras, filling a bumper, and handing it to the new-comer. 'It is Beau Villiers's chief valet,' he added, in an undertone, to Sir Norfolk, who had made a polite though formal bow to the stranger.

'What!' exclaimed Sir Norfolk, almost shuddering at the inadvertence he had committed; 'a waiting-man in such costly and nitid attire. Why, his master, the Pretonius Arbiter of the day, can scarcely be more studiously refined in the taste and style of the vestments wherewith he adorneth his person.'

'Not a whit so,' laughed Firebras; 'the only difference between them is, that Beau Cripps wears in May the coat which Beau Villiers has worn in April.'

'Mehercle!' exclaimed Sir Norfolk. 'Such prodigality almost exceedeth belief.'

'Landlord, it is time!' cried Father Verselyn, who performed the part of chairman, and occupied the principal seat.

'I am ready, your reverence,' replied the landlord. And he forthwith proceeded to a cupboard, from which he produced a large china bowl, apparently filled with punch, and placed it with great care and solemnity in the centre of the table.

'Why, it is water,' exclaimed Randulph, gazing at the clear lymph, with which, on nearer inspection, he perceived the bowl was filled.

'To be sure!' cried Firebras; 'and we are about to drink the king's health—*over the water*. And now, gentlemen,' he continued, filling Randulph's glass and his own, 'fill, I pray you, to the brim.'

'I have filled, even to the summit of the vase,' said Sir Norfolk, rising and holding up his glass.

'And I,' cried Sir Bulkeley, likewise rising.

'And I,' added the landlord, who stood next to the last-named baronet, and was allowed to join in the ceremony.

'And I—and I,' chimed Mr. Travers and the valet.

'Then give the word, my son,' said Verselyn, addressing Firebras.

'With the greatest pleasure, father,' replied Cardwell. And he held his glass over the bowl, while his example was imitated by all the others except Randulph. 'Here is the king's health "over the water." Why don't you do as we do?' he added, turning to Randulph.

‘Ay, stretch forth your arm over the scyphus, young gentleman,’ cried Sir Norfolk, pointing to the bowl.

‘You *must* drink the toast—it’s the rule of the club,’ added Sir Bulkeley.

‘It is a rule I cannot subscribe to,’ replied Randulph.

‘How!—am I mistaken in you, young man?’ said Firebras, regarding him menacingly.

‘Do as they bid you, or you’ll have your throat cut, ‘pon rep!’ whispered Mr. Cripps, popping his head over Firebras’s shoulder.

‘Will you drink the toast, or not?’ demanded Firebras fiercely.

‘I will not!’ replied Randulph firmly. ‘It is treasonable, and I refuse it.’

Randulph’s bold declaration had well-nigh cost him dear. Cries of ‘spy!’ ‘traitor!’ ‘Hanoverian!’ ‘down with him!’ resounded on all sides; the landlord rushed to the door, and placed his back against it, to prevent any attempt at egress in that way; while Sir Norfolk Salusbury, plucking his long blade from its sheath, and making it whistle over his head, kicked a chair that stood between him and the young man out of the way, and bade him, in a stern tone, defend himself. The confusion was increased by the vociferations of Mr. Cripps, and by an accident caused by Sir Bulkeley Price, who, in hurrying round the table, contrived to entangle himself in the cover, and dragging it off, precipitated the bottles and glasses to the ground, drenching the lower limbs of his brother baronet in the contents of the fractured bowl. The only two persons apparently unmoved in the midst of this uproar were its author and Cardwell Firebras. The latter made no hostile display, and did not even alter his position, but kept his eye steadily fixed upon Randulph, as if anxious to observe the effect of the incident upon him. The young man maintained his firmness throughout. He retreated a few steps towards the wall, and put himself in a posture of defence. The nearest of his antagonists was Sir Norfolk Salusbury; but seeing the others press forward, the chivalrous Welsh baronet declined commencing the attack.

‘Singulatim!—one at a time, Mr. Travers,’ he cried. ‘Ne Hercules contra duos. It shall never be said that any man, however unworthy of fair treatment, fought against odds in the presence of a descendant of Adam de Salzburg. Stand aside, therefore, sir—and you, Father Verselyn—and leave him to me, or I must relinquish the right of combat, which I have in some measure acquired, as being the first to claim it, to you.’

‘Let the young man swear to keep silence touching all he has seen and heard, or he shall not quit this room alive,’ rejoined Travers.

‘Trust him not—trust him not!’ cried Father Verselyn: ‘his oath will not bind him. Fall upon him altogether and slay him! That is the only way to ensure his silence and our safety. I will absolve you of his blood. The imminence of the danger justifies the deed.’

‘Proh pudor!’ cried Sir Norfolk sternly. ‘That would be trucidation dedecorous and ignave; neither can I stand by and see it done.’

‘Nor I,’ cried Sir Bulkeley, who had by this time recovered from the embarrassment occasioned by the accident. ‘I disapprove of Father Verselyn’s counsel entirely. Let us hear what the young man has to say. I will question him.’

‘Haudquàquam, Sir Bulkeley,’ replied the other gravely, ‘I gave you precedence on a recent occasion, but I cannot do so on the present. I claim this young man as my own—to interrogate, to fight, and, perchance, to slay him.’

‘Fight him as much as you please, Sir Norfolk, and slay him if you think proper—or can,’ rejoined Sir Bulkeley angrily; ‘but you shall not prevent my speaking to him.’

‘Sir Bulkeley Price,’ returned Sir Norfolk, raising his crane neck to its utmost height, ‘I pray you not to interfere between me and Mr. Crew, otherwise——’

‘Well, Sir Norfolk, and what then?’ cried the other, his hot Welsh blood mounting to his cheeks, and empurpling them more deeply than usual. ‘What then, Sir Norfolk?’

‘I shall be compelled to make you render me reason for it,’ replied the other sternly.

Cardwell Firebras now thought it time to interfere. ‘Gentlemen,’ he said, advancing towards them, ‘we have plenty of other quarrels to settle without disputing among ourselves. I brought Mr. Randulph Crew here, and will be responsible for his silence.’

‘What saith the young man?’ demanded Sir Norfolk. ‘If he will oppignerate his word for taciturnity, I will take it.’

‘So will I,’ added Sir Bulkeley.

‘I thank you for your good opinion of me, gentlemen,’ returned Randulph. ‘I have been, almost unwittingly, a party to your counsels, and ought perhaps to have declared my sentiments sooner; but I hoped the meeting would pass off without rendering any such avowal necessary, in which case, though I certainly should never have joined your club again, the secret of its existence would have rested in my own bosom—as it will now, if I am suffered to depart. I could not avoid expressing my disapproval of a toast which, in common with every loyal subject of King George the Second, I hold to be treasonable.’

‘You cannot be the subject of a usurper, young man,’ said Firebras. ‘Your allegiance to King James the Third is unalienable.’

‘Compel him to avow allegiance to his rightful sovereign, Mr. Firebras,’ interposed Father Verselyn.

‘I will sooner lay down my life than comply,’ cried Randulph resolutely.

Firebras looked slightly disconcerted; and Sir Norfolk, who had lowered the point of his sword, again raised it.

‘It is vain to reason with him, my son,’ whispered Verselyn. ‘Our safety demands his destruction. If he goes hence we are denounced; and an irreparable injury will be done to the good cause.’

‘I have promised him safe conduct, father,’ rejoined Firebras; ‘and, at all risks, I will keep my word. Mr. Randulph Crew, you are at liberty to depart. You give up all hopes of the miser’s daughter?’ he added, in a deep whisper.

‘I must, if she is only to be purchased in this way,’ replied Randulph, in the same tone.

‘Take time to consider of it,’ rejoined Firebras. ‘I will find means of communicating with you to-morrow. Landlord, attend Mr. Crew to the door.’

‘You are wrong in letting him go,’ cried Verselyn. ‘You will repent this blind confidence. Sir Norfolk, I entreat you to interfere—Sir Bulkeley, I appeal to you.’ But they both turned from him, and sheathed their swords; while the landlord, having received a sign from Firebras, obeyed his instructions.

As soon as Randulph was gone, Firebras addressed himself to the two baronets: ‘I hope no unkindly feeling—none, at least, that cannot easily be set to rights—subsists between you, gentlemen?’ he said.

‘I shall never quarrel with my good friend, Sir Norfolk, except about a matter of punctilio,’ replied Sir Bulkeley, who was as easily appeased as roused to anger.

‘And I ought never to quarrel with one who knows how to make so handsome a concession as Sir Bulkeley Price,’ replied Sir Norfolk, with a gracious bow.

‘Then the storm has blown over,’ laughed Firebras. ‘I feared this more than the other.’

A long discussion then took place among the members of the club as to Randulph’s introduction to it, and Firebras was severely censured by Father Verselyn for admitting the young man without testing his political principles.

‘I do not repent what I have done, father,’ returned Firebras, ‘because I am satisfied no harm will come of it; and it was an attempt to gain a very useful ally to our cause. He is a brave lad, as his firmness during this affair proved, and it would be a great point to win him over. Nor do I yet despair of doing so.’

‘I hope we have seen the last of him,’ muttered Father Verselyn; ‘and I beg it may be borne in mind that it was against my advice that he was suffered to depart.’

Cardwell Firebras darted an angry look at the priest, but he made no reply; and the cloth having been replaced by the landlord and Mr. Cripps, the former proceeded to fetch a fresh supply of flasks and glasses; after which the company once more gathered round the table, and began to discuss anew their projects.

THE JACOBITE CLUB PURSUED BY THE GUARDS—THE JACOBITE CLUB SURPRISED BY THE GUARD—THE FLIGHT—AND PURSUIT—MR. CRIPPS’s TREACHERY

Midnight arrived, and found the party still in deep debate. Suddenly, a quick and continuous knocking was heard at the door. All instantly started to their feet, gazing at each other in alarm.

‘We are betrayed,’ said Firebras, in a deep whisper.

‘We are,’ replied Father Verselyn; ‘and by the spy you introduced among us.’

‘It is false!’ cried Firebras angrily. ‘But this is no time for dispute. We must provide for our safety. Who is it, landlord?’ he cried to the host, who, on the first alarm, had rushed to the door, and opened the reconnoitring hole within it.

‘O lud! we’re all lost!’ rejoined the landlord, closing the trap-door, and returning to them with scared looks and on tiptoe, as if afraid’ of the sound of his own footsteps.

‘Who is it?—what is it?’ demanded Firebras.

‘A dozen grenadier guards, headed by their captain and lieutenant, come to search the house,’ replied the landlord. ‘They’re mounting the stairs now.’

‘Zounds!’ exclaimed Sir Bulkeley, ‘this is awkward!’

‘There is nothing to fear,’ said Firebras calmly. ‘We have plenty of time for flight.’

‘Yes, you can fly, gentlemen, but I am ruined,’ exclaimed the landlord. ‘I can never return to my own dwelling!’

‘Pshaw! you shall never be the worse for it,’ replied Firebras.

‘But what will become of me, if I am taken?’ cried Mr. Cripps, feigning a look of despair. ‘I am sure to be the worse for it.’

‘Silence!’ cried Firebras authoritatively. ‘Don’t you hear them?—they are at the door. Be quick, gentlemen. Not a moment is to be lost.’

While this was passing, Father Verselyn hurried to the lower end of the room, and, mounting a ladder placed against the wall, passed through a trap-door in the ceiling above it. The landlord, Mr. Cripps, and Mr. Travers next ascended; then Sir Bulkeley followed; then Sir Norfolk, whose equanimity not even the present danger could disturb; while Firebras brought up the rear.

‘’Sdeath, Sir Norfolk!’ cried the latter, as the baronet slowly scaled the steps before him—‘move on a little more quickly, or we shall certainly be captured. They’re breaking open the door. Don’t you hear them?’

‘Perfecté,’ replied Sir Norfolk coolly. But he did not on that account accelerate his movements.

Knowing it was in vain to remonstrate, Cardwell Firebras waited till Sir Norfolk had worked his long frame through the trap-door, which he did with the utmost deliberation, and then ran up the steps himself, with much more activity than might have been expected from a person so weighty. Just as he was quitting the ladder, the door was burst open with a tremendous crash, and two officers of the guard rushed into the room, sword in hand, followed by a dozen grenadiers armed with muskets, on which bayonets were fixed. Firebras’s first object, on securing a footing on the floor of the garret above, was to try to draw up the ladder, and he was assisted in the endeavour by Sir Norfolk; but their design was frustrated by the foremost officer and a tall grenadier bearing a halberd, both of whom sprang upon the ladder, and kept it down by their joint weight, and all that those above could do was to shut down the trap-door, before it could be reached by their foes. A dormer window opened from the garret upon the roof of the house; but an unexpected difficulty had been experienced by the first detachment of fugitives in unfastening it. All ought to have been in readiness for an emergency like the present, and Sir Bulkeley and Mr. Travers bitterly reproached the landlord for his negligence. The poor fellow declared that the mischance was not his fault—that he had taken every possible precaution—and, in fact, had examined the window that very morning, and found it all right.

At length it was forced back, and all but Sir Norfolk and Firebras got through it. They were detained by the necessity that existed of guarding the trap-door. Unfortunately, there was no bolt on the upper side of it, so that they had to stand upon it to keep it down, and this plan being discovered by the officer below, he ordered two of his men to thrust their bayonets through the boards, while the tall grenadier tried to prize open the door with his halberd. The manoeuvre compelled Firebras and Salus-bury slightly to alter their position, to avoid being wounded by the bayonets, and in doing so, they necessarily gave admittance to the point of the halberd. The efforts of the assailing party were redoubled, and the trap slightly yielded.

‘Lose not a moment! fly, Sir Norfolk!’ cried Firebras, apprehensive lest the baronet’s deliberation, which he well knew nothing could shake, should prevent his escape.

But true to his principles, Sir Norfolk would not move an inch.

'I cannot leave you in angusto,' he said.

'But I am the stronger of the two, as well as the more active,' rejoined Firebras. 'My weight will suffice to keep down the trap-door till you have got through the window, and then I can make good my retreat. Fly! fly!'

But Sir Norfolk continued immovable. 'I shall be the last to quit this place,' he said, in a tone of unalterable determination. 'But do not, I pray you, tarry with me. The trifurciferous myrmidons of the Hanoverian usurper shall never take me with life.'

'I must leave the punctilious old fool to his fate,' muttered Firebras, observing that the greater part of the head of the halberd was forced through the side of the trap. 'God protect you, Sir Norfolk,' he cried, rushing to the window.

The brave old Welsh baronet essayed to hew off the head of the halberd from the staff—but in vain; and finding that the enemy must gain admittance in another moment, and that Firebras had cleared the window, he turned away and strode majestically towards it. His retreat was so suddenly made, that the grenadier who held the pike, and was prizing with all his force, lost his balance, and tumbled off the ladder, causing such confusion among his comrades, that Sir Norfolk had time to get through the window unmolested.

It was a beautfully bright night—the moon being at the full, and the sky filled with fleecy clouds. On the left lay ridges of pointed-roofed houses, covered with the warm-looking and mellow-tinted tile, so preferable to the cold blue slate—broken with stacks of chimneys of every size and form—dormer windows, gables, overhanging storeys and other picturesque and fantastic projections; and the view being terminated, at some quarter of a mile's distance, by the tall towers and part of the roof of Westminster Abbey.

Viewed thus, the whole picture looked exquisitely tranquil and beautiful. The fires in the houses were almost all extinguished, and little or no smoke issued from the chimneys to pollute the clear atmosphere. Above the venerable and majestic fane hung the queen of night, flooding its towers—seen at such an hour to the greatest advantage—with silvery light, and throwing some of the nearer buildings and projections into deep shadow, and so adding to the beauty of the scene. On the right, the view extended over other house-tops to the gardens and fields of Pimlico. Behind was Saint James's Park, with its stately avenues of trees, its long canal, and Rosamond's Pond glimmering in the moonlight; while in front lay the New Artillery Ground, and the open and marshy grounds constituting Totnill Fields. But it will be readily imagined that neither Firebras nor his companions looked to the right or to the left. They were only conscious of the danger by which they were menaced, and were further discouraged by Father Verselyn, who at that moment scrambled over the roof they were about to cross, to inform them that the door by which they hoped to escape could not be got open.

'Everything seems to have gone wrong! cried Verselyn in an ecstasy of terror. 'What will become of us?'

'Jacta est alea,' replied Sir Norfolk composedly. 'We must fight for it, father.'

'Heaven and all its saints protect us,' cried the priest, crossing himself.

'Be composed, father,' rejoined Firebras sternly. 'You ought to be equal to any circumstances in which you may be placed.

The latter exclamation was occasioned by a joyous shout, announcing that their friends had succeeded in opening the door; and the next moment the good news was confirmed by Sir Bulkeley Price, who clambered over the roof to acquaint them with it. On hearing this the party instantly beat a retreat; and their flight was accelerated by the officer and the tall grenadier, who at that moment sprung out of the window. Even Sir Norfolk was urged to a little more expedition than usual; and two or three of his mighty strides brought him to the top of the roof. Cardwell Firebras would not have been much behind him, if Father Verselyn had not caught hold of his coat-tails to help himself up the ascent, which he felt wholly unable to accomplish without assistance. By this time the officer was well-nigh upon them; and, finding his summons to surrender wholly disregarded, he made a pass at the priest, which took effect in the fleshy part of his leg, restoring him at once to more than his former agility. Uttering a loud yell, and clapping his hand to the wounded limb to stanch the blood, Father Verselyn bounded over the roof, and made to the door through which the landlord and Mr. Travers had already disappeared, and through which Mr. Cripps was now darting. Between the two roofs lay a small flat space, used by its former proprietor as a place for drying clothes, as was evident from the four tall posts at the corners.

Here Firebras and Sir Norfolk came to a stand, resolved to dispute the passage with their pursuers. Sword in hand, and calling to them to surrender, the foremost officer dashed down the roof; but his precipitation placed him at the mercy of Fire-bras; for his foot slipping, the latter struck his sword from his grasp. Sir Norfolk, in the interim, had encountered another foeman with equal success. This was the tall grenadier, who, as he descended, made a thrust at the baronet with his halberd, which the latter very adroitly parried, and, lunging in return, disabled his adversary by a wound in the arm. At the same moment, too, the tiles gave way under the weight of the grenadier, and he sank above the knees in the roof. Other foes were now at hand. The second officer, carrying a lantern in one hand, and a drawn sword in the other, appeared on the roof; while the tall caps and bayonets of the rest of the grenadiers were seen above it. Though Sir Norfolk, whose blood was up, would have willingly awaited the advance of these new opponents, he yielded to the entreaties of Firebras, and followed him through the door, which was instantly secured behind them by a couple of strong bolts.

The house in which the Jacobites had taken refuge was expressly hired by them for an occasion like the present, and kept wholly uninhabited. The mode of communication between it and the Rose and Crown will, it is hoped, be sufficiently understood from the foregoing description. That so many unforeseen accidents should have occurred at a time when, if ever, things ought to have been in readiness, almost drove the poor landlord distracted; but if he could have watched Mr. Cripps's manoeuvres, he would have speedily found out the cause of the delays. In the first instance, a penknife, dexterously slipped by the valet into the groove of the window, prevented it from moving, and had well-nigh, as has been seen, occasioned the capture of the fugitives. This difficulty having been overcome by the strenuous efforts of Sir Bulkeley and Mr. Travers, Mr. Cripps was the first to scramble through the window.

‘Which way?’ he cried to the landlord, who was following.

‘Over the roof, and to the door opposite,’ was the reply.

Nimbly as a cat the agile valet bounded over the roof, and instantly perceiving the door, made towards it. A key was in the lock; he turned it, took it out, and dropped it into the street below. He then began to shake the door violently, and shouted to the landlord, who at that moment came in sight.

‘Unlock it—unlock it!’ cried the host.

‘I can’t,’ cried Mr. Cripps; ‘there is no key. ‘Pon rep! we shall be all taken.’

‘No key!’ exclaimed the landlord. ‘Impossible! I saw it there this morning myself. It must have dropped down. Look about for it.’

Mr. Cripps feigned compliance, and the landlord coming up, poured forth a torrent of imprecations on finding his statement correct. Father Verselyn, as has been related, crept back to Firebras, while the others used their efforts to open the door. Nor were they long in effecting their purpose. Finding all other attempts fail, the landlord stepped back on the leads, and running to give additional impetus to the blow, dashed his foot against the door, and the lock yielded with a loud crash.

MR. CRIPPS ENCOUNTERING HIS MASTER IN MARYLEBONE GARDENS

Marylebone Gardens, it is well known, lay on the eastern side of the upper end of the lane bearing the same name—the whole of the country beyond Harley Street, which was not more than a third of its present extent, being open fields. They were of considerable size, and were originally laid out and planted at the beginning of the last century, at which time the public were gratuitously admitted to them. In one part of the grounds there was an excellent bowling-green, which drew many lovers of that most agreeable recreation to it. By degrees the gardens, being very conveniently situated, rose in repute; and in 1737, their proprietor, Mr. Gough, began to demand a shilling for admittance—this sum entitling the visitor to its value in refreshments. But still further improvements were effected. Orchestras, boxes, and a theatre for musical entertainments were erected within them. Besides the main walks, semicircular rows of trees were planted, and hedges contrived so as to form pleasing labyrinths for those who preferred privacy. Bowers and alcoves were built in different places; lamps were fastened to the trees, and at night, on the occasion of a fête, every part of the garden was illuminated with myriads of lamps of various colours. The company began to improve, and the price of admission was raised to five shillings. Fêtes of every kind were held here; and the place continued in vogue until nearly the end of the century with which its rise commenced. Malcolm mentions that a few trees, once forming part of Marylebone Gardens, were standing at the north end of Harley Street in 1808. But we fear not even a stump of one of them is now left. Carriages, coaches, and chairs were setting down their occupants at the entrance to the gardens as Mr. Cripps and his companion drew near. Never had Mrs. Nettle-ship seen a gayer throng—the dresses she thought magnificent. There was Lady Ancaster, whom Mr. Cripps pointed out to her, in a brocaded lutestring sack, with ruby-coloured ground and white tobine stripes trimmed with floss—the Countess of Pomfret, in a black satin sack flowered with red and white—Lady Almeria Vane, in a scarlet unwatered tabby sack—Lady Ilchester, in a white tissue flowered sack. All these ladies wore hoops; but none of them, Mr. Cripps assured his companion, managed this equipment with half so much grace as herself.

Throughout this stage of the business, Mr. Cripps had some difficulty in playing his part, and it required all his effrontery to enable him to go through with it. Having affirmed to his companion that he was an intimate acquaintance of all the ladies of rank he encountered, and in the habit of attending their routs and parties, he was under the necessity of sustaining the character, and kept constantly bowing and kissing his hand to them. In most cases he succeeded; for the ladies he addressed, deceived by his showy attire, which seemed to mark him as somebody, returned his salutations. Mrs. Nettleship was enchanted. To be attended by so fashionable a person, who knew all the *beau monde*, was supreme felicity. She would have given the world to be introduced to some of the fashionable ladies, and intimated as much to her companion; but he was too shrewd to attend to the suggestion, contenting himself with saying, with a very impassioned look, ‘I hope, my angel, that one of these days I shall have the honour of introducing you to my fair friends under another name.‘Twould make me the happiest of men—‘pon rep!’

‘Odd’s bodikins! Mr. Willars, how you do confuse me!’ exclaimed the lady, spreading her large fan before her face.

By this time they had gained the principal avenue leading towards the orchestra, and at each step he took, Mr. Cripps kissed his hand to some elegantly dressed person.

‘There’s my friend Lord Effingham, and his countess,’ he said; ‘glad to see you, my lord. That’s the pretty Mrs. Rackham—a bride, sweetheart, *a bride*,’ with tender emphasis—‘that’s the rich Mrs. Draper—I daren’t look at her, for she’s determined to have me, whether I will or no, and I can’t make up my mind to it, though she’s promised to settle sixty thousand pounds upon me, and to die in six months.’

‘La! Mr. Willars, you wouldn’t sell yourself to such an ojus creature as that!’ cried Mrs. Nettleship—‘why, she’s a perfect fright, and so dressed!’

‘Precisely what you describe her, ‘pon rep!’ replied Mr. Cripps. ‘But do listen to the music. Isn’t it inspiring?’ And they paused for a moment to listen to the lively strains proceeding from the orchestra, which was placed at one end of a large building facing the principal walk. By this time the company had almost entirely assembled. The main walk was completely thronged, and presented the appearance of the Mall at high tide, while all the boxes and alcoves were filled with persons discussing bowls of punch, plates of ham, chickens, salads, and other good things. The band in the orchestra was excellent, and the lively airs and symphonies added to the excitement and spirit of the scene. Mr. Cripps created a great sensation. Many persons thought they had seen him before, but no one could tell who he was. Meanwhile, the object of this attention continued to dispense his bows and smiles, flourished his clouded cane, tapped his magnificent snuff-box, and after astonishing all the beholders with his coxcombry, glided off with his companion into one of the side walks. He had scarcely disappeared, when Lady Brabazon and her party entered the main walk. Her ladyship led her little spaniel by its string, and was attended on one side by the beau, and on the other by Trussell. Behind them walked Clementina, who had contrived to allure Randulph from her mother, and to

attach him to her, while on the young man's left walked Sir Singleton Spinke. Everybody whom Mr. Villiers encountered told him of the prodigious beau who had just been seen on the walk—Lord Effingham, Major Burrowes, Lord Dyneover, Sir John Fagg—all described him.

'Who the devil is he?' cried Villiers.

'Haven't the least idea,' replied Sir John Fagg. 'But I'll speak to him, if I meet him again. He's your very double, Villiers. I'll swear he has employed Desmartins to make him a suit precisely like your own.'

'Has he?' cried the beau indignantly—'Then I'll never employ a rascally Frenchman again! and what is more, I won't pay him his bill.' The same thing was told him by twenty other persons, and the beau looked anxiously round for his personator, but was for some time unable to discern him.

Meanwhile, Mr. Cripps had sought this secluded walk to give him an opportunity of making a declaration to the widow, and though he was not positively accepted he was not decidedly refused,—the lady only asking time to consider over the proposal. The audacious valet was on his knees, and rapturously kissing her hand, vowing he would never rise till he received a favourable answer to his suit, when two persons were seen approaching, whom, to his infinite mortification and surprise, he recognised as Abel Beechcroft and his uncle, Mr. Jukes.

'We are interrupted, my charmer!' he cried, getting up, with a countenance of angry dismay. 'Let us return to the public promenade. You won't refuse me? I shall kill myself, 'pon rep, if you do.'

'I'll think of it, Mr. Willars,' said Mrs. Nettleship, twirling her fan. 'But it would be a dreadful thing if I was to break my engagement to Mr. Rathbone!'

'Oh! curse Mr. Rathbone! I'll cut his throat!' cried Mr. Cripps, glancing anxiously down the walk. But unfortunately there was no outlet at the lower end, and he was compelled to turn and face the intruders. He looked also to the right and left, but on neither side was there an alcove into which he could retreat. Nothing was left for it but impudence, and luckily for him, this quality seldom deserted him at a pinch. Putting on his boldest manner, he strutted gaily, and with affected nonchalance, towards Abel and his uncle, who, as he advanced, stepped a little aside to look at him.

'Why, as I live!' cried Abel, 'that's Mr. Villiers's valet—your nephew, Jukes.'

'Lord save us! so it is,' cried Mr. Jukes, lifting up his hands in astonishment. 'Why, Crackenthorpe, what are you doing here—and in your master's clothes?'

'Truce to your jests, old fellow,' said Mr. Cripps, waving him off, 'and let me pass.'

'What! disown your uncle!' cried Mr. Jukes angrily, 'and in the presence of his worthy master! The rascal would deny his own father. Pay me the ten crowns you borrowed yesterday.'

'La! Mr. Willars, what's the meaning of all this?' asked Mrs. Nettleship.

'Pon my soul, my angel, I don't know, unless the old hunks has been drinking,' replied Mr. Cripps. 'The 'rack punch has evidently got into his head, and made him mistake one person for another.'

''Rack punch!' cried Mr. Jukes furiously. 'I haven't tasted a drop! You call him Mr. Willars, ma'am,' he added to Mrs. Nettleship. 'He's deceiving you, ma'am. He's not Mr. Willars—he's Mr. Willars's gentleman—

his valet.'

'A truce to this folly, you superannuated old dolt!' cried Mr. Cripps, raising his cane, 'or I'll chastise you.'

'Chastise me!' exclaimed the butler angrily. 'Touch me, if you dare, rascal; Crackenthorpe, Crackenthorpe—you'll certainly be hanged.'

'Let him alone, Jukes,' interposed Abel. 'He'll meet his master at the corner of the walk, and I should like to see how he'll carry it off.'

Taking advantage of the interference, Mr. Cripps passed on with his inamorata, who was as anxious to escape from the scene as himself; while Abel and Mr. Jukes followed them at a short distance. It fell out as Abel had foreseen. As Mr. Cripps issued into the broad walk, right before him, and not many yards off, were his master and Lady Brabazon, together with the rest of the party. If the valet ever had need of assurance, it was now. But though ready to sink into the earth, he was true to himself, and exhibited no outward signs of discomposure. On the contrary, he drew forth his snuff-box, took a pinch in his airiest manner, and said to Mrs. Nettleship—'There's Lady Brabazon—accounted one of the finest women of the day, but upon my soul, she's not to be compared with you.' With this he made a profound salutation to Lady Brabazon, who looked petrified with astonishment, and kissed his hand to Trussell, who was ready to die with laughing. As to the beau, he grasped his cane in a manner that plainly betokened his intention of laying it across his valet's shoulders. But the latter, divining his intention, and seeing that nothing but a bold manoeuvre could now save him, strutted up to him, and said in a loud voice—'Ah! my dear fellow—how d'ye do?—glad to see you—plenty of company'—adding, in a lower tone—'for Heaven's sake, sir, don't mar my fortune. I'm about to be married to that lady, sir—large fortune, sir—to-day will decide it—'pon rep!'

Mr. Villiers regarded him in astonishment, mixed with some little admiration; and at length his good-nature got the better of his anger. 'Well, get you gone instantly,' he said; 'if I find you in the gardens in ten minutes from this time, you shall have the caning you merit.'

'Good day, sir,' replied Mr. Cripps—'I'll not forget the favour.' And with a profound bow, he moved away with the widow.

'And so you have let him off?' cried Lady Brabazon, in amazement.

'Upon my soul, I couldn't help it,' replied the beau. 'I've a fellow-feeling for the rascal—and, egad, all things considered, he has played his part so uncommonly well, that I hope he may be successful.'

DAY MASQUERADE IN RANELAGH GARDENS

And now, before entering Ranelagh, it may be proper to offer a word as to its history. Alas for the changes and caprices of fashion! This charming place of entertainment, the delight of our grandfathers and grandmothers, the boast of the metropolis, the envy of foreigners, the renowned in song and story, the paradise of hoops and wigs, is vanished,—numbered with the things that were!—and we fear there is little hope of its revival.

Ranelagh, it is well known, derived its designation from a nobleman of the same name, by whom the house was erected, and the gardens, esteemed the most beautiful in the kingdom, originally laid out. Its situation adjoined the Royal Hospital at Chelsea, and the date of its erection was 1690-1.

Ranelagh House, on the death of the earl in 1712, passed into the possession of his daughter, Lady Catherine Jones; but was let, about twenty years afterwards, to two eminent builders, who relet it to Lacy, afterwards patentee of Drury Lane Theatre, and commonly called Gentleman Lacy, by whom it was taken with the intention of giving concerts and breakfasts within it, on a scale far superior, in point of splendour and attraction, to any that had been hitherto attempted.

In 1741 the premises were sold by Lacy to Messrs. Crispe and Meyonnet for £4000, and the rotunda was erected in the same year by subscription. From this date the true history of Ranelagh may be said to commence. It at once burst into fashion, and its entertainments being attended by persons of the first quality, crowds flocked in their train, shortly after its opening, Mr. Crispe became the sole lessee; and in spite of the brilliant success of the enterprise, shared the fate of most lessees of places of public amusement, being declared bankrupt in 1744. The property was then divided into thirty shares, and so continued until Ranelagh was closed.

The earliest entertainments of Ranelagh were morning concerts, consisting chiefly of oratorios, produced under the direction of Michael Festing, the leader of the band; but evening concerts were speedily introduced, the latter, it may be mentioned, to show the difference of former fashionable hours from the present, commencing at half-past five, and concluding at nine.

Thus it began, but towards its close, the gayest visitors to Ranelagh went at midnight, just as the concerts were finishing, and remained there till three or four in the morning. In 1754 the fashionable world were drawn to Ranelagh by a series of amusements called Comus's Court; and notwithstanding their somewhat questionable title, the revels were conducted with great propriety and decorum. A procession which was introduced was managed with great effect, and several mock Italian duets were sung with remarkable spirit. Almost to its close, Ranelagh retained its character of being the finest place of public entertainment in Europe, and to the last the rotunda was the wonder and delight of every beholder.

The coup-d'oeil of the interior of this structure was extraordinarily striking, and impressed all who beheld it for the first time with surprise. It was circular in form, and exactly one hundred and fifty feet in diameter. Round the lower part of the building ran a beautiful arcade, the intervals between each arch being filled up by alcoves. Over this was a gallery with a balustrade, having entrances from the exterior, and forming a sort of upper boxes. Above the gallery was a range of round-headed windows, between each of which was a carved figure supporting the roof, and forming the terminus of the column beneath. At first, the orchestra was placed in the centre of the amphitheatre, but being found exceedingly inconvenient, as well as destructive of the symmetry of the building in that situation, it was removed to the side.

It contained a stage capable of accommodating thirty or forty chorus singers. The original site of the orchestra was occupied by a large chimney, having four faces enclosed in a beautifully proportioned, hollow, hexagonal column, with arched openings at the sides, and a balustrade at the base. Richly moulded, and

otherwise ornamented with appropriate designs, this enormous column had a charming effect, and gave a peculiar character to the whole amphitheatre. A double range of large chandeliers descended from the ceiling; others were placed within the column above mentioned, and every alcove had its lamp. When all these chandeliers and lamps were lighted, the effect was wonderfully brilliant.

The external diameter of the rotunda was one hundred and eighty-five feet. It was surrounded on the outside by an arcade similar to that within, above which ran a gallery with a roof supported by pillars, and defended by a balustrade. The main entrance was a handsome piece of architecture, with a wide, round, arched gate in the centre, and a lesser entrance at either side.

On the left of the rotunda stood the Earl of Ranelagh's old mansion, a structure of some magnitude, but with little pretensions to beauty, being built in the formal Dutch taste of the time of William of Orange. On the right, opposite the mansion, was a magnificent conservatory, with great pots of aloes in front. In a line with the conservatory, and the side entrance of the rotunda, stretched out a long and beautiful canal, in the midst of which stood a Chinese fishing temple, approached by a bridge. On either side of the canal were broad gravel walks, and alleys shaded by lines of trees, and separated by trimly clipped hedges. The gardens were exquisitely arranged with groves, bowers, statues, temples, wildernesses, and shady retreats.

Though Lady Brabazon's carriage was within a hundred yards of the entrance of Ranelagh when Mr. Cripps and his party passed it, owing to the crowd and confusion it was nearly a quarter of an hour in setting down. Before getting out, the whole party put on their masks; and Lady Brabazon wrapped herself in a yellow silk domino. Trussell took charge of Clementina, and her ladyship fell to Randulph's care.

It was yet extremely early, but the crowd was prodigious,—many hundred persons being assembled in the area before the entrance to the rotunda. At least a thousand others were dispersed within the gardens, for the rotunda was not opened till the evening; and it was afterwards computed that more than four thousand persons attended the masquerade.

At the entrance, Lady Brabazon and her daughter were joined by Beau Villiers, Sir Bulkeley Price, and Firebras, Sir Singleton Spinke having disappeared. Randulph had already been more than once at Ranelagh, but it was only to attend the ordinary concerts, and never having seen a masquerade, he was extraordinarily struck with the spectacle presented to him.

Most of the characters were grotesquely dressed, as was the taste of the time, for it was not a period when the niceties of costume were understood or regarded; still, the general effect was admirable. A May-pole, surmounted by a crown, with long ribands dangling from it, was planted in front of the conservatory, and several dancers were chasing each other round it, while lively strains were played by a band of musicians beside them. Other and less melodious sounds were heard. Now a drummer would go by, beating a rub-a-dub enough to deafen every listener. Then came the vile scraping of a fiddle, or the shrill notes of a fife. The shouts, the laughter, the cries of all kinds baffled description, and equally vain would it be to attempt any delineation of the motley assemblage. It consisted of persons of all countries, all periods, and all ranks, for the most part oddly enough jumbled together. A pope in his tiara would be conversing with a Jew; a grave lawyer in his gown and wig had a milk-girl under his arm; a highland chief in his full equipments escorted a nun; a doge in his splendid habiliments was jesting with a common sailor, with a thick stick under his arm.

But frolic and fun everywhere prevailed; and to judge from the noise, everybody seemed to be merry. No one could escape from the tricks and jests of the buffoons with whom the crowd abounded. The humour of the last century was eminently practical; cuffs and kicks were liberally dealt around, and returned in kind; and whenever a sounding blow was heard, it elicited shouts of laughter like those that are heard at the feigned knocks in a pantomime. The clowns, punches, pierrots, doctors, and harlequins, of whom there were several besides our friend, Mr. Cripps, were the chief creators of this kind of merriment.

While Randulph, greatly diverted by all he saw, was gazing around, a few words pronounced by a voice whose tones thrilled to his heart caught his ear. He turned, and saw close behind him, attended by a tall personage, whose stiffness left no doubt as to its being Sir Norfolk Salusbury, a beautiful female mask, whose snowy skin and dark streaming ringlets would have told him, if his heart had not informed him of the fact, that it was Hilda, but before he could summon resolution to address her, she had passed by; and Lady Brabazon, who had likewise heard the voice and recognised the speaker, dragged him in the opposite direction towards the May-pole. He looked eagerly backwards, but the fair mask was lost amid the throng, nor could he even discern the tall figure of Sir Norfolk.

RANDULPH AND HILDA DANCING IN THE ROTUNDA AT RANELAGH GARDENS

Some hours passed on in this way, and Randulph was still held in bondage. At length the rotunda was opened. Of course, the royal party was ceremoniously ushered in, in the first place; but immediately afterwards crowds poured-in, and the whole area of the amphitheatre, together with the boxes and gallery above, were filled with company. What with the innumerable lights, and the extraordinary variety of dresses, the whole scene had a most brilliant effect. There was an excellent band in the orchestra, and a concert was commenced, but little attention was paid to it by the assemblage, who continued promenading round and round the amphitheatre—laughing and talking loudly with each other.

As soon as the concert was over, the loud blowing of a horn attracted general observation to a platform near the central column, on which the quack doctor and his attendant were stationed—the latter of whom began dispensing his medicines, and vaunting their efficacy, in a highly ludicrous manner. This and other entertainments consumed the time till ten o’clock; before which, however, a magnificent supper was served to the royal party in a private refreshment room.

A bell was then rung, to announce that a grand display of fireworks was about to take place, and the company hurried to the outer galleries and to the gardens to witness the exhibition. Much confusion ensued, and amidst it, the fair Thomasine, somehow or other, got separated from her party. The little barber was almost frantic. He rushed hither and thither among the crowd, calling for her by name, and exciting general ridicule. At last, in an agony of despair, he stationed himself near the scaffold where the fireworks were placed; and when the first signal-rocket ascended, he perceived her pretty face turned upwards at a little distance from him. She was standing near the trees with the old beau, whose transports at his enviable situation were somewhat disturbed by the descent of a heavy rocket-stick on his head. At this juncture the little barber reached his truant mistress, and forcing her from Sir Singleton, placed her rounded arm under his own, and held it fast.

‘Oh, dear, how glad I am to see you,’ said the naughty little Thomasine, for ‘fair’ she does not deserve to be called; ‘we’ve been looking for you everywhere’—(here she told a sad story). ‘That odious old beau has been trying to persuade me to run away with him. He offers to settle—I don’t know what—upon me, and to make me Lady Spinke.’

‘And why don’t you accept his offer?’ said the barber, in an ecstasy of jealous rage.

‘Because I’m engaged, and engagements with me are sacred things,’ replied the fair Thomasine theatrically, yet tenderly. ‘But do look at that beautiful wheel.’

The fireworks were really splendid. Flights of rockets soared into the skies; magnificent wheels performed their mutations; star-pieces poured forth their radiant glories; maroon batteries resounded; Chinese fountains filled the air with glittering showers; pots-des-aigrettes, pots-des-brins, and pots-des-saucis-sons discharged their stars, serpents, and crackers; yew-trees burnt with brilliant fire; water-rockets turned the canal to flame; fire-balloons ascended; and a grand car with flaming wheels, drawn by sea-horses snorting fire, and containing a figure of Neptune, which, traversed the whole length of the canal, and encircled the Chinese temple—the bridge being removed to make way for it—and finally exploded, scattering serpents and crackers in every direction, concluded the exhibition, amid the general plaudits of the assemblage. Darkness for a few minutes enveloped the crowd, during which a few cries were heard in timid female tones; but the lamps were as soon as possible lighted, and the majority of the assemblage returned to the rotunda, where they repaired to the alcoves, and many a bowl of punch was emptied, many a bottle of champagne quaffed; after which dancing was resumed with greater spirit than ever.

Mr. Rathbone gave a capital supper to his party, in which the old beau contrived to get himself included. He contrived also to sit near the fair Thomasine, and pledged her so often and so deeply that he fell beneath the table. Here he was left by the others, and a minuet being struck up, Mr. Cripps offered his hand to the widow, and led her forth to dance; while Mr. Rathbone, greatly exhilarated by the punch he had drunk, stood by, laughing at them ready to split his sides; and the little barber took the opportunity of their being left alone together, to reprove the fair Thomasine for her improper conduct towards the old beau during supper.

Liberated by the departure of the Prince of Wales, who quitted the gardens on the conclusion of the fireworks, Randulph immediately returned to the rotunda, in the hope of finding Hilda still there. He had scarcely entered it when he perceived Firebras at supper by himself in one of the alcoves, and instantly joined him.

‘She is still here,’ said Firebras, ‘and as soon as I have finished my supper I will take you to her. There would be no use in going now, for Sir Norfolk has only just ordered supper, and I can merely introduce you as a partner for a dance. Sit down, and take a glass of champagne.’

Randulph declined the latter offer, and was obliged to control his impatience until Firebras thought fit to rise. Crossing the amphitheatre, they proceeded to an alcove, in which Sir Norfolk and Hilda were seated, and Firebras, bowing to the old knight, said—

‘Sir Norfolk, permit me to have the honour of presenting the friend I mentioned some hours ago to your fair charge. Miss Scarve,’ he added, after a significant look at Hilda, ‘this gentleman wishes to have the honour of dancing a minuet with you. I am sorry there is no time for a more ceremonious introduction to yourself, Sir Norfolk, but the musicians are striking up the dance.’

Upon this Hilda arose, and tendered her hand, with some trepidation, to Randulph, who, with a breast thrilling with joyful emotion, led her to the open space cleared for the dancers, and part of which was already occupied, as before related, by Mr. Cripps and the widow. No time was allowed Randulph to hazard a word to his partner. Scarcely were they placed when the minuet commenced. The grace with which they performed this charming, though formal dance, excited the admiration of all the beholders, and contrasted strongly with the exaggerated style in which it was executed by Mr. Cripps and Mrs. Nettleship. Indeed, a better foil—had such been desired—could not have been found than the two latter personages presented. Sir Norfolk planted himself on one side to view the dance, and there was unwonted elation in his countenance as he witnessed the graceful movements of his fair cousin and her partner. Trussell in his Turkish dress was among the spectators; and not far from him stood Cardwell Firebras. There were two other personages, also, who watched the dance, but who regarded it with other sentiments than those of satisfaction. These were Lady Brabazon and Beau Villiers.

‘So you see, Villiers, notwithstanding all your scheming, he *has* contrived to dance with her,’ said the former.

‘He has,’ replied the beau, partly removing his mask, and displaying a countenance inflamed with passion —‘but he has not exchanged a word with her, and I will take care he shall not exchange one.’

‘You are desperately in love with this girl, Villiers,’ said Lady Brabazon angrily. ‘I thought it was her fortune merely you aimed at.’

‘I have been foiled, and that has piqued me,’ replied Villiers.

‘*Le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle*,’ rejoined Lady Brabazon. ‘After the failure of your attempt to carry her off, I wonder you will persevere.’

‘Hush!’ exclaimed the beau. ‘Some one may overhear us. I would have carried her off to-night, if I had known she would have been here. Your ladyship ought to be obliged to me for the trouble I am taking. I shall remove your rival, and you will then have young Crew entirely to yourself. And now to put Sir Norfolk on his guard.’

With this, he passed on to the Welsh baronet, and addressed him. The latter bowed stiffly in return, and approached nearer the dancers; and while Hilda was curtseying to her partner at the close of the minuet, he took her hand and led her away. The young man would have followed them, but Cardwell Firebras came up, and arrested him.

‘It won’t do,’ he said; ‘Villiers has told the old baronet who you are. I must go after him instantly, and make some excuse for my share in the matter, or I shall have to cross swords with him to-morrow morning. I have done all I can for you. Goodnight.’

Soon after this, Randulph quitted the masquerade with Trussell. With some difficulty a boat was procured to convey them home. Finding his nephew in no mood for conversation, Trussell, who was rather tired, and

moreover had drunk a good deal of punch and champagne, disposed himself to slumber, nor did he awake till they reached Lambeth Stairs. Another boat had just landed, and two persons in dominos marched before them in the very direction they were going.

‘Why, who the deuce have we here?’ cried Trussell, running forward to overtake the party in advance. ‘Zounds, brother, is it you? Have you been at the masquerade?’

‘I have,’ replied Abel; ‘and I have seen all that has occurred there.’

THE SUPPER AT VAUXHALL—BEAU VILLIERS’s ATTEMPT TO CARRY OFF HILDA DEFEATED BY RANDULPH

Celebrated throughout Europe, and once esteemed the most delightful place of recreation of the kind, Vauxhall Gardens were in existence considerably more than a century. They were first opened with a ridotto al fresco, about the year 1730, and speedily rising to a high reputation, were enlarged, and laid out in the most superb manner.

A magnificent orchestra, of Gothic form, ornamented with carving and niches, and provided with a fine organ, was erected in the midst of the garden. There was likewise a rotunda, though not of equal dimensions with that of Ranelagh, being only seventy feet in diameter, with a dome-like roof, supported by four handsome Ionic columns, embellished with foliage at the base, while the shafts were wreathed with a Gothic balustrade, representing climbing figures. From the centre depended a magnificent chandelier.

A part of the rotunda, used as a saloon, was decorated with columns, between which were paintings by Hayman. The entrance from the gardens was through a Gothic portal. Moreover, there were pavillions or alcoves, ornamented with paintings, from designs by Hogarth and Hayman, appropriate to the place; each alcove having a table in it capable of accommodating six or eight persons, and leading in an extensive sweep to a magnificent piazza, five hundred feet in length, of Chinese architecture. This semicircle led to a further sweep of pavilions.

A noble gravel walk, nine hundred feet in length, bordered with lofty trees, and terminated by a broad lawn, in which there was a Gothic obelisk, faced the entrance. But the enchantment of the gardens commenced with the moment of their illumination, when upwards of two thousand lamps, lighted almost simultaneously, glimmered through the green leaves of the trees, and shed their radiance on the fairy scene around. This was the grand charm of Vauxhall. One of its minor attractions was a curious piece of machinery representing a miller’s house, a water-wheel, and a cascade, which, at that period of the art, was thought quite marvellous. There were numberless walks and wildernesses in the grounds, and most of the vistas were adorned with statues. In one of them, at a date a little posterior to this history, was a statue of Handel as Orpheus holding a lyre.

It was nearly ten o’clock when Randulph reached the gardens. He proceeded along the grand walk, which was brilliantly illuminated, and filled with company, as far as the obelisk, but he could see nothing of Sir Norfolk or Hilda.

He then turned into one of the side walks, and approached the orchestra, in front of which stood Kitty Conway, preparing to sing. She instantly detected him, and made a slight movement of recognition. As he passed the range of alcoves beneath the orchestra, he perceived Jacob, who instantly came towards him.

‘I’ve found it all out,’ said the porter—‘I knew I should. Mr. Willars *is* the contriver of the plot. He means to carry off Miss Hilda, and has engaged a coach for that purpose, which is stationed at the back o’ the gardens. Luckily, the coachman is a friend o’ mine, and it’s through him I’ve detected the scheme.’

‘But where is your mistress?’ cried Randulph.

‘There,’ replied Jacob, pointing to a party seated at supper beneath the grove of trees in front of the orchestra.

‘I see,’ replied Randulph. ‘By Heaven!’ he cried, ‘Mr. Villiers is coming this way. Two persons stop him. As I live, one of them is his valet, and the other Captain Culpepper, a fellow whom my uncle Trussell told me was a sort of bravo, and would cut any man’s throat for hire. Doubtless they are planning the abduction.

‘You may take your oath of it,’ replied Jacob. ‘I’ll manage to get near ‘em unobserved. Come back to this place when they separate, and you shall know all.’

So saying, he slouched his hat over his eyes, and mingling with the crowd, got within ear-shot of the beau, who, as has been intimated, was addressing Captain Culpepper and Mr. Cripps.

Randulph, meanwhile, felt irresistibly drawn towards the table where Hilda was seated, and as he kept behind the trees, he was not noticed by the party, though he *was* noticed by Kitty Conway, from the orchestra, who, guessing his intention, was so much agitated, that, for the first time in her professional career, she made some false notes in her singing. Hilda's seat was placed against a tree. On her right was Sir Norfolk Salusbury; and on the right of the baronet, Lady Brabazon; next her ladyship was a vacant chair—no doubt just quitted by Beau Villiers; then came Lady Fazakerly; then Sir Bulkeley Price; and lastly, Clementina Brabazon, who occupied the seat on the left of the miser's daughter.

Partly screened by the tree against which Hilda was seated, Randulph bent forward, and breathed her name in the gentlest accents. Hilda heard the whisper, and looking round, beheld the speaker. How much may be conveyed in a glance! She read the intensity of his passion and the depth of his devotion in his eyes, and for the first time returned his gaze with a look of kindness, almost of tenderness; Randulph was transported; he could not resist the impulse that prompted him to advance and take her hand, which she unresistingly yielded to him. All this was the work of a minute; but the action had not been unobserved, either by Kitty Conway or Lady Brabazon. Both had felt a similar pang of jealousy, but revenge instantly occurred to the latter. While Randulph was in the act of raising Hilda's hand to his lips, she touched Sir Norfolk's arm, and, pointing in the direction of the lovers, whispered, 'Look there!'

Sir Norfolk arose, and in a stern and peremptory voice, said to the young man, 'Set free that lady's hand, sir!'

'Not unless she chooses to withdraw it,' replied Randulph.

'I am wholly to blame for this, Sir Norfolk,' said Hilda, withdrawing her hand, and blushing deeply.

'You are pleased to say so, Miss Scarve,' returned Sir Norfolk; 'but the young man has been guilty of a great indecorum, and I shall call him to a strict account for it.'

'I shall be ready to answer the call whenever you please, Sir Norfolk,' rejoined Randulph. 'But this is not the place for menaces. You will do well to look after your charge.'

'I shall take care to keep off impertinents like you,' replied Sir Norfolk.

'Better guard her against other dangers, which require more penetration than you care to practise,' retorted Randulph. 'I have only one answer to make to such insolence,' said Sir Norfolk, 'and that shall be given to-morrow. You shall hear from me, Mr. Crew.'

'As soon as you please, Sir Norfolk,' replied Randulph.

'For my sake, Mr. Crew,' interposed Hilda, 'let this quarrel go no further. I have been the innocent cause of it. Promise me it shall not.'

'I would willingly obey you in anything, Miss Scarve,' replied Randulph; 'but in this case it is not in my power. Farewell!' Fixing one passionate look upon her, he then bowed haughtily to Sir Norfolk, who returned his salutation in kind, and withdrew.

As he walked away, he encountered Beau Villiers, who was returning from his conference. Villiers started on seeing him, but instantly recovered himself, and would have addressed him, but Randulph turned abruptly away.

'What the devil has brought Randulph Crew here?' said Villiers to Sir Singleton, as he joined the party. 'I thought he was at Drury Lane.'

'Devil knows!' cried the old beau. 'But he has made a pretty scene.' And he proceeded to relate what had

occurred. Villiers laughed heartily at the recital.

'I hope old Salusbury will cut his throat,' he said, in an undertone.

'Why, it would be desirable to get him out of the way, certainly,' replied the old beau. 'The women are all mad about him.'

'Especially Kitty Conway,' observed Villiers. 'Odds life! this accounts for her having feinted in the orchestra. I wondered what could be the matter with her, but now I understand it. All is prepared,' he added, in a deep whisper to Lady Brabazon.

'Be careful how you act,' she replied, in a low tone. 'You'll find Sir Norfolk dangerous, and Randulph Crew is on the watch.'

'Fear nothing,' he rejoined, 'I've taken my measures securely. Make towards the dark walk, and contrive to lead him and the others away.'

Lady Brabazon nodded. Soon after this she arose, and, without ceremony, took Sir Norfolk's arm, while Villiers very gallantly offered his to Hilda. The rest of the party paired off in like manner. Leading the way in the direction agreed upon, Lady Brabazon expressed a desire to view the scenic representation of the mill and waterfall before mentioned, which was exhibited in a hollow of the great walk; and they proceeded towards it. Hilda was much displeased by the assiduities of her companion, and she could not help remarking that he contrived, on various pretences, to linger behind the rest of the party, and though she repeatedly urged him to rejoin them, he always made some excuse for not doing so. At last, on pausing longer than usual, they quite lost sight of them, and were hurrying forward at Hilda's urgent request, when, as they passed one of the side vistas, Mr. Cripps, who was standing at the end of it, advanced towards his master.

'Fortunately encountered, sir,' said the valet, bowing; 'Lady Brabazon sent me to look for you, to tell you that she and the party are gone down a walk on the left to see a fine painting in the Chinese pavilion at the end of it. With your permission, I'll show you the way.'

'Oh, yes, let us go to them, by all means,' said Hilda unsuspectingly.

'Lead on, then!' cried the beau, scarcely able to conceal his satisfaction at the success of the scheme.

A few steps brought them to the end of a narrow walk, arched over by trees, the branches of which were so thickly interlaced, that the moonlight could not penetrate through them. Alarmed by its appearance, Hilda drew back. 'How thoughtless of Sir Norfolk to leave me thus!' she exclaimed.

'Why, you are surely not afraid of accompanying me down this walk, Miss Scarve,' laughed the beau. 'My valet is with us, and shall protect you. The Chinese pavilion is not more than a hundred yards off; and the walk, though dark, is not solitary.'

Fancying she perceived some persons within it, Hilda suffered herself to be led on; but she had not advanced many steps when all her uneasiness returned, and she bitterly regretted having assented. But it was too late. The beau's grasp had tightened upon her arm, and he drew her quickly forward, while Mr. Cripps proceeded at the same rapid pace. Once or twice, she thought she heard footsteps behind her, and almost fancied she could distinguish a figure walking near them, but she did not dare to express her terrors.

They had proceeded, so for as she could judge, about a hundred yards, when a sudden turn in the walk disclosed a low hedge; beyond was the open country bathed in moonlight. Coming to a sudden halt, the beau said, in a hurried, but imperative tone—

'Miss Scarve, I love you to desperation, and am determined to make you mine. You are now in my power, and must accompany me.'

'Never,' replied Hilda resolutely. 'And I command you to release me.' She would have screamed for help, if Villiers, who grasped her more tightly, had not taken out his handkerchief, and, placing it over her mouth, prevented her cries. While this was passing, Captain Culpepper emerged from the trees, and hastened with Mr. Cripps towards him.

'Bravo, sir,' cried the captain. 'All goes well this time. We'll have her in the coach in a twinkling.'

'Not so fast, villains!' thundered Randulph, rushing forward. 'I have allowed you to go thus far to see to what lengths your villainy would carry you. But you shall pay dearly for it.'

As he spoke, he rushed to the beau, and snatching Hilda from him, dashed him backwards with such force that he fell upon the ground. Another person likewise came to the rescue. This was Jacob, who, brandishing his cudgel, hurried to the scene of action. On seeing him the valet whipped out his blade, but it was beaten from his grasp, and he only avoided a terrible blow from the cudgel by a nimble leap aside. Without waiting for a second blow, he plunged into the wood, and made his escape.

Captain Culpepper fared no better. Before he could draw his sword, he received a blow on the head that stretched him senseless and bleeding on the ground. Hilda, meantime, had murmured her thanks to her deliverer, who felt, as he pressed her to his bosom, that the whole of his previous anxiety was more than repaid by the unutterable joy of the moment.

'Hilda!' he cried passionately, 'I would risk a thousand lives for you. Forgive me if, at this moment, I dare to ask if I may hope?'

She murmured a faint response in the affirmative.

'I am the happiest of men!' cried Randulph, transported with delight.

'Alas!' exclaimed Hilda, 'my avowal can give you little happiness. I can never be yours.'

'There you speak truth!' cried Villiers, who by this time had regained his feet, and furiously approached them. 'You never shall be his.'

'This is the leader of the gang!' cried Jacob, who having just disposed of Captain Culpepper, now rushed towards the beau, brandishing his cudgel in a formidable manner. 'I'll soon settle him.'

'Leave him alone, Jacob,' cried Randulph authoritatively; 'his punishment belongs to me.'

'You're wrong, sir,' rejoined Jacob, 'but I shan't disobey you. He doesn't deserve to be treated like a gen'l'man.'

‘Oblige me by stepping aside for a moment, Mr. Crew!’ said the beau, with forced politeness. And as Randulph complied, added—‘I shall expect satisfaction for the injury you have here done me.’

‘I might well refuse it,’ replied Randulph; ‘but I am too eager for vengeance myself to do so. You shall have the satisfaction you seek as soon as you please.’

‘To-morrow morning, then, at the earliest hour—at five—in Tothill Fields,’ said Villiers.

‘I will be there,’ replied Randulph. And, quitting the beau, he rejoined Hilda, to whom he offered his arm. They walked down the avenue together, Jacob following close beside them. Hilda allowed her hand to remain in his, while he poured the warmest protestations of attachment into her ear. She did not attempt to check him; and perhaps it would be difficult to say which of the two felt the most regret when that brief dream of happiness was ended, as they emerged into the lighted vista.

Almost immediately on entering the great walk, they met Sir Norfolk and Lady Brabazon and the rest of the party. Her ladyship was at first greatly confused at seeing Randulph, but she instantly guessed what had happened, and tried to put a good face on the matter. Advancing to Hilda, she hastily inquired what had happened; but the latter turned coldly from her, and taking the arm of Sir Norfolk Salusbury, desired to be led home.

‘Your ladyship is perfectly aware of the peril in which I have been placed,’ she said. ‘But I have been delivered from it by the courage and address of Mr. Crew.’

‘Before you go, Miss Scarve,’ said Lady Brabazon, ‘I beseech you to give me some explanation of what has happened.’

‘It must suffice, then, to say, that Mr. Villiers has attempted to carry me off,’ replied Hilda—‘but his purpose has been defeated.’

‘What is this I hear?’ cried Sir Norfolk. ‘Mr. Villiers guilty of so base an attempt? I will go in search of him instantly!’

‘I have undertaken the punishment of Mr. Villiers’s offence, sir,’ said Randulph.

‘You have an account to settle with me yourself, sir,’ rejoined Sir Norfolk sternly.

‘I will settle it at five o’clock to-morrow morning, in Tothill Fields,’ replied Randulph, in a low tone, ‘after I have arranged with Mr. Villiers.’

‘Be it so,’ replied Sir Norfolk. And he strode off with Hilda, followed by Jacob; while Randulph, without staying to exchange a word with Lady Brabazon, walked away in the opposite direction.

THE DUEL IN TOTHILL FIELDS, WESTMINSTER

It was a fresh and beautiful morning, though the sun was scarcely risen, and a thin silvery mist hung like a veil over the smooth surface of the water. Two or three watermen were lying asleep in their tilts, and they roused one of them, who speedily rowed them to the opposite bank, near which they found Mr. Hewitt, with two brace of swords under his arm, in addition to the one by his side, accompanied by a tall stout man, with a red face, dressed in a well-powdered wig, and a suit of purple velvet, and carrying a gold-headed cane, who was introduced as Mr. Molson, the surgeon.

‘You look famously,’ said the fencing-master to Randulph.

‘Follow my instructions, and you’re sure to come off victoriously.’

The party then walked along the Horseferry Road, which speedily brought them to Tothill Fields. They were the first on the ground, and Mr. Hewitt, after looking about for a short time, discovered a spot excellently adapted for the encounters. By this time, the sun having risen, the morning’s early promise of beauty was fully confirmed.

The spot selected for the combats commanded a fine view of Westminster Abbey, which reared its massive body and tall towers above a range of mean habitations masking its base. Cawing jackdaws in clouds wheeled in the sunny air above its pinnacles.

A calmer or more beautiful scene could not be imagined. Randulph’s reflections were interrupted by the approach of two persons from the left of the fields, who proved to be Sir Norfolk Salusbury and Cardwell Firebras. Sir Norfolk bowed stiffly to Randulph, and also to Trussell, and seeing that the beau was not arrived, said to the former, ‘As I am first in the field, I am entitled to the first bout.’

‘I am sorry I cannot oblige you, Sir Norfolk,’ replied Randulph; ‘but I *must* give Mr. Villiers priority.’

‘Well, as you please, sir,’ said the baronet, walking aside.

Cardwell Firebras then advanced to Randulph.

‘I am here as Sir Norfolk’s second,’ he said; ‘but I hope the matter may only serve as a little breathing for you both before breakfast. It is an idle quarrel. We must talk about Villiers’s attempt anon. But here he is.’

As he spoke, two chairs were seen approaching from the lower end of the fields. When they came within a hundred yards of the party they stopped, and from the first issued Mr. Villiers, and from the other Sir Bulkeley Price. Mr. Cripps walked by the side of his master’s chair, bearing a water-bottle and a glass. The new-comers advanced slowly towards the party, and Mr. Villiers, having bowed with much haughtiness to Randulph, gracefully saluted the rest of the company.

‘Have we anything to wait for, gentlemen?’ he asked.

‘Nothing,’ replied Trussell; ‘we are all ready.’

‘To business, then,’ rejoined the beau.

At a motion from his master, Mr. Cripps advanced towards him, and receiving his clouded cane, proceeded to divest him of his coat, leaving him on a light striped silk waistcoat, with sleeves of the same material. Randulph, meantime, threw off his upper garment, and rolled up the shirt sleeve on his right arm. Mr. Hewitt then stepped up to him, and gave him the German sword he had promised; while Mr. Villiers received an exquisitely tempered blade from the valet.

These preparations made, the seconds and bystanders fell back a few paces, Trussell, Firebras, and Hewitt standing on one side, and the two baronets on the other, while the surgeon stood at a little distance in the

rear with Mr. Cripps. Advancing towards each other, the combatants saluted, and in another moment their blades were crossed, and several rapid passes exchanged.

The spectators watched the conflict with the greatest interest, for both parties appeared admirably matched, and the beau's superior skill was counterbalanced by Randulph's extraordinary vigour and quickness. Thrusts were made and parried on both sides, but not a single hit was given, until Randulph, finding his adversary engaged in tierce with a high point, made a firm thrust in carte over the arm, and passed his sword through the fleshy part of the other's shoulder. At this successful hit, the seconds rushed forward, but before they reached the spot, the beau's sword fell from his grasp.

'It is nothing,' said Villiers, surrendering himself to the surgeon, who likewise hurried towards him; 'but I acknowledge myself defeated.'

While the beau's wound was bound up by the surgeon, and he was led to the chair by Mr. Cripps, Sir Norfolk Salusbury, who had been a watchful spectator of the conflict, stepped forward, and said to Randulph —

'Whatever may be the issue of our encounter, Mr. Crew, I shall declare that in the combat which has just taken place, you have conducted yourself like a man of honour and spirit.'

'I am glad to receive the acknowledgment from you, Sir Norfolk,' replied Randulph, bowing.

'Pray do not hurry yourself on my account,' said the baronet courteously.

'I am quite ready for you,' replied Randulph. 'What I have gone through has only served to steady my nerves.'

With the assistance of Firebras, who had come over to him, Sir Norfolk then took off his coat, waistcoat, and shirt, and in this state presented so extraordinary an appearance, that Randulph could scarcely repress a smile. The punctilious old knight's first step was to deliver his sword to Mr. Hewitt, who, on measuring it with that of Randulph, found that it exceeded the latter in length by two inches. He therefore gave him one of his own swords, and Sir Norfolk, beating an appeal with his right foot, bade his youthful opponent come on. Having gone through their salutes with the greatest formality, they commenced the combat with the utmost caution.

Sir Norfolk acted chiefly upon the defensive, and contented himself almost entirely with parrying the thrusts aimed at him. Randulph soon found that he had a formidable antagonist to deal with, and altering his plan, tried to compel him to attack him. He made several feints with great dexterity, and just touched his adversary's breast with an inside thrust in carte, causing a slight effusion of blood.

This had the effect of rousing the old baronet into exertion, and in his turn he became the assailant. He attacked Randulph with such force and fury, that he drove him back several paces. The young man returned to the charge, and pressed his adversary in his turn, so that he regained his ground; but while making a pass in carte, his sword was turned near the wrist by a dexterous and sudden lunge on the part of the baronet, whose point entered his side just below the elbow, and inflicted a severe wound. Maddened by the pain, Randulph continued to fight desperately, but the seconds rushed between the combatants, and interposing their blades, declared that the strife must terminate, and that Sir Norfolk was the victor. The baronet immediately dropped his sword, and Randulph, whose strength had been fast failing, fell to the ground insensible.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE MYSTERIOUS PACKET—TREATS OF THE MISER'S ILLNESS, AND OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE MYSTERIOUS PACKET BY HILDA

His mind lightened, apparently, by what had taken place, Mr. Scarve remained perfectly quiet during the rest of the day, and retired early to rest; but he passed another sleepless night, and was seized with a new panic about his money.

The next day, finding himself unable to go downstairs, he ordered Jacob to bring up all his boxes, and to place them near him. His fever increasing, and assuming somewhat the character of an ague, he consented to have a small fire kept up constantly in his bedroom, and set his chair close beside it. In addition to his dressing-gown he wrapped an old blanket over his shoulders, and tried to keep his lower limbs warm by clothing them in a couple of pairs of worsted hose. His bed being totally destitute of hangings, he had a sheet hung up against the lower end of it to keep off the blaze of the fire, which he fancied disturbed him during the night. These slight comforts were all he permitted himself, and he remained as inflexible as ever on the score of medicine and medical advice.

'A doctor can do no good,' he said to Jacob, who urged him to send for one; 'if abstinence won't cure a man, no physic will.'

'Well, perhaps you're right, sir,' said Jacob; 'but I wish you'd think less o' your worldly affairs, and more o' your sperretual ones. Look at that pictur' over your chimney-piece, and see how Death is takin' away the covetous man's treasures before his very eyes. It might be intended as a warnin' to you.'

But he grew daily worse and worse, and his faculties became more and more enfeebled. He rambled about the house at night, almost in a state of somnambulism, muttering strange things about his treasure, and frequently visiting the cellar where he had buried the chest, unconscious that it was gone. At such times, Jacob constantly followed, to prevent him from doing himself a mischief, but took care not to be seen. His groans and lamentations were pitiful to hear, for he had begun to fancy himself a ruined man, and not even the sight of his money could assure him to the contrary. It was vain to reason with him. The distressing idea was too strongly impressed upon his mind to be removed. His next whim was to have his boxes opened by Hilda, to whom he had entrusted his keys, and he insisted upon certain deeds and papers being read to him, the meaning of which he only very imperfectly comprehended.

One night, when seated by the fireside wrapped in his blanket, and with his feet on a straw hassock, he desired his daughter to read him some more papers. The fire burnt as cheerily as it could in the starveling grate, and Hilda insisting upon having two candles to read by, there was more light than usual. Having got through several mortgages, leases, and bonds, to the innumerable clauses of which he listened in his usual apathetic manner, he suddenly turned round to her, and pointing to the strong box which formerly stood

under his table in the room downstairs, signed to her to open it. Well aware that this box contained his most private papers, Hilda had hitherto avoided meddling with it, but thus enjoined, she no longer hesitated. Placing it on the table, therefore, she took the large bunch of keys, and soon finding the right one, unlocked it.

'Is there anything in particular you wish me to read, dear father?' she said, taking out some papers tied together with red tape. 'Here is a bond for two thousand pounds from George Delahay Villiers, Esquire; another from Lady Brabazon; and another from Sir Bulkeley Price. Shall I read any of them?'

The miser shook his head.

'Here are several bills,' she continued, taking up a roll of smaller papers—'and another bundle of mortgages, will you hear any of them?'

THE DISCOVERY OF THE MYSTERIOUS PACKET

The miser shook his head. The movement was almost mechanical with him.

'Then I will go on,' pursued Hilda. 'Ah! what is this letter with the black seal? Shall I read it?'

The miser made no reply. He was gazing listlessly into the fire, and watching the wreaths of smoke ascend the chimney with childish delight. Hilda, therefore, opened the letter, and found a small memorandum enclosed in it, which she placed upon the table. Trembling with emotion, she then began to read aloud the following lines:—

'"Old and valued Friend—If this should ever meet your eye, I shall have been a year in my grave, for, in accordance with our agreement, it will not be delivered to you until the expiration of that time after my death. The agreement, I need not remind you, was so formed that in case we should both die within the year, the contract entered into by us respecting the marriage of our children should be null and void."'

Here Hilda was startled by a sharp cry from her father, and looking up, she saw that he was staring wildly and inquiringly at her.

'What are you reading?' he asked.

'The letter delivered to you by Randulph Crew,' she replied; 'the letter from his father.'

'And what business have you to read it?' he cried. 'Who gave you leave to do so?'

'Having gone so far, I shall go on,' rejoined Hilda; and she resumed her reading, '"now call upon you to fulfil your share of the contract, and to give your daughter to my son. When we entered into the engagement, I was supposed to be the richer of the two; but I am now sadly reduced, and if my son fulfils his word, and gives up the estates to pay my creditors, he will have little or nothing."'

'He has nothing—he has nothing!' cried the miser, 'I will never give my consent—never!'

'"But under whatever circumstances he may be placed,"' said Hilda, continuing the letter, '"whether he gives up the property or not, I call upon you to fulfil your part of the contract, as I would have fulfilled mine, whatever might have happened to you; and to make, as you have agreed to do, a settlement upon your daughter proportioned to your means."'

'I made no such agreement!' cried the miser; 'it is false—false!'

“‘I enclose a copy of the memorandum,”’ pursued Hilda, still reading; ‘“the original, as you know, is in the possession of Cardwell Firebras. He will see it executed. God so requite you as you shall fulfil your agreement or neglect it!

“‘Randulph Crew.’”

‘And here is the memorandum,’ she added, taking up the smaller piece of paper. ‘It is signed by Randulph Crew and John Scarve.’

‘It is a forgery!’ shrieked the miser.

‘The original is in the possession of Cardwell Firebras,’ said Hilda. ‘Father, you have dealt unjustly by Randulph Crew. You owe him a great reparation, and I trust you will make it.’

‘I owe him nothing,’ replied the miser; ‘it is all a fabrication. Give me the papers, that I may burn them! Give them to me directly.’

And getting up, he staggered towards her, and snatched the letter and memorandum from her, with the intention of throwing them into the fire. But before he could do so, the door opened, and admitted Abel Beechcroft.

RANDULPH DEFENDING HIMSELF AGAINST PHILIP FREWIN AND HIS MYRMIDONS—RANDULPH AGAIN DINES WITH LADY BRABAZON—HE RECEIVES A NOTE FROM KITTY CONWAY, AND IS ASSAULTED BY PHILIP FREWIN AND HIS MYRMIDONS ON HIS WAY TO SUP WITH HER.

The dinner passed off delightfully. It was a small party, consisting of Sir Bulkeley Price, Sir Norfolk Salusbury, and Lady Fazakerly. Everything was done to please Randulph, and the efforts were perfectly successful. The wine flowed freely after dinner—for it was a hard drinking age—and Randulph, who had been exceedingly temperate since the duel, began to feel the effect of it. As he was about to ascend to the drawing-room with the rest of the gentlemen, a note was handed him by a servant, which he instantly opened.

‘What says your billet, nephew?’ inquired Trussell, who was standing by.

‘Oh! it’s from Kitty Conway,’ said Randulph. ‘She has found out, I know not how, that I am here, and wishes me to sup with her to-night for the last time.’

‘And you will go, won’t you?’ said Trussell.

‘Not I,’ replied Randulph irresolutely.

‘Oh yes, you will,’ said Trussell; ‘and I’ll accompany you on your last visit, as I did on the first.’

And they went upstairs laughingly to the drawing-room.

Time passed by so fleetly in the fascinating society of Lady Brabazon, that Randulph was surprised, on glancing at his watch, to find it nearly eleven o’clock. ‘Jacob will be gone,’ he thought, ‘and will think I have forgotten him.’

Hastily taking leave of Lady Brabazon, who chided him playfully for running away so early, and engaged him to call upon her on the following morning, he went downstairs accompanied by Trussell. They found Jacob at the door, and in no very bland humour at having been kept so long.

‘My time’s more than up,’ said the latter gruffly, ‘and I was just goin’ away. What I want to say is this,—I’ve received a hint that master’s miserly nevy, Philip Frewin, is about to decamp with the money I gave Mr. Diggs t’other day. He’s at the Crown Inn, Ox-yard, King Street. Suppose you pay him a visit.’

‘I’ll readily do so to-morrow, Jacob,’ said Randulph; ‘but tonight I’m engaged. Come along with me. My way lies in the same direction as yours, and I want to talk to you about your master and young mistress.’

Jacob complied, and accompanied Randulph to the corner of Hedge Lane, a narrow thoroughfare running into Cockspur Street, where he took his leave. Randulph and his uncle then tracked the lane above mentioned, until they came to Whitcomb Street, where Kitty Conway then resided, having removed from the Hay-market to an old house in the latter street, erected three years after the Great Fire of London—namely, 1669.

Never having visited the pretty actress in her new abode, but having been told in the note that this date, which was inscribed in large figures on a shield over the door, would guide him to it, Randulph was looking out for the house, when he observed three men at a little distance behind him, who seemed to be dogging him and his uncle. The foremost was a tall thin man; the second a stout, square-set personage, attired in a shabby military garb; and the third a great hulking fellow with an atrociously black muzzle, dressed in a blue jacket, short trousers, and woollen cap.

Randulph could not help fancying he had seen these personages before, though he could not tell where, but he did not concern himself much about them, until just as he had discovered Kitty Conway’s dwelling, and was about to knock at the door, he saw that they were quickening their pace towards him. On a nearer approach, he was at no loss to detect Philip Frewin, and in his companions, Captain Culpepper and the fellow who had officiated as Jack-in-the-water at the Folly on the Thames.

‘Here is your man!’ shouted Philip, pointing out Randulph to the others; ‘upon him! don’t leave an unbroken bone in his body.’

Randulph, however, was prepared for the attack. Grasping the stout cane he held in his hand, he dealt Philip so severe a blow on the head with it that he stretched him on his back on the ground. At the same moment, Trussell received a blow from the cudgel of the athletic sailor, which sent him reeling against the door, to the posts of which he clung for support, while the ruffian turning to assault Randulph, encountered an unexpected adversary in the person of Jacob Post.

‘I thought what you were after, you scoundrels, when I saw you doggin’ these gen’l’men,’ cried Jacob; ‘I’m glad I got up in time. Turn your cudgel this way, you black-muzzled hound! Two can play at your game.’

While Jacob and his antagonist rapped away at each other as hard as they could, making the welkin ring with their blows, Randulph turned upon Culpepper, who attempted to draw his sword to assail him, and belaboured him so lustily with his cane, that the latter was soon fain to cry for quarter.

The sound of the cudgels, and the vociferations of the combatants, had alarmed the watch, who sprang their rattles, and hastened to the scene of strife, while Kitty Conway, hearing the noise, opened a window above, and seeing what was passing in the street, added her shrieks to the general clamour. Before, however, the watch could come up, Jacob had brought his athletic antagonist to the ground, and Culpepper had taken to his heels without being able to strike a single blow.

MR. CRIPPS DETECTED—HOW MR. CRIPPS’S MARRIAGE WITH THE WIDOW WAS INTERRUPTED

It was arranged that the ceremony should take place in the upper chamber, where Randulph first breakfasted with the beau, and the clergyman selected to perform it was Doctor Gaynam. Thus nothing seemed wanting on the valet’s part to complete the matter; and late on Wednesday evening he went to Billiter Square, to inform Mrs. Nettleship that all was ready. After a brief visit, for he was somewhat fatigued, he took a tender adieu of her, saying, as he squeezed her hand at parting—

‘We shall meet to-morrow, to part no more!’

The next morning, betimes, Mr. Cripps placed himself under the hands of Antoine, who proceeded to array him in a magnificent suit, which had never been worn by his master, it having only been sent home the night before by Desmartins.

It consisted of a coat of crimson-embossed velvet, richly laced with gold, breeches of the same material, and a white satin waistcoat flowered with gold. To these were added, pink silk hose rolled above the knee, superb diamond buckles, and point-bee cravat, and his master’s handsomest Ramillies periwig, which had been dressed by Peter Pokerich.

Nearly three hours were expended in thus attiring him; and when all was completed, Antoine declared that his master had never looked half so well—a sentiment in which Mr. Cripps, as he complacently surveyed himself in the cheval-glass, entirely concurred.

A little before twelve, Peter Pokerich and the fair Thomasine arrived. The lady was dressed in white and silver, with a fly-cap with long lappets, and looked so excessively pretty that Mr. Cripps could not help wishing she had been the bride instead of Mrs. Nettleship.

While he was welcoming them, and passing some high-flown compliments on the fair Thomasine’s charms, Mr. Jukes was shown into the room; but as he was in his butler’s dress, his nephew did not condescend to speak to him.

Shortly after this Antoine announced that the bride had arrived, and Mr. Cripps hurried downstairs to meet

her.

Mrs. Nettleship, who had bestowed more than ordinary pains upon her person, wore a yellow satin sack embroidered with little dots of gold. She had large pearl earrings, a garnet necklace, and a diamond solitaire. Her complexion, which was naturally rather high, had been corrected by white French powder, and was further set off with abundance of little patches on her checks, neck, and shoulders. She carried a beautiful Indian fan, the handle of which was ornamented with precious stones.

She had arrived in great state, a gilt chariot lined with pale blue satin, hired for her from a coachmaker, by Mr. Rathbone, having formed her conveyance; and she was attended by a couple of footmen out of place, likewise hired for the occasion, habited in superb liveries of sky-blue cloth trimmed with silver, with silver shoulder-knots, and point d'Espagne hats.

Mr. Rathbone, who accompanied her, was dressed in a suit of purple velvet, laced with gold. Almost bewildered by the grandeur she beheld around, the widow was led upstairs by Mr. Cripps; her wonder increased at every step she took. The two long-eared spaniels and the macaw enchanted her; but she actually screamed with delight on beholding the monkey, in his little scarlet coat and bag-wig.

Coffee, chocolate, and champagne were then handed round by Antoine and the page; and while this was going on, the clergyman and his assistant were announced.

Doctor Gaynam had a much more respectable appearance than when he officiated at Sir Singleton Spinke's marriage. He was dressed in his full canonicals, and wore a well-powdered full-bottomed wig, which Peter Pokerich would not have disdained.

Meanwhile Mr. Cripps had seated himself by the bride on one of the couches, and was talking very tenderly to her, when he perceived his uncle approach Mr. Rathbone, as if with the intention of addressing him.

He instantly arose, and taking the latter aside, whispered a few words to him, and then, having accomplished his object, which was to prevent any communication between him and Mr. Jukes, told the clergyman to proceed with the ceremony.

Doctor Gaynam was sipping a glass of usquebaugh, but he hastily gulped it down, and declared himself perfectly ready. He then took a prayer-book from the clerk, and stationed himself between the windows, motioning the others to take their places before him.

MR. CRIPPS DETECTED

All was soon arranged. Peter Pokerich and the fair Thomasine stood near the bride; Mr. Rathbone near the bridegroom; Antoine behind him; while the group was completed by the two Africans, who had mounted a settee in the corner, to obtain a full view of the ceremony. The page was on the floor keeping the dogs quiet, who were quarrelling with the monkey, and biting its tail.

Just as Doctor Gaynam had opened his book, and uttered a preliminary cough, a noise was heard at the door, and Mr. Cripps, turning to see what was the matter, beheld it open, and admit his master.

The valet's alarm was instantly communicated to the whole assemblage. Antoine shrugged his shoulders, and lifted up his hands in affright. The two Africans exchanged glances of alarm, and all eyes were directed

towards the beau, who with angry looks, and grasping his clouded cane, marched towards the valet. He was followed by Lady Brabazon, Sir Bulkeley Price, and Trussell Beechcroft.

Lady Brabazon was attended by her black page, leading her dog by a riband, and this arrival excited the anger of one of the spaniels, whose furious barking set the macaw screaming.

Mr. Cripps presented a very chopfallen appearance. All his assurance deserted him. His hands dropped to his side, and he scarcely dared to meet his master's angry gaze.

'Rascal!' exclaimed Villiers, 'I have at last fairly detected you. I'll teach you to put on my clothes—to assume my name——'

'What!' screamed Mrs. Nettleship, dropping a bottle of salts which she had placed to her nose—'isn't it really himself—isn't it Mr. Willars?'

'No, madam,' replied the beau—'I am Mr. Villiers; and this rascal is only my valet, Crackenthorpe Cripps.'

'This looks like the real gentleman, I must say,' cried Mr. Rathbone, who was thunderstruck with surprise.

'Oh, the villain!—the base deceiver!—the impostor!' shrieked Mrs. Nettleship, clenching her hands, and regarding the valet as if she would annihilate him. 'I'll tear his eyes out! To deceive and expose me in this way—to—to—to—oh! I shall never survive it. Support me!' she added, falling into the arms of the fair Thomasine.

'This is really too bad of you, sir,' said Mr. Cripps, who began to recover himself a little. 'You've deceived *me*. I thought you were at Newmarket.'

'I received information of your practices, rascal,' replied the beau, 'and resolving to see to what extent you carried them, I only went to a short distance from town, and then returned with Sir Bulkeley Price, with whom I have remained till now. And a pretty discovery I've made, i'faith! My house filled with company—my servants turned into your servants—a dinner, supper, confectionery, wine, fruit, musicians, and the devil knows what, ordered at my expense.'

'Well, they're not thrown away, sir,' replied Mr. Cripps.

'You can marry the lady yourself, if you think proper. I've no doubt she'll consent to the exchange, and she has fifty thousand pounds.'

'Oh, the impudence!' exclaimed Mrs. Nettleship, jumping up.

'I'll not be taken in a second time. I'll be revenged on all the sex!'

'You are not aware, Mr. Willars, of the extensive frauds this rascal has practised upon you,' said Mr. Rathbone. 'He has actually signed a bond for five thousand pounds in your name, which I have in my pocket.'

'The devil he has!' exclaimed Villiers.

'But it is of no effect, since the marriage has not taken place,' said Mr. Cripps; 'and if Mr. Villiers chooses to take the lady, he will of course pay you himself.'

In spite of himself, the beau could not help laughing.

'Bad as Mr. Cripps is, he is not worse than the other party,' said Trussell, stepping forward; 'while he was duping them, they tried to dupe him. I understand from Mr. Jukes, who has it on unquestionable authority, that Mrs. Nettleship, so far from being a wealthy widow, is greatly in debt, while her friend there, Mr. Rathbone, hoped to pocket the five thousand pounds secured by the bond he has mentioned.'

'Gadso! then it seems I've had an escape!' cried Mr. Cripps.

'You have,' replied Trussell; 'and your uncle would have told you all this before, if you had not kept him at a distance.'

'I won't stay here to be laughed at!' cried the widow, looking defiance at the jeering countenances around her. 'Mr. Rathbone, your arm. I'll make you marry me yourself, or pay the penalty of the contract,' she added, in a whisper.

'You'll not mistake a valet for a gentleman after this, Monsieur Rathbone,' said Antoine—'ha! ha!'

'You had better go away by the back stairs,' said Trussell, stopping them; 'for there are a couple of officers in the hall waiting to arrest you!'

'Curse on it! I sent them myself!' said Mr. Rathbone, 'to compel the rascal I supposed to be Mr. Wiliars to pay your debts.'

And hurrying out of the room, he acted upon Trussell's suggestion.

'And now, rascal,' said the beau to the valet, 'you are no longer in my service—I discharge you. And you may thank your stars that I let you off so easily.'

'I was about to discharge *you*. sir,' rejoined the valet, impertinently. 'I don't desire to live with a gentleman who takes his servants by surprise. He's as bad as a jealous husband.'

'Stay!' cried the beau—'you don't leave me in that way. Antoine, stand by him. Now, sir, take off that peruke—take it off carefully—now the sword.'

The orders were obeyed, and the wig and sword delivered to the French valet.

'Now take off the coat.' Mr. Cripps complied with a sigh.

'Now the waistcoat.' The order was obeyed.

'Now the cravat.' And it was taken off.

'Now the diamond buckles.'

'Anything else?' inquired Mr. Cripps, as he gave up the buckles. 'Recollect there are ladies in the room, sir.'

'Yes; take yourself off,' rejoined the beau.

Even thus shorn of his splendour, Mr. Cripps maintained his customary assurance. He bowed profoundly and gracefully round, and quitted the room amid the laughter of the company.

ABEL BEECHCROFT DISCOVERING THE MISER IN THE CELLAR—DEATH OF THE MISER

o sooner, however, was one source of dread removed, than another was aroused. His hoards might be gone!

Terrified by this idea, he flew to all his hiding-places, and placed their contents on the table. His dim eyes sparkled with unnatural brilliancy as he gloated over them.

While telling over the pieces, and weighing them in his hand, a new recollection crossed him. Snatching up the candle, he hurried to a small cupboard at one side of the room, at the bottom of which lay a heap of old rags and rubbish, apparently put there out of the way. Hastily removing this dusty pile, some half dozen leathern bags were exposed to view.

'Here they are—here they are!' he exclaimed, with a cry of childish delight. 'Oh, my darlings!—my treasures!—-how glad I am to see you. You give me new life. Talk of physic—pshaw! there is none like gold. The sight of it cures me in an instant. I feel well—quite well; no, not quite,' he added, as a sudden giddiness seized him, and he had to catch at the closet door for support; 'not quite well; but better—much better. What a memory mine must be to forget these bags—each containing two hundred guineas—that's twelve hundred! Twelve hundred guineas! and I had forgotten them. I hope I have not forgotten anything else. Let me see—oh! my head!—my head!' he continued, shaking it mournfully. 'My memory's clean gone!—clean gone! But what shall I do with these bags? they're not safe here. Jacob may find them in clearing the room. I'll hide them in the cellar with the other treasure.'

Utterly forgetful that the chest had been removed, he immediately set about executing his design.

Listening at the door to hear that all was still, he took up two of the bags with the intention of carrying them downstairs; but finding them too heavy for him, he was obliged to content himself with one, and thus in transporting them all to the cellar, he had to perform six journeys. The last had nearly proved fatal, for as he tottered down the cellar steps, he missed his footing, and rolled to the bottom.

With some difficulty he got up again; but heedless of the bruises he had received, he picked up his candle, which was extinguished in the fall, and returned to his bedchamber to light it at the fire. This done, he procured the shovel, and repairing to the cellar commenced his task.

In his present state of debility and exhaustion, it cost him infinite labour to get up the bricks, and he was frequently obliged to desist from the toil and rest himself; but though he shook in every limb—though thick damps burst from every pore, he still persevered.

Having got out the bricks, he carefully scraped off the surface of the loose sandy soil. Surprised that the spade met with no resistance, his alarm was instantly excited, and he plunged it deeply into the ground.

But no chest was there!

For a few minutes he stood transfixed with despair. It never occurred to him that he had himself removed his treasure, but he concluded he had been robbed of it.

At length his anguish found vent in a piercing cry, and he rushed towards the door with the intention of calling up Jacob; but the recollection that forced itself upon him, that the porter was from home, checked him.

Other imperfect ideas thronged upon his bewildered brain. A glimmering recollection of digging up the chest crossed him, but he fancied he must have taken out its contents and buried them deeper in the ground. Somewhat calmed by the idea, he commenced digging anew with frightful ardour, and soon cleared out the soil to nearly the depth of three feet. But as he found nothing, his apprehensions returned with new force and paralysed his efforts.

Throwing aside the spade, he groped about in the sandy soil with his hands, in the hopes of finding a few pieces of gold. A single piece would have satisfied him; but there was none—nothing but little pebbles mixed with the sand. His moans, while thus employed, were truly piteous.

At this juncture, his candle, which had long been expiring in the socket, went out, leaving him in total darkness. A mortal faintness seized him at the same time. He tried to get out of the hole, but fell back with the effort—his head striking against the bricks. He struggled to get up again, but in vain—his limbs refused their office. He tried to cry out for help, but a hollow rattling sound alone issued from his throat.

At length, by a convulsive effort, he did contrive to lift his head from the ground; but that was all he could do. His hands clutched ineffectually at the sandy soil; his frame was powerless; and a stifled groan broke from his lips. But this condition was too horrible for long endurance. The muscles of the neck relaxed; his head fell heavily backwards; and after a gasp or two, respiration ceased.

Thus died this unhappy man, unattended, in a cellar, half entombed in the hole digged as a hiding-place for a portion of his wealth—wealth for which he had sacrificed all his comforts, all his feelings, all his affections, and for which alone of late he had seemed to live. Thus he perished—a fearful example of the effects of the heart-searing vice of which he was the slave and the victim.

After some little consideration, Abel went up alone to the miser's room, and knocking two or three times, and receiving no answer, opened the door. Approaching the bed, he found it empty, with the clothes turned down, as left by the miser; and casting a hurried glance into the closet to satisfy himself that no person was there, he hastily ran downstairs to Hilda, to acquaint her with the alarming discovery he had made.

She was greatly terrified; but after a moment's reflection, suggested that her father might possibly have gone down to the cellar, and related the circumstance which she herself had once witnessed there.

Concurring in the opinion, Abel offered immediately to go in search of him; and dissuading Hilda, who secretly shared his worst apprehensions, from accompanying him, took a candle and descended to the cellar.

As he entered the vault, he indistinctly perceived a ghastly object; and springing forward, held up the light, so as to reveal it more fully. His fancy had not deceived him. There, in a grave—evidently digged by his own hands—lay his old enemy—dead—dead!

While Abel was wrapt in contemplation of this miserable spectacle, and surrendering himself to the thoughts which it inspired, heavy steps were heard behind him, and Jacob rushed into the cellar.

‘Where is he?’ cried the porter, in accents of alarm. ‘Has anything happened? Ha! I see.’

And pushing past Abel Beechcroft, he precipitated himself into the hole with his master.

‘All’s over with him,’ he cried, in a voice of agony and self-reproach, and grasping the cold hand of the corpse. ‘This would never have happened if I had been at home. I’m in a manner his murderer.’

‘Another hand than yours has been at work here, Jacob,’ said Abel; ‘and terrible as your poor master’s fate has been, it may prove a salutary lesson to others. There he lies, who a few hours ago was the possessor of useless thousands, the value of which he knew not—nay, the very existence of which he knew not—for the few bags of gold beside him were the only palpable treasure he owned.

DISPERSION OF THE JACOBITE CLUB, AND DEATH OF CARDWELL FIREBRAS—THE SUMMER-HOUSE AT THE CHEQUERS—THE OLD MILL—THE JACOBITES BETRAYED

A glance satisfied Firebras that all was right, and he returned slowly to the house, the landlord stamping upon the floor as he quitted the building, as a signal to the grenadiers that they might now come forth from their concealment. On reaching the house, Firebras dismissed the landlord, and going up to Randulph, clapped him on the shoulder, and said, ‘I have rare news for you.’

‘And I have rare news for you,’ replied the other.

‘Hear mine first!’ cried Firebras. ‘What if I tell you I am come to offer you your estates and the hand of Hilda, if you join the Jacobite party?’

‘There would be no use in joining you now!’ returned Randulph.

‘You think I’m trifling with you!’ cried Firebras, producing a packet; ‘but this will speak to the contrary. Here is the assignment of your estates to Isaac Isaacs. A receipt in full of all claims is attached to it. The deed is yours, provided you join us.’

‘You amaze me,’ cried Randulph, gazing at the packet; ‘that is unquestionably the deed I executed.’

‘Most certainly it is,’ replied Firebras. ‘It is too long a story to tell you how I became possessed of it,’ he added, replacing it in his pocket, ‘but I have other intelligence for you. Mr. Scarve is dead!’ Randolph uttered an exclamation of surprise.

‘He died last night,’ pursued Firebras, ‘and left his property to Philip Frewin, in case of Hilda’s refusal to marry him.’

‘But Philip may not live to claim the fulfilment of the condition,’ cried Randulph.

‘Philip, also, is dead,’ replied Firebras. And smiling at Randulph’s astonishment, he added, ‘Now you see that all is in your grasp. Fate has given you the lady of your love. I offer you your fortune. Can you refuse to join us?’

‘Mr. Firebras,’ said Randulph, composing himself, ‘this is not the time to put such a question to me.’

‘Pardon me,’ cried Firebras sternly, ‘I must have an answer now—at this moment—or you lose your estates and Hilda for ever. Do not suppose I threaten lightly. I can, and will, make good my words.’

‘You mistake me altogether,’ rejoined Randulph. ‘I mean to say it would be useless for me to assent. You are betrayed.’

‘Betrayed!’ exclaimed Firebras, in a voice of thunder. ‘How! by whom? But this is a mere assertion made to turn me from my purpose.’

‘You will find it too true,’ replied Randulph. ‘The house is environed on all sides by grenadiers.’

‘I have just visited the summer-house,’ said Firebras. ‘There was no one there.’

‘The men were concealed in a lower chamber,’ said Randulph.

‘It’ may be so,’ cried Firebras, with a terrible imprecation. ‘But they shall not take me easily. My pistols! ha! they have been removed! The landlord, then, is our betrayer.’

‘He is,’ replied Randulph. ‘Your only chance of escape is apparent unconsciousness of the design. You might perhaps make good your own retreat—but the others——’

‘I will never desert them,’ said Firebras. ‘There is a boat at hand, for I ordered Jacob Post to be in waiting for you off the summer-house, for another purpose, and I caught a glimpse of him just now. Ha! here come our friends.’ And, as he spoke, Sir Norfolk Salusbury, Sir Bulkeley Price, Father Verselyn, Mr. Travers, and four or five other gentlemen entered the room.

‘Leave us, landlord,’ said Firebras; ‘we will call you when we want you.’ And the order being obeyed, he bolted the door. ‘We are betrayed, gentlemen,’ said Firebras, in a low tone; ‘the house is surrounded by guards, and our retreat is cut off by the river.’

As the words were uttered, the door was tried by some persons without, who, finding it fastened, proceeded to burst it open. ‘To the garden! to the garden!’ cried Firebras. And the party made for the window.

Before, however, the whole of them could pass through it, the officer and a party of grenadiers burst open the door, and endeavoured to seize them.

Firebras and the others, with the exception of Randulph, drew off.

DEATH OF TUE JACOBITE CLUB, AND OF CARDWELL FIREBRAS—DISPERSION

The Miser’s Daughter their swords, and the next instant an encounter took place. But, as all was buried in darkness, little mischief was done. In spite of the efforts of the soldiers to prevent them, five or six of the Jacobites contrived to get across the ditch, and gaining the mill, took shelter within it. They were followed by a party of grenadiers, who fired a few shots at them. Whether the circumstance was the result of accident or design is immaterial, but a few minutes afterwards the mill was found to be on fire. Flames burst from the upper windows, throwing a fierce glare on the groups below, and brightly illumining the towers of Westminster Abbey.

Repeated loud explosions were next heard, threatening each moment to shake the mill to pieces; while some of the unfortunate Jacobites were seen springing from a side window upon the waterwheel, and trying to descend by it. Two others, at the risk of breaking their necks, dropped from a window facing the river, and endeavoured to gain the vessel moored beside it. The fugitives on the water-wheel were held in check by a party of grenadiers, who, having thrown a couple of planks over the little stream, were enabled to reach them.

Meanwhile, favoured by the previous darkness, for all was now as bright as day, Firebras, Salusbury, and the rest of the Jacobites made good their retreat as far as the summer-house. Some of them even managed to force their way to the platform. Here a desperate struggle took place, in which Sir Norfolk was severely wounded in the side by a bayonet. By this time the fire had broken out in the mill, and its glare showed Jacob at a little distance in a skiff. Notwithstanding the menaces of the soldiers, who pointed their guns at him, and threatened to fire if he approached nearer, Jacob pushed resolutely towards the summer-house.

He was now close under the platform, and made signs to Randulph to descend, but the latter would not desert Sir Norfolk, who had been seized by a couple of grenadiers. He threw himself upon the old baronet's captors, and in the struggle that ensued, the railing gave way, precipitating Sir Bulkeley Price, the Jesuit, and the grenadiers into the tide. Before the other soldiers had recovered from their surprise at this occurrence, Randulph had lowered Sir Norfolk into the skiff and sprung in after him.

Jacob's efforts to push off were impeded by Sir Bulkeley Price, who clung to the stern of the skiff, earnestly imploring them to take him in. Father Verselyn caught hold of the steps, and apprehensive of some further disaster, crept along the side of the summer-house, and took refuge in a small sewer, in the slime of which it is supposed he perished, for he was never heard of more.

Meanwhile, Cardwell Firebras—engaged hand to hand with the officer, who, having vainly summoned him to surrender, attacked him in person—had reached the platform. Seeing escape impossible, Firebras, while defending himself against the officer, called to Randulph, whom he descried below, and held out the packet to him. The latter ordered Jacob to keep the skiff steady, and to bring it as near the combatants as possible.

While Jacob obeyed the injunction, a successful thrust from Firebras stretched his adversary upon the platform, but the next moment he received his own death-wound from Long Tom, who stepped forward as his officer fell, and discharged his musket into his breast. With a dying effort, Firebras stretched his hand over the rail, and consigning the packet to Randulph, fell backwards into the water. Possessed of the packet, Randulph turned to the aid of Sir Bulkeley Price, and pulling him into the skiff, Jacob instantly pushed off. Assisted by the stream, which ran very strong, they soon got under the sides of the vessel near the mill, and were sheltered from the fire of the soldiery.

Meanwhile, the conflagration raged fast and furiously, and before the skiff containing the fugitives had got half way to Westminster Bridge, a tremendous explosion took place, scattering the blazing fragments of the old mill far and wide into the river.

RANDOLPH CREW'S MARRIAGE WITH HILDA AT LAMBETH CHURCH—DETAILING AN EVENT WHICH MAY POSSIBLY HAVE BEEN ANTICIPATED

We shall hurry over the intervening period as rapidly as the lovers themselves would have hurried it over, and proceed at once to the wished-for day.

A little before nine o'clock, on this eventful morning, Randulph, who had taken up his quarters with Sir Bulkeley Price, in Saint James's Square, entered the breakfast-room, arrayed in his bridal attire, which had been prepared for him by the skilful hands of Desmartins. He found Sir Bulkeley Price and Sir Norfolk Salusbury at the table—the latter having come up from Wales, whither he had retired to recruit himself after his wound, expressly to attend the ceremony. After receiving their congratulations, Randulph sat down with them, but as he could only swallow a cup of chocolate, he underwent much rallying on his want of appetite.

Breakfast over, the party drove to Whitehall Stairs, where a six-oared barge was in readiness to convey them across the river. Jacob Post was appointed coxswain of this barge, and he wore a waterman's coat of scarlet cloth, and velvet jockey-shaped cap of the same colour. The six rowers were attired in the same livery, and presented a very gay appearance.

The morning was bright and beautiful, and everything seemed to Randulph to participate in his happiness. Each boat that passed them, seeing the purpose on which they were bent, cheered them cordially, and Jacob, who was greatly elated, returned their greetings lustily.

As they passed through Westminster Bridge, and shaped their rapid course to Lambeth, they passed a boat containing a couple in bridal attire, and rowed by watermen with favours in their caps. These were Mr. Rathbone and Mrs. Nettleship, who, having made a composition with their creditors, had come to the conclusion that the best thing they could do would be to fulfil their original agreement, and having heard that Randulph and Hilda were to be united at Lambeth, they determined, like Peter Pokerich and the fair Thomasine, to be married at the same time, and at the same church. The boats cheered each other as they passed. Shortly after this, they came up with a four-oared cutter, in which was a still more gaily dressed bridal party, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Deacle, the fair Thomasine, and Peter Pokerich. The sunny tresses, bright eyes, and dimpling cheeks of the bride attracted Sir Bulkeley's admiration, and he called out to Peter that he ought to consider himself a very happy man; to which the little barber replied, 'that he was the happiest man in the world—Mr. Crew excepted.'

Another cheering passed between the rowers; and Randulph's barge swept over the sparkling waters to the stairs near Lambeth Palace, where he and his companions disembarked.

As Abel Beechcroft was extremely well known and highly respected in the neighbourhood, great preparations were made to lend éclat to his nephew's wedding. A band of music was stationed on a lighter moored near the stairs; and the lighter itself was hung all over with flags and streamers. The band was playing, the bells ringing, and as Randulph leaped ashore, a loud shout from the crowd collected to see him land, welcomed him, while many flattering comments, in no very low key, were made upon his handsome appearance by the female part of the assemblage. In passing towards his uncle's residence, Randulph noticed with interest a troop of pretty little girls with wreaths round their heads, and baskets of flowers in their hands, standing in the path leading to the church.

The party were admitted by Mr. Jukes, whose portly figure was well displayed in an expansive snowy waistcoat, a brown coat, spick and span new for the occasion, and a well-powdered bob-wig. The worthy butler gave Randulph a hearty welcome, and wished him many years of happiness, and having ushered him and the others into the parlour, returned to the hall to Jacob, to give him wedding favours for himself and the watermen, which the other hastened to distribute.

The meeting between the young bride and bridegroom was full of agitated delight. Abel looked perfectly happy, but thoughtful, as did Mrs. Crew, whose emotion found relief in an occasional sigh—not the sigh of misgiving, but the relief of a joy-oppressed heart.

Trussell was, as usual, in very high spirits. He shook Randulph heartily by the hand, wished him all sorts of happiness, and then cordially greeted the Welsh baronets. Besides Mrs. Clinton, there was another young lady present, the daughter of an old friend of Mrs. Crew's, a Miss Wilbraham, who acted as bridesmaid to Hilda.

Soon afterwards, all being in readiness, the bride prepared to set forth under the care of Abel Beechcroft, who, before they quitted the house, in an earnest tone, invoked a blessing on her head and on that of his nephew. And both felt that the blessing of so good a man would not be thrown away.

Cheered by the good wishes and smiling countenances of the groups through which they had passed, and enlivened by the sunshine, the party entered the church. Peter Pokerich and the fair Thomasine, with Mr. Rathbone and Mrs. Nettleship, were already standing beside the altar. The young couple advanced, and took the central place, and the church was instantly crowded with spectators. The service was admirably performed by a venerable clergyman—an old and valued friend of Abel's, and at its close, the concourse issued from the church, dividing into two lines, so as to allow a passage for the wedding train.

As soon as the happy couple were seen issuing hand-in-hand from the Gothic portal of the old church, a loud and joyous shout was raised by the assemblage, a couple of guns were fired on board the lighter, and the church bells rang forth a joyous peal.

It was a heart-cheering sight, and many a breast throbbed, and many an eye grew moist at beholding it. And plenty of spectators there were. The whole of the area before the church was filled, and the windows and towers of the old archiépiscopal palace were studded with faces. The little flower-girls now stepped forward, and strewed their fragrant offerings in the path of the happy pair, who walked on amid the continued cheers of the bystanders.

A little behind Randulph, on the right, walked Trussell, who, excited by the general enthusiasm, had placed his hat on his cane, and waved it to the crowd. Near him came Abel and Miss Wilbraham, the former with a glowing smile on his countenance, such as Mr. Jukes himself never remembered to have witnessed. After them walked Sir Norfolk Salusbury and Mrs. Crew. Next in order came Mr. and Mrs. Pokerich, the latter of whom thought it decorous to turn aside her pretty face from the ardent gaze of her enamoured little lord. Lastly came Mr. and Mrs. Rathbone, whose appearance did not seem greatly to interest the spectators. Sir Bulkeley Price had posted himself on the left of the church door, to watch the wedding train pass by, and to wait the coming forth of the clergyman.

As Randulph advanced through the crowd, Jacob Post stepped forward, and holding out his rough, honest hand to him, said in a voice, the sincerity of which could not be doubted, 'God bless you, sir, and your lovely bride, and may you know years of uninterrupted happiness!'

'And take my blessing too,' said Mr. Jukes, likewise extending his hand. 'An old man's good wishes, though he be but a dependant, can do no harm.'

'I thank you both!' cried Randulph, in a voice of emotion; 'and my wife thanks you too.'

'I do—I do,' she replied; 'nor do I doubt the fulfilment of your wishes.' And as she uttered these words, loud and deafening cheers rent the air, and another discharge of guns took place.

In this way they proceeded to the house, where they were followed by the rest of the party, and presently afterwards by the clergyman and Sir Bulkeley. They then all sat down to an excellent repast.

By desire of his hospitable master, Mr. Jukes invited the other couples and their friends to take refreshments at his house, which, as they delightedly availed themselves of the offer, were served to them in the summer-house overlooking the river; where, while enjoying themselves, they did not forget to drink long life and happiness to Randulph and his bride.

The honeymoon—all the rest of their life was a honeymoon—was passed by the happy couple, in good old-fashioned style, at Lambeth. They then proceeded to Cheshire, accompanied by Trussell and Mrs. Crew, and were soon afterwards followed by Abel, who passed the winter with them. In due time the prognostications of Mr. Jukes were fulfilled, and Abel displayed no objection to the endearments of two great-nieces and a great-nephew.

Appointed Randulph's head-gamekeeper, Jacob Post passed the remainder of his days in the service of his new master. Of the two brothers Beechcroft, Abel was the first to pay the debt of nature, Trussell survived him two or three years, during which he was a great martyr to gout. He never, however, lost his temper, except when young Master Randulph accidentally trod on his toe, and then he would swear a round oath, to frighten him, and try to hit at him with his stick, as testy old gentlemen are wont to do in plays. Randulph and Hilda almost touched the verge of the nineteenth century; and from the anecdotes of one of their descendants, in the third generation, the materials of the present tale have been collected.

HISTORY OF THE IRISH REBELLION IN 1798 AND EMMETT'S INSURRECTION IN 1803

By W. H. Maxwell

Author Of 'The Life Of The Duke Of Wellington,' Etc. Etc.

Take heed
How you awake the deeping sword of war;
We charge you, in the name of God, take heed!
For never two such kingdoms did contend,
Without much fall of blood.

—Shakspeare.

THE CRADLE OF THE REBELLION

The rebellious movement which, in 1798, openly burst into the horrors of civil war, had for years been maturing. The success of the American colonists in defeating the mother country, and the upheaval in France, the great Revolution, proved fatal precedents, and the easily excited minds of the Irish people led the disloyal and disaffected of the sister kingdom to contemplate the forcible carrying out of a similar policy. As will be seen, this fratricidal struggle largely resolved itself into a religious campaign between the Catholic and Protestant sections of the community.

At an early stage of the coming struggle the ulterior objects of the discontented Catholics became perfectly apparent, and some of their warmest advocates took alarm. Sir Hercules Langrish, in his place in the Irish Parliament, thus addressed the House: 'Notwithstanding my prepossessions in favour of the Roman Catholics, I was checked for some time in my ardour to serve them, by reading of late a multitude of publications and paragraphs in the newspapers, and other public prints, circulated *gratis* with the utmost industry, purporting to convey the sentiments of the Catholics. What was their import? They were exhortations to the people never to be satisfied at any concession till the State itself was conceded: they were precautions against public tranquillity; they were invitations to disorder, and covenants of discontent; they were ostentations of strength, rather than solicitations for favour; rather appeals to the power of the people, than applications to the authority of the State; they involved the relief of the Catholic, with the revolution of the Government; and were dissertations for democracy, rather than arguments for toleration.'

APPEAL TO FORCE OF ARMS

Acting, however, on the resolutions they had published, the Committees determined to summon a Convention in imitation of the proceedings which were at the time violently revolutionising France, where the horrors of the great French Rebellion had already unsettled everything in 1789. Circulars were issued by their leaders—representatives elected in the counties—and on the 3rd of December 1792 the 'Back Lane Parliament' commenced its first session in Tailor's Hall.

The daring measure of calling together an assembly, where the delegates debated with closed doors, was followed by a still bolder demonstration. The discontented Romanists resolved upon making an overbearing display of physical force, and declared their intention to arm, to maintain their rights and effect their objects. For this purpose large sums of money were levied, and a body was enrolled in the metropolis under the title of 'The National Guard.' They were arrayed in green uniforms, with a harp without the crown displayed upon the buttons and appointments. Orders were issued for a general muster on the 9th of December; but a proclamation, issued by the Lord Lieutenant, declared the body to be dangerous to the public peace, and directed the authorities to disperse the meeting should it be attempted, and employ force were it required. Many conjectures were hazarded at the time respecting the objects of the movement; some asserted that it was merely intended, by an exhibition of numerical strength, to confirm unsteady friends, and intimidate those who were opposed to them; others, however, ascribed to the National Guards more serious and sanguinary designs—'to seize even then upon the city, and commence at once a civil war.' Certain it is that the Government were led to apprehend that this muster would lead to a revolutionary movement, and, accordingly, the most decisive measures were taken to render it abortive.

'THE UNITED IRISHMEN'

To follow up the progress and proceedings of the 'United Irishmen' throughout that unquiet period which intervened between the lieutenancies of Earls Westmoreland and Camden would be unnecessary. Their civil and military organisation, however, shall be described, and a brief analysis given of their general history from the epoch where we have broken off, when the seeds of disaffection had taken a firm root, and a conspiracy was hatched, which, a few years afterwards, became fatally matured, and exploded in 1798 with portentous violence.

Under the colour of volunteering, the arming and drilling of the malcontents continued. A proclamation, issued by the 11th of March 1793, declared these proceedings illegal, and attached penal consequences to any who should continue them. The preamble ran thus: 'Whereas certain seditious and ill-affected persons, in several parts of the north, particularly in the town of Belfast, have endeavoured to foment and encourage discontent, and to defame the Government and the Parliament, by seditious publications circulated among the people; and that several bodies of men have been collected in armed associations, and have been levied and arrayed in the said town of Belfast; and that arms and gunpowder to a very large amount have been sent thither; and that bodies of men have been drilled and exercised by day and night, under the pretext of obtaining a redress of grievances, though the obvious intention appears to be to overawe the Parliament and the Government, and to dictate to both.'

This and the Gunpowder Act struck heavily at the military organisations of the revolutionists; while the Convention Act, subsequently passed, embarrassed the leaders of the movement so much, that an influential member of the Union, Samuel Neilson, afterwards declared, 'That the bill was calculated to meet every part of the system, and the framer must have had their constitution in his hand when he was devising its provisions.'

'THE DEFENDERS' AND 'ORANGE LODGES'

In 1794 and 1795 outrages by 'the Defenders'—a lawless confederacy, exclusively Catholic—became general, and the Protestants associated for self-defence. A conflict between the rival religionists took place at a spot called 'The Diamond,' in the county of Armagh, in which the Defenders were signally defeated. In commemoration of this success the first Orange Lodge was formed on the 21st of September 1795. The system of Orange Lodges 'was not established in the metropolis, though many years threatened with open rebellion, till the month of January 1798; and many gentlemen of high character and considerable talents placed themselves at its head, to give the institution a proper direction, and to silence the calumnious clamours of traitors against it.' The 'Orange' organisation, slowly but steadily, gained strength, until the body was considered in the north of Ireland so numerous and effective, that General Knox, commanding at the

outbreak in 1798, assured the Government that to these ardent supporters of the constitution the safety of Ulster might be confidently entrusted.

STATE PROSECUTIONS

Early in the annals of the movement several of the revolutionary leaders were subjected to State prosecutions for sedition. Hamilton Rowan was convicted, fined, and imprisoned, but escaped in women's clothes from Newgate; Nappy Tandy placed under bail, but fled the kingdom to avoid a trial; Doctor Drennan was tried and acquitted; Tone expatriated himself, and went with his family to America; but Jackson, an English clergyman, and an envoy from the French Republican Government to the Irish revolutionists, was, on the 23rd of April 1795, capitally convicted of high treason. The unhappy man committed suicide, and poisoned himself in the prisoner's bar, immediately after the foreman had announced him guilty.

The recall of Lord Westmoreland and the appointment of Lord Fitzwilliam as viceroy raised the sinking confidence of the Catholic party as much as it depressed the hopes of the Orangists. The well-known bias of the Earl's political opinions was warmly in favour of fresh and full concessions, and it was supposed that Catholic emancipation was at hand. While the Roman Catholics were buoyant with high expectation, arising from the noble lord's appointment to the Irish lieutenancy, a sudden recall crushed their hopes and augmented their disaffection. From this period their hostility to any monarchical form of government appears to have become inveterate, and the first test required of a United Irishman—one in which a reformed Parliament was distinctly recognised—was instantly exchanged for another purely democratical.

OATH OF THE 'UNITED IRISHMEN'

The initiatory oath taken henceforth by the United Irishmen was thus worded:—'In the awful presence of God, I,... do voluntarily declare that I will persevere in endeavouring to form a brotherhood of affection among Irishmen of *every* religious persuasion, and that I will also persevere in my endeavours to obtain an equal, full, and adequate representation of *all* the people of Ireland. I do further declare, that neither hopes, fears, rewards, or punishments, shall ever induce me, directly or indirectly, to inform or give evidence against any member or members of this or similar societies, for any act or expression of theirs, done or made collectively or individually in and out of this society, in pursuance of the spirit of this obligation.'

FRENCH INVASION INVITED

1796 was not fated to enjoy more tranquillity than the stormy era that preceded it. A compulsory increase of military power, under the provisions of the Militia Bill, increased the general discontent, and the public uneasiness was not abated by a discovery that the French Directory had undertaken to land an invading army to assist the Irish revolutionists, who, on their part, undertook to pay these auxiliaries, and eventually defray the whole expenses of the expedition. Additional powers were now demanded by the Irish Executive, and the Insurrection Act, which had passed in spring, was followed up by a suspension of *habeas corpus* in October.

There is no doubt that these stringent powers were afterwards sadly and frequently abused. Arrests on secret information—districts unnecessarily proclaimed—suspected persons sent, without the shadow of a trial, on board the fleet—military license—arbitrary impressment of beasts of burden for baggage transport—abuse in billeting—a general insolence in the soldiery,—all these formed constant subject for complaint, and, unfortunately, it was seldom made without ample provocation.

These severities were impolitic—they reacted against the Government—and the feelings of the lower orders became exasperated, but not subdued. The most deeply marked of innate feelings in the human breast is resistance to oppression, whether it be real or imaginary. The peasantry assembled by night to drill, or deprive the loyalists of their arms, whilst by day they collected in enormous numbers to harvest the crops of persons imprisoned for political offences, or under the pretext of attending a funeral, or a hurling match, they paraded in military array, with banners and martial music.

While the disaffected thus evinced warm sympathy for their imprisoned friends, reaping their corn and securing their potato crops, they were equally assiduous in shielding them from the penal consequences of their crimes. Bribery and intimidation were the means commonly employed, and should these fail, assassination was not infrequent. This system of terror too frequently sheltered the guilty from the punishment they deserved; for, dreading the consequences of conviction and consequent reprisals, witnesses prevaricated, intimidated jurors were afraid to do their duty, and the criminal escaped.

PROSECUTIONS AND SEARCHES FOR CONCEALED ARMS

In the spring of 1797 General Lake issued a proclamation, directing that all persons unauthorised to keep arms should surrender them forthwith to the proper authorities. It was declared that secret information where weapons were concealed should be liberally rewarded, and the full value of such arms as might be thus recovered should be given to the informant. That the quantity hidden throughout the kingdom was immense may be conceived from the fact that, within the year, and in two provinces alone, Ulster and Leinster, 129,583 weapons of various descriptions were seized or surrendered. In this number there were 48,000 firelocks, 70,000 pikes, and 22 pieces of cannon.

READY FOR THE REBELLION

At this period it is probable that the United Irishmen, in point of numbers and organisation, were almost as formidable as at the moment of the insurrection. In the northern provincial meetings particular inquiries were made of the delegates assembled, 'whether they considered themselves as being sufficiently strong to disarm the military quartered in their respective districts?' and, with a few exceptions, the question received an affirmative reply. Although too successful in corrupting the soldiers, they appear to have made very erroneous calculations as to the number whose allegiance had been shaken. Many, both of the line and the militia, became pretended converts to republicanism merely to obtain the money and entertainment offered liberally by the disaffected. Some regiments, however, became seriously tainted with disloyalty; but, generally, the active measures to counteract seduction adopted by the commanding officers defeated the attempt.

ORGANISATION OF THE REBELS

ith the confidence which strength and union give to those who meditate a revolutionary essay, the leaders of

the disaffected waited with impatience the assistance promised them through their agents by the French Directory.

The military organisation of the United Irishmen was grafted on their elaborately framed civil representative constitution, and was constituted in the following manner:—'The secretary of each subordinate society, composed of twelve members, was appointed their petty or non-commissioned officer. The delegate of five societies to a lower baronial committee was commonly appointed captain of a company, consisting of the five societies who had delegated him, and who made the number of sixty privates; and then the delegate of ten lower baronials to the upper or district committee was commonly appointed colonel of a battalion, which was thus composed of six hundred. The colonels of battalions in each county sent in the names of three persons to the Executive Directory of the Union, one of whom was appointed by them adjutant-general of the county, whose duty it was to receive and communicate military orders from the Executive to the colonels of battalions, and in general to act as officer of the revolutionary staff. They were required to inform themselves of, and report the state of the rebel regiments within their respective districts, of the number of mills, the roads, rivers, bridges, and fords, the military positions, the capacity of the towns and villages to receive troops, to communicate to the Executive every movement of the enemy (meaning the King's troops), to announce the first appearance of their allies (the French invaders), and immediately to collect their forces.

MILITARY PLANS

Besides these a military committee was specially appointed. Its labours were twofold: one was to prepare a plan for a general insurrection unsupported by foreign aid; the other, to devise the best means of co-operation with a French army, in the event of the promised descent being effected on the coast of Ireland. On this event the Directory calculated with such certainty in 1797, that a general order 'to be ready' was issued through the provincial committees. Those who had the means to obtain them were exhorted to procure firearms and ammunition—pikes were to be provided by the lower orders—and throughout three provinces the order was promptly obeyed. The organisation of Connaught was, fortunately, still imperfect, and at the outbreak of the insurrection the western counties were, happily for themselves, quite unprepared for action.

FRENCH INVASION

Passing over the abortive attempt at an invasion arranged between Lord Edward Fitzgerald and General Lazare Hoche in 1796, when, after months of preparations, which—like the Spanish Armada—failed ignominiously, the ships being the victims of the adverse winds, and the commander, Morard de Galles, being watched by the English Admiral Gardiner with a stronger force (18 sail of the line). The equipment, but for unfavourable circumstances, was sufficiently formidable,—the expedition numbering 15 sail of the line, 10 frigates, and 7 transports, which were afterwards augmented,—the whole comprising 15,000 troops, with 40,000 extra stand of arms, a field park of 29 pieces, 60,000 barrels of powder, and 7,000,000 cartridges. The time chosen was just before Christmas.

DISCOMFITED FRENCH FLEET IN BANTRY BAY

On the 26th December—the morning after the French admiral had issued orders to cut the cables and put to sea—Wolf Tone, who was the active spirit of the expedition, thus describes the situation to which the remnant of the invading forces was reduced:—'The morning is now come, the gale continues, and the fog is so thick that we cannot see a ship's length ahead; so here we lie in the utmost uncertainty and anxiety. In all probability we are now left without admiral or general; if so, Cherin will command the troops, and Bedout the fleet; but, at all events, there is an end of the expedition. Certainly we have been persecuted by a strange fatality, from the very night of our departure to this hour. We have lost two commanders-in-chief; of four admirals not one remains; we have lost one ship of the line (the *Séduisant* was shipwrecked) that we know of, and probably many others of which we know nothing; we have been now six days in Bantry Bay, within 500 yards of the shore, without being able to effect a landing; we have been dispersed four times in four days; and at this moment, of 43 sail, of which the expedition consisted, we can muster of all sizes but 14. There only wants our falling in with the English to complete our destruction.'

On the 27th the weather continued stormy. Several ships were obliged to cut and run, the fleet was reduced to 7 sail of the line and a frigate, the troops to 4200 men, and the artillery to two four-pounders. As a last effort this miserable remnant of the expedition determined to seek the Shannon, which had been named as the place of rendezvous. During the whole gale, which blew on the night of the 28th, a sixth separation occurred, and three seventy-fours and a frigate parted company. On the 29th the commodore signalised the other captains to steer for France, and the last ship of an expedition intended to overthrow the British monarchy quitted the shores of Ireland without having landed a single soldier, communicated with the disaffected, or thrown a musket on the shore.

The failure of the first attempt at an invasion was a fatal disappointment to the Irish Unionists; and although hopes were held out that a second armament would be fitted out by the French Directory without delay, the financial and political embarrassments of the Republic gave little promise that it would or could be effected. Hoche, who did not reach France for fifteen days after Grouchy, was nominated soon after to the command of the army of the Sambre and the Meuse. This appointment was heavily regretted by the agents of the United Irishmen, for there is no doubt that Ireland was to Hoche the favourite field of ambition that Egypt was afterwards to Bonaparte; and undoubtedly he was sincere in his expressed intention of making the second effort at invasion, had not his sudden dissolution intervened.

'The affair,' replied he, 'is but suspended. You know our difficulties for money; the repair of our fleet and the necessary preparations require some considerable time, and, in the meantime, there are 15,000 men lying idle below, and, in fact, we cannot even feed them there. The Directory has resolved, in the meantime, to employ them usefully elsewhere, and has accepted my services; but be assured, the moment the enterprise is resumed, that I will return with the first *patrouille* which embarks.'—*General Hoche to Tone.* Hoche sank from rapid consumption, it is said, 19th of September 1797, in command of the united armies of the Rhine and Sambre and Meuse. Adverse fate seemed determined to overwhelm unhappy Ireland, but fortune again miraculously warded off the desperately threatening conjunction of affairs.

From another quarter, however, the Irish revolutionists obtained both sympathy and support. Lewines, the chief agent of the United Irishmen, had been accredited to Spain and Holland, with both powers England being at war, to request assistance. From the Spanish Government he received, generally, an encouraging answer to his memorial; and from the Batavian Executive a positive assurance of prompt and powerful co-operation on the part of the Dutch republicans—a promise they endeavoured to faithfully perform.

It was an awful epoch in British history; and it would have been difficult to say whether at home or abroad the political position of England was more embarrassed and portentous. Conquest had attended the onward march of the Republicans, and victory had succeeded victory; and while Ireland was ready to explode, public confidence was shaken to its centre, for that stay of Britain—her fleet—had failed her in her trying hour, and broken into open mutiny. Such was the ominous aspect, foreign and domestic, when the Batavian Government determined to strike a blow, that, if fortunately delivered, might have gone far to dismember that island empire which had wrung from the Dutch the dominion of the seas.

Holland was a power to be dreaded. France threatened and intended a descent, but she possessed the wish, rather than the power to effect it. Her naval executive was wretchedly defective, her marine and monetary resources limited and precarious; and while the dockyard authorities declared that eight weeks would be sufficient to fit out a second expedition, it was probable—and so it proved—that as many months must elapse before a fleet could be sent afloat. With the Dutch Republic matters were in a different state. In the Texel five-and-twenty line-of-battle ships and frigates were lying manned, equipped, and ready for sea; 15,000 troops were ordered for instant embarkation; and with a quantity of spare arms, a large artillery force, and plenty of money to subsist the troops when landed, the Batavian armament undauntedly determined to push out of harbour with the first fair wind, elude Admiral Warren and his blockading squadron—if they could—or, if intercepted, stand an action with the British admiral's forces, and thus endeavour to redeem the honour of a flag that once had been feared and respected.

The Dutch Government proved their sincerity of intention by the selection they made for the command of the expedition. The naval department was entrusted to De Winter, an officer of distinguished reputation, while the troops were placed under the direction of Daendels, a man justly considered to be the best general in the service of the Republic. The feelings of the Batavian Executive towards the Irish revolutionists were ardent and disinterested, and nothing could surpass the enthusiastic spirit which pervaded both the military and marine.

Tone relates in his *Memoirs*:—'General Daendels showed me to-day his instructions from the Dutch Government. They are fair and honest, and I have no doubt he will act up to them. The spirit of them is, always to maintain the character of a faithful ally, and not to interfere in the domestic concerns of the people; to aid them, by every means in his power, to establish their liberty and independence, and to expect no condition in return, but that we should throw off the English yoke, and that, when all was settled on that score, we should arrange our future commerce with the Dutch Republic on the basis of reciprocal advantage and accommodation.'

But it would appear that against invasive efforts fortune had declared herself an enemy, and the same wind that prevented the landing of a French armament as obstinately resisted the sailing of the Dutch one. Day after day fifteen sail-of-the-line, eight frigates, and thirty transports lay at single anchor, locked up in the Texel, while a breeze, any point to northward, would have carried them to sea with eighteen battalions of infantry, four of chasseurs, eight squadrons of cavalry, and eleven companies of artillery—the whole forming an efficient and well-appointed army of 14,000 men, a force more than sufficient, under happy auspices, to have changed an empire's fate.

Foul winds continued. The spirit of troops cooped up a month on shipboard gradually abated, and golden opportunities slipped away. Even the most sanguine began to doubt, a coolness arose between the commanders, and De Winter at last memorialised his Government, and intimated that the expedition, as far as its original destination was concerned, must be abandoned for the present. The document stated that July had been named for the attempt, that on the 9th all was ready, that the English fleet (the forces of which he rightly foresaw, would have to be faced) at that time consisted, at the very most, of thirteen sail-of-the-line, which could not make any effectual opposition, that contrary winds having prevailed ever since, without an hour's intermission, the enemy had had time to reinforce himself to the number of seventeen sail-of-the-line, so that he had now a superiority in force over the Dutch fleet, which, of course, rendered the issue of an engagement, to a certain degree, doubtful; that, by this unforeseen delay, which might, and probably would, continue still longer, a great additional consumption of provisions had taken place, so that in a very few days there would be barely sufficient for the voyage north-about; that the season was now rapidly passing away, and, if the foul wind continued a fortnight longer, the voyage would become highly dangerous, if not utterly impracticable, with a fleet encumbered with so many transports, and amounting to nearly seventy sail of all kinds, and that, in consequence, even a successful action with the English would not ensure the success of the enterprise, which the very season would negative; that for all these reasons, his opinion was that the present plan was no longer advisable, and in consequence he proposed that it should be industriously published that the expedition was given up; that the troops should be disembarked, except from 2500 to 3000 men of the *élite* of the army, who with twenty or thirty pieces of artillery, and all the arms and ammunition, should remain on board the frigates and one or two of the fastest-sailing transports; that as the vigilance of the enemy would probably be relaxed in consequence, this flotilla should profit by the first favourable moment to put to sea, and push for their original destination, where they should land the men, arms, and artillery, and he would charge himself with the execution of this plan; that by this means, even if they failed, the Republic would be at no very great loss, and if they succeeded must gain exceedingly; that she would preserve her grand fleet, which was now her last stake, and, during the winter, would be able to augment it, so as to open the next campaign—in case peace was not made *ad interim*—with twenty sail-of-the-line in the North Sea. These were most certainly very strong reasons, and, unfortunately for the would-be invaders, the wind gave them every hour fresh weight.

FATE OF THE DUTCH FLEET

In accordance with De Winter's advice the troops were landed, and the Dutch attempt upon Ireland virtually abandoned; for although it was ordered that the invading army should be so cantoned that it could be instantly concentrated for embarkation, its future destination was changed, and the north of Scotland was declared a fitter place for the attempt than the Irish coast. But these designs were never carried out, for the excellent reason that the British North Sea fleet under Duncan's leadership was prepared to intervene. On the 11th October 1797 De Winter put to sea, and the memorable action of Camperdown resulted. Both fleets in numbers, men, and metal were much the same, and though the Dutch vessels were skilfully handled and most gallantly fought, their defeat was so decisive, that with this crushing blow the marine power of the States of Holland was finally extinguished.

DESPAIR OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

The failure of the Batavian Government in giving their promised assistance to the Irish malcontents proved in many respects most injurious to the success of the conspiracy. The ardent expectations of succour from abroad, so long and eagerly expected, vanished with the crowning victory of Camperdown. This heavy and irremediable disaster abated the confidence of the most sanguine, distracted the deliberations of the leaders, and hurried the lower classes into overt acts of violence which irritated the royalists and provoked a fearful retaliation. Indeed, on both sides exasperated feelings had produced cruelty, and, as a consequence, barbarous reaction. The troops, with the impunity attendant upon martial law, made a plea of disaffection the excuse for licence and exaction; and upon the innocent and guilty, too frequently, the vengeance of the Executive was indiscriminately directed. The summary infliction of corporal and capital punishment—the destruction of property—the severity attached to charges of sedition, when secret enmity and vile espionage would bring ruin on the unoffending, and suspicion was held synonymous with guilt,—all these severities, equally illegal and injudicious, kindled a ferocity of feeling between parties which milder measures might have allayed, accustomed men to acts of violence from which otherwise they would have revolted, and reconciled them to the terrible barbarities attendant upon civil war.

INFLAMMATORY PUBLICATIONS

Nor is it to be denied that cruelty in the authorities found much extenuation in the crimes committed by the disaffected. That accursed crime, so alien to British feeling, became every day more prevalent, and secret assassination was perpetrated by the ignorant, and encouraged by the most infamous prints which ever damned a cause. *The Union Star* headed its columns with a broad encouragement to murder, and individuals were regularly branded for the knife; *The Press* was equally violent, but its sedition was modified—the treasonable doctrines of the one being levelled generally against public securities, while a malignant hatred to the person inculcated in the leading article of the other the assassination of those who were obnoxious. Both these inflammatory prints were eventually prosecuted and put down; and while no publications ever called for the intervention of the law-officers more imperiously, in justice we must add that none were more unconstitutionally disposed of—a military mob demolished the one, the civil authorities arbitrarily suppressed the other.

To the cause which they ardently but unwisely advocated these prints were fatally mischievous. There were two great parties in the kingdom: one—the Roman Catholics—had serious reasons for discontent, for statutory enactments excluded them from civil rights; with the Protestants it was different—they had much to reform, but nothing to obtain. In the north of Ireland and part of Leinster, as it does at present, the wealth, the moral character, and hence the moral influence of the kingdom, might be considered as being concentrated; and, as it will ever be, the intelligence of the minor section of the Irish people overbalanced the physical superiority of the other. To one object—wild and imaginative—the efforts of the Protestant party were directed; to another—vague, bigoted, and impracticable—the Romanists addressed themselves. Hence the combination of interests and feelings was easily disorganised, and within six months after an eternity of union had been announced as existing between religionists virulently opposed, the discrepancy of intentions had severed the Roman Catholics and Dissenters so completely, that the conviction exists, had the issue come to trial, nineteen out of twenty of the northern republicans would have eventually joined the royal banner.

Musgrave, in his *Memoirs*, has pointed out this logical conclusion:—'When Dickey, a rebel leader and a Dissenter, was on the point of being hanged at Belfast, he declared that the eyes of Presbyterians had been opened too late; and that they were convinced by the massacres perpetrated by the Romanists in the province of Leinster, that they must have had to contend with them if they had succeeded in overturning the constitution.'

The secret informer played a most important part in this fearsome history from its commencement; of these—the most important—because occupying the most influential position, was Mr. Thomas Reynolds, of the county of Kildare, who had acquired a landed property at Kilkea Castle.

Lord Edward Fitzgerald and Oliver Bond, two leaders in the conspiracy, having, for the reason that he possessed considerable influence amongst the Romanists, considered Reynolds a proper person to assist in forwarding their treasonable designs, practised every art of seduction to attach him to their cause; and having at last succeeded, he was sworn a United Irishman at the house of Oliver Bond in Dublin in the beginning of the year 1797, was induced to accept the commission of colonel, the offices of treasurer and representative of the county of Kildare, and at last that of delegate for the province of Leinster.

THE LEADERS OF THE CONSPIRACY BETRAYED TO THE GOVERNMENT

Soon after he was raised to this elevated situation in the Union, having discovered that the conspirators, instead of intending to reform the abuses of the State, and to abolish all religious distinctions, which was their professed object at first, meditated the subversion of the constitution, the massacre of the leading members of Government, and of such persons as should oppose their designs, he determined to defeat them by embracing the first opportunity of communicating them to some person in whom he could confide.

REVELATIONS OF THE SECRET TRAITOR-INFORMER

e had a very great friendship and respect for Mr. Cope, an eminent merchant of the city of Dublin, who, having lamented to him in the course of conversation the crimes and atrocities which were constantly

He committed, and which were undoubted symptoms of an approaching rebellion, Mr. Reynolds, upon whom his conversation had made a very deep impression, said, 'That he knew a person connected with the United Irishmen, who, he believed, would defeat their nefarious projects by communicating them to Government, in order to make an atonement for the crime he had committed in joining them.' Mr. Cope assured him that such a person would obtain the highest honours and pecuniary rewards that the administration could confer, and that he would be admired and applauded by the most virtuous and valuable portion of society. But Mr. Reynolds said that nothing could tempt him to come forward and avow himself. However, after the most earnest and pressing solicitations repeatedly made on the part of Mr. Cope, for whom he had filial reverence, he said that his friend would appear in person and disclose the particulars of the plot on the following conditions:—"That he should not be called upon in person to prosecute any United Irishmen; that the channel through which the information came should be kept a secret, at least for a time; that, as his life would be in danger upon its being known, and he must leave the country and go to England till matters were settled—which would derange his affairs, and put him to considerable expense—he expected to receive some compensation. Mr. Cope then told him that he might draw on him for any sum not exceeding five hundred guineas. On that he told Mr. Cope that the Leinster delegates were to meet at Oliver Bond's on the 12th of March to concert measures for an insurrection."

It will be seen that, to pierce the conspiracy, no common informer was likely to penetrate the secrets of the confederacy. Save to a chosen few the higher executive was veiled in mystery—the revelations of obscure and ordinary traitors would therefore prove unavailing—and he who could denounce the Secret Directory must be a member himself.

The traitor who had betrayed the elements of this huge conspiracy found his confidences well kept. Documents, whose authenticity cannot be called in question, are in existence, and furnish irrefragable proof of Mr. Thomas Reynolds having received for his disclosures not £500 only, but the sum of £5000 in four payments, at the following dates, and in the following amounts:—

1798. Sept. 29, Mr. T. Reynolds received....£1000

Nov. 16.....£2000

1799-Jan. 19.....£1000

March,,.....£1000

£5000

In all these curious disclosures is revealed the fact that, owing to the sensitive conscience of the informer, he in all received a very comfortable sum—including an annuity of £1000 per annum.

Moreover, on the 14th of June 1799 Mr. Reynolds received his annuity of £1000, 'in full to the 25th March 1799; from which period till his death, the 18th of August 1836, his pension continued to be paid to him.

The amount of that pension was £1000 Irish, or £920 British, per annum, he received for a term of thirty-seven years.

The gross amount for the above period, at £920 per annum, is £34,040

Gratuity before the trials of Bond, M'Cann, and Byrne £500

Gratuities between Sept. 1798, and 4th March 1799 £5,000

Consulship at Lisbon, four years at £1,400 per annum £5,600

Consulship at Iceland, two year at £300.....£600

.....£45,740

THE HEADS OF THE CONSPIRACY SWEPT OFF

The result of Reynolds's information was the arrest of the whole provincial committee, consisting of fifteen members, delegates from different societies. They had assembled at the house of Oliver Bond, in Bridge Street, on the 12th of March, and were completely surprised by Captain Swan, attended by a dozen soldiers in coloured clothes. Several important papers were found upon the persons of the conspirators, some written by Byrne, and others by John M'Cann—and both these unfortunate men subsequently underwent the extreme penalty of the law.

The arrest at Bond's was followed up by many others, and most of the Leinster delegates were promptly seized and imprisoned, while others were denounced. Among the former were Emmett, Sweetman, Jackson, and Macnevin; among the latter Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Sampson, and McCormick.

The consequences of the fatal occurrence can be readily imagined. The loss of their leaders created confusion and distrust—that they had been betrayed was evident, and yet none could point to the betrayer. No wonder that men implicated in the conspiracy trembled for themselves—treason was abroad—and what added terror to that knowledge was that none could name the individual, and hence all was vague apprehension, more heart depressing than actual but open danger.

The effect of this fetal discovery was equally injurious to the interests of the Union abroad.

WOLF TONE'S DIARY

In his 'Diary' Tone records:—'I have read news of the most disastrous and afflicting kind, as well for me individually as for the country at large. The English Government has arrested the whole committee of United Irishmen for the province of Leinster, including almost every man I know and esteem in the city of Dublin. It is by far the most terrible blow which the cause of liberty in Ireland has yet sustained. I know not whether in the whole party it would be possible to replace the energy, talents, and integrity of which we are deprived by this most unfortunate of events. I have not received such a shock from all that has passed since I left Ireland. What a triumph at this moment for Fitzgibbon (Lord Clare)! These arrestations following so close on that of O'Connor, give rise to very strong suspicions of treachery on my mind. I cannot bear to write or think longer on this dreadful event.'

BELATED PRECAUTIONS

The first care of such of the leaders as remained at liberty was to fill up the vacancies in their executive; and while the shaken confidence of the Unionists should be re-established they endeavoured, by a cautionary address, to repress any premature explosion. This diplomatic document thus concludes:—'This recital, Irishmen, is meant to guard those of you who are remote from the scene of the late events against the consequences of misrepresentation and mistake. The most unfounded rumours have been set afloat, fabricated for the double purpose of delusion and intimidation. Your enemies talk of treachery in the vain and fallacious hope of creating it; but you, who scorn equally to be their dupe or slaves, will meet their forgeries with dignified contempt, incapable of being either goaded into untimely violence, or sunk into pusillanimous despondency. Be firm, Irishmen, but be cool and cautious; be patient yet awhile; trust to no unauthorised communications; and above all, we warn you—again and again we warn you—against doing the work of your tyrants, by premature, by partial, or divided exertion. If Ireland shall be forced to throw away the scabbard, let it be at her own time, not theirs.'

DESPAIR OVER WRECKED OPPORTUNITIES

A month wore on. Every day the chances of a successful rising became more gloomy; disclosures were hourly made; and it became quite evident to the revolutionary leaders that the Government had penetrated their most secret plans, and were prepared to crush the conspiracy. As the arms and ammunition of the malcontents were detected and seized, the hands of the Executive were proportionately strengthened as the offensive power of the disaffected became less formidable. Supplementary corps of loyalists were armed and embodied; and those to whom the destinies of Ireland were entrusted assumed now an air of stern determination equally inflexible and appalling to the guilty. Daily a French invasion appeared a more improbable event. At last the truth became apparent that it was hopeless to expect foreign assistance; and the blow must be struck by the conspirators, unaided and alone.

THE DATE OF RISING FIXED

Accordingly, the night of the 23rd May was appointed for a general insurrection; and the signal for a rising *en mane* was to be the destruction or detention of the mail coaches after they had left the metropolis, while the counties and districts were left generally to the direction of local leaders; the insurrectionary movement in the capital embraced a simultaneous attack on the castle, the prisons, and military posts, the artillery barracks at Chapelizod, and the camp at Laughlinstown, seven miles south of Dublin.

Some of the foreknowledge of the movements of the United Irishmen was evidently furnished by the informer Reynolds, who, strange to relate, had successfully eluded detection. In making his terms with the Government the traitor had prudently insisted upon his condition, that the channels through which the information came should remain for some time a secret; a stipulation in which his employers were no less interested than himself, as, by wearing still the mask of a friend, he could retain still the confidence of those he was betraying, and whatever victims his first aim had missed might, from the same ambush, be made sure of afterwards. In pursuance of this policy we find him, as he himself admits, paying a friendly visit to Mrs. Bond, two or three days after he had marked her husband for death; and even to Lord Fitzgerald—whose place of concealment at this moment was kept secret, as we shall see, from his own family—Reynolds, under the trust reposed in him, found ready admittance. Lord Edward was at once the head and arm of the seditious movement.

THE UNFORTUNATE LORD EDWARD FITZGERALD

The name of Lord Edward stands out as that of the most conspicuous actor in this lurid history of the Irish Rebellion, as a personage whose birth, talents, energies, and enthusiasm obtained for him an unhappy pre-eminence. The fifth son of the Duke of Leinster, Lord Edward was nobly born by the maternal side, his mother being the daughter of Charles, Duke of Richmond. When Lord Edward was ten years old the Duke of Leinster died, and after a brief widowhood his relict remarried, and removing to France, there Lord Edward commenced his education, which appears to have been hurried and imperfect. Subsequently, after remaining for a short time with the Sussex militia, he obtained a commission in the line, joined the 96th regiment in Ireland; exchanged into the 19th, embarked for America, with which England was then at war, and, landing at Charlestown, was placed under the command of Lord Rawdon (Lord Moira), and afterwards attached to the staff of that spirited commander.

Here the young soldier had an opportunity of witnessing field service for the first time, and in one important branch of the profession—outpost duty—it afforded frequent opportunities of exhibiting tact and address, as well as personal courage. With these qualities Lord Edward was abundantly gifted, and apparently a contempt for danger, carried to rashness. Owing to ill-health Lord Rawdon left Carolina for England, and Lord Edward rejoined his regiment (the 19th), when Greene attacked Stuart at Eutaw Springs, the result of which was a gallant and very doubtful action. Lord Edward, with his accustomed daring, was closely engaged, wounded in the leg, and left upon the field.

In this helpless situation he was found by a poor negro, who carried him off on his back to his hut, and there nursed him most tenderly till he was well enough of his wound to bear removing to Charlestown. The negro was the 'faithful' Tony, whom in gratitude for the honest creature's kindness he now took into his service, and who continued devotedly attached to his noble master to the premature ending of his lordship's career.

After the surrender of Cornwallis's army at York Town, Lord Edward joined the staff of General O'Hara at St. Lucia; but, after a few months, he left the West Indies, returned home, and was nominated by his brother, the Duke of Leinster, member for the borough of Athy. Several years passed; his career appears to have been unsettled and undetermined—one while studying professionally at Woolwich, the next visiting Gibraltar and Lisbon, and subsequently the principal cities of Spain. In June 1788 he returned again to America, landed at Halifax, and proceeded to join the 54th regiment, quartered at St. John's; and held a field officer's rank in the same corps, in which the celebrated political writer, Cobbett, was then acting as sergeant-major.

Lord Edward appears—according to Moore's *Life and Death*—to have been a man of nervous excitability. We find him occasionally enacting 'Love's Slave'—and, with all the ardour and inconstancy of Romeo,

forgetting Rosalind for Juliet. Had circumstances permitted the chances are that he would have changed his military profession for the calm enjoyments of domestic happiness. But they did not—and hence, probably, 'an uneasy mind' sent him a second time across the Atlantic to seek, in savage or primaeval life, employment for an ardent and impassioned spirit, which, under more fortunate circumstances, would have sought domestic and cultivated enjoyments.

The active and careless character of his pursuits may be collected from an extract from one of numerous letters to his mother:—'I have been out hunting, and like it very much—it makes me *un peu sauvage*, to be sure. You may guess how eager I am to try if I like the woods in winter as well as in summer. I believe I shall never again be prevailed on to live in a house. I long to teach you all how to make a good spruce bed. Three of the coldest nights we have had yet I slept in the woods with only one blanket, and was just as comfortable as in a room. It was in a party with General Carleton, we went about twenty miles from this to look at a fine tract of land that had been passed over in winter. You may guess how I enjoyed this expedition, being where, in all probability, there had never been but one person before.'

This excursion, no doubt, suggested to Lord Edward his subsequent overland journey direct from Fredericstown to Quebec.

To modern adventurers the exploit would appear a commonplace essay, but at the time the expedition was devised and accomplished, few excepting an Indian or backwoodsman would have voluntarily undergone the real and imaginary hardships of the journey. After a thirty days' pilgrimage the young adventurer reached Quebec. One incident written to his mother is characteristic: 'I must tell you a little more of the journey. After making the river we fell in with some savages, and travelled with them to Quebec; they were very kind to us, and said we were "all one brother"—all "one Indian." They fed us the whole time we were with them. You would have laughed to have seen me carrying an old squaw's pack, which was so heavy I could hardly waddle under it. However, I was well paid whenever we stopped, for she always gave me the best bits, and most soup, and took as much care of me as if I had been her own son; in short I was quite *l'enfant chéri*'

A final expedition he made *via* Detroit and Michilimackinack to New Orleans, seems to have confirmed his Indian predilections, and led to his adoption into the Bear Tribe,—an honour upon which Lord Edward prided himself no little. From New Orleans he embarked for England, and for the three years succeeding his career was passed in England and Ireland without important occurrences to mark them, beyond the outbreak of the great French Revolution, that prodigious social and political upheaval which turned the heads of Europe. This terrible cataclysm intoxicated the Irish sympathisers, who, valorous for liberty, were blind to its excesses. This *bouleversement* fascinated the imaginations of the men who aspired to copy its progressive developments, and to leave their record heroically impressed upon Irish history; the Emmett brothers, Wolf Tone, the brothers Sheares, Lord Edward himself, and many other enthusiasts—the guiding spirits of the Irish insurrection—drew their inspirations from the Gallic font. They were friends and developed into fellow-conspirators. For instance, take the names last mentioned. Henry and John Sheares were brothers, and sons of a banker in Cork. They had received a liberal education, and both had been called to the Irish bar. Travelling, during the wildest period of the French Revolution, they became residents in Paris while the reign of terror was at its height, and, as it has been stated, witnessed the horrible scenes enacted daily under the tyranny of Robespierre, with an apathy from which accomplished and civilised gentlemen should have recoiled. The fearless manner in which their political opinions were promulgated exposed them to the suspicions of the Executive, and shortly before the Irish conspiracy broke out,—thanks to the revelations on the part of the traitor-informer, which at one swoop cut off the entire corps of directing spirits—they were arrested and confined.

Lord Edward, more practical than his philosophic friends, had notoriously learned to act while they were 'philosophising;' he too had been educated in the school of the French Revolution, with the arch leading spirit of which violent movement he had connected himself by family ties. When France declared herself a republic in 1792, and the Duke of Orleans—'the enigma of the revolution,' as Lamartine pronounces him—had voted for the death of the king, his kinsman, possibly realising a similar fate overhung his own head, Lord Edward was too enthusiastic to lose such a spectacle of moral and political excitement, and hastened over to Paris without communicating his intentions even to the Duchess, and to that fatal visit, as his biographer Moore avers, his subsequent misfortunes must be traced. His wild and hasty attachment to French principles—for he became almost a personage of the French Revolution, and is mentioned in Lamartine's *History*—his introduction to Madame de Sillery (de Genlis), *gouvernante* to the Orleans children, his falling desperately in love with the notoriously bewitching and *spirituelle* 'Pamela,' natural daughter of the *Egalité* Duke of Orleans by the lady *gouvernante* already mentioned, are matters of history. Pamela, on all accounts, was sufficiently fascinating to account for so romantic an attachment, and Lord Edward was in himself a perfect hero of romance, and was made all the more interesting, even in France, by this tender episode. After this union his dismissal from the British army, his return to Ireland with his bride, the surpassingly charming Frenchwoman, are merely personal details. Had not Lord Edward been steeped in the practical development of the Irish rebellion, his political career would have subsided in favour of that domestic felicity of which he sent his mother the following artless and sympathetic picture:—

'My little place is much improved by a few things I have done, and by all *my planting*; by the bye, I doubt if I told you of my flower garden,—I got a great deal from Frescati. I have been at Kildare since Pam's lying-in, and it looked delightful, though all the leaves were off the trees, but so comfortable and snug. I think I shall pass a delightful winter there. I have got two fine large clumps of turf, which look both comfortable and pretty. I have paled in my little flower-garden before my hall door with a lath paling like the cottage, and stuck it full of roses, sweetbriar, honeysuckles, and Spanish broom. I have got all my beds ready for my flowers; so you may guess how I long to be down to plant them. The little fellow will be a great addition to the party. I think when I am down there with Pam and child of a blustering evening, with a good turf fire and a pleasant book, coming in after seeing my poultry put up, my garden settled, flower beds and plants covered for fear of frost,—the place looking comfortable and taken care of, I shall be as happy as possible; and sure I am I shall regret nothing but not being nearer my dearest mother, and her not being of our party. It is indeed a drawback, and a great one, our not being more together. Dear Malvern! how pleasant we were there; you

can’t think how this time of year puts me in mind of it. Love always. Your affectionate son, E. F.’

Moore significantly comments: ‘In reading these simple and, to an almost feminine degree, fond letters, it is impossible not to feel how strange and touching is the contrast between those pictures of a happy home which they so unaffectedly exhibit, and that dark and troubled sea of conspiracy and revolt into which the amiable writer of them so soon afterwards plunged; nor can we easily bring ourselves to believe that the joyous tenant of this little Lodge, the happy husband and father, dividing the day between his child and his flowers, could be the same man who, but a year or two after, placed himself at the head of the rebel myriads, negotiated on the frontiers of France for an alliance against England, and but seldom laid down his head on his pillow at night without a prospect of being summoned thence to the scaffold or the field.’

At the crisis of the conspiracy the hopes of the disaffected almost centred in this individual, who has left a memory behind which commands the admiration of many—the pity, I believe, of all. His earlier history we have already sketched, and the more painful duty of describing its hurried and unhappy close now devolves upon us. Meanwhile Lord Edward, as a military leader, devoted himself to arming and disciplining the people whose grievances he was preparing to redress by force.

Whether the high estimation in which his military character was held by the United Irishmen was justly merited or not, is a question that can never be determined. He had many essential qualities to command popular respect, and fit him to become a revolutionary leader—high birth, family influence, singleness of purpose, devotion not to be mistaken, and courage beyond a doubt. But he seems to have been a self-willed and most imprudent man, and, if his biography may be credited, the last person upon earth to whose absolute direction a nation’s fate, and the fortunes of a mighty and complicated movement, should have been entrusted.

It was perfectly notorious to the Government that Lord Edward was deeply implicated in the conspiracy; that he was the life and spirit of the plot, the hope of the revolutionists, and the selected leader of the intended insurrection. When the arrest at Bond’s, due to Reynolds’s treacherous disclosures, had fallen like the stroke of a thunderbolt upon the Union, and paralysed the boldest, it was whispered in that gloomy hour that Lord Edward had escaped abroad, and therefore the cause was not altogether desperate. That he had not been found at the secret meeting of the Leinster committee was a heavy disappointment to the Executive. It was true that, in the seizure of the delegates, the conspiracy had received a stunning blow, but it was ‘scotched, not killed.’ Lord Edward was at liberty, and consequently the masterspirit was abroad. On the score of humanity, of policy, or both, it had been hinted by the Irish Government that his escape would be connived at, and the ports left open, if he would secretly quit the kingdom. Mr. Ogilvie, Lord Edward’s foster-father, hastened to Dublin, and interviewed Lord Clare; the Lord Chancellor expressed himself with the most friendly warmth on the subject, counselling Lord Edward’s stepfather: ‘For God’s sake get this young man out of the country; the ports shall be thrown open to you, and no hindrance whatever offered.’

The offer was conveyed to Lord Edward, and rejected by him; no course remained but to apprehend him if possible, and thus deprive the hydra of its head. Among others, he was afterwards denounced by proclamation dated the nth of May, and £1000 offered for such secret information as might lead to his arrest.

On quitting Leinster House, the first place where Lord Edward sought concealment was the domicile of a widow lady situated on the banks of the canal. Thither, three nights after the surprise of the Leinster committee, he was conveyed in disguise, and there he remained a month undiscovered, although, with an imprudence not pardonable in a leader on whose safety a mighty movement hinged, he too frequently exposed himself to detection. For the feelings of the lover-husband, that would induce him to risk everything to visit an idolised wife and the children, even a callous heart would find or frame an apology. As Moore relates: ‘Her ladyship had immediately, on the disappearance of Lord Edward, removed from the Duke of Leinster’s to a house in Denzel Street, taking with her an attached female servant and the negro Tony, her husband’s favourite. The two latter believed, as did most people, that their master had fled to France, and it was therefore with no small surprise that the maidservant saw, in going into her lady’s room late in the evening, his lordship and Lady Edward sitting together by the light of the fire. The youngest child had, at his desire, been brought down out of its bed for him to see it, and both he and Lady Edward were, as the maid thought, in tears.’ Circumstanced as he was, unnecessary exposure was unpardonable. His person might be considered a sort of public property, and yet we find him walking most nights along the banks of the canal, jumping in and out of boats to amuse a child he had made his companion, and afterwards by sheer recklessness falsifying the incognito of an assumed name.

How Lord Edward could have evaded detection so long appears astonishing. An enormous reward was offered for his detection, and, as the plot became further unfolded, the alarm of the Government for its own existence superseded every other thought, and all considerations of mercy were lost in their fears. At the period, therefore, where we are now arrived, the search after his lordship was, by the emissaries of authority, pursued with as much eagerness as political zeal, urged by fear and revenge, could inspire.

Lord Edward at last seemed awakened to his danger, and it was considered by himself and friends that a longer residence where he was might be hazardous and lead to a discovery. Another asylum was accordingly provided for him at a feather merchant’s house in Thomas Street, and at Murphy’s, as the owner was called, he remained for several days in safety.

On the 30th March the kingdom had been declared by proclamation ‘in actual rebellion,’ the troops were directed to act without magisterial authority whenever their own officers deemed it proper. This fearful order loosed a licentious soldiery upon the country, and every hope of averting bloodshed ended. As the great object of the revolutionary leaders was to prevent a premature explosion, agents were despatched to hold out encouragement to the disaffected that a French invasion would speedily be reattempted. But a double failure had damped the expectations of the Directory. Hoche, the apostle of this adventurous policy, was in his grave; Bonaparte, bent on other objects, and unfriendly to an Irish demonstration; and without foreign assistance it became evident to the conspirators that ‘themselves must strike the blow.’ The plot was on the verge of coming to a head.

For the following fortnight Lord Edward—whose leadership counted for so much at the opportune and

decisive moment of actual outburst—made Murphy's house his place of concealment. Even there he received company (some of his friends were regarded as traitors to the cause), walked out at night, and, disguised in women's clothes, visited Lady Edward in Denzel Street. He then changed his residence, and sought shelter in the houses of tradesmen, named Moore and Corwick, situated in the same street.

Some circumstances gave alarm to his friends, and Lord Edward a second time was conducted to his suburban retreat, and placed again in charge of his former hostess. Things were approaching a climax. On the 11th of May the proclamation that offered L.1000 for his apprehension appeared; the day for the insurrection was appointed; John Sheares despatched to Cork to raise the southern rebels; and, for the purpose of holding a closer communion with the Dublin leaders, Lord Edward quitted the house of his faithful protectress on the 13th May, and on the 18th he re-entered Murphy's, and only left it on the 19th for a cell, wherein to linger out a few miserable days, and expire in the common jail, without a friend or relative to watch 'the spirit's parting'!

THE ARREST OF LORD EDWARD FITZGERALD

It was evident that the Government were cognisant of these plans. The date of the rising had been determined, Lord Edward was to head the movement; his commanding officer's uniform was ready, but it was preordained that the commander-in-chief of the rebel forces would never appear in it. From this distant point of view the operations of the Government resembled the movements of the watchful cat prepared to spring upon the doomed mouse.

On the night preceding the 18th of May it was arranged that Lord Edward, the hero and hope of the movement, now on the eve of being declared openly, should resume his residence with Murphy in Thomas Street, and he set out, accordingly, under a strong escort of his followers. One of those affrays, of common occurrence in those days of terror—which this popular escort seemed destined to attract—resulted.

It is quite evident from this occurrence that his betrayal was already complete. Of Lord Edward's intended movements Sirr, the Dublin town-major, had received certain information; and this officer was on the spot, ready prepared to stultify the plans of the conspirators. Sirr had with him a party for the purpose, and as either of two streets would have conducted Lord Edward to his destination, the town-major divided his myrmidons,—one section occupied Wading Street, the other was posted in Dirty Lane.

A similar precaution happened to be adopted by Lord Edward's escort; there consequently ensued in both these streets a conflict between the parties. In the street affair John McCabe, a very active member of the United Irishmen, was seized and made a prisoner; he was afterwards tried, convicted, and executed. Lord Edward, by a miracle, was left free for the moment. Sirr, bearing the brunt of the struggle, found his opponents overstrong, and was nearly losing his life. In defending himself with a sword, which he had snatched from one of his assailants, he lost his footing and fell; and had not those with whom he was engaged in a hand-to-hand scuffle been much more occupied with their noble charge than with him, Sirr could hardly have escaped. A pistol or two was snapped at the fallen officer, and the group passed on with Lord Edward to Murphy's.

The house was under surveillance. On the morning following, evidently the eve of the insurrection, the generalissimo of the United Irishmen's uniform—dark green, faced with scarlet—was delivered by an old woman to Murphy. This 'his already nervous host' concealed under goat-skins in his warehouse. At noon a party of soldiers suddenly entered the street, and suspiciously halted before Moore's house, the man who had formerly sheltered Lord Edward. Alarmed for the safety of his guest, the feather merchant conveyed him by a trap door to the roof of his warehouse, and in one of the valleys which ran between the houses.

Lord Edward remained for two or three hours, until the alarm had subsided, and the soldiers had left the street.

At the usual hour dinner was served, and Neilson, a constant and most imprudent visitor, was invited to join Murphy and his noble guest. The cloth 'had not been many minutes removed, when Neilson, as if suddenly recollecting something, hurried out of the room and left the house; shortly after which, Mr. Murphy, seeing that his guest was not inclined to drink any wine, went downstairs. In a few minutes, however, returning, he found that his lordship had, in the interim, gone to his bedroom, and, on following him thither, saw him lying without his coat upon the bed. There had now elapsed, from the time of Neilson's departure, not more than ten minutes, and it is asserted that he had, in going out, left the hall door open.'

At this moment Major Sirr, who had but just received an intimation from the Castle of the place where Lord Edward was concealed, proceeded in hackney-coaches to arrest him, attended by eight soldiers in coloured clothes, and accompanied by Captains Swan and Ryan. While Sirr was disposing the soldiers below to prevent any chance of escape, Swan hurried upstairs, entered the apartment, and, approaching the bed, told Lord Edward that he was a prisoner. Lord Edward jumped out of bed, and Swan, perceiving that he was determined on resistance, snapped, or, as others say, discharged a pistol ineffectually, and then closing with his antagonist, both rolled upon the bed. In the struggle which ensued Lord Edward stabbed his opponent on the hand and body repeatedly, when Ryan entered the chamber and rushed to the assistance of his companion, lunging at Lord Edward with a cane-sword, which, however, turned on the ribs, and only inflicted a flesh wound. All three fell on the floor together; in the *mêlée* which followed Ryan received a mortal stab, and when Sirr entered he found Lord Edward on his feet endeavouring to reach the door, while Swan and Ryan held on desperately by the legs to prevent it. Threatened as he was with a fate similar to his companions, Sirr had no alternative but to fire, and aiming his pistol deliberately, he lodged the contents in Lord Edward's right arm near the shoulder. The wound for a moment staggered him; but as he again rallied, and was pushing towards the door, Major Sirr called up the soldiers, and so desperate were the captive's struggles that they found it necessary to lay their firelocks across him before he could be disarmed or bound so as to prevent further mischief. Clearly the powers would have preferred to take this unfortunate and embarrassing prisoner dead—the history of the affair makes this evident—three attempts all more or less deliberate had been made on the captive's life in the short encounter.

An eminent surgeon was immediately brought to the assistance of the wounded men; Ryan's injury was pronounced the most dangerous—he had commenced his share in the affray by attempting to run their captive through the body. Swan's wounds, though numerous, were not severe, and on examination Dr. Adreen expressed an opinion that Lord Edward's were not mortal. The surgeon's communication elicited a brief but significant remark, 'I am sorry, doctor, to hear it'!

On the arrival of a cavalry picket and the Rainsford Street guard the wounded men were removed, and Lord Edward was taken to the Castle in a sedan, and carried into the office of the Secretary of the War Department. On his arrest being communicated to Lord Camden, orders were given that the State surgeon should instantly examine and dress his wounds; while with a feeling honourable to his well-known humanity, the Viceroy transmitted by his own secretary a private message to the noble prisoner, giving him an assurance of receiving every indulgence consistent with personal safety. The message was conveyed by Mr. Watson, whose account of the melancholy interview is graphic and interesting. 'I found Lord Edward leaning back on a couple of chairs, his arm extended, and supported by the surgeon, who was dressing the wound. His countenance was pallid, but serene; and when I told him, in a low voice, not to be overheard, my commission from the Lord Lieutenant, and that I was going to break the intelligence of what had occurred to Lady Edward, asking him, with every assurance of my fidelity and secrecy, whether there was any confidential communication he wished to be made to her ladyship, or whether I could undertake any other act of personal kindness in his service, he answered merely, but collectedly, "No, no, thank you—nothing, nothing —only break it to her tenderly."'

After a delay of several hours, during which time his wounds had been carefully attended to, Lord Edward was removed to Newgate under a strong military guard, and placed in Lord Aid-borough's room. As the carriage and escort passed from the Castle to the prison, the countenances and demeanour of the disaffected indicated how deeply they felt the loss of the leader on whom they had placed so much dependence. To attempt a rescue was determined, and, in full assurance that the effort would be made, the garrison remained under arms throughout the night.

On the 31st of May Captain Ryan died of his wounds, but it was considered, though the heat of the weather was against him, that Lord Edward would recover. Attended by a kind-hearted militia officer named Stone, and constantly visited by the State surgeon, there is no doubt that the severity attendant on his confinement as imputed to the authorities was exaggerated.

Lord Edward lingered to the 1st June, when his wounds assumed an unhealthy appearance and fever set in; the death of Captain Ryan had transpired, and the knowledge that his victim was no more added poignant sorrow to a mind already excited too seriously. It is said that the confusion and noise attending on the execution of a young man named Clinch increased this mental irritation. On the 2nd of June Lord Edward became delirious, and the attendance of a keeper from a mad-house was deemed necessary. On the 3rd reason returned, but his strength had sunk completely. The authorities gave a tardy consent for his brother and sister to visit him, a concession Lord Clare had seen fit to withhold until the last. Lady Louisa Conolly relates they saw he was cast for death—'The two dear brothers frequently embraced each other, to the melting of a heart of stone; and yet God enabled both Henry and myself to remain quite composed. As every one left the room we told him we only were with him. He said, "That is very pleasant." However, he remained silent, and I then brought in the subject of Lady Edward, and told him I had not left her until I saw her on board; and Henry told him of having met her on the road well. He said, "And the children, too? She is a charming woman," and then became silent again. That expression about Lady Edward proved to me that his senses were much lulled, and that he did not feel his situation to be what it was; but, thank God! they were enough alive to receive pleasure from seeing his brother and me. Dear Henry, in particular, he looked at continually with an expression of pleasure.'

Immediately after Lord Henry and his sister had taken leave convulsions came on violently, and at two o'clock in the morning of the 4th, a gallant, generous, and enthusiastic spirit—would that it had been better directed I—parted.

After an inquest the body was interred in the cemetery of St. Werburgh, the funeral being conducted as privately as possible to prevent any exhibition of popular feeling, which, had it been more public, would have been certain to occur.

ARREST OF THE BROTHERS SHEARES

The capture of Lord Edward on the eve of the rebellion was followed by the arrest of the brothers Sheares; and had the Government required documentary evidence to establish the ruthless spirit with which the ends of the conspiracy would have been carried out, a military memoir found in the writing-desk of the ill-directed young nobleman, and a sanguinary manifesto in the handwriting of John Sheares, and discovered in the house of his brother Henry, would have been amply sufficient. Lord Edward's document was purely military, and, although highly mischievous, it was defensible; but the proclamation to be issued on the 24th of May betrayed a ferocity of intention which no circumstances could palliate. Every paragraph seemed traced in blood; and while the sanguinary course of action which it inculcated deprived the unhappy author of that sympathy which his fate might have otherwise obtained, those who would rescue his memory from the odium of savage purpose have wisely grounded its defence upon the only pardonable excuse—insanity.

JOHN SHEARES' BLOODTHIRSTY MANIFESTO

This explosive manifesto had been prepared in anticipation that the sanguinary programme laid down for the 23rd of May, the outbreak of the rebellion in the capital, had been successfully carried out to its reckless sequel:—

'Irishmen, your country is free, and you are about to be avenged. That vile Government, which has so long and so cruelly oppressed you, is no more. Some of its most atrocious masters *have already paid the forfeit of their lives*, and the rest are in our hands. The national flag, the *sacred green*, is at this moment flying over the ruins of despotism!

'As for those degenerate wretches who turn their swords against their native country, the national vengeance awaits them. *Let them find no quarter*, unless they shall prove their repentance by speedily exchanging the standard of slavery for that of freedom.

'Under the conduct of your chosen leaders march with a steady step to victory. Heed not the glare of hired soldiery, or aristocratic yeomanry: they cannot stand the vigorous shock of freedom. Their trappings and their arms will soon be yours; and the detested Government of England, to which we vow eternal hatred, shall learn that the treasures it exhausts on its accoutred slaves for the purpose of butchering Irishmen shall but *further enable us to turn their swords on its devoted head*. Attack them in every direction by day and by night; avail the natural advantages of your country, which are and with which you are better acquainted than they. Where you cannot oppose them in full force constantly harass their rear and their flanks; cut off their provisions and magazines, and prevent them as much as possible from uniting their forces; let whatever moments you cannot devote to fighting for your country be passed in learning how to fight for it, or preparing the means of war—for war, war alone must occupy every mind and every hand in Ireland, until its long-oppressed soil be purged of all its enemies. Vengeance, Irishmen, vengeance on your oppressors. Remember that thousands of your dearest friends have perished by their merciless orders. Remember their burnings, their rackings, their torturings, their military massacres, and their legal murders. Remember Orr!'

OUTBREAK OF THE REBELLION

The crisis hurried on rapidly. On the morning of the 21st, the Viceroy officially to the Lord Mayor, and the day following, through Lord Castlereagh, apprised the House of Commons, 'that his Excellency had received information that the disaffected had been daring enough to form a plan for the purpose of possessing themselves, in the course of the present week, of the metropolis, of seizing the seat of Government, and those in authority within the city; that, in consequence of that information, he had directed every military precaution to be taken which seemed expedient; that he had made full communication to the magistrates for the direction of their efforts; and that he had not a doubt, by the measures which would be pursued, the designs of the rebellious would be effectually and entirely crushed.'

A spirited and dutiful answer was voted by the Commons. 'The Speaker and all the members immediately waited on his Excellency with the address; and to show their zeal, and to increase the solemnity of the proceedings, they walked through the streets on foot, two and two, preceded by the Speaker, the sergeant-at-arms, and all the officers of the house.'

The 23rd of May, a day that must ever carry with it deplorable recollections, dawned upon a city destined before another sun should rise to undergo every horror that attends a civil war. A gloom overspread the countenances of the royalists. Enough had been communicated by the Executive to convince the most sceptical that the long portending thundercloud was on the eve of bursting—and still the moment of actual insurrection continued veiled in impenetrable mystery.

Evening came, and no positive information of revolutionary outbreak as yet had reached the Castle. A Government spy, late in the day, communicated authentic intelligence, that the picket of yeomanry cavalry at Rathfarnham would that night be surprised and cut off, and, consequently, instead of a sergeant's party the whole troop mounted for patrol. After narrowly escaping an ambush, Lieutenant La Touche ascertained that the rebels had actually risen, and an express, carried by a trooper called Bennett, was immediately despatched to apprise the Lord Lieutenant of the insurrection. The duty—one of the many instances of the zeal and personal gallantry with which the Irish yeomanry evidenced their fealty and devotion to the Government—was truly perilous, for the rebels in great numbers were collecting in the road and adjacent fields in the vicinity of Dublin. In the city, particularly the suburbs, the yeoman saw a great number of rebels with pikes, in the gateways, alleys, and stable-lanes, waiting the beat of their drums and the approach of rebel columns from the country which they were expecting; and as he passed they frequently cried out, animating each other, 'Come on, boys! who's afraid?'

Immediately the garrison and yeomanry drums beat to arms, and the latter hurried to their alarm-posts. The North Cork Militia were formed in Stephen's Green, and the bridges of the canals, which stretch along the city north and south, were occupied by strong pickets. Those crossing the Liffey were also secured, and the communications completely interrupted.

For some nights previous to the 23rd of May beacon fires were seen on the Wicklow mountains, whose luminous appearance by night and whose smoke by day served as signals to the disaffected in the metropolis and in all the adjacent country. The same practice took place on all the mountains which extend from the

Scalp in the county of Wicklow to Mount Leinster in the county of Wexford.

Where existed any necessity for this idle and unnecessary display, when all was organised and ready, and any striking exhibition must naturally add to the alarm which every prudential motive should have allayed? Why increase the fears and consequently the vigilance of the Executive? In secrecy of purpose lay success, and all was in favour of it could the authorities be lulled into a false and fatal security. The yeomanry corps, which in a few days afterwards were purified of traitors, at the moment of the outbreak abounded in United Irishmen, upon whom no shadow of suspicion had yet fallen. 'It was discovered,' says Sir Richard Musgrave in his narrative, 'that near nine-tenths of the Roman Catholics in the yeomanry corps were United Irishmen, and had taken an oath to be true to the rebels in direct contradiction to their sworn allegiance, and yet many of them, after taking the United oath, had, by deliberate and pre-determined perjury, joined the yeomanry corps for the purpose of getting arms in their hands, learning the use of them, and turning them against the loyalists perhaps in the very moment of danger. In the subsequent development of the conspiracy there occurred direct evidence of the loyalist corps deliberately joining the rebels they were sworn to subdue at the critical juncture of the encounters.

The domestic servants of Dublin were deeply engaged in the conspiracy, and hence every action of their employers was revealed, and the safety of every house was compromised. Even the lamplighters lent their assistance, and darkness was prearranged to assist—as it would do most effectively—a sudden outburst, by neutralising the advantages which daylight secures to disciplined troops in a conflict with fierce and tumultuary assailants.

It has been already mentioned that the stoppage of the mail-coaches was to be the signal for a general rising. On the evening of the 23rd, at Santry, the Belfast mail was burned; the Limerick stopped on the Curragh of Kildare, and both guard and coachman murdered; the Athlone coach was destroyed at Lucan, and the Cork mail at Naas.

A number of petty affairs followed the instant outbreak of the rebellion, all characterised by the atrocities attending civil war. In these affairs the rebels were generally repulsed; but in a few they unhappily succeeded, and always by surprise, treachery, or the imprudence of the royalists. Of these we shall meet instances in the course of our illustrations. As regards the outbreak in the capital, naturally the capture of Dublin was the grand and primary object at which the conspirators unanimously aimed; and a simultaneous movement on the metropolis by the Kildare rebels was to have seconded the efforts of the disaffected within the city. Everything was in favour of success; and, as the garrison was almost drained of regular troops, and its safety entrusted to the yeomanry, that circumstance was not overlooked by the rebel leaders. In barracks soldiers cannot be easily surprised; a few taps from the drum, and a very few minutes are quite sufficient to place a regiment in battle order; but to collect irregulars, dispersed and distant from the alarm-posts they have been directed to assemble at, is a work of time, and equally difficult and precarious, as, in an attempt to reach the posts assigned, individuals and isolated parties are readily intercepted and overpowered.

This was the great design of the insurgents, and nothing could have been more easily effected when aided by the darkness of night and the intricacies of a city crowded with houses, and intersected by narrow lanes.

By an unaccountable oversight the canals, which covered two sides of Dublin, had been left open, when by stockading the bridges they could have easily been rendered defensible, and have thus placed an impassable obstruction to any bodies who might approach the city from Kildare. Before the royalists occupied the bridges numbers of insurgents from the country had crossed over, and it was computed that by one northern turnpike more than two thousand strangers had entered the city during the evening and succeeding night.

Of the chief plans propounded by the rebel leaders, the capture of the Castle with the high authorities it contained, the cutting off of the royalists in detached parties as they hurried to their respective alarm-posts at the beat to arms of rebel drums, with an attack on the jail of Newgate, the liberation of their friends the State prisoners there incarcerated, formed the grand objects of their midnight movement. The guiding spirit was evidently lacking, for the head had been cut off. On the plans of action there was a division of opinion among the existing leaders. John Sheares confined the intended operations of his followers to dealing with the Castle and disposing of the inmates. Neilson, it was arranged, should attack the jail. Accident interfered; neither plan had any success, and the leader found himself at midnight the inmate of the prison from which he had falsely calculated that he was going to liberate his imprisoned confederates.

Southwell C. McClure, a rebel colonel, who had been pardoned, gave evidence that Neilson had made preparations for his task, and taken elaborate preparations for the carrying out of his plan on Newgate and cutting off the loyalist auxiliaries in detail. He had assembled at a house in Church Lane, a noted rendezvous for rebels, fifteen colonels representing as many battalions; to each of these leaders he had produced a map of Dublin, and assigned to each the post which each colonel and his regiment was to occupy that night. In his attack upon Newgate he was to have been seconded by a large body of rebels, headed by Seagrave, who was to have secured possession of Mr. Halpin's distillery, the windows of which flanked it, and they were to have kept up a constant fire on the front of the prison, while another party scaled the walls in a different quarter. Neilson's preparations promised to prove formidable, and at ten o'clock this leader, having a body of rebels collected in some fields contiguous to-Eccles Street, proceeded to reconnoitre Newgate and point out the best points of attack to his supporters. Escalade, supported by a commanding fire of musketry, was the plan adopted, and from the manner in which the prison was domineered the attempt might have easily succeeded. In the most suspicious manner Neilson was always found doing compromising acts. His behaviour had helped to compromise Lord Edward's security, and on this occasion he seems to have deliberately sacrificed his plans and his safety at the critical juncture, and thus compromised the entire scheme.

Some waste ground, then covered with heaps of market offal, and close to the prison, enabled a person to examine the building unperceived, and of this advantage Neilson, already well acquainted with the locality, had availed himself. In the darkness he trod upon a child, and the outcry brought its mother to the spot. The woman was drunk, an angry altercation followed, and no apology which Neilson could offer would conciliate the irritated poissarde. The noise naturally attracted attention; persons hastened to the spot, and among others Mr. Gregg, the jailor. Neilson, having already been in his custody, was perfectly familiar to Gregg. The latter immediately arrested him, a desperate resistance was offered, a pistol snapped, and a doubtful struggle

ensued. Under a belief that Gregg's assault on Neilson was occasioned by his resentment of the injury offered to her child, the fishwoman so far contributed by her clamour to mystify the affray that the line of posts which Neilson had established between Newgate and Eccles Street thought the noise only a squabble of drunken fishwomen, and waited in idle expectation for Neilson's return and orders to advance, until the capture transpired in an hour or two, and the party took alarm and disbanded.

In a popular movement failure or success at first generally decides its fortunes. The attempt on the capital signally miscarried. The master-spirit was wanting at the hour of action, and he who might have given a fatal direction to efforts ill-directed and uncombined, was, with his abler associates, immured within the walls of a prison. Upon individuals alike wanting in courage and ability the hurried choice of revolutionary leadership had fallen. If Neilson's imprudent visits to Lord Edward before the arrest subjected him to a charge of treachery afterwards, his conduct on the night he reconnoitred Newgate proves him to have been quite unfitted for command. That a man known to every turnkey should have personally examined a building in which he had been so long confined appeared, from its extreme rashness, almost to indicate indifference to the consequences of discovery.

THE REBELLION OFFICIALLY PROCLAIMED

On the morning of the 24th two proclamations were issued—the one from General Lake, the other from Alderman Fleming. Both were stringent, but the circumstances of the times admitted of no temporising measures:—

'Lieutenant-General Lake, commanding his Majesty's forces in this kingdom, having received from his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant full powers to put down the rebellion, and to punish rebels in the most summary manner, according to martial law, does hereby give notice to all his Majesty's subjects, that he is determined to exert the powers entrusted to him in the most vigorous manner for the immediate suppression of the same; and that all persons acting in the present rebellion, or in any way aiding or assisting therein, will be treated by him as rebels, and punished accordingly.

'And Lieutenant-General Lake hereby requires all the inhabitants of the city of Dublin (the great officers of State, members of the houses of Parliament, privy councillors, magistrates, and military persons in uniform excepted) to remain within their respective dwellings from nine o'clock at night till five in the morning, under pain of punishment.'

The Lord Mayor's proclamation was equally to the point and equally judicious:—

'Whereas the circumstances of the present crisis demand every possible precaution; these are therefore to desire all persons who have registered arms forthwith to give in, in writing, an exact list or inventory of such arms at the town-clerk's office, who will file and enter the same in books to be kept for that purpose. And all persons who have not registered these arms are hereby required forthwith to deliver up to me, or some other magistrate of this city, all arms and ammunition of every kind in their possession. And if, after this proclamation, any person having registered arms shall be found not to have given in a true list or inventory of such arms, or if any person who has not registered shall be found to have in their power or possession any arms or ammunition whatever, such person or persons will, on such arms being discovered, be forthwith sent on board his Majesty's navy, as by law directed.

'And I do hereby desire that all housekeepers do place upon the outside of their doors a list of persons in their respective houses, distinguishing such as are strangers from those who actually make part of their family; but as there may happen to be persons who, from pecuniary embarrassments, are obliged to conceal themselves, I do not require such names to be placed on the outside of the door, provided their names are sent to me. And I hereby call upon his Majesty's subjects within the county of the city of Dublin immediately to comply with this regulation, as calculated for the public security; as those persons who shall wilfully neglect a regulation so easy and salutary, as well as persons giving false statements of the inmates of their houses, must, in the present crisis, abide the consequences of such neglect.'

SURPRISE OF THE BARRACKS OF PROSPEROUS

The outbreaks in the immediate vicinity of Dublin come next in the order of alike the chronological sequence of events and of the illustrations. Slight affairs occurred on the night of the 23rd, and upon the following day. At Rathfarnham, Lucan, Lusk, Collan, and Baltinglass the royalists and rebels came in contact, and the latter were repulsed. At Dunboyne and Barretstown the escorts of some baggage (Reay and Suffolk Fencibles) were surprised. On the succeeding day Clane, Naas, Ballymore-Eustace, Kilcullen, and Prosperous were attacked, and with the exception of the latter, in every effort the rebels were unsuccessful.

Prosperous, a small but thriving town, then generally inhabited by persons manufacturing cottons, is seventeen miles from Dublin. It was garrisoned by a detachment of the North Cork Militia, some forty men under Captain Swayne, with a lieutenant and twenty of the Ancient British Cavalry. The infantry occupied a temporary barrack, half the cavalry were quartered in an opposite house, and the remainder in single billets. On the Sunday (20th) previous to the outbreak Swayne arrived in Prosperous with his detachment. He attended at the chapel with Dr. Esmond, a man of great local influence, and then implored the people there assembled to deliver up any arms which might be concealed, return to their allegiance, and receive the protection he was authorised to grant them. This exhortation proved ineffectual; some coercive measures—such as the seizure of cattle, then warranted by martial law—were resorted to; and on the 23rd it was intimated that fear had hitherto prevented the peasantry from bringing the concealed arms to the town, and that should they be permitted to enter after dark, unchallenged and unmolested, on the following night, pikes and firearms would be brought in and deposited in the streets.

It is difficult to decide whether the stupidity of Swayne or the treachery of Esmond were most to be condemned. A man individually may trifle with himself, but for him who turns right or left from the plain path which duty points to, and compromises the safety of those committed to his charge, there can be no extenuation. For Swayne's folly there can be no apology—his pickets should have been doubled—a cart, a ladder drawn across the street, would have marked sufficiently where those who came to surrender arms might approach with full security. A step beyond it, if the challenge failed, the advanced sentry shot the intruder, and the garrison was at once alarmed. So much for Captain Swayne. His weakness was inexcusable

—he died its victim—ignobly certainly, but still by the weapon of a foeman. Esmond met the doom he merited —a halter. Mus-grave's account of the surprise is authentic:—

'At two o'clock on Thursday morning, the 24th May, the two sentinels were surprised and killed; and both the barracks were assaulted while the soldiers were fast asleep. The barracks of the Cork company consisted of a hall, an apartment on each side, the same in the next storey, and underground offices. A party of the rebels rushed into Captain Swayne's apartment, which was on the ground floor, and murdered him. Some soldiers, who slept in the opposite apartment, alarmed at the noise, came forth with their firelocks and expelled those ruffians from the barrack, after having killed two or three of them.

'The house was at that time surrounded with a great number of rebels variously armed. A fierce conflict ensued between the assailants and the besieged; but it was soon put an end to by the following malignant device of the former. There was a great quantity of straw in the underground office, to which the rebels set fire, and, to increase the flame, introduced some faggots into it. The soldiers were soon in a state of suffocation; and the heat being so great that they could not endure it, they retreated to their comrades in the upper storey; but the flames and smoke soon reached them there, as the rebels continued to introduce lighted faggots into the apartments under them. Enveloped with thick smoke, and overcome with heat, some of them leaped out of the windows, but were immediately received on the pikes of the assailants, who gave a dreadful yell whenever that occurred.

'At last the barrack being in a state of conflagration, the soldiers resolved to rush forward and fight their way through their assailants; but they, who were very numerous, formed a halfmoon round the front of the barrack, and received them on their pikes, so that but few of them escaped.5

Nothing could have been more detestable than the treachery of Esmond; though lieutenant in the Armagh Militia, he actually planned and led the rebel surprise of Prosperous. He wore the royal uniform, and yet was false to the monarch to whom he had sworn allegiance. When men of desperate fortunes swerve from the path of honour poverty may be pleaded to extenuate, though not excuse. Esmond had no plea to offer—he was wealthy, well born, and respected. He might have proved a rebel, but why play the traitor? When in the house of God loyalty was on his lips, while the heart was contemplating bloodshed. Even the tie a savage venerates could not turn him from his truculent design,—and, while he devoted him to death, he shared his victim's hospitality—dined with Captain Swayne 'at an inn on the 23rd of May, and continued to enjoy the glow of social mirth with him, till a few hours before the perpetration of that bloody scene which he had for some time meditated.'

The work of death at Prosperous was interrupted by intelligence conveyed to the insurgents, that at Clane, three miles off, their friends had been defeated—for although partly surprised, that little garrison succeeded in beating off their assailants.

ATTACK ON THE GARRISON AT CLANE

Clane was occupied by a party of the Armagh Militia and some yeomanry cavalry. Early on the morning of the 24th a large body of armed rebels stole into the street. Fortunately there was just time to beat to arms, although such of the soldiers as were at single billets in the town were attacked as they issued from the houses where they had been quartered, and several of them killed and wounded before they could join their comrades. The guards, however, with great gallantry, held the rebels in check until their comrades hastily turned out and formed. A few well-directed volleys routed the rebels, and they were driven with considerable loss from the town; but deeming pursuit imprudent, the royalists returned, and again formed in the streets.

At five in the morning the rebels made a second attempt, reinforced by the exulting rebels who had returned from their bloody deeds at Prosperous; supported by a column of pikemen and musketeers, a party mounted on the horses and furnished with the arms of the slaughtered Ancient Britons, whom they had cut off at Prosperous, charged boldly into Clane. A rolling volley from the royalists brought down half the party and dispersed the rest. They retired at gallop from the rebel column, which, from previous success of superior numbers, cut a strange but formidable appearance.

An affair highly honourable to the royalists resulted. 'As they were not strong enough to attack so

numerous a party, and thinking it dishonourable to retreat, the captain, Griffiths, in concurrence with the militia officers, resolved to take post on an elevated spot near the commons, where they could not be surrounded or outflanked, and there they waited for the enemy, who began a smart fire on them, but without effect, as the elevation was too great. Our troops, having returned the fire, killed and wounded a considerable number of them, on which they fled in great dismay, and were charged by the captain and his sixteen yeomen, who cut down many of those whose heads were ornamented with the helmets of the Ancient Britons or the hats of the Cork regiment.'

A disorderly flight succeeded—the rebels totally disbanding, by throwing away their own ruder weapon the pike, with the firearms and sabres they had captured in the morning, and held in but brief possession.

On re-entering Clane, Captain Griffiths was privately informed by a soldier named Philip Mite, that his own treacherous lieutenant had actually carried out the surprise of Prosperous. Having been ordered to march to Naas, at the moment when the troop were mounting, Esmond, in full accoutrements, joined it. The rash confidence that his treason was unsuspected proved ruinous to the unhappy man. He was arrested, forwarded to Dublin, tried, convicted, and hanged on Carlisle Bridge on the 14th of June.

The insurrectionary occurrences at Ballymore-Eustace and Dunlavin simultaneously with those described, offer fearful pictures of the atrocious spirit with which a civil war is carried through.

MURDER OF GEORGE CRAWFORD AND HIS GRAND-DAUGHTER

Uncompromising severity does not always produce the intended effect. On some example may strike terror, in others it will excite undying hatred, and foster the worst spirit of the human heart—thirst for vengeance. Of this truth a retrospect of the events of these calamitous days gives evidence enough, and it is difficult now to determine on which side the excess of cruelty should be awarded. Assassination on one side was met upon the other with military executions—the royalists extenuating the act under the plea of necessity, while the rebel proclaimed that his murders were committed only from revenge.

When admitting that a similar savageness of purpose might in many cases be charged against both sides, there all comparison must cease. No matter what the acts might be, the causes which produced them were totally dissimilar. The royalists took up arms for the protection of home and altar, which the fanaticism of Popery, or the accursed doctrines of the French revolutionists, were alike bent upon overturning. Allegiance to the king, and the maintenance of social order and an established government, urged the former to come forward; thousands perilled life and property from the purest motives; and when the insurrection was suppressed, sheathed the sword, drawn in the support of a matchless constitution, unstained by any act save those which resistance to rebellion had imperatively demanded. Those who have led a soldier's life and seen service in the field know that men become the creatures of circumstances.

Let the gentlest spirit—and such are frequently united to the boldest heart—one that would not tread upon a worm or harm a sparrow, let him crown a defended breach, and he will use the bayonet unscrupulously. The feelings are influenced by the times; and if the royalists were sanguinary and unsparing, they could point to the atrocities of the insurgents, and bring forward established facts, so truculent and unwarranted, as to place those who committed them almost without the pale of mercy.

Making every allowance for the political colouring given to his history of the times, and recollecting that he felt and wrote as a partisan, Sir Richard Musgrave narrates two well-authenticated instances of unprovoked cruelty among the many that marked the rebel outbreak in Kildare, which will sufficiently exhibit the ferocious spirit of the insurgents from the moment they flew to arms.

'The following horrid circumstances,' relates the historian, 'attended the murder of George Crawford and his grandchild, a girl of only fourteen years of age. He had formerly served in the 5th Dragoons, retired on a pension, and was permanent sergeant in Captain Taylor's corps of yeoman cavalry. He, his wife, and grand-daughter were stopped by a party of the rebels, as they were endeavouring to escape, and were reproached with the appellation of heretics because they were of the Protestant religion. One of them struck his wife with a musket, and another gave her a stab of a pike in the back, with an intent of murdering her. The husband, having endeavoured to save her, was knocked down, and received several blows of a firelock, which disabled him from making his escape. While they were disputing whether they should kill them, his wife stole behind a hedge and concealed herself. They then massacred her husband with pikes; and her grand-daughter having thrown herself on his body to protect him, received so many wounds that she instantly expired.

These circumstances of atrocity have been verified by affidavit, sworn by Crawford's widow, the 20th day of August 1798. The fidelity of a large dog, belonging to this poor man, deserves to be recorded, as he attacked those sanguinary monsters in defence of his master, till he fell by his side perforated with pikes.'

STOPPAGE OF THE MAIL AND MURDER OF LIEUTENANT GIFFARD

'The second murder occurred on the same night. About eleven o'clock the Limerick mail was stopped by a numerous banditti, and a gentleman was slaughtered under circumstances which elicited a lively sympathy. The sufferer was Lieutenant William Giffard, of the 82nd regiment, son of Captain John Giffard of the Dublin regiment.' The savages having shot one of the horses so effectually to prevent the coach from proceeding, demanded of Lieutenant Giffard who and what he was, to which he answered, without hesitation, that he was an officer proceeding to Chatham in obedience to orders he had received. They demanded whether he was a Protestant; and being answered in the affirmative, they held a moment's consultation, and then told him that they wanted officers, that if he would take an oath to be true to them, and join them in an attack to be made next morning upon Monastereven, they would give him a command, but that otherwise he must die. To this the gallant youth replied, 'That he had already sworn allegiance to the king, that he would never offend God Almighty by a breach of that oath, nor would he disgrace himself by turning a deserter and joining the king's enemies; that he could not suppose a body of men would be so cruel as to murder an individual who had never injured them, and who was merely passing through them to a country from whence possibly he never might return; but if they insisted on their proposal he must die, for he never would consent to it!' This heroic answer, which would have kindled sentiments of humanity in any breasts but those of Irish rebels, had the contrary effect, and with the utmost fury they assaulted him. He had a case of pistols, which natural courage and love of life, though hopeless, prompted him to use with effect, and being uncommonly active he burst from them, vaulted over a six feet wall, and made towards a house where he saw a light and heard people talking. Alas! it afforded no refuge! It was the house of poor Crawford whom, with his grand-daughter, they had just piked. A band of barbarians returning from this exploit met Lieutenant Giffard. There he fell, covered with wounds and glory, and his mangled body was thrown into the same ditch with honest Crawford and his innocent grandchild.

'Thus expired, at the age of seventeen, a gallant youth—the martyr to religion and honour—leaving a memory behind that will ever be respected by the virtuous and the brave.'

Shortly, in the course of his campaign, struggling to suppress the rebellion, Sir James Duffs movable column entered Kildare, when it passed close to the scene of slaughter, and poor Giffard's body was removed from the ditch and interred with military honours.

COURSE OF THE INSURRECTION

A course of cowardly assassination thus commenced was continued by the insurgents in their progress to attack Monastereven. Their numbers had increased to ten or twelve hundred men, and they were commanded by a ruffian called M'Garry. Such Protestants as they unfortunately met with were put to death, and a solitary dragoon, seized as he crossed the Curragh, was inhumanly murdered. About four in the morning they approached the town and made their preparations for attacking it.

On the 24th of May there was not a regular soldier in Monastereven; and an infantry company, with a troop of horse, both yeomanry, formed the little garrison. After a feint on the canal, and a movement by the high road, which was repulsed by a charge of the cavalry, they pushed boldly into the town, and a warm conflict took place in the main street. The well-sustained musketry of the infantry threw the head of the rebel column into confusion, when the cavalry charged home, and the rout was complete. Fifty bodies were found lifeless in the town; and as the horsemen followed the flying rebels vigorously, as many more were cut up in the pursuit. The repulse of this attack was most honourable to the defenders of Monastereven. The gallant action was achieved by loyalists alone, and of the brave men who fought and bled that day fourteen of the troop were Roman Catholics.

The outbreak of the 23rd of May was attended by many acts of cruelty inflicted upon isolated families, who, either from mistaken confidence or inability to reach a place of safety, exposed themselves to the fury of savages, whose natural truculence was often inflamed to madness by intoxication. Many individuals of great worth and respectability perished thus. Mr. Stamers, the chief proprietor of the town of Prosperous, was torn from the house of a lady where he had obtained a temporary shelter, and murdered in cold blood. Rathangan

was, indeed, a scene of extensive butchery. Mr. Spencer and Mr. Moore were slaughtered there, although they had surrendered their arms on the assurance of being protected. They were murdered in the open street, and their wives had the horrible assurance that, with the shots they heard, the existence of their beloved partners had terminated. Thus Mr. Spencer, that worthy gentleman, 'who was an active and intelligent magistrate, and as remarkable for the amiableness and affability of his manner as the benevolence of his heart, fell a sacrifice to the fanaticism of those savages, to whom he had been unremittingly a kind and generous benefactor. As his house, at the hall door of which he was so brutally murdered, was a short distance from the town, Mrs. Spencer, who was led to it in the midst of these monsters, had the anguish to see the mangled corpse of her husband lying at his door' (Musgrave).

A number of other victims were immolated by these bloodthirsty savages, and, until relieved by Colonel Longfield on the morning of the 28th, Rathangan was a constant scene of atrocity, in which even woman forgot her sex and barbarously participated. The murders at Rathangan, while they exasperated the royalists to acts of desperate retaliation, operated against the perpetrators in another and unexpected way. The few Protestants in Leinster and the south, who had mixed themselves with the conspiracy, suddenly became alarmed, for the war had now assumed a religious rather than a revolutionary complexion. Suspicion once aroused finds abundant causes to confirm it; and while some Protestants quietly seceded from their fellow-traitors, not a few sought favour with the Government by a secret betrayal of their guilty companions.

Musgrave illustrates this point:—'I shall mention here an incident which throws light on the spirit of the conspiracy and rebellion, and the secret designs of the great body of the rebels. One Dennis, an apothecary and a Protestant, was the county delegate and chief conductor of the plot in the King's County, which was to have exploded in a few days; but the wanton massacre of Protestants at Prosperous and Rathangan having convinced him that their extirpation was the main object of the Romanists, though they had with singular dissimulation concealed it from him who was their leader, he repaired to Tullamore to General Dunn, who commanded the district, threw himself on the mercy of Government, exposed the whole plot, and betrayed the names of the captains, who were immediately arrested. He said to the general, "I see, sir, that it will soon be my own fate."' In the course of this history nothing will be more apparent than the incompetency, military and diplomatic, of many of the functionaries to whom extensive powers were confided. One while unnecessary severity was employed, and at another mistaken lenity marred every advantage which stringent measures might have effected. In military conduct the royalist commanders were too often found deficient, and almost in every instance, either to imprudence or imbecility, the insurgents were alone indebted for moments of doubtful and envanescent success. The affair at Old Kilcullen was about one of the worst military offences committed by an incompetent commander. Yeomanry officers always behaved with boldness, and frequently displayed both tact and talent when left to their own resources, while many from whose high military rank and standing something like ability might have been looked for, proved the truism of the adage, that as 'the cowl does not make the monk,' neither does an *aiguilette* constitute a general. Learning that some three hundred well-appointed rebels had assembled at Old Kilcullen, and that they had entrenched themselves in the churchyard, General Dundas proceeded to dislodge them. His force consisted of only forty dragoons and some twenty Suffolk militiamen. The rebel position was on a height—one side protected by a high wall, the other secured by a double fence—a hedge with a dike in front. Would it be credited that an English general could be mad enough to assail three hundred men thus posted with forty dragoons? Musgrave thus narrates the transaction, and his account has been considered by those engaged to be perfectly correct:—

General Dundas ordered the Romneys and the 9th Dragoons to charge the rebels, though it was uphill, though the ground was broken, and many of the rebels were in a road close to the churchyard in which not more than six of the cavalry could advance in front.

'They, however, charged with great spirit, though their destruction was considered by all the spectators to be the certain and inevitable consequence of it; for what could cavalry do, thus broken and divided, against a firm phalanx of rebels armed with long pikes? Nevertheless they made three charges, but were repulsed in each; and at every repulse the general urged them to renew the attack.

'It was with the utmost difficulty that Captain Cooks and Captain Erskine could prevail upon their men to renew the charge after the first defeat. In the last charge, Captain Cooks, to inspire his men with courage by example, advanced some yards before them; when his horse, having received many wounds, fell upon his knees; and while in that situation the body of that brave officer was perforated with pikes; and he, Captain Erskine, and twenty-two privates were killed on the spot, and ten so badly wounded that most of them died soon after.'

Shamefully discomfited, Dundas fell back on the village of Kilcullen bridge, and occupied a pass in every way defensible. So thought the successful peasants who had garrisoned the churchyard and deforced an English general. They prudently declined any attempt to force the bridge, forded the Liffey at Castlemartin, and took up a position between Naas and Kilcullen—thus cutting off General Dundas's communication with the capital.

Nothing remained for the royalist commander but to drive them from these grounds and open his road to Naas. He advanced accordingly, found them in line three deep, and with his cavalry in hand, boldly attacked the position with half a company of the gallant Suffolks. Small as the party was, three rounds broke the rebels. The cavalry charged, and the same body which had so recently inflicted a severe repulse were scattered like a flock of sheep, leaving the ground covered with their dead and wounded. After a brief but bloody pursuit, Dundas marched on Naas, to concentrate his troops and assist in covering the capital.

ATTACK ON NAAS

'If one can imagine such a thing as a tableau, or bird's-eye view of the rebellion from the 23rd to the 30th of May (1790), the appearance it would present would be this. Seven or eight comparatively minor explosions, lighting up the atmosphere for a short space and then going gradually out, viz. one in Meath (Tara), one in Wicklow (Mount Kennedy), a good blaze in Carlow, and four or five in Kildare, which its being Lord Edward Fitzgerald's own county accounts for—these were Naas, Prosperous, Kilcullen, and Rathangan. The eye should then be drawn to the mighty and absorbing eruption of Wexford; taking Vinegar Hill as its crater, it

would observe two streams of lava pouring forth, one due west to Ross, one due north towards Wicklow, and a third, of somewhat less importance, north-west to Newtown Barry. I rather think the first shot was fired by my regiment at Naas, as Mick Reynolds, who led the rebels, was one of the promptest of the insurgent leaders.'—*The MS. Journal of a Field Officer*.

The garrison of Naas consisted of a hundred and fifty of the Armagh Militia, with two battalion guns, and seventy cavalry, consisting of small detachments of the Fourth Dragoons, Ancient Britons, and sixteen mounted yeomen. The whole were under the command of Colonel Lord Gosford.

On the evening of the general insurrection (the 23rd of May) anonymous letters were received by the commanding officer, apprising him that a night attack would be made upon the town by a numerous body of well-armed rebels, and necessary dispositions of the garrison were made to receive the threatened assault. The guards were doubled, the outskirts of the town carefully patrolled, and a plan of defence prearranged to prevent any confusion when the hour for action came. Midnight passed without anything occurring to cause alarm, and as morning dawned, it was believed that the information received the preceding evening had been incorrect, and the officers retired to their quarters. At half-past two, however, an outlying dragoon galloped in, announcing the advance of a numerous body of rebels; the drums beat to arms, and the garrison occupied their alarm posts.

Perhaps the commanding officer and his staff were more than a trifle incautious and premature in deciding there was nothing in the timely warning.

In spite of the precautionary vigilance, Lord Gosford had the very narrowest possible escape from death by assassination. His lodging was situated at the summit of the hill which the Dublin road ascends. The sentinel at his door, having his attention attracted by the entrance of the rebel columns at the foot of the hill, was inexcusably so far off his guard as to allow two pikemen, belonging to the town, to slip into the hall, where they were ready to receive his lordship with their pikes as he hurried from his chamber on the alarm. And they were very near succeeding—but the sentinel turning about at the critical moment, shot one and bayoneted the other, just as his lordship was rushing down the stairs. The sentinel's name was John Sandford; he was afterwards made a sergeant, and his son a drummer.

The rebels, who had assembled at the quarries of Tipper, advanced on the town in four divisions, each entering by a different approach, and the heaviest column moving by the Johnstown Road. The latter was commanded by Michael Reynolds, and it made a bold effort to carry the jail, in front of which a party of the Armagh Militia, the Ancient Britons, and a battalion gun were posted. But the attack was completely repulsed, and the rebel loss would have been more considerable had not the cavalry, irritated by the fall of their officer, Captain Davis, who had been fatally piked, charged too prematurely, and interrupted the play of the gun; the execution of the latter was so trifling compared to what it should have produced upon a body in close column and at canister range, that it was ascribed rather to treachery than want of skill. For forty minutes, however, desultory firing continued.

'Large parties of the rebels, who stole unnoticed into the town through the houses and narrow lanes, fought some time in the streets, and stood three volleys from the Armagh Militia, posted opposite to the barrack, before they gave way; at last they fled precipitately in every direction, when the cavalry charged, and killed a great number of them in the pursuit. Thirty of the rebels were killed in the streets; and from the numbers found dead in back houses and in the adjacent fields a few days afterwards, it is imagined that no less than three hundred must have fallen.

'They dropped in their flight a great quantity of pikes and other arms, of which a number were found in pits near the town, where also three men with green cockades were seized, and instantly hanged in the public streets. Another prisoner was spared in consequence of useful information which he gave. He informed the commanding officer that the rebel party was above one thousand strong, and was commanded by Michael Reynolds, who was well mounted, and dressed in yeoman uniform. He made his escape, but his horse fell into the hands of our troops.'

KILDARE AND CARLOW

The entire of the county of Kildare was now in open insurrection, and not less than six rebel encampments were formed, and multitudes of the peasantry flocked to them. The houses were almost entirely deserted. Of the Protestant clergy not a man remained, and indeed the ferocity of party feeling had attained an intensity of violence which now can scarcely be imagined or believed. An infernal spirit actuated the opposite religionists. On one side, Catholics were too generally regarded with hatred and distrust; on the other, Protestants and Orangemen were held synonymous, and to all who dissented from the Church of Rome the most abominable feelings and intentions were attributed.

The MS. Journal of a Field Officer relates: 'One of the *completest* things during the rebellion was the defeat of the rebels at Carlow, in which a company of my regiment had a share. There was full information of the intended attack, but "not a drum was heard." The soldiers, who were chiefly in billets, were allowed to repair to their quarters as usual, and remain there until it was ascertained that the town rebels had quitted it to join their fellows and arm themselves, which they did about two miles from the town. A number of sergeants then went round, and the men were brought to their posts without the least alarm.

'The rebel column entered Carlow by Tullow Street, unopposed—the street terminating in a place or open space where stood the horse barracks and jail. Arrived here they raised a loud shout or yell, and it was fearfully responded to by a destructive fire which opened upon them from different points. Seized with a panic at this unexpected reception they endeavoured to escape in various directions. The greater part retraced their steps through Tullow Street, but a picket had by this time occupied the further end of it, and opened a withering fire. They now sought refuge in the houses: these the soldiers set fire to; a number were shot in attempting to escape the flames, but a great many of the unfortunate wretches perished in them.'

About eighty houses were consumed in this conflagration; and for some days the roasted remains of unhappy men were falling down the chimneys in which they had perished.

It will be here necessary to mention that in Kildare, within a few days after the outbreak, an amnesty for the past was solicited by many of the rebels, and, with the consent of Government, the generals commanding

in that county entered into negotiations with their chiefs. How far this was a prudent measure is questionable. In the spirit of the proclamations issued—with arms in their hands, rebels should have been placed outside the pale of treaty; while at the same time the most extensive forgiveness should have been extended to such as should disband themselves and reoccupy their abandoned dwellings. In diplomatic, as well as in field abilities, the royal generals were defective, and the amnesty produced nothing but treachery and bloodshed. The former charge rests with the insurgents, the latter must be laid at the hands of the royalists.

TREACHERY IN THE MIDST OF THE CAPITAL

While the counties in the immediate vicinity of the capital were thus in open insurrection, in the city the spirit and hopes of the disaffected were still buoyant as to the prospect of ultimate success; and although the failure of the 23rd had for a time paralysed the traitors of the metropolis, they were disappointed, but not despairing, and rebellion was 'scotched, not killed.'

The committees and 'directories' continued their meetings, pikes were fabricated in large quantities, the sentries were assaulted on isolated posts, the doors of royalists were marked, domestic servants were corrupted. Musgrave records:—'The Lord Mayor's servant acknowledged to his employer that he was at the head of a numerous body of servants who were to have assassinated their masters; that he and his party were to have murdered the Lord Mayor and his family, with two others of his servants who had refused to join this precious association, and that this atrocious deed was to have been the signal for the other servants in the vicinity to rise and commit similar enormities. Another certain proof that a revolution was not only contemplated but expected, many of the Dublin tradesmen refused to receive bank notes in payment from their customers.'

Another serious cause of alarm also was the discovery that into many of the yeomanry corps disaffected persons had been introduced, and in some the traitors outnumbered 'the true men.'

In Kildare almost every corps was tainted, and the same remark applied to many in the metropolis. Of the country corps, the Sleamarigue laid down their arms, the Castledermot had but five well-affected men, the Athy cavalry were publicly disarmed in the market-place, and their captain, Fitzgerald of Geraldine, committed to prison. The Rathangan, North Naas, and Furnace yeomanry were all extensively disaffected, and the Clane, nominally amounting to sixty-six, could only muster five-and-twenty when the insurrection broke out.

Of the metropolitan corps many were exclusively loyal, but others were not without traitorous members. One instance will be sufficient to show how extensive and dangerous was the disaffection.

On the 29th of May, the St. Sepulchre's corps, in turn of duty, took the guard at Dolphin's Barn, an outpost on the southwest side of the metropolis. While on the march to the bridge, a Roman Catholic yeoman, named Raymond, entered into conversation with his comrade, a notorious United Irishman, and communicated the secret plot. He told Jennings, 'that in case of an attack, which was hourly expected, and which it was believed he had previously concerted with the rebels, the disaffected members of the corps were to massacre their officers and the Protestants, and to deliver up the bridge to the assailants. They were then to proceed to the battery in the park, inform the guard that they had been defeated, ask admittance, and on being let in, murder the guard, take possession of the battery and ammunition, and turn it to their own use.

'Jennings had been sworn a United Irishman, and was attached to the cause from republican principles; but being a Protestant, and having discovered from the massacres which had taken place in the counties of Dublin, Meath, and Kildare, that the extirpation of his own order was intended, he informed Lieutenant Mathurin of the plot; and he, having communicated it to the Government, Raymond was taken up, tried, convicted, and hanged on the Old Bridge on the 1st of June.'

As the Roman Catholic members of that corps, who formed the majority of it, were discovered to be disaffected, they were disarmed on parade the Sunday following, and disbanded.

The fears of the inhabitants of the city were not abated when, on the 26th of May, the Lord Mayor caused the following placard to be circulated throughout the metropolis:—

'A Caution

'*Lest the innocent should suffer for the guilty*.

'The Lord Mayor requests his fellow-citizens to keep within their houses as much as they can, suitable to their convenience, after sunset, in this time of peril; as the streets should be kept as clear as possible, should any tumult or rising to support rebellion be attempted, in order that the troops and artillery may act with full effect in case of any disturbance.'

THE HILL OF TARA

At this period, after plundering, and a commission of other outrages at Dunboyn, the rebels, from the borders of Meath and Dublin, proceeded in the first instance to Dunshaughlin, and afterwards to the hill of Tara. Their numbers had rapidly increased; there were no military parties in the immediate neighbourhood; and unchecked and unresisted, they devastated the country for miles round their camp, to which they carried an immense quantity of booty. A few corps of yeomanry still remained in the vicinity, but they were not sufficiently numerous to attack a very strong and defensible position. Accident, however, interposed, and the royalists obtained the assistance they required.

Three companies of the Reay Fencibles, with a battalion gun, were on the march to the metropolis, and halted in Navan on the night of the 25th of May. Captain Preston, who commanded the yeomanry of that town, solicited the co-operation of Captain M'Clean to deforce the rebels....

'After going some time in quest of the rebels they found them very strongly posted on Tara hill, where they had been four hours, and about four thousand in number, while the country people were flocking to them in great multitudes from every quarter. They had plundered the houses in all the adjacent country of provisions of every kind, and were proceeding to cook their dinners, having lighted nearly forty fires, and hoisted white flags in their camp.

'The hill of Tara is very steep, and the upper part surrounded by three circular Danish forts, with ramparts

and fosses; while on the top lies the churchyard surrounded with a wall, which the rebels regarded as their citadel, and considered impregnable.

'The king's troops, including the yeomanry, might have amounted to about four hundred. As soon as the rebels perceived them they put their hats on the tops of their spikes, sent forth some dreadful yells, and at the same time began to jump, and put themselves in singular attitudes, as if bidding defiance to their adversaries. They then began to advance, firing at the same time, but in an irregular manner.

'Our line of infantry came on with the greatest coolness, and did not fire a shot until they were within fifty yards. One part of the cavalry, commanded by Lord Fingal, was ordered to the right, the other to the left, to prevent the line from being outflanked, which the enemy attempted to accomplish. The rebels made three desperate onsets, and in the last laid hold of the cannon; but the officer who commanded the gun laid the match to it before they could completely surround it, prostrated ten or twelve of the assailants, and dispersed the remainder. The Reay Fencibles preserved their line, and fired with as much coolness as if they had been exercising on a field-day.

'At length they routed the rebels, who fled in all directions, having lost about four hundred in killed and wounded. In their flight they threw away arms and ammunition, and everything that could encumber them. Three hundred horses, all their provisions, arms, ammunition, and baggage fell into the hands of the victors, with eight of the Reay Fencibles, whom they had taken prisoners two days before, and whom they employed to drill them.

'It is to be lamented that the Reay Fencibles lost twenty-six men in killed and wounded, and the Upper Kells infantry six men.

'The king's troops would have remained on the field all night, but they had not a cartridge left either for the gun or small arms, The prisoners, of whom they took a good many, informed our officers that their intention was to have proceeded that night to plunder Navan, and then Kells, where there was a great quantity of ammunition, and little or no force to protect it; and that when they had succeeded they expected, according to a preconcerted plan, to have been joined by a great number of insurgents from Meath, Westmeath, Lough, Monaghan, and Cavan.'

The defeat of the insurgents, and their complete dispersion at Tara hill and on the Curragh, were highly advantageous, as they opened the communications north and south with the metropolis, which had been seriously interrupted.

Many partial affairs took place at this time between the royalists and the rebels in Kildare, and barbarities on the one side produced on the other a terrible retaliation. The insurgents burned and murdered as they went along; the troops and yeomen shot and hanged liberally in return. The record of crimes inhumanly committed and ruthlessly revenged would only disgust a reader.

While thus Kildare was exhibited for nearly a week one wide blaze of general insurrection, another county, which in the annals of rebellion assumed afterwards a sanguinary pre-eminence, remained in ominous tranquillity. The storm burst at last, and in crime and bloodshed Wexford left every other scene of tumultuary violence completely in the shade.

WEXFORD INSURRECTION AND CONSEQUENT ATROCITIES

Wexford had long withstood the anarchy of the evil days. While many counties in Ireland were disgraced by nocturnal robbery and assassination, committed by Defenders and United Irishmen, for five years previous to '97, it was the pride of the Wexford gentlemen to boast that their county had remained in perfect tranquillity. But in the autumn and winter of that year, and in the spring of '98, there were well-grounded suspicions that the mass of the people had begun to be infected by those baneful principles which since proved fatal to the kingdom, that pikes were manufactured, and clubs had been formed, in which illegal oaths had been administered. In April, however, unequivocal symptoms that a disaffected spirit actuated the peasantry became evident; and although the priests laboured hard to lead the resident gentry to believe that no danger was impending, and the people by thousands swore allegiance in the chapels, and expressed open attachment to the Government, there is too much reason to conclude that the plot had been long in preparation, and that the ferocious spirit which marked the proceedings of the insurgents was not the wild ebullition of a resentment produced by injudicious severity, but the fruits of a long-cherished antipathy to those who dissented from them in faith. It was the explosion of a frantic effort of the Papists to stamp out and exterminate their Protestant fellow-countrymen.

There is no doubt violent measures produced great exasperation, and that possibly a conciliatory policy might have averted the outbreak altogether. 'Not above six hundred men at most of the regular army or militia were stationed in the county, the defence of which was almost abandoned to the troops of yeomen and their supplementaries. The magistrates in several districts employed themselves in ordering the seizure, imprisonment, and whipping of numbers of suspected persons. These yeomen being Protestants, prejudiced against the Romanists by traditionary and other accounts of the former cruelties that sect committed, fearing similar cruelties in case of insurrection, and confirmed in this fear by papers found in the pockets of some prisoners, containing the old sanguinary doctrines of the Romish Church, which authorised the extermination of heretics, acted with a spirit ill-fitted to allay religious hatred and prevent any feeling to rebels.

CAPTAIN FATHER JOHN MURPHY OF BOULAVOGUE

Until Saturday, the 26th of May, the flame of rebellion remained smouldering; but on that evening John Murphy, the curate or coadjutor-priest of Boulavogue, gave the signal for a general rising, which was too fatally responded to. A fire lighted on the hill of Corrigrua was answered by another kindled on Boulavogue, and the rapidity with which the volcano burst appears almost incredible. Murphy, the rebel general, was the son of a petty farmer in the parish of Ferns, where he was educated at a hedge school kept by a man of the name of Gun. It appears by his testimonium and diploma, that he received holy orders at Seville in Spain in the year 1785, and probably graduated there as a doctor of divinity, as he assumes that title in his journal, which was dropped in his retreat from Vinegar Hill, and found by Captain Hugh Moore of the 5th Dragoons, aide-de-camp to General Needham.

Nothing could be more ferocious than the church-militant career of this savage man. Every Protestant

house in the parish of Kilcormick was reduced to ashes, and such of their unfortunate owners as could be seized were ruthlessly destroyed. These outrages proceeded entirely from a truculent disposition—for mostly his victims were men who offered no opposition—and when rashly attacked at a place called the Harrow, he beat off the Camolin cavalry, and killed Lieutenant Bookey who commanded it.

Whether the demon spirit which Murphy afterwards exhibited had been provoked or not is a matter of controversy; some say that his house and chapel had been burnt before he took the field, and others as positively deny it. In searching through the evidence on record dispassionately, I incline to the Tatter opinion, for when his house was burned the furniture had been previously removed and hidden in a sand-pit, and when his vestments were brought from the same concealment, the leader of the loyalists observed, in reply to some insulting remark, 'Punish the rebel if you can, but offer no mockery to his religion.'

Early in his martial career Murphy commenced his murderous treacheries, destroying the glebe house at Kyle and murdering the rector of Kilmuckridge, Doctor Burrowes, and his family, under circumstances of peculiar atrocity. The house was defended with barricades by the rector and his parishioners at sunrise it was attacked by about five hundred rebels. 'It was vigorously defended for some time, many shots having been fired by the assailants and the besieged. At last the rebels set fire to the out-offices, which were quickly consumed, and soon after to the dwelling-house, which in a short time was in a state of conflagration. The rapid spread of the flames in the latter was caused by the application of some unctuous combustible matter applied to the doors and windows of the house, which the rebels frequently used in the course of the rebellion.

'The besieged being in danger of suffocation from the thickness of the smoke, resolved to quit the house, however perilous it might be, and this they were encouraged to do by Father Murphy, who assured them they should not be injured if they surrendered themselves without further resistance. Relying on his promise they quitted the house, on which the rebels treacherously murdered Mr. Burrowes and seven of his parishioners, and gave his son, a youth of sixteen, so severe a wound in the belly with a pike, that it subsequently caused his death.

CAROUSAL AND PLUNDER AT THE PALACE OF THE BISHOP OF FERNS

George Cruikshank has seized this characteristic incident for one of his graphic pictures. It will be remembered that Murphy's father came from the parish of Ferns. The illustration is in itself sufficiently graphic, and filled with pictorial details descriptive of the incident. Maxwell has related, in reference to the plunder of the bishop's palace, an anecdote connected with it, which marks the total subversion of principle, religious feelings, badly excited, will produce. An orphan boy, whom the bishop had found naked and starving at the age of seven years, and whom he had fed, clothed, and instructed afterwards, was the leader of these marauders, showed them every valuable article of furniture, and assisted them in breaking open the cellar. The bishop's fine library was plundered of its antique folios; these the rebels converted into saddles.

CAMPS OF KILTHOMAS AND OULART HILLS

The first consequences of the Wexford rising was the assemblage of two large bodies of insurgents, the one occupying the hill of Oulart, ten miles southward of Gorey, in the direction of the town of Wexford; the second taking a position nine miles westward of the former place, on a ridge of the Slieve Buoye mountain, called Kilthomas hill. Camps were established on the heights, and an immense number of the peasantry, including every age and sex, flocked immediately to join the rebels.

Both camps were attacked, but with results painfully different. The garrison of the little town of Carnew, consisting of nearly three hundred yeomanry, mounted and dismounted, marched boldly against the insurgents collected on Kilthomas, roughly estimated at about three thousand men. Although, with favourable ground and enormous superiority of numbers, it might have been expected that an attempt to dislodge the rebels from their position would have failed, nothing could have been more successful than the attack, and the royalists obtained a bloodless victory. Here again, the unrelenting spirit of the times appeared, and a very gallant and daring exploit was sullied by impolitic severity. The attempt to disperse the second camp at Oulart was attended with consequences not only disastrous to the troops engaged, but its results caused afterwards an immensity of bloodshed. Through the imprudence of an incompetent commanding officer, a

very gallant detachment perished, while the insurgents, encouraged by accidental success, acquired a false but dangerous confidence which involved a fearful amount of atrocity, with a reaction, in many cases to be excused, and in more to be lamented.

On the morning of the 27th of May, Mr. Turner of Newfort arrived at Wexford and announced that his own house had been attacked and robbed of a quantity of arms, previously surrendered, and that the insurrection had unequivocally broken out.

Intelligence presently came in of the murders and atrocities everywhere committed in the neighbourhood, and also of the formation of a rebel camp at Oulart. Thinking it advisable to crush the outbreak in its birth, the yeomanry cavalry proceeded to scour the country, while Captain Foote with a detachment of the North Cork militia, amounting to no men, rank and file, marched in the direction of the rebel camp; and in route to Oulart he was joined by a troop of yeomanry cavalry; however, most of the yeomen in face of the enemy proved traitors and deserted to the enemy. In rough numbers, the insurgent force might have been set down at four to five thousand combatants. Although the advance was made with every disregard of military caution, accident more than determination enabled the rebels to profit from the gross mismanagement of the force opposed to them. Contempt of an enemy, which creates incaution, has often proved fatal. The rebels fled at the first onset, and were pursued at full speed by the militia, who were so little apprehensive of resistance, that no rank or order was observed. While the rebels were making their escape with precipitation towards the northern side of the hill, they were apprised that a large body of cavalry had been seen that morning advancing against them in the opposite direction, apparently with a design to intercept their flight and co-operate with the militia by a double attack. As the Wexfordian insurgents as yet were totally unacquainted with warfare, the onset of cavalry was, to the imaginations of many among them, more terrible than that of infantry. They therefore ignorantly supposed the cavalry to be still in the neighbourhood; and while Father John Murphy exclaimed that they must either conquer or perish, they turned desperately against the militia, who had now arrived near the summit, almost breathless, and charging them with their pikes, killed the whole detachment in an instant, except the lieutenant-colonel, a sergeant, and three privates. ‘It appears,’ says Musgrave, ‘that the rebels were rendered bold and desperate by intoxication, and that from twelve to fifteen of them singled out, cut off, and attacked each of the soldiers, who did not resign their lives but at a dear rate to their assailants.’

The consequences of this unfortunate disaster speedily evinced themselves. Numbers of the peasantry who had hitherto remained neutral repaired to the camp and joined the rebel standard; and in the same ratio that the confidence of the insurgents increased, the spirit of the royalists was abated. Fearful of an attack by numbers of savage men under the intoxication of a first success, the little garrison of Gorey determined to retreat at once on Arklow; and the movement was conceived and executed with a celerity that caused the most afflicting distress to crowds of helpless loyalists, who, dreading the ferocity of the rebels, abandoned their homes and followed the retiring garrison as they best could; the situation of these unfortunates was truly deplorable, and their subsequent sufferings pitiable in the extreme.

DESTRUCTION OF THE CHURCH AT ENNISCORTHY

Flushed with success, Murphy, the fighting priest of Boulavogue, now turned his attention to the town of Enniscorthy, six miles distant from his encampment. Its possession would be important; and as the garrison amounted only to about three hundred men, of whom a hundred were North Cork Militia and the remainder local yeomanry, there was every reason to believe that an open town, accessible in many quarters and protected by a feeble garrison, would offer to the overwhelming masses which should assail it a short and unavailing defence. Accordingly, Father Murphy determined to attack the place, and he carried his resolution into effect early on the afternoon of the 28th of May.

From its dangerous vicinity to the rebel encampment the garrison of the town apprehended, naturally enough, that the first effort of the victorious insurgents would be directed against them, and they were obliged, in consequence, to be vigilant and prepared. The duty of patrolling and giving pickets was therefore most harassing; for three days and nights they had been continually under arms; but though worn out and exhausted, while reports and appearances were most discouraging, they determined nevertheless to offer a gallant defence, and nobly they realised their resolution.

Certain intelligence having been received on the morning of the 28th that the town would be attacked early that afternoon, the drums beat to arms and the garrison took the posts previously assigned to them. The North Cork Militia occupied the bridge, a cavalry corps holding the street connecting it with the town, while the Duffry gate hill, upon the Carlow road, was protected by the yeomanry and infantry. The market-house and castle had each a sergeant’s guard allotted for its defence.

The ground taken up by the yeomanry was three or four hundred yards in front of the Duffry gate, and on that point the rebels made their opening attack. On perceiving the yeomanry in line, the insurgent column halted and deployed, extending largely to the right and left, to outflank the small body in their front and cut it from the town. This done, they advanced, driving cattle in their front, and at the same time opening a heavy and well-directed fire. (As the county of Wexford abounds with water-fowl, the occupation of a fowler is so profitable that numbers of the lower class of people are not only experts in the use of fire-arms, but excellent marksmen.) The yeomanry replied to it with effect, but dreading, from the extension of the rebel wings, that they should be ultimately turned, they retired into the town, covered by a charge of cavalry, which dispersed a body that pressed them too closely, but inflicted on the gallant horsemen a very heavy loss.

The suburbs and the town itself were now on fire. A number of the assailants had got in through by-ways unperceived, the rebel inhabitants fired on the royalists from their windows (many lives of officers were thus picked off in ambuscade), while, repulsed from an attempt upon the bridge, the insurgents attempted to ford the river beyond the reach of the fire of the North Cork Militia. Pressed by numbers totally disproportionate, the yeomanry obstinately held their ground, and although suffering heavily themselves, they cheered as they observed that their own heavy and well-supported fusilade cut down the head of the rebel column and checked its advance.

‘The streets,’ relates Musgrave, ‘were entirely involved in smoke, so that the yeomen could not perceive the rebels till they were charged by their pikes. The flames from the houses at each side of the street were so

great as to unite and form a fiery arch, by which their hair was singed and the bear-skin in their caps was burnt. The loyalists, bravely disputing every inch of ground, retreated to the market-house, an open space like a square, where they made a determined stand and killed great numbers of the enemy. By this effort the loyalists turned the scale and drove the rebels completely out of the town, the streets of which at each side of the river presented an awful scene of conflagration. While the troops were thus engaged in the south side of the town, another body of the rebels crossed the river, about three-quarters of a mile above the bridge, but were soon routed by Captain Snowe. On this occasion his men showed great dexterity as marksmen, seldom failing to bring down such individual rebels as they aimed at. Captain Snowe then ordered Captain Richards to charge, which he did most effectually, but with heavy loss in killed and wounded.

'As a party of the rebels, which came from Vinegar Hill towards the glebe, still remained unassailed and their numbers seemed increasing, they were attacked by Captain Drury, with half a company of the North Cork Militia, and dispersed with considerable slaughter.'

Thus ended an action which lasted more than three hours, fought on a very hot day, in the midst of a burning town, the disaffected inhabitants of which set fire to their own houses to annoy the loyalists, and fired on them from their windows with deadly effect, picking out the loyalist leaders. In this action the yeomen and Protestant inhabitants performed prodigies of valour in support of the constitution and in defence of their property and their families.

'It was generally believed that not less than five hundred of the rebels were killed or wounded. The banks of the river and the island in it were strewed with their dead bodies, and numbers of them fell in the streets. To keep up the courage of the insurgents every artifice was used; for even women, as if insensible of danger, were seen in the midst of the carnage administering whiskey to their rebel friends.'

In this most gallant defence the loss sustained by the garrison fell chiefly on the yeomanry and loyalists; nearly a third of the whole amount employed were placed *hors de combat*, the greater proportion being slain.

After the rebels were repulsed, the necessity of an instant retreat became apparent. The town was on fire, and no longer tenable by a garrison equally reduced in strength and numbers, the insurgents were hanging in an immense force about the town, a night attack seemed almost certain, and no hope could be held out that under existing circumstances it could be repulsed. A council of war was held, and, after mature deliberation, it was resolved to abandon the town and march on Wexford by the eastern side of the river, by St. John's. 'From the suddenness of the retreat, only a few of the Protestant inhabitants could accompany the troops, and they could carry with them no other comforts or necessaries but the apparel which they wore. Imagination cannot form a more tragic scene than the melancholy train of fugitives, of whom some were so helpless from their wounds, from sickness, the feebleness of old age or infancy, that they could not have effected their escape had not the yeomen cavalry mounted them on their horses. Some parents were reduced to the dreadful necessity of leaving their infants in cottages on the roadside, with but faint hope of ever seeing them again.

'The town, the morning after the rebels got possession of it, presented a dreadful scene of carnage and conflagration; many bodies were lying dead in the streets, and others groaning in the agonies of death; some parts of the place were entirely consumed, and in others the flames continued to rage with inextinguishable fury. No less than 478 dwelling-houses and cabins were burned in the town and its suburbs, besides a great number of stores, malt-houses, and out-offices.'

The rebel entrance of the town was marked by the atrocities of a barbarous force, irritated by resistance, and now excited by the accidental success which circumstances had given them.

AN ACT OF VENGEANCE

In the spirit of sheer destructiveness the rebels turned their exertions to wrecking the Protestant church. Our artist has graphically pictured the wild and lurid spectacle attending the wilful destruction of the church at Enniscorthy; vestments, benches, the organ, the pulpit, Bibles, and church furniture were devoted to feed the flames and make a bonfire; meanwhile the triumphant insurgents are shown carrying off the church bell as a trophy, which we find set up subsequently, a prominent feature of the vast rebel camp in the vicinity.

THE CAMP ON VINEGAR HILL

mmediately after obtaining possession of Enniscorthy the rebels proceeded to form an extensive encampment

on Vinegar Hill, from which the town, after its seizure, was garrisoned by rebel reliefs, sent down from headquarters on the mountain. Immense numbers of the peasantry flocked to this camp, and in a few days it was believed that fully ten thousand men were there collected. As this was the point on which the insurgents concentrated in greater force and for a longer time than on any other during the brief period that elapsed from the *émeute* to its final suppression, and as it was also, unhappily, the scene, were its atrocities recorded, that would picture civil war in revolting colours—which may be fancied but not detailed—it may be interesting here to describe its local position and the appearance it then presented.

In a military point of view Vinegar Hill is strong. High grounds, gradually rising, are crowned by a cone of bold ascent, while the country beneath, being cultivated fields, is divided into numerous enclosures, and intersected by stone walls, hedges, and trenches. On the apex of the hill stood the ruins of a windmill; round the upper height some rude field-works were thrown up, as well as on a lower ridge which the rebels occupied as part of their position. For defence by irregular troops, who trusted rather to numbers than to discipline, Vinegar Hill was particularly favourable, for the numerous enclosures afforded safe cover for skirmishers, who could with perfect impunity severely annoy any columns advancing to assail the hill, and oblige an enemy to feel his way with caution. Good roads wound round the base of the position, and a command of the Slaney added to its military value.

Its local appearance was singular and picturesque, and perfectly in keeping with a wild and guerilla sort of warfare. Although the weather was particularly hot and night but nominal, a part of the insurgents placed themselves under cover, and the position exhibited rather the varied colouring of an Indian camp than the dazzling whiteness of ‘the tented field.’ Wattles—as thin and flexible poles are termed in Irish parlance—were overhung with blankets, tablecloths, chintz furniture, and window curtains, plundered from the surrounding neighbourhood, while in the centre, from the top of the ruined windmill, a green flag ‘dared the battle and the breeze.’ A few guns and swivels were rudely placed in battery, and in whatever else the rebel executive might have been deficient, their commissariat, as the figures and records show, was carefully attended to. A local board of field officers assembled every day, and after their deliberations the larders and cellars of the neighbouring gentry were put into extensive requisition. Vinegar Hill was better provided with rude accommodations than any of the insurgent stations, for the heights on which the rebel masses herded were generally mere bivouacs, hurriedly taken up and as suddenly abandoned. These posts they termed camps, though they were destitute of tents, except a few for their chiefs, while the people remained in the open air in vast multitudes, men and women promiscuously, some lying covered with blankets at night, and some without other covering than the clothes which they wore during the day. This mode of warfare was favoured by an uninterrupted continuance of dry and warm weather, to such a length of time as is very unusual in Ireland in that season, or any season of the year. This was regarded by the rebels as a particular interposition of Providence in their favour, and some among them are said to have declared, in a prophetic tone, that not a drop of rain was to fall until they should be masters of all Ireland. On the other hand, the same was considered by the fugitive loyalists as a merciful favour of Heaven, since bad weather must have miserably augmented their distress and caused the death of many. In these encampments or stations, among such crowds of riotous, undisciplined men, under no regular authority, the greatest disorder may be supposed to have prevailed. Often when a rebel was in a sound sleep in the night he was robbed by some associate of his gun or some article considered valuable; and hence to sleep flat on the belly, with the hat and shoes tied under the breast for the prevention of stealth, was the general custom.

THE CAMP ON VINEGAR HILL

‘The camp at Vinegar Hill presented a dreadful scene of confusion and uproar. A number of female rebels, more vehement than the male, were marching out to meet the army from Newtown Barry; this was a large body which Father Roche led from Vinegar Hill to the attack of that town, which took place the 1st of June. Great numbers of women were in the camp. Some men were employed in killing cattle and in boiling them in pieces in large copper brewing-pans; others were drinking, cursing, and swearing; many of them were playing on various musical instruments which they had acquired by plunder in the adjacent Protestant houses, the whole producing a most disagreeable and barbarous dissonance.’—*Visit to the Camp, Rossiters Affidavit*, printed in Musgrave’s *Appendix*, No. XX.

They were in nothing more irregular than in the cooking of provisions, many of them cutting pieces at random out of cattle scarcely dead without waiting to dismember them, and roasting those pieces on the points of their pikes, with the parts of the hide which belonged to them still attached. The heads of cattle were seldom eaten, but generally left to rot on the surface of the ground, as were often large portions of the carcases after a few pieces had been cut away. From this practice the decay of animal matter was rapid, and the stench of the encampment in a few days became intolerable.

THE FATAL PASS OF TUBBERNEERING

This incident, one of the most fatal episodes of the insurrection, was due, like several others recounted, to the incompetence of the leaders; a fine body of men were thus sacrificed, and the situation of the loyalists was aggravated in consequence. The abandonment of Wexford followed the succession of military mistakes. The peasantry, hounded on by truculent priests and ferocious partisans, committed every enormity which can be imagined, while the royalists and yeomanry emulated this abominable cruelty, and, under the name of loyalty, too frequently perpetrated wanton and savage reprisals. Confidence between men was ended, and while the rebels dissimulated to obtain their end, the royalist, shielded by the hand of power still predominant, robbed and slaughtered ‘in the king’s name.’ On both sides there were violence and treachery. It was an unholy contest, and while Popish massacres were revolting, it cannot be denied that Protestant atrocities were neither ‘few nor far between.’ Colonel Walpole was detached from Dublin to reinforce General Loftus, that on his junction he arrogated for himself an independent command, that it was culpably acceded to, that he was ambitious to fight an action without delay, and that to oblige a minion of a Lord-Lieutenant an attack on the rebel position, the hill of Ballymore, was planned, it being considered the safest method of gratifying ‘a carpet-knight’ whose services had as yet been confined to the duties of the drawing-room. The result may be imagined. Walpole led his fine division into a well-prepared ambuscade in the fatal pass of Tubberneering, the guns were taken, the commanders shot. ‘Suddenly from the enclosures a wild yell burst forth, accompanied by a stream of musketry. Colonel Walpole fell on the first fire; the confusion was tremendous, and to fight or retreat impossible. The height and number of the fences on every side made the ground most favourable for irregular and desultory warfare, as the long pikes of the rebels reached nearly across the narrow road, and those of the distracted soldiers who escaped the first close fire were perforated from behind the hedges’ by invisible opponents. The surprise of the troops was complete, dragoons and infantry were thrown in helpless disorder on each other, and a scene of butchery ensued. The column was now completely surrounded, discipline unavailing; an attempt made by a detachment of the 4th Dragoon Guards to turn the enemy’s right flank failed. After having sustained the attack for about three-quarters of an hour with considerable disadvantage on the part of the king’s troops, and having lost their commander and three pieces of artillery, which were immediately turned against them, a retreat began in all the confusion which might be expected from raw and inexperienced troops.

‘The rebels pressed them hard, a general dismay took place, which would probably have been fatal to the whole of the column had not Lieutenant-Colonel Cope of the Armagh Militia, who had been fortunately in the rear of the column with a detachment of his own regiment, rallied and formed them on the road to impede the progress of the enemy. He gallantly disputed every inch of it for three miles. To this small band of brave men, under the command of a cool and gallant officer, the safety of those who escaped on that disastrous day may be entirely attributed.

‘Walpole, a mere Castle *attache*, had been very improperly employed to collect what troops could be spared from Naas, Kilcullen, and Baltinglas to reinforce General Loftus.... Walpole assumed the duties of his superior, planned ridiculous attacks, and finally sacrificed one of the finest detachments in the field.’

THE LOYAL LITTLE DRUMMER-BOY

Musgrave has thus related the touching incident of which George Cruikshank has made an effective picture:—‘A drummer, named Hunter, of the Antrim regiment, only some twelve years old, fell into the hands of the rebels in the unfortunate affair in which Colonel Walpole lost his life. He carried his drum with him, and when conducted to the town of Gorey with some other prisoners, being ordered to beat it, actuated by a spirit of enthusiastic loyalty, he exclaimed, “That the King’s drum should never be beaten for rebels,” and at the same instant leaped on the head and broke through the parchment. The inhuman villains, callous to admiration of an heroic act even in an enemy, instantly perforated his body with pikes.’

The consequences of the slaughter at Tubberneering were precisely such as might be expected. The royalists lost heart, and the insurgents acquired a dangerous audacity. Every Protestant abandoned home and property in despair, and more than a thousand individuals fled from their once happy dwellings, with wives and children, and, without food or shelter, endeavoured to seek safety elsewhere, and obtain eleemosynary support from those who still possessed a home. In the first place all, soldiers and civilians alike, fell back to Arklow, but, feeling themselves insecure even there, the retreat was continued to Wicklow.

As we have seen, the results of the insurgent success reacted most disastrously; the rebels at once became masters of Gorey, and to the army of Irish liberty in '98 the conquest of this town proved the reverse of advantageous to the captors.

INSURGENT OCCUPATION OF GOREY

For five days they halted in and about the town, drinking and pillaging, destroying property not portable, and, as at Enniscorthy, visiting their vengeance on the church. Had their fury been expended on the building alone it would have been a matter of little import, but unhappily the contest had now taken a religious colouring, so rancorous and sanguinary that blood alone could satisfy party hatred and thirst for vengeance, and the best interests of the cause itself were sacrificed to stupid and unproductive brutalities, from which gray hairs afforded no protection, nor boyhood could claim no immunity. To satisfy this insensate vengeance upon inoffensive victims, military expediency was disregarded, and important advantages lost sight of and utterly sacrificed.

The MS. Journal of a Field Officer, in every sense an invaluable guide to the true situation of those affairs which come within the observations of this keen professional critic, dwells conclusively on this point: 'Providentially, the rebels had too many commanders; those of the Wexford force being mostly priests, their attention was more directed to the interests of their church by purging the land of heretics than to the concerns of the "Irish Republic," which the northern leaders had in view. Consequently time was wasted in collecting and piking Protestants, which might have been employed with far greater advantage to the cause.'

THE BATTLE OF ROSS

The operations of the rebel armies which we have already detailed, namely, the attempt on Newtown Barry by the corps under Father Kearns, and that on Gorey by the insurgents under the two Murphys and Perry of Inch, with the intervening occurrence of Walpole's defeat at Tubberneering, must be connected by a simultaneous transaction, probably, in military importance, the most interesting which marked the outbreak.

The strongest of the insurgent corps had assembled on the hill of Carrickbyrne, under the chief command of B. Baganel Harvey, with Father Roche acting en second. Their encampment was six miles from the town of Ross, of which it was their first and greatest object to obtain possession.

The dangerous proximity of the rebel host had caused alarm for the safety of the town, and, consequently, the garrison had been strengthened. On the 5th of June the County Dublin Militia, commanded by the popularly beloved Lord Mountjoy, with detachments from the Clare, Donegal, and Meath Militia, 5th Dragoons, Midlothian Fencibles, and English Artillery, occupied the place—a force amounting to 1400 men of all arms, of which 150 were yeomen. General Johnson, a veteran officer, commanded, and his heroic exertions won the day, and must shed a lasting lustre upon his reputation as a courageous and able leader.

On the evening of the 4th June the rebel camp at Carrick-byrne broke up, and the insurgents moved bodily to Corbethill, within a mile and a half of Ross. The rebel hordes 'moved by parishes and baronies, each having a particular standard; in their way they stopped at a chapel, where mass was said at the head of each column by priests, who sprinkled an abundance of holy water on them.'—*Musgrave*. After driving in a distant outpost they bivouacked on Corbethill for the night. The royalists, fearing a surprise, remained under arms, the infantry and guns in position on the southern and eastern faces of the town, the yeoman infantry holding the bridge, and the cavalry formed on the quay. Night passed, however, without alarm; and it was four o'clock on the morning of the 5th before Baganel Harvey, who had been a few days before elected to the chief command, sent a formal summons to General Johnson, which unfortunately (as some say) was not delivered. Furlong, the rebel leader, who carried it, was shot, through the ignorance of the advanced sentry, who paid no respect to a white handkerchief he waved on approaching the outposts.

The MS. Journal of a Field Officer sums up the actual military situation: 'The movement upon Ross showed some head on the part of Baganel Harvey, the object being to force the principal passage of the Barrow, and, in conjunction with the insurgents of Kilkenny, bear down upon Waterford, which was then very disaffected, weakly garrisoned, and presented strong temptations in the way of plunder. But Harvey had no idea of attacking Ross when that event took place, and there were evidently no preparations made for it. Harvey expected, and with reason, that the appearance of his masses on the hills which domineered the town would have secured the active co-operation of the Kilkenny men from the other side of the Barrow. And this would have been the case had time allowed it, but Furlong was a popular leader among the rebels, and when he was shot by a sentinel at the outpost the mass of the rebels, maddened by the occurrence, rushed by a sudden impulse, in a mighty but disordered torrent, along one side of the road on the Three-bullet Gate, instead of making a combined movement on an open town, by which facility of approach and enormous preponderance in numbers could not but have succeeded.' This argument is supported by the communication which Furlong carried. On searching the pockets of the dead man the following cartel was found:—

Sir—As a friend to humanity I request you will surrender the town of Ross to the Wexford forces, now assembled against that town. Your resistance will but provoke rapine and plunder, to the ruin of the most innocent. Flushed with victory, the Wexford forces, now innumerable and irresistible, will not be controlled if they meet with resistance. To prevent, therefore, the total ruin of all property in the town I urge you to a speedy surrender, which you will be forced to in a few hours, with loss and bloodshed, as you are surrounded on all sides. Your answer is required in four hours. Mr. Furlong carries this letter, and will bring the answer. —I am, Sir,

B. B. Harvey,

General commanding, etc., etc.

Camp at Corbethill, half-past three o’clock morning,

June 5, 1798.

The death of Furlong is said to have precipitated the attack, for immediately afterwards the rebels moved forward in dense masses, cheering and yelling, and directing their march on the Three-bullet Gate. The advance of this armed multitude—by some estimated as from 20,000 to 25,000 men—was described to me by an eye-witness as the most singular spectacle imaginable. The irregularity of their array—partly in close column and partly in line—had the effect of displaying their enormous strength to full advantage; while the presence of several priests, who were observed flitting through their ranks and haranguing their deluded followers with certain assurances of victory, inspired an enthusiastic fanaticism, which blinded them to danger and rendered them additionally formidable. They pushed forward four guns and a cloud of musketeers, some in extended order, and others heading the pikemen, whose crowded columns occupied the whole road, far as the eye could range.

As might have been expected, the pickets were roughly driven in, and, in a wild rush made by the rebels on the troops in front of the Three-bullet Gate, the latter were obliged to recede, and one of the guns was captured. In turn, however, the troops rallied and drove back the insurgents, and, perceiving their unsteadiness when mobbed together in the repulse, General Johnson ordered the 5th Dragoons to charge. For cavalry effect the ground was totally *un suite*, the numerous fences enabling the rebels to avoid the charge, while, protected themselves, they inflicted a heavy loss on men who very gallantly, but very ineffectively, had thus assailed them at disadvantage.

An entrance to the town was gained, and while some of the rebels fired the houses, others pushed forward towards the bridge. But the advance by Neville Street was swept by the steady fire of a gun placed in the market-place, which looked directly down the approach. Notwithstanding the murderous fire which fell on a dense mass of men, wedged together in a narrow street, and which shore the head of the column down as frequently as it came forward, others succeeded those who fell, and fresh numbers momentarily appeared. The troops, terrified at the armed crowds who swarmed through the Three-bullet Gate, and who, maddened by inebriety and fanaticism, seemed rather to court death than avoid it, the defenders at last despairing of offering a longer resistance against myriad hordes of infuriated fiends, retreated across the bridge.

BATTLE OF ROSS—‘COME ON, BOYS! HER MOUTH’S STOPPED!’

George Cruikshank, with his native genius for selecting effective and sensational episodes for pictorial delineation, has seized an actual incident which more resembles the effort of a romancer’s imagination than an actuality of stern warfare. The illustration is founded upon one of the paragraphs given by Maxwell in confirmation of his statement that the hordes of rebels apparently courted destruction rather than safety.

Says our historical authority:—‘One rebel, emboldened by fanaticism and drunkenness, advanced before his comrades, seized a gun, crammed his hat and wig into it, and cried out, “Come on, boys! her mouth is stopped!” At that instant the gunner laid the match to the gun and blew the unfortunate savage to atoms. Incredible as this instance of savage ignorance may appear, the fact has been verified by the affidavit of a person who saw it from a window.’

BATTLE OF ROSS—GENERAL JOHNSON RETRIEVES THE WANING FORTUNES OF THE DAY

It appeared, beyond the causes already related as having induced Harvey and his rebel myriads to feel confident of easily securing the strategically important town of Ross, that the insurgents had been induced to think that the militia regiments at Ross, from being almost entirely composed of Romanists, would have either joined them in the action, or offered a feeble opposition. The Clare regiment was considered friendly, and the Dublin County were believed not particularly loyal or trustworthy. *The MS. Journal of a Field Officer* is enlightening upon these points:—‘Be this as it may, their colonel, Lord Mountjoy, was heading them up the street leading to the Three-bullet Gate when he met his death by a traitorous shot, and the attachment which his men bore him superseded every other feeling but a desire for revenge. Although they had retired at first before the torrent, they rallied instantly, and showed no appearance of disaffection afterwards, but fought stoutly at Vinegar Hill. Lord M. was riding a little way ahead of the regiment when he was treacherously shot from a window by a baker’s boy. Such were the results of the fall of

Furlong on the one side, and the death of Lord Mountjoy on the other.'

The forced abandonment of the bridge was a heavy repulse. Virtually the day was lost, for although a small party of the royalists, under Sergeant Hamilton, still held most gallantly a position in the vicinity of the Three-bullet Gate, had the insurgents followed up their success, a total and bloody defeat of the king's troops must have been unavoidable. But, once within the town, drink and plunder engrossed the attention of the majority, while the admirable gallantry of that brave old man who commanded the retreating royalists retrieved the fortunes of the day.

Crossing to the Kilkenny side, General Johnson rallied the fugitives and urged them to follow him once more. 'Will you desert your General?' he exclaimed to the disheartened militia; but this appeal was coldly heard. 'And your countryman, too?' he added. The chord of national honour was touched, a cheer answered it, the old man wheeled his horse round, and, riding in front, brought back his rallied troops to the fight, and, rejoining the staunch few who still held the post beside the Three-bullet Gate, announced that a large reinforcement had just arrived from Waterford. When the fortune of a doubtful day is in the balance, a feather turns it frequently. Such was the case at Ross. The troops cheered, and plied their musketry with additional spirit and excellent effect, and, turning the rebel rear, put their massive column into a confusion which proved irretrievable, and at last, with desperate slaughter, drove them fairly from the town. The exhaustion of the garrison prevented anything being attempted beyond a brief pursuit in the direction of Corbet Hill, while the rebels made no effort to rally and renew the action, but went off dispersedly, some to their old camp at Carrickbyrne, and others to a new position which they had taken on a height called Slieve Keilter, some four miles' distance from the town.

In this, the most sanguinary and hardly contested action of the insurrection, commencing at five in the morning and ending at three in the afternoon, the loss on both sides was immense, although in gross numbers wholly disproportionate. Musgrave states the rebels killed to have exceeded 2500, besides the many 'carried off on cars.' Before the walls, between Three-bullet and Bunnion Gates, and in the cross lanes and streets which led directly to the market-place, the slaughter was enormous.

In Chapel Lane the rebels lay three deep, and throughout the approaches to the main guard the streets were heaped with corpses.

The defence of this post, and the assistance afforded to the few brave men who held it, were characteristic of the desperate fighting which marks the uncompromising spirit that religious and political antipathies produce. A most gallant soldier, Sergeant Hamilton of the Donegal Regiment, with sixteen men and two ship-guns, indifferently mounted, were posted at the intersection of four streets in the immediate vicinity of the jail. When the troops retreated over the bridge, Hamilton was recommended to remove the spare ammunition he had in charge and quit a post where now he must remain isolated and unsupported. His reply was, 'Never, but with life!' and though frequently assailed by hundreds, he laned them literally with grape-shot, covering the approach to the guns with dead and dying men, and through every turn of a doubtful conflict resolutely maintaining his ground.

Although the leading streets were completely under his fire, the gallant sergeant was open to attack from a narrow lane immediately beside the main guard, where, sheltered from the cannon, the rebels could form in security; and, no doubt, from that point they would have carried the post by a sudden onset had not a fortunate circumstance afforded the Donegal soldiers protection from the threatened danger.

The house of a loyalist called Dowesley was in the Backhouse Lane, and occupied by the family and a lame pensioner. The part of the lane where the rebels were safe from the fire of Hamilton's guns was, however, commanded by Dowesley's windows; and whenever the insurgents attempted to form and attack the main guard, a close and constant fusilade from the little garrison of the house drove them from a place where they expected to find shelter while collecting for their intended attack. As fast as the muskets were discharged the old soldier quickly reloaded them, adding half a dozen buck-shot to the bullet, and so deadly was the fire from Dowesley's dwelling that upwards of fifty bodies were found after the action heaped together in the lane.

Mr. Tottenham, the proprietor of Ross, employed six carts and a great many men for two entire days in collecting the bodies of the slain. Most of those found in the town were thrown into the river and carried off with the tide. The remainder were flung into a fosse outside the town wall and buried there. The conflict at Ross might have been shortened had the Roscommon regiment, which had been detached from Waterford early on the morning of the action, completed its march and brought its timely reinforcement to the exhausted garrison. It was also very fortunate the Roscommon regiment returned to Waterford that night, as the rebels, who were numerous and well organised there, meditated an insurrection, imagining Ross had been taken. The next day the Roscommon regiment moved a second time from Waterford and reached Ross with little opposition, although during the short interval which had occurred the country had risen *en masse*. On the adjacent hills parties of rebels were seen, and an arch of the Glynmore bridge had been partially broken, but the colonel planked it and passed his guns easily across. A body of rebels, who showed themselves upon a height, gave way after a round or two from the cannon, previously murdering fifteen of the refugee militiamen who had fled from Ross the day before, fell into these ruffians' hands, and now paid the penalty of their cowardice.

With the battle of Ross subsequent atrocities, which have placed the Wexford insurrection fearfully pre-eminent in crime, were connected. One foul deed, the massacre at Scullabogue, infinitely surpassed all others, and, with the massacres perpetrated wholesale on Wexford Bridge and Vinegar Hill, has cast a stain on Irish character that another century will scarcely remove. One reads, almost with incredulity, of Autos-da-fe and Eves of St. Bartholomew, and blesses God, when he finds the narrative is true, that his lot was not cast in an age of cruelty and darkness. But the narration of scenes which discoloured the Irish rebellion makes one blush to think that the wolfish wretches who were the actors therein bore the common name of man. It is a revolting detail that historic impartiality forces on the writer, and it shall be briefly despatched.

MASSACRE AT SCULLABOGUE

hen the rebels encamped on Carrickbyrne they established an outpost at the house of Scullabogue, which had been deserted by its proprietor, Captain King. A large barn was attached to the mansion; it was 34 feet long,

15 feet in breadth, and 12 feet high. This outhouse and the mansion itself had been made a prison wherein to deposit the unfortunate prisoners who by their loyalty or their difference in religious faith had incurred the displeasure of the rebels, and fell after the outbreak into their hands; and on the morning when the rebels marched on the attack of Ross, 230 ill-fated victims were then confined in a building, which proved at once their prison and their grave. A rebel guard was left to secure the captives, amounting to 300 men, under the command of three subordinate leaders, named Murphy of Loughnageer, Devereux, and Sweetman. The particulars of the butchery which took place on the fatal 5th of June will be best understood by abstracts from evidence upon oath, given on the trials of some of the monsters implicated in this hellish sacrifice. Any person who wishes for more extensive details of this most atrocious transaction will find them duly verified in the voluminous appendix attached to Musgrave's *Memoirs*.

The depositions of sundry persons are briefly abridged. One who escaped the massacre, by the bribery of a rebel and the virtue of a priest's protection, gives the following account of this horrible transaction. He states that, when the rebel army began to give way at Ross, an express was sent to Murphy to put the Protestant prisoners to death, as the king's troops were gaining the day; but Murphy refused to comply without a direct order from the general. That he soon after received another message to the same purpose, with this addition, that 'the prisoners, if released, would become very furious and vindictive.' That, shortly after, a third express arrived, saying, 'the priest gave orders that the prisoners should be put to death.' That the rebels, on getting the sanction of the priest, became outrageous, and began to pull off their clothes, the better to perform the bloody deed. That, when they were leading the prisoners out from the dwelling-house to shoot them, he turned away from such a scene of horror, on which a rebel struck him with a pike upon the back, and said he would 'let his guts out if he did not follow him!' That he then attended the rebels to the barn, in which there was a great number of men, women, and children, and that the rebels were endeavouring to set fire to it, while the poor prisoners, shrieking and crying out for mercy, crowded to the back door of the building, which they forced open for the purpose of admitting air. That for some time they continued to put the door between them and the rebels, who were piking or shooting them. That, in attempting to do so, their hands or fingers were cut off. That the rebels continued to force into the barn bundles of straw to increase the fire. At last, that the prisoners having been overcome by the flame and smoke, their moans and cries gradually died away in the silence of death—and all became still.

The witness, during this dreadful scene, saw a child, who got under the door and was likely to escape, although much hurt and bruised, when a rebel perceiving it, thrust his pike through it and threw it into the flames. While the rebels were shooting the prisoners in front of the dwelling-house, a party of men and women were engaged in stripping and rifling the dead bodies; and the prisoner, Phelim Fardy, called out to them to avoid the line of his fire (as he was busily employed in shooting the prisoners), and after saying so, he fired at a man who was on his knees, who instantly fell and expired. Another ruffian, whose barbarities made him conspicuous, trampled on the dead and wounded bodies, and behaved otherwise in such a ferocious manner as to obtain from the rebels the appellation of 'the true-born Roman.'

The barn was so limited in size that suffocation must have soon taken place from the great number of people compressed into a space so small; for besides the burning of the thatched roof of the barn, the rebels fed it by introducing blazing faggots on their pikes.

Richard Grandy, who was present, swore the prisoners were led out by fours to be shot, and that the rebels who pierced them when they fell took a pleasure in licking their spears.

A gentleman present, who had a narrow escape, assured the writer that a rebel said he would try the taste of orange blood, and that he dipped a tooth-pick in the wound of one of the Protestants who was shot and put it into his mouth.

Whenever a body fell on being shot, the rebel guards shouted and pierced it with their pikes.

They burned there several wives and some of the children of the North Cork Militia in the barn, who were Roman Catholics; but it was sufficient to provoke their vengeance that they were connected with the soldiers of an heretical king.

The most innocent victims were sacrificed; a girl was brought there in place of her sister; she was seized and sent to the barn, and her father shortly after, having gone there with his poor old wife to solicit her

liberation; the parents and child were thrust into the barn together, and burned with the other unfortunates. No less than twenty-four Protestants were taken from the village of Tintern, about eight miles distant, many of them old and feeble, and led in one drove to the barn, where they perished. Two Romanists, serving-men, were burnt in the barn because they would not consent to the massacre of their Protestant masters. Another Romanist, who was travelling with a royalist pass for his protection, was intercepted by the rebels, who considered the pass an emblem of loyalty; they committed him to the barn, with a son who happened to accompany him, and both perished in the flames.

In his history of these events Taylor, after recording the dreadful massacre of Scullabogue, thus describes the retreat of the rebels from New Ross, and pictures Baganel Harvey's feelings when he viewed the scene of the fearful tragedy enacted at the fatal barn: 'After ending this horrid massacre, the rebels marched (exulting in their diabolical achievements) towards New Ross, but the destroying angel had gone before them, and miserably defeated that huge army in which they trusted. As they proceeded to reinforce their brother rebels they met multitudes of the wounded returning, some crawling along as well as they could, others on horses and on cars; some were shot through different parts of the body, while others had broken arms, legs, and thighs. Going on further, they met the remnant of the main body retreating in the greatest confusion, hurry, and noise, bringing with them cars full of the dead and wounded. They took their station on Carrickburn that night; several stole home, and never joined them more, particularly those of Barony Forth, who, though a race of cowards, were cruel in the extreme.'

The next morning Baganel Harvey was in the greatest anguish of mind when he beheld Scullabogue House and the barn, where the murdered Protestants were to be seen in every attitude. They lay so close, that several were standing up against the walls, and many lying in heaps in each other's arms among the ashes of the timber of the house, while their bodies looked frightful, being burned to a cinder. He turned from the scene with horror, wrung his hands, and told those around him that 'as innocent people were burned there as ever were born, and that their conquests for liberty were at an end.' He then said privately to a friend, 'I see now my folly in embarking in any cause with these people. If they succeed I shall be murdered by them; if they are defeated, I shall be hanged.' Now convinced of the sanguinary feelings of his followers, he was determined to put a stop to it, as far as in his power lay, and that day he issued a proclamation, had it printed, sent many copies to Vinegar Hill, Wexford, and Gorey, and distributed them over the country.

On Saturday, the 9th of June, 184 skeletons were cleared out of the barn, thrown into a ditch near the place, and slightly covered with clay.

There is every reason to believe that this horrible atrocity occasioned to all but the lowest barbarians, who were banded with the rebel forces, feelings of alarm and disgust. Almost the last act of Baganel Harvey before he was deprived of his command was the publication of a general order to restrain future acts of violence, under the penalty of death; and he originated a subscription—in which many rebel leaders joined—to pay for the interment of the poor sufferers.

Years afterwards, record all the authorities who have dwelt on this cruel episode, it was the greatest wish of such of the Wexford rebels as survived, to prove that, in whatever crimes they might have participated largely, they were wholly unconnected with the burning of Scullabogue.

FATHER M. MURPHY OF BALLYCANOO AND THE HERETIC BULLETS

Of the rebel chiefs, the priests were decidedly the most despotic, and too often the most unrelenting, to the unhappy men who became prisoners to the banditti they commanded. One of the most truculent of these spiritual chiefs was Father Michael Murphy of Ballycanoo, a prominent church-militant general in the Wexford campaigns, who met his fate at the battle of Arklow. After the priest's death the following edifying epistle, addressed to a Dublin tradesman, was found on his body; this letter, as Musgrave suggests, in the constant hurry and confusion in which he had been kept, probably in preparing for the attack of Arklow, the Father had neither time nor opportunity to forward:—

Gorey, 6th June 1798.

Friend Houston—Great events are ripening. In a few days we shall meet. The first-fruits of your regeneration must be a tincture of poison and pike in the metropolis against heretics. This is a tribunal for such opinions. Your talents must not be buried as a judge. Your sons must be steeled with fortitude against heresy, then we shall do; and you shall shine in a higher sphere. We shall have an army of brave republicans, 100,000, with fourteen pieces of cannon, on Thursday before Dublin; your heart will beat high at the news. You will rise with a proportionate force.—Yours ever, M. Murphy.

Decipher B.I.K.M.Q.Y....

The plans disclosed in this letter came near to complete realisation; but for the events of Ross and Arklow, who can say that the results foreshadowed in the intercepted letter of the slain priest might not have been realised to the very letter?

The lowest ruffians had become leaders of the mob, and several monsters, who desecrated the holy orders intrusted to them, encouraged the barbarities of their besotted followers and pandered to their superstitions. Among these wretches Murphy of Bannow and Roche of Paulpearsay were conspicuous. The latter, like Murphy of Ballycanoo, was a bullet-catcher, and while he occasionally distributed to his flock balls which had been caught in action, he promised an immunity from danger to the faithful—for a consideration. 'He would give them gospels,' he said (they were generally sewed to a brown-coloured tape), 'to hang about their necks, which would make the person who wore it proof against all the powers of heretical artillery; but that notwithstanding their extraordinary utility to the Irish army, they would be of no avail unless they were purchased. The price to the better sort of people was half-a-crown; but as the poorer were zealous in the glorious cause, he would only ask from them a sixpence.' Says Taylor, 'Thousands of these gospels were made and speedily sent round the country.'

In the heat of action, on every repulse, and when his deluded followers retreated, Murphy of Ballycanoo had induced fresh victims to come forward, and, blinded against danger by whisky and fanaticism, they rushed on more than one occasion to the very muzzles of the guns. Were the fact not accredited beyond a doubt, it would not be believed that the drunken scoundrel persuaded the unhappy savages who obeyed his orders that his person was impervious to heretical balls, producing a handful of musket-bullets, which he averred had struck him during the action, or had been caught as they innocently whistled by. However potent the spell might be that saved the worthy churchman from lead, it proved inefficient against 'cold iron.' A round-shot from one of the Durham guns struck him down while leading these ignorant wretches to the charge; the ruffian went to his account, and his followers broke finally and disbanded. When the warlike Murphy fell he was but a few paces from the barricade, and was waving a banner over his head emblazoned with a huge cross and the motto of 'Death or Liberty.'

THE BATTLE OF ARKLOW

The consternation which the intelligence of Walpole's destruction occasioned in the metropolis may be easily imagined. Many families quitted the kingdom in despair. This, probably, was the gloomiest moment of that fearful period, but the unbounded loyalty and devotion of the Dublin Protestants shone out with increasing brilliancy, and assisted to dispel the gathering cloud.

In the metropolis the yeomanry amounted to nearly 4000 men, now armed, well disciplined, and purged from those traitors who, but a few weeks before, had thronged their ranks. With perfect confidence the city was intrusted to their protection, and from the few regular troops in garrison, the Cavan regiment, with a detachment of Reay Fencibles, were despatched to reinforce the troops in Wicklow, and enable the royalists to rally and recover the ground they had lost.

FATHER M. MURPHY OF BALLYCANOO AND THE HERETIC BULLETS

The troops were forwarded by carriages specially impressed, the command given to General Needham, and on the 6th of June the column quitted Wicklow, and after passing a deserted country and being joined by some yeomanry and armed loyalists, it entered Arklow early the same evening; some straggling rebels retiring from the town, where they had loitered, plundering and drinking, on the cavalry advanced guard appearing by the Dublin road.

The reception of the troops by the inhabitants was enthusiastic, for many, under fear of death, had already abandoned their houses to embark in fishing boats, and escape from a place which they expected to become an immediate scene of savage violence.

During the two succeeding days (7th and 8th of June) the commanding officer was engaged in making dispositions for the defence of the town and in selecting a position. Ground was marked out capable of being occupied by a body of troops so limited in number as the garrison; and while such fences were preserved as would afford cover to the royal light troops from which to annoy an advancing enemy, others that could neither mask their movements or interrupt the play of the guns were levelled and removed. Meanwhile the country was carefully patrolled, and alarm posts assigned to the different corps to take up on the rebels being reported to be in motion.

The morning of the 9th came. At noon a wing of the Durham Fencibles marched in under the command of an excellent officer, Colonel Skerrett, affording a well-timed and most effective reinforcement to the garrison, and, in consequence of this arrival, General Needham made a slight change in his dispositions, and never was a little army more curiously composed than the morning state of that of Arklow exhibited on the day of the attack upon the town.

As the evening came on, an advanced picket announced the appearance of the insurgents, and consequently an infantry outpost at the Charter-house was called in and replaced by a cavalry patrol, while by the two great approaches to the town—the seaside road and that leading to Coolgreney—dense masses were seen moving to the attack. By the former road one great column directed its march against the lower part of the town called the Fishery; by the latter an immense mass, under the command of Father Murphy of Ballycanoo, threatened the upper part of Arklow, and thus endangered the right and rear of the royalist position. To deploy their unwieldy masses appeared to be a task beyond the power of their leaders, for more than half an hour was consumed in the attempt, and when they did effect the change the line was irregular and disordered, at some parts merely in rank entire, and at others six files deep.

The royalists were already in position, the line being slightly curved, the flanks refused, and each protected

by battalion guns, with two six-pounders nearly in the centre. The hedges were lined by the Suffolk and Tyrone Militia and part of the supplementary yeomen, with a small party posted in the churchyard and another at the bottom of the street which looked upon the bridge. These posts were occupied to defend the lower town. The barrack walls had been provided with a ‘banquette’ (a wooden stage attached to high walls, at an elevation which will allow the defenders to fire over the parapet), and supplied with musqueteers, while the upper end of the street was barricaded with carts and lumber, and defended by part of the Antrim regiment and a field-piece. Generally the cavalry were formed on the bridge and sands. Taking the local character of the place and the small number of its defenders into consideration, the disposition of the troops was very judicious and creditable to General Needham.

The actual strength of the rebel army was, on the lowest calculation, computed at 25,000 men, and on good authority it has been even raised to 31,000. About 5000 of the insurgents, were armed with firearms, and they brought two well-appointed guns into action. But it was not from their enormous numbers only that they were formidable. They came forward under the wildest enthusiasm, burning to exact vengeance for past defeats, and confident they must annihilate the small but daring body who, undaunted by a twenty-fold superiority, were steadily awaiting their attack. During the morning’s march from Gorey they plundered the houses of the Protestants of everything valuable, putting in requisition all the spirits and provisions that could be supplied; and, under the double influence of intoxication and fanaticism, were led on by their priests, who inspired them with ideas of their own invincibleness; because, as they assured the misguided wretches, they were engaged in the cause of heaven, and opposed to the enemies of God. To maintain that religious frenzy which was their great source of courage, at the end of every mile during the march their leaders said mass, and used every mode of exhortation and every superstitious device that priestcraft could invent. They advanced in an irregular line, which was frequently broken by their running out to file along the hedge-rows lying parallel to the position of the king’s troops, of the cover of which they endeavoured to avail themselves. Their front rank was composed of those who had firearms, and were mostly from the barony of Shelmalier, on the Wexford coast, where they subsist during the winter by shooting sea-fowl, which makes them expert marksmen. They were covered in the rear by the pikemen, many deep, while at certain intervals the line was strengthened by numerous masses of men, who were ready to supply the places of those who fell, or act as occasion might require. Each company had a green flag about two feet square, with a yellow harp in the centre, while some were parti-coloured, and equal in size to the king’s colours. Their leaders were distinguishable riding through the ranks, marshalling them and giving orders. During the engagement the rebels frequently repeated their dreadful yells, which heightened the terrific appearance of a numerous host of barbarians, who seemed confident, from superior numbers, that they could easily overwhelm the small army that opposed them.

The rebels advanced two guns by the Coolgreney road, under a sharp and destructive fire from those on the right of the Durham regiment, and the third in position at the barricade. Both of the former were dragged up by lanes on the high road and placed on high grounds, one looking on the centre of the royalist line, the other commanding its left flank.

Although tedious in their formation, the insurgent column directed against the lower town advanced so rapidly that they had nearly succeeded in cutting off a cavalry patrol, which saved itself, however, by swimming the horses across the Ovoca. Having fired the houses in the suburb, the rebels pushed on under cover of the smoke, but they never could gain the bridge, as the fire of the detached party, which covered that approach, and the second, which held the churchyard, cut down the head of the column, and finally disordered it so much as to allow the cavalry, formed on the sands, to charge with excellent effect. During a long and desperate struggle the troops behaved with a steadiness and determination which enabled them not only to secure the lower town, but to inflict a destructive loss upon the assailants.

But the grand effort of the insurgents was directed against the left and centre of the position and the barricade that covered its right flank. From behind the hedges the rebels kept up a steady and well-directed fusilade, and also commanded the royal line with such effect as to dismount a battalion gun and oblige Colonel Skerrett to advance his left wing and protect it behind a fence from the fire of a field-piece, which otherwise must have enfiladed it. The gallantry of the Durham Fencibles was unbounded. Thrice the rebels came forward in immense force against the wing of this noble regiment, and as often a destructive volley from their musketry, with grape from the battalion guns, obliged the assailants to recede from a fire they found intolerable. But, maddened by intoxication and encouraged by their ghostly leader, the deluded wretches again and again returned to the attack, and the General, despairing of repulsing the continued efforts of desperate savages, determined to yield the ground and abandon the position. Colonel Skerrett, well aware that to retire with a handful of beaten troops in the presence of five-and-twenty thousand men would lead to their total destruction, as sternly resolved to hold the post he had taken to the last; and an unforeseen event decided the fortune of this doubtful day, and crowned the gallant few with well-merited victory.

As long as the redoubtable Murphy of Ballycanoo—who hitherto seemed to bear a charmed life—remained to lead his demented and infatuated followers, all that the assailed could effect was to frantically hold their ground, their assailants continuing to rally after each repulse. It may be judged how critical was the situation of the defending royalists. Murphy, as described, had led his legions within a few paces of the barricade, and was encouraging his adherents by waving his famous banner of ‘Death or Liberty’ at the head of the advancing hordes he was leading to the charge, when a round-shot from one of the Durham guns struck him down; the invincibility charm was broken, and the rebels fled dismayed. About eight o’clock, when it was growing dusk, they began to retreat towards Coolgreney in an irregular and disorderly manner, carrying off nine cart-loads of dead and wounded. Had the cavalry but had sufficient daylight to have pursued them, they must have cut off great numbers in the retreat.

The loss of the rebels was said to have amounted fully to one thousand, while that of the royalists in killed and wounded did not exceed sixty or seventy.

Although night saved the rebels from any pursuit, and probably thus abated their losses extensively, as the wounded were enabled to crawl away, the moral effect of their defeat was incalculable, obliterating entirely the false confidence which the affairs at Oulart and Three Rocks and the calamity at Tubberneering had

produced. The mischief occasioned by their first neglect of seizing Arklow when deserted by its garrison was consummated by the defeat attendant on the attempt on the part of the rebels to redeem their original error and carry the town when it had been rendered defensible. Had the insurgents not lost time at Gorey—had they advanced and seized Arklow—Wicklow and Bray must of necessity have fallen into their hands without the snapping of a flint. The metropolis, as Father Murphy's intercepted letter revealed, assaulted by 100,000 reckless men, like the warlike priest's followers, with the fourteen pieces of cannon at that time in their possession, joined in Dublin by the rising of a proportionate force similarly armed, might have effected their wicked object.

The effect of the defeat, and the deductive inferences from it, as drawn by Gordon as our authority observes, are interesting and correct:—

'As the repulse at Arklow,' writes Gordon in his *History*, 'decided the fate of the rebellion, so it fortunately left undecided a question how far the Romanists would have carried religious animosity had the insurrection been successful. The violent acts of the insurgents at Gorey and its neighbourhood were not near so great as in the southern parts of the county. The former might, by an advocate of their cause, be coloured with a pretext of retaliation, since acts of the same kind had been committed by the loyalists, as the burning of houses, the quartering of men on families for subsistence, imprisonments, trials of prisoners by court-martial, the shooting of prisoners without trial, and the insulting of others by cropping the hair and covering the head with a pitched cap. But an opinion is entertained, I fear indeed with too much foundation, that if the town of Arklow had been taken, and thus a wide prospect opened for the success of the rebellion, the Protestants remaining in the power of the Catholic rebels in the county of Wexford were to have been massacred.

Many believe also that the persons excepted from the first massacre were destined for ultimate slaughter on the final success of the insurgents, and that even such leaders of the rebels as were Protestants were to be included in this proscription. The war from the beginning—in direct violation of the oath of the United Irishmen—had taken a religious turn, as every civil war in the south or west of Ireland must be expected to take by any man acquainted with the prejudices of the inhabitants. The terms Protestant and Orangeman were synonymous with the mass of the insurgents; and the Protestants they meant to favour had been baptized into the Romish Church by the priests of that communion. But whatever degree of religious bigotry or party hatred had been hitherto discovered by the insurgents, there were still many individuals who evinced the greatest humanity in their endeavours to mitigate the fury of their associates.'

CAPTURE OF VINEGAR HILL

The fatal effects of the defeat at Arklow in the subsequent fortunes of the insurrection became every day more apparent, and during these transactions the rebels who remained at Gorey and its neighbourhood were gradually dispersing. 'A part of them retired to Wexford, bringing with them the prisoners who had been confined in the market-house of Gorey. These had been severely treated; they had been supplied with food only once in the twenty-four hours, cropped, pitch-capped, and exposed from the windows to the insults of the shouting multitudes on their march to attack Arklow, while many had been shot or piked to death. As the mass of remaining rebels had taken their station on the hill of Ask, only a mile from Gorey, after the battle of Arklow, the royal army remained some days close within its quarters, sending out patrols with caution, at first to a very small distance, and afterwards gradually advancing further. At last a troop of yeomen cavalry ventured so far on the road towards Gorey as to approach the rebel station on Ask hill, and found the post had been so thinned by perpetual desertions that not more than about a hundred men fit for action were then remaining in it, and these without a leader.'

For every reason, military and political, it was now unanimously determined by the royalist commanders that the relief of Wexford and Enniscorthy, so long and so unhappily in possession of the rebels, must be preceded by the capture of the camp and a total dispersion of the insurgent bodies collected on Vinegar Hill. To effect this difficult but desirable object a vigorous and well-combined attack would be required, and on the 16th of June the preparatory movements of the different corps were arranged by General Lake; to Generals Dundas, Needham, Johnson, Sir Charles Asgill, Wilkinson, Sir James Duff, Loftus, and Moore were assigned plans of operations covering three or four days; some of these movements were delayed from various eventualities, and two brigades were unfortunately absent at the final assault on Vinegar Hill. As the attack was to be made immediately after daybreak on the 21st, and as it was utterly impossible that by any exertions his wearied troops could reach their ground in time, Needham despatched an aide-de-camp to the

Commander-in-Chief requesting the advance to be delayed for an hour, to allow him time to get up; but General Lake could not postpone his movements against the rebel position, as an immediate assault upon the camp was absolutely necessary to prevent the enemy from detaching reinforcements to their friends at Enniscorthy, who were then warmly engaged with Johnson's brigade. Under these circumstances General Needham, finding it impossible to get the column up, very properly pushed his cavalry forward; and when the rebels broke upon the hill, they were sufficiently advanced to cut down a number of the fugitives. General Sir James Duff, who advanced by the Ferns road, with his right resting on the Slaney and his left flanked by the light infantry under General Loftus, reached the base of the hill with occasional interruptions from rebel pickets, who occupied the high grounds on the line of march, but who were easily dispersed by a few shells from the howitzers. Previous to commencing his ascent he detached General Loftus with the light infantry and guns to seize an eminence which overlooked the lower line of the rebel position, and consequently laid it open to a cannonade at easy range. The movement was rapidly effected, and although the enclosures were numerous and the ground steep, General Loftus, by breaking down the stone fences, was enabled to get his artillery forward, and, crowning the height with his guns, he opened them with excellent effect upon crowded ranks, which were completely enfiladed. The remainder of Duff's brigade pressed steadily up the hill, and at the same time the columns of Generals Lake, Wilford, and Dundas, with Campbell's light companies, ascended the south-eastern face, while Johnson's brigade mounted from Enniscorthy.

As the troops advanced they sustained a sharp fire from the rebel marksmen, who, acting *en tirailleur*, lined the numerous enclosures and disputed them with some spirit. The rebel cannonade was ineffective, although they had thirteen pieces of various calibres on the hill, but their musketry was well sustained, and yet, with all the advantages of a strong position, the loss inflicted on the assailants was infinitely less than could have been anticipated. The steady advance of the troops was never for a moment checked, and the movements of the columns so admirably timed that they crowned the hill simultaneously, while the rebels, availing themselves of the means of retreat which General Needham's failure had unluckily left open, went off *en masse*, abandoning their cannon, ammunition, and all the plunder that had been accumulated during the period they had occupied their savage and sanguinary encampment.

If the wholesale destruction of a deluded multitude were a desirable object, certainly the failure of this movement is to be lamented, for the rebels were enabled to get off bodily, whereas had Needham reached his ground they must have been so totally *derouted* that no exertions could have rallied them again, and the flame of rebellion would have been extinguished. But the results of his failure, and not the cause, were severely tested at the time, and the General was censured with injustice for a miscarriage, occasioned by circumstances entirely beyond control, and of everyday recurrence in war.

The brunt of the action, and the greatest proportion of the loss, fell upon the brigade commanded by General Johnson (afterwards Sir Henry Johnson, G.C.B., who may be said, in the rebellion of 1798, to have been the military saviour of Ireland). On the evening preceding the attack on Vinegar Hill, that General advanced within a mile and a half of Enniscorthy, intending to bivouac in the vicinity of the rebel position, and bring his column fresh into action the next day. The troops had scarcely, however, piled arms when the rebels in great force issued from Enniscorthy and moved forward with the apparent intention of attacking the royalists and hazarding a general action. They advanced in close columns, covered by a number of sharpshooters, and connected by several bodies, formed in irregular lines. The rebel skirmishers, after maintaining a sharp fusilade, were speedily dislodged by the fire of the cannon, and, falling back on the supporting column, which had halted on an eminence half a mile from the ground occupied by the royalists, the guns were directly turned upon the height.

On this occasion these unfortunate and deluded men evinced an ignorance of warlike missiles which can hardly be conceived. As the round shot from the guns bedded themselves in the face of the hill against which they had been directed, the rebels rushed in numbers to pick them up. A shell from a howitzer falling, it was exultingly surrounded by a crowd of men, each struggling to become owner of this god-send. The effect of the explosion may be fancied, as when the fuse reached the powder, more than fifty of the ignorant wretches were furiously contending for the possession of the lighted shell.

According to Taylor's *History*, 'Here they were cannonaded, and on seeing the shells they were driven into the utmost confusion, as they could not conceive what they were, some shouting in a kind of delirium (as shell followed shell), "They spit fire at us"; others, "We can stand anything but these guns which fire twice!" Indeed the carnage occasioned by them was very great, and fully answered the end.'

The night passed, and at daybreak Johnson drove the rebels from the height and forced them back upon Enniscorthy. After halting an hour, to allow the general attack upon the hill to operate as a diversion and employ the main body of the enemy, Johnson pushed his column into the town. On this occasion the rebels made a stubborn resistance, their pikemen disputing the streets and their musketry firing upon the advancing troops from the windows. Every yard was stoutly contested, and a six-pounder, advanced into the open space before the court-house, was carried by a sudden rush, the gunners killed, and the piece captured by the pikemen. But it was immediately retaken; the bridge was cleared of the enemy, the Dublin regiment cheered and pressed up the hill, and although that ascent was the steepest, the brave old man reached the summit as the other columns cleared it.

The royalist casualties were comparatively trifling, and the rebel loss fell infinitely short of what might have been expected from a *déroute* so complete as that which followed the loss of their favourite position. As the greater number of the insurgents were cut down dispersing in the pursuit, the amount could not be correctly estimated. Probably three or four hundred might have been slain. One of their favourite generals, a church-militant leader, was included in the casualties of the day, for Father Clinch of Enniscorthy was killed while retreating after the action.

There is a military criticism which is placed here while summarising the results of this action. It is given in the *M.S. Journal of a Field Officer*:—'There is one point which has never been explained to my satisfaction. After the defeat at Vinegar Hill the main body of the rebels retreated to Wexford, where they divided—one column crossed Wexford bridge, and made their way to the north of the county about Gorey; now this body must have been due north while General Lake was moving due south from Vinegar Hill upon Wexford, so that

they must have actually passed each other at a distance of not six miles between the parallel roads, as a glance at the map will show. Perhaps General Lake did not consider himself strong enough to divide and occupy both roads to Wexford, or perhaps he might have thought “the stag at bay’s a dangerous foe,” and permitted them to weaken themselves by allowing them to quietly disbandon. It cost, however, much loyal blood at Gorey.’

REBELS EXECUTING THEIR PRISONERS ON THE BRIDGE AT WEXFORD

Wexford was a scene of unexampled horror, where were enacted the most sanguinary barbarities in emulation of the bloodthirsty atrocities of the reign of terror; nor can it be an excuse that the monsters avowedly imitated those terrorising scenes which were made luridly familiar by the annals of the French Revolution.

The plunder of houses and the incarceration of their innocent victims after the unfortunate defeat of the Meath detachment at the Three Rocks, which determined Colonel Maxwell’s fatal retreat from Wexford, immediately occupied the insurgents.

While the rabble were engaged in collecting numbers of ill-fated Protestants for future slaughter, the leaders went through the mockery of establishing a provisional government, and, in imitation of the French Jacobins, a grand national committee, a council of elders, and a council of five hundred were to be organised forthwith, while the dwelling-house of a wealthy merchant was put into requisition as a senate-house, wherein the different estates were to legislate for the young republic.

If it were necessary to prove the fallacy that any possibility exists of retaining influence over a sanguinary and superstitious mob by any means but acting on their ignorance or pandering to the worst passions of brutal dispositions, the rebel occupation of Wexford would afford an ample evidence, and the president of the council and the governor of the town, in their own sad stories, tell that the baser the *materiel* of the mob, the briefer is the authority of those who undertake the direction of its movements. Every day during the rebel occupation of the town and adjacent encampments, fresh victims continued to be brought in by the savage pikemen. In Wexford a small sloop, the town jail, and subsequently the market-house, were filled with unhappy sufferers. A reign of terror had commenced, the rabble power had become predominant, and all persons of superior rank or a different faith were denounced by wretches who associated crime with religion and slaughtered in the name of God. The chiefs themselves, particularly those few among them who had been educated in the Protestant religion, were in perpetual danger of death or violence from an ungovernable multitude, whom they had unwisely hoped to command.

With such feelings and dispositions it will be a subject of regret, but not surprise, that now the ferocity of the rabble resisted all control and blood alone could appease it. The death decree of the wretched prisoners went forth, and the fearful story of the massacre is recorded by one who miraculously escaped the fate of his less fortunate companions. It is a fearful record of butchery, and, alas! the statement is not over-coloured. The leading monster of these executions was Thomas Dixon, a relative of the priest, and he may well be described as a fiend in human form.

On the 19th of June the Protestants in Wexford received the heart-rending intelligence that all the prisoners were to be murdered the next day. That night also, one of them, while sitting alone in silent sorrow, heard the death-bell toll as loud as ever she heard it, and much more awfully. On the following morning, the never-to-be-forgotten 20th of June, Thomas Dixon rode to the gaol-door and swore that not a prisoner should be alive against sun-set. He then rode into the street repeating the same, with horrid imprecations, adding ‘that not a soul should be left to tell the tale.’ Good God! how shall I proceed? neither tongue nor pen can describe the dismal aspect of that melancholy day,—a day in which the sun did not so much as glimmer through the frowning heavens. The town-bell rang, and the drums beat to arms to assemble the rebels for the purpose of joining those at Three Rocks to march against General Moore’s brigade. In the evening Dixon assembled the murdering band, and immediately hoisted that harbinger of destruction, the *Black Flag*, which had on one side a bloody cross, and on the other the initials M.W.S., that is, ‘murder without sin,’ signifying that it was no sin to murder a Protestant. Having paraded for some time to give more solemnity to the scene, the Protestants who were confined in the gaol and prison ship were led forth to the slaughter, and conducted to the bridge under a strong guard of merciless ruffians, piked to death, with every circumstance of barbarous cruelty, and then flung into the river to leave room for more! While this work of blood was going on, a rebel

captain ran to the Popish bishop and entreated of him ‘for the mercy of Jesus’ to come and save the prisoners. The bishop coolly replied that ‘it was no affair of his.’ All this time the sanguinary pikemen continued butchering the poor victims on the bridge; some they perforated in places not mortal, to prolong and increase their torture, others they would raise aloft on their pikes, and while the miserable victim writhed in extreme agony, his blood streaming down the handles of their pikes, they exulted round him with savage joy. In the midst of this terrific scene General Edward Roche galloped up in great haste and commanded the drums to beat to arms, declaring that Vinegar Hill was nearly surrounded by the king’s troops, and that all should repair to camp, as reinforcements were wanting. This express had a wonderful effect; the assassins instantly closed the bloody scene and fled in all directions. Some of the rebel guard returned soon after and conveyed the prisoners back to gaol. But that sanguinary monster, Thomas Dixon, returning, he soon evinced that his thirst for blood was not yet satiated by ordering out the remainder of the prisoners from the gaol and prison ship, the greater part of whom were tortured to death in like manner as the former. He then proceeded to the market-house, and having fixed his vulture eye on others, dragged them to the fatal bridge for execution. After butchering these, a lot of ten more was brought forth and barbarously murdered. The third time they took out eighteen, and were massacring them when Dick Monk rode into town from Vinegar Hill, with his shoes and stockings off, and shouted, ‘D—n your souls, you vagabonds, why don’t you go out and meet the enemy that are coming in, and not be murdering in cold blood?’ Some Protestant women followed him and asked him, ‘What news?’ He replied, ‘Bad news, indeed; the king’s forces are encamped round Vinegar Hill.’ He then rode towards the convent. Shortly after, Priest Collin was seen running towards the bridge. There were six of the poor Protestants killed out of the last party that were taken down before he arrived, and it was with great difficulty he prevailed on them to spare the rest. After using all the arguments he could, without effect, he at length took off his hat and desired them to kneel down and pray for the souls of the poor prisoners before they put them to death. They did so, and having got them in the attitude of devotion, he said, ‘Now pray to God to have mercy on your souls, and teach you to show that kindness towards them which you expect from Him in the hour of death and in the day of judgment!’ This had the desired effect; he led them off the bridge without opposition, and they were sent back to confinement. The massacre of that day ceased about eight o’clock in the evening. Out of forty-eight prisoners who had been confined in the market-house, nineteen only escaped.

Nor were these dreadful cruelties confined to the town alone. In their camps, and on their marches and retreats, the same execrable barbarities were constantly committed. No exaggeration can be imputed to those who escaped death, and afterwards described the sufferings they had undergone; for the dying confessions of many who were actors in those scenes of blood, and afterwards paid the penalty of crime, corroborated the statements of those who had been their prisoners, and confirmed their truth.

Jackson’s *Narrative* affords further dreadful details of the Protestant martyrdoms enacted on Wexford bridge:—

‘They thus continued till about seven o’clock to convey parties of prisoners, from ten to twenty, from the gaol, the market-house, and the prison ship, where many of them were confined, to the bridge, where they butchered them. Every procession was preceded by the black flag, and the prisoners were surrounded by ruthless pikemen, as guards and executioners, who often insultingly desired them to bless themselves.

‘The mob, consisting of more women than men, expressed their savage joy on the immolation of each of the victims by loud huzzas.

‘The manner in general of putting them to death was thus: Two rebels pushed their pikes into the breast of the victim, and two into his back; and in that state (writhing with torture) they held him suspended till dead, and then threw him over the bridge into the water.

‘After they had massacred ninety-seven prisoners in that manner, the insurgents were taken off their blood-thirsty work by the cry “to camp! to camp!”’

Musgrave, in the Appendix to his *Memoirs*, relates:—‘After taking possession of Enniscorthy they planted the Tree of Liberty, with shouts of “Vive la République” and “Erin go Bragh!” Here the work of blood immediately began, and continued every day, more or less, for twenty-five days—a dreadful specimen of what might be expected from such a government. One day they were so diabolical as to murder all the Protestants they had; and not satisfied with this, they sent to Wexford for more, and every day parties ranged the country, dragging forth all they could find, to satiate their thirst for blood.’

It is said that not less than four hundred Protestants were massacred in Enniscorthy and on Vinegar Hill, the bodies of whom lay unburied during several days.

Meanwhile, the final scene of the tragic occurrences promised to equal, and perhaps exceed, the terrible events which had preceded it. There is little doubt that a general and unsparing massacre of the Protestants had been resolved upon; and although, assisted by an alarm that their camp was being attacked, the Catholic bishop and clergy had induced the greater number of the insurgents to quit the town, still the most ferocious wretches remained, and seemed determined to conclude a period of anarchy and terrorism by a scene of indiscriminating slaughter.

During the confusion which the precipitate flight of the rebels occasioned (when they proposed to fire the town, only had no time!), the bloody Thomas Dixon, mounted on a very fine horse, rode through the streets with a broad sword drawn and upbraided the rebels for their timidity and their dilatoriness. ‘If you had followed my advice,’ he said, ‘in putting all the heretics to death three or four days ago, it would not have come to this pass.’ Mrs. Dixon—a worthy mate of her sanguinary husband—who accompanied him on horseback with a sword and case of pistols, clapped the rebels on the back and encouraged them by saying, ‘We must conquer; I know we must conquer!’ and she exclaimed repeatedly, ‘My Saviour tells me we must conquer!’ They repaired to the bridge to stop the retreat of the rebels, but in vain, though Mrs. Dixon drew a pistol and swore vehemently ‘that she would shoot any one who would refuse to return with her to put the remainder of the heretics to death!’ They endeavoured to raise the portcullis of the bridge to prevent retreat, but were unable to do so.

It has been said that the butcheries on Wexford bridge were perpetrated by a small section of the

insurgents, kept by that sanguinary monster, Thomas Dixon, in a state of constant drunkenness, and ever ready to execute his ruthless orders. Every means were used by the ruffian to play upon the credulity and excite the worst passions of his followers, and his fiendish inventions to irritate a brutal mob appear almost incredible.

The approach of Moore's brigade, however, freed Wexford from the banditti who infested it to the last moment, and averted the intended massacre. 'Captain Boyd, the member for the town, and commandant of a corps of mounted yeomen, having ascertained that the great body of the rebels had returned, asked and obtained permission from General Moore to enter Wexford, and announce that the army was on its march to occupy the place. Attended by only a dozen mounted yeomen, Captain Boyd galloped down the streets, proclaiming to the inhabitants their deliverance. At five in the evening Moore's brigade arrived at the heights commanding Wexford, and bivouacked on the Windmill Hill, while a wing of the Queen's regiment marched into the place and took military possession. Description fails in attempting to set forth the emotions which arose in the breasts of the poor Protestants who had been doomed to destruction. Many wept with joy to see their deliverers.'

The Wexford prisons had been scarcely emptied of the Protestant prisoners who had occupied them until they were tenanted by those who had lately been the directors of the insurrection. General Lake arrived on the 22nd, and took up his quarters in the house of Captain Keugh, the ex-governor, the latter exchanging his former domicile for a jail.

SUMMARY FATE OF THE INSURRECTIONARY CHIEFS

While some of the rebel chiefs endeavoured to evade the first outbreak of the royalist excitement by seeking a temporary security in concealment, others, under the persuasion that the negotiations between the Wexford leaders and the commanding officers of the troops would lead to a general amnesty, or, perhaps, in the desperation of their circumstances, remained in their respective homes, and quietly awaited the fate they knew to be impending. Grogan had retired to his mansion at Johnstown, while Harvey repaired to Bargy Castle, from whence, as a peace-offering, he sent some fat cattle to the commanding officer in Wexford. On the return of the messenger he found that to the chiefs of the insurgents mercy would not be extended, and quitting his house, never to revisit it, he set out to join a fellow-unfortunate, who had vainly endeavoured to remove himself beyond the reach of the vengeance of the outraged laws.

Colclough, with his wife and child, had sought a temporary asylum in one of the Saltee Islands, about six leagues from Wexford; with some valuables hastily collected, and a few necessaries to maintain life, they had hidden themselves in a cave, of which the entrance was artfully concealed. There Harvey joined the unhappy fugitives; and chiefly through the indiscretion with which he had neglected to keep his fatal visit secret, the whole party were arrested, brought back, and committed to close custody.

THE CAPTURE OF COLCLOUGH AND HARVEY

To these unfortunate gentlemen, John Colclough of Ballyteigue and B. Baganel Harvey of Bargy Castle, late commander-in-chief of the Wexford insurgents, a melancholy interest is attached; and the retreat selected by the hapless fugitives has an air of romance that makes it interesting. The subject of George Cruikshank's realistic illustration of this picturesque incident is founded upon the account given in Musgrave's *Memoirs*:—'The arrest of B. B. Harvey and John Colclough was attended with some curious circumstances which I shall relate. On the flight of the rebels from Wexford, the 21st of June, they retreated to the largest of the Saltee Islands, which Mr. Colclough rented from Mr. Grogan. Dr. Waddy, a physician who served in the yeomanry, having got intelligence of their retreat, applied to General Lake for a proper party and armed vessel to go in quest of them, which he readily obtained.

'About three o'clock on Sunday evening, the 23rd of June, he set sail in the Rutland cutter of ten guns, commanded by Captain Willoughby, with Lieutenant Turner of the Queen's, a detachment of his regiment, and a man-of-war's boat with a party of sailors well armed. The island is about six leagues from Wexford, and four or five miles from the southern coast of the country. The weather was so tempestuous that they were obliged to reef their sails; and the wind being adverse, they did not descry the island till about four o'clock in the morning, and could not cast anchor alongside till eight. When they were approaching it they saw a small boat pass from the island to the mainland. As it is surrounded with high precipices, and is accessible but in one place, and as they expected to be opposed by a party of armed rebels, who, it was believed, had accompanied Harvey and Colclough, Captain Willoughby prepared to cover their landing with the cutter's guns, and they were attended for the same purpose by the man-of-war's boat. On landing they repaired to the only house on the island, occupied by one Furlong, who rented it from Mr. Colclough. They found there an excellent feather-bed, with fine sheets which were warm, a handsome tea equipage, some genteel wearing apparel belonging to both sexes, particularly a pair of pantaloons, which Dr. Waddy had seen on Mr. Colclough before the rebellion; and, near the house, some silk shoes and other articles hid in high ferns. They searched every suspected spot in the island, particularly a place called the Otter's Cave, but in vain, though they had not a doubt of their having been there, as they had found, among other things, a chest of plate in a concealed place belonging to Mr. Colclough. The doctor resolved to make another effort by going round the island in a boat, for the purpose of reconnoitring the sides of it. In doing so he perceived on the edge of a high precipice one rock lighter coloured than the adjoining one; and, as the earth near it seemed to have been recently stirred, he suspected that they had been making preparations there for their concealment. He therefore again ascended the island, and found that the approach to the place which he wished to explore was steep, serpentine, and through some crags. The light-coloured stone covered the mouth of the cave, and above it was an aperture to let in the light. The doctor called out to Colclough and told him that if he did not surrender immediately, and without resistance, he should receive no quarter. Colclough asked, "Is that Dr. Waddy?" and on his saying "Yes," he said he would surrender; and soon after he, at the doctor's desire, gave up his arms through the hole of the cave. The doctor threw down the precipice the stone which covered the mouth of it, which fell with a monstrous crash; on which Mr. and Mrs. Colclough came forth, dressed in the meanest habits of peasants for the purpose of disguising themselves. Then Mr. Harvey came out saying, "My God! my God!" and so pale and weak from fatigue and anxiety of mind that the doctor was obliged to support

him. He also had a chest of plate concealed, which he gave in charge of the doctor and his party.’

There was little of romance about the sequel; these unfortunates were simply led off by their captors direct to the scaffold. The prisoners were arraigned on charges of high treason, and tried by a court-martial. Among the first to suffer were Father Philip Roach, Captain Keugh, who deserved a better fate,—he had served his king in America,—and Esmond Kyan, rebel captain of artillery. The executions took place upon the bridge, and they were hurried over with little consideration to the last moments of the dying, or to the feelings of relations who survived them. Roach was a tall and weighty man, and, on being suspended, the rope broke, and he fell to the ground, stunned and stupefied. Another halter was immediately procured; he thus suffered the last penalties of the law, it might be said, twice over. After death the sufferers were decapitated, the mutilated bodies cast into the river, the heads placed upon spikes on the Sessions-House, exposed to public view, thus calling into operation again one of the most disgusting remnants of feudal severity upon offenders against the State.

Harvey’s trial commenced on the same evening; he appeared to be much agitated, and spoke little. It came out in evidence that he acted as commander-in-chief of the rebel forces at the battle of Ross on the 5th of June, and his letter to the commander-in-chief of the king’s troops, signed ‘B. B. Harvey,’ summoning him to surrender the town to the rebels, was produced in evidence on the trial, and acknowledged by Mr. Harvey to be in his handwriting. The unhappy man produced many witnesses in his defence, but none to disprove the main facts. He did not deny having acted as commander of the rebel forces, but endeavoured to extenuate his conduct by saying he had accepted the distinction to prevent much greater evils, which must have occurred had it fallen into other hands, and in the hope of surrendering that command one day or other, with greater advantage to the country. He had no counsel, and, after a trial which lasted eight hours, was found guilty of death; which sentence, with that of Grogan, was put into execution on the morning of the 28th. His head was cut off and placed on the Sessions-House and his body thrown into the river. On the same evening was executed John Colclough of Ballyteigue. He was a gentleman of great respectability, and bore a very good private character. On this occasion the entreaties of his widowed partner were attended to, mutilation was dispensed with, Mrs. Colclough received the body of her husband, and in the poet’s words

She laid him in his father’s grave,

and had the melancholy satisfaction of giving sepulture to the body of a beloved husband.

THE ATTACK ON CAPTAIN CHAMNEY’S HOUSE, BALLYRAHEENE

The tide of rebellion was ebbing fast, dissension prevailed in their councils, the leaders disagreed, and the Wexford men separated from those of Wicklow, the latter, under Garret Byrne of Ballymanus, moving off to the hill of Ballyraheene, nearly midway between Tinehaly and Carnew. Here another error in judgment occasioned an unnecessary loss of life. The yeomanry had pursued the rebels closely, but the latter gained the high grounds and formed in a very strong position. The numbers were enormously disproportionate, and every prudential consideration should have discouraged an attack. Some of the yeoman officers were of opinion that their troops ought to halt, and that they should content themselves with watching at a safe distance the movements of the enemy. Contrary opinions prevailing, an attack was made up the hill, when the rebels, who had wished to avoid a battle, rushing down, put the royalists to flight, killing ten of the infantry, but the cavalry escaped. Two officers fell in the beginning of this action, Captain Chamney of the Coolattin company, and Captain Nickson of the Coolkenna company, both greatly lamented. George Cruikshank’s picture vividly represents the situation of Captain Chamney’s house at the critical point of the siege, which saved a portion of this unfortunate loyalist force. ‘The slaughter,’ records Gordon, ‘would have been far greater if sixty of the infantry, under Captain Morton and Lieutenant Chamney, had not taken refuge in Captain Chamney’s house at the foot of the hill, where they sustained during fourteen hours the attacks of the rebels, who attempted repeatedly to fire the house. Some—particularly a very large man from Gorey named John Redmond, nicknamed “Shaun Plunder”—advanced under a covering of feather-beds to the hall door, with the design of burning it, and thus opening a passage into the house; but they were killed in the attempt, the bullets penetrating even this thick tegument. As a discharge of musketry was maintained from

the windows on the assailants, whose associates injudiciously set fire to the neighbouring house of Henry Morton (the owner being among the defenders of Captain Chamney's house), the illumination enabled the garrison to aim at their enemies in the night, and the loss of the rebels was very considerable, amounting according to some accounts to a hundred and thirty men, by others, to two hundred.' This ill-judged affair occurred on the 2nd of July.

It has been described how Wexford was by the success of the king's forces ultimately liberated from the masses of its insurgent population. We have stated that the scene of their predatory warfare was changed from their native county to Kildare, and that they were reinforced by the insurgents commanded by Michael Reynolds. The junction produced little advantage, except in increasing the numbers of a tumultuary rabble, in whom there was neither unity of purpose nor any fixed plan of future operations. Every leader had some object of his own, none a particle of military talent, and their strategic conceptions were as erroneous as the execution was feeble and contemptible.

Anthony Perry, another rebel general, despairing of doing any mischief in Wexford, now so well defended, where the insurgent forces were too dispirited to longer struggle in a body against the royalists and yeomanry, when joined by a strong body under the command of Michael Aylmer, intended to penetrate into the north of Ireland, where he expected to meet with a cordial co-operation. But Aylmer prevailed on Perry to abandon his intention, and declared that it was more advisable to attack Clonard, a town on the confines of Kildare and Meath, and situated on the river Boyne, as there was but a small force to defend it; and afterwards march by Kilbeggan to the Shannon, and surprise Athlone, where, from its central position, great advantages might be expected to arise. This plan was accordingly adopted; and their united forces, amounting to four thousand men, on the 11th of July marched to the attack of Clonard.

THE REBELS STORMING 'THE TURRET' AT LIEUTENANT TYRRELL'S, CLONARD

Many very gallant exploits were performed during this short and sanguinary period by loyalist irregulars; but probably the defence of Clonard may be placed foremost among numerous occurrences, in which the boundless gallantry of a determined handful of daring spirits repulsed the overwhelming masses to which they were opposed, and proved that no physical superiority can quench the courage of men devoted to home and altar, and determined 'to do or die.' The little garrison of Clonard consisted of a weak corps of yeoman infantry, and its commander was a self-taught soldier. But military talent

is intuitive, and Lieutenant Tyrrell proved that the ruder the storm, the more extensively the resources of a brave man will be developed.

On being apprised that the rebel column was in march, Tyrrell made the best dispositions for defence which his small force permitted. He occupied a turret, which domineered the road, with half a dozen musketeers, and with the remaining twenty retired into the old mansion-house. Having selected his best marksmen, they were placed at such of the windows as offered the best positions for firing with effect upon the assailants, while the remainder of the corps were secured behind the walls, and employed in loading spare muskets to replace the firearms when discharged.

The rebel cavalry, amounting in rough numbers to three hundred, formed an advance guard, and were commanded by a man named Farrel. Unconscious that the garden turret was occupied, they came forward in a trot, and the first intimation that they were already under fire was conveyed by a shot from the youngest Tyrrell, a boy only fifteen years old, which mortally wounded the rebel captain. A volley from the other loyalists emptied several rebel saddles; a panic ensued, and the horsemen galloped out of musket range, leaving Several of their companions dead upon the road. With more caution and better success the rebel footmen came forward under shelter of a hedge, and, lining an opposite fence, they opened a sharp fire on the turret, while the column itself pushed forward to surround the' house, and unite itself with another division which had advanced to join them by a cross-road. To cut off all communication and prevent the garrison from receiving reinforcements, the bridge was occupied by a rebel guard, but as it lay directly under the fire of the house, half a score of the occupants were rapidly shot down, the bridge cleared of its defenders, the western road laid open, and the garrison communication maintained.

In both their first attempts the insurgents were heavily repulsed, but defeat seemed only to exasperate them, and they again came forward to the attack. Penetrating by the rear, an immense number filled the garden and seized the lower portion of the turret. As the ladder had been drawn up by the defenders of the upper story, the rebels, by climbing on each other's shoulders, attempted to force through the ceiling; still the fatal fire of the loyalists was kept up; at every shot a rebel fell, and on the ground floor lay seven-and-twenty bodies. At last, despairing of success, they procured a quantity of straw and fired the building. To force a passage through the rebels was almost a desperate attempt, but to perish in the flames, which had now seized the building, was the sad alternative. Two yeomen were killed in their attempt at escape, but fortunately the other four, by jumping from a window into a hay-yard under cover of the garden wall, succeeded in reaching the main body, who were posted in the dwelling-house. For six long hours this unequal contest had been maintained, and still no impression had been made upon the gallant royalists. To confuse the garrison, the assailants set fire to the toll-house and adjacent cabins, but the conflagration served no better purpose than to consume their own slain, whose bodies they flung into the burning houses. Happily succour was at hand, and at five in the evening a reinforcement was descried by the wearied royalists, advancing rapidly to meet them.

THE REBELS STORMING 'THE TURRET' AT LIEUTENANT TYRRELL'S, CLONARD

One of the yeomen, who had been excluded by the sudden shutting of the gates in the morning, finding he could be of no use in defending the house, repaired to Kinnegad and represented the alarming situation of his friends at Clonard; upon which, Lieutenant Houghton, with fourteen of the Kinnegad infantry, and a sergeant, with eleven Northumberland Fencibles (this being all the force that could be spared), immediately marched to their succour. The pass by the bridge having been kept open in the manner before related, Lieutenant Tyrrell now sallied from the house, and soon effected a junction with this reinforcement. A few volleys completely cleared the roads, and having placed the Northumberland Fencibles and Kinnegad infantry in such situations as most effectually to gall the enemy in their retreat from the garden, the lieutenant himself undertook the hazardous enterprise of dislodging them from thence.

'At this time it is supposed there were four hundred rebels in the garden, a large body being posted on a mount planted with old fir-trees, which afforded considerable protection, while many lay concealed behind a privet hedge, from where they could see distinctly every person who entered the garden, though unperceived themselves. The brave Tyrrell, at the head of a few chosen men, now rushed into the garden, and was received by a general discharge from both bodies of the enemy; but he instantly attacked the party behind the hedge, which, being defeated, retired to the mount. Here a warm action ensued, the enemy appearing determined to maintain their advantageous situation; but the yeomen, though fatigued with the heat and burden of the day, and six of them badly wounded, persevered with the most undaunted courage, and directed such a steady and well-directed fire against the mount, that the enemy were at length dispersed, and in their flight the Northumberland Fencibles and Kinnegad infantry made great havoc among them.'—Taylor's *History*.

The rebel loss, when it is remembered that it was inflicted by a garrison not numbering thirty men, may appear to be overstated. In killed and wounded it was said to reach two hundred. Nor is there any reason to question the accuracy of the return. A close and well-directed fire was maintained for half the day, and some of the yeomanry were supposed to have discharged one hundred rounds a man.

After this severe repulse the remaining body of insurgents retreated to Carbery and plundered the mansion of Lord Harburton, and next day entered Meath by Johnstown. On the 12th of July they were again overtaken, brought to action, and defeated by a detachment under Colonel Gough, hunted afterwards by General Myers, and driven upon Slane, and encountered ar In all these affairs disorganised that, as a body, they ceased to have existence.

FATE OF FATHER JOHN MURPHY OF BOULAVOGUE AFTER VINEGAR HILL

The horde of insurgents with Father John Murphy of Boulavogue escaped from the Vinegar Hill *déroute*, retreated through the Scullagh gap, and selected Kilkenny as their field of future operations. Their progress was marked by the customary atrocities of plundering and murder, and the line of march towards Castlecomer might have been readily traced by property destroyed and houses laid in ashes.

After the continuation of their old tactics and acts of coldblooded treachery—such as the affair at Gore's bridge, when promises of protection were given to the discomfited loyalist soldiers surrounded in an untenable position, to induce them to lay down their arms, and scandalously violated, and in a few hours after

their surrender, six privates of the Wexford, two of the 4th Dragoons, and nine Protestant prisoners were savagely butchered at Kellymount by orders of Devereux, a sanguinary ruffian, principally concerned in the massacre at Scullabogue—the insurgents were discovered at daybreak halted on Kilcomney Hill. The Downshire battalion guns—under Major Mathews—opened fire, and the rebels, to avoid the cannonade and gain time to make dispositions to receive the royalists, fell back a mile. While forming, Sir Charles Asgill's artillery were heard firing at a rebel party in their rear, and a few rounds from the Downshire guns completed their discomfiture. They broke, fled, and were cut down, scarcely resisting, the pursuit being continued for two hours with fatal effect.

This was the crushing blow given to the southern insurrection. All was lost, for baggage, arms, provisions, and ammunition were totally abandoned. A few soldiers and Protestants who had fallen into their hands and escaped assassination were mercifully they suffered a continued loss, and at last had become so totally delivered and the insurgents disbanded, and while the Wexford party crossed into their native country through the Scullagh gap, the wanderers from Wicklow and Kildare went off dispersedly, some of the least guilty returning to their own homes, while others, despairing of forgiveness, commenced an outlaw's life, and sank the rebel in the robber.

'Father John Murphy, a priest who acted as aide-de-camp to the great sacerdotal hero, John Murphy of Boulavogue, and who had accompanied him from Vinegar Hill, fell in this action. He had a dove and a crucifix on his buttons, and letters directed to him were found in his pocket, recommending proper places for encamping. Father John Murphy, the commander-in-chief, who fled from the field of battle, was taken at an ale-house by three yeomen, one of the name of M'Cabe, and led a prisoner to Tullow, the headquarters of Sir James Duff. He was introduced into a room where the general, his aides-de-camp, Colonels Foster and Eden, the Earl of Roden, Captain M'Clintock, and about twenty officers were sitting. Major Hall, having asked him some questions which gave offence, in a violent rage the priest made a blow of his fist at the Major, which would have knocked him down, but that he warded it off with his arm, on which, however, he received a severe contusion. On searching Murphy, in his pockets his vestments were found, with some letters from Mrs. Richards and other ladies, prisoners at Wexford, imploring him to save the lives of their husbands and relations. He was hanged on the same day; his body was burned and his head fixed on the market-house.'

Musgrave's *Memoirs*, which furnish the foregoing account, further enlighten us upon Murphy's personal traits:—'He was about forty-five years old, light complexioned, bald-pated, and about five feet nine inches high, well made, uniting strength with agility. He was exceedingly irascible, and when in a passion had somewhat the aspect of a tiger. His pix, his oil stock, and a small crucifix were found in his pocket.'

LANDING OF THE FRENCH INVADERS IN KILLALLA BAY

In the west of Ireland the system of terrorism was also incessantly persevered in; general murders were announced, and the people continued not to sleep in their own houses to avoid surprise. The strangest means by which these imaginary massacres were to be effected were invented, promulgated, and believed, and the peasantry in many places actually remained night after night in the open fields as the only means of escaping the devilish devices of destroyers.

Musgrave has set down in his *Memoirs*: 'A few days before the French landed, a report was industriously circulated that the Protestants had entered into a conspiracy to massacre the Roman Catholics, and that they would not spare man, woman, or child. It was said that for this purpose a large quantity of combustible stuff had been introduced by the Orangemen, who made a kind of black candles of it; that they were of such a quality that they could not be extinguished when once lighted, and that in whatever house they should be burnt they would produce the destruction of every person in it.'

Such was the state of Mayo and Connaught generally when, on the 22nd of August 1798, three French frigates, with English colours flying, entered Killalla Bay. No suspicion was occasioned by their appearance, and under the belief that they were British cruisers, several gentlemen from the town visited the strangers, and when declared prisoners first discovered their mistake.

Killalla was at that time a bishop's see (subsequently suppressed on the passing of the Reform Bill). On the day when the French appeared in the bay the lord-bishop was holding his annual visitation, and the clergy of the diocese were collected in the castle, as the see-house was popularly called. The strange vessels, however, excited no alarm; dinner passed quietly, the guests were preparing to depart, when that intention was accelerated by the arrival of a breathless messenger to inform the company and their host that the French had actually landed, and an advanced guard of three hundred men were marching on the town.

Killalla was feebly garrisoned by a party of the Prince of Wales's Fencibles and a few yeomanry, the whole not exceeding fifty or sixty men, but still they offered a bold resistance, until, with the loss of a few killed and wounded, they were finally driven into the castle and obliged to surrender. The commander of this extraordinary expedition, Humbert, after summoning the bishop to his presence, and having announced that he came from the great nation to give the Irish liberty and sever the yoke of England, which had so long oppressed them, proceeded to put into requisition his lordship's horses, sheep, and cows, intimating at the same time that the Irish Directory, to be established immediately in Connaught, would pay the full value of the same.

The French officers gave the following account of the expedition:—'About eighteen days before, 1500 men, some of whom had served under Bonaparte in Italy, the rest had been of the army of the Rhine, embarked on board three frigates at Rochelle, and on a very dark night eluded (beyond their expectation) the vigilance of the English fleet, which was close behind them. Two of them had forty-four guns, eighteen-pounders, the other thirty-eight guns, twelve-pounders. They said also they brought nine pieces of cannon and arms for 100,000 men, but this was French gasconnade, as they had arms only for 5500 men and but two four-pounders. The meagre persons and the wan and sallow countenances of these troops, whose numbers did not exceed 1060 rank and file and 70 officers, strongly indicated the severe hardships which they must have undergone.

'They hoisted a green flag in front of the castle, with the Irish words, "Erin go braugh" inscribed on it, which signifies "Ireland for ever," and they invited the people to join them, having assured them that they

would enjoy freedom and happiness by doing so.

'The first day they passed in landing arms and ammunition; the second in clothing and arming the natives, of whom great multitudes flocked to their standard, and granting commissions to Irish officers.'

Compared with the other armaments destined for the invasion of Ireland, Humbert's was by far the smallest. The grand army, termed 'the reserve,' which was commanded by General Kilmaine, amounted in round numbers to 10,000; and a second, lying in the harbour of Brest, under General Hardy, had 3000 men on board. Neither, however, attempted to put to sea, and although Kilmaine never appeared in person, his proclamations were abundantly distributed.

Humbert's manifesto was cleverly conceived and ingeniously put together:—

LIBERTY! EQUALITY! FRATERNITY! UNION!

Irishmen—You have not forgot Bantry Bay; you know what efforts France has made to assist you. Her affections for you, her desire for avenging your wrongs and insuring your independence can never be impaired.

After several unsuccessful attempts, behold Frenchmen arrived amongst you.

They come to support your courage, to share your dangers, to join their arms, and to mix their blood with yours in the sacred cause of liberty.

Brave Irishmen, our cause is common; like you, we abhor the avaricious and bloodthirsty policy of an oppressive government; like you, we hold as indefeasible the right of all nations to liberty; like you, we are persuaded that the peace of the world shall ever be troubled, as long as the British ministry is suffered to make, with impunity, a traffic of the industry, labour, and blood of the people.

But exclusive of the same interests which unite us, we have powerful motives to love and defend you.

Have we not been the pretext of the cruelty exercised against you by the cabinet of St. James's? The heartfelt interest you have shown in the great events of our revolution has it not been imputed to you as a crime? Are not tortures and death continually hanging over such of you as are barely suspected of being our friends? Let us unite then and march to glory.

We swear the most inviolable respect for your properties, your laws, and all your religious opinions. Be free; be masters in your own country. We look for no other conquest than that of your liberty—no other success than yours.

The moment of breaking your chains is arrived; our triumphant troops are now flying to the extremities of the earth to tear up the roots of the wealth and tyranny of our enemies. That frightful Colossus is mouldering away in every part. Can there be any Irishman base enough to separate himself at such a happy juncture from the grand interests of his country? If such there be, brave friends, let him be chased from the country he betrays, and let his property become the reward of those generous men who know how to fight and die.

Irishmen, recollect the late defeats which your enemies have experienced from the French; recollect the plains of Honscoote, Toulon, Quiberon, and Ostend; recollect America, free from the moment she wished to be so.

The contest between you and your oppressors cannot be long.

Union! liberty! the Irish republic!—such is our shout; let us march, our hearts are devoted to you; our glory is in your happiness. Health and Fraternity, Humbert, Gen.

Humbert's was a bold but wild experiment, but still it evinced the daring character of the adventurer. He had encountered difficulties that would have disheartened a soldier less enthusiastic.

To land with 1200 men in a country in full military occupation, as Ireland then was, without money, necessaries, or any resources but what chance and talent gave, proved indeed that the French general was no common soldier.

The sketch given by Bishop Stock (his involuntary and captive host) of the invading army and their daring leader is not only graphic, but faithfully descriptive of the bold adventurer and his hardy followers: —'Intelligence, activity, temperance, patience, to a surprising degree, appeared to be combined in the soldiery that came over with Humbert, together with the exactest obedience to discipline. Yet, if you except the grenadiers, they had nothing to catch the eye. Their stature for the most part was low, their complexions pale and sallow, their clothes much the worse for wear; to a superficial observer they would have appeared incapable of enduring almost any hardship. These were the men, however, of whom it was presently observed that they could be well content to live on bread or potatoes, to drink water, to make the stones of the street their bed, and to sleep in their clothes, with no covering but the canopy of heaven. One half of their number had served in Italy under Bonaparte; the rest were of the army of the Rhine, where they had suffered distresses that well accounted for thin persons and wan looks. Several of them declared, with all the marks of sincerity, that at the siege of Metz, during the preceding winter, they had for a long time slept on the ground in holes made four feet deep under the snow; and an officer, pointing to his leather small-clothes, assured the bishop that he had not taken them off for a twelve-month. Humbert, the leader of this singular body of men, was himself as extraordinary a personage as any in his army; of a good height and shape, in the full vigour of life, prompt to decide, quick in execution, apparently master of his art, you could not refuse him the praise of a good officer, while his physiognomy forbade you to like him as a man. His eye, which was small and sleepy (the effect, probably, of much watching), cast a side-long glance of insidiousness, and even of cruelty—it was the eye of a cat preparing to spring upon her prey. His education and manners were indicative of a person sprung from the lowest orders of society, though he knew how (as most of his countrymen can do) to assume, where it was convenient, the deportment of a gentleman. For learning, he had scarcely enough to enable him to write his own name. His passions were furious, and all his behaviour seemed marked with the characters of roughness and violence. A narrower observation of him, however, served to discover that much of this roughness was the result of art, being assumed with the view of extorting, by terror, a ready compliance with his demands. This latter trait in Humbert's character was personally experienced by the bishop. An offer of the presidency of the Connaught Directory was declined by his lordship, on the plea of his sworn allegiance to the king—a pledge, he said, never to be violated; and a command that he should issue orders to place every

horse and vehicle in the country at Humbert's disposal for mounting his cavalry, and the transport of his guns, stores, and baggage, was evaded by an assurance that his lordship had been but lately a resident, and, from want of local knowledge or authority, had not the means of compliance with the French general's request.

'Next morning Humbert, finding that no cars or horses had been procured, became furious, uttered a torrent of vulgar abuse, presented a pistol at the bishop's eldest son, and declared he would punish his father's disobedience by sending him to France, and accordingly he marched off the bishop towards the shore under a sergeant's guard, but when they had advanced a short distance a mounted orderly recalled the party, and Humbert apologised to the bishop, and excused, under the plea of military necessity, a very gross departure from the laws of *la politesse*.

'The 24th was occupied by a French *reconnaissance* on Ballina, which was repelled by a party of carbineers and some yeomanry. In the evening the royalists advanced to Killalla in return, had a smart skirmish with the enemy, and, after losing a few men, were hastily driven back.'

On Sunday, the 26th, Humbert took the offensive, leaving six officers and two hundred men in Killalla to garrison the town, secure his spare ammunition, and drill such recruits as should join the standard of the republic. The French numbered about 900 bayonets, with treble that number of peasant partisans. They entered Ballina unopposed, and Humbert expressed considerable disappointment when no respectable persons welcomed his *entree*, and the body of an active agent suspended to a tree, executed by the troops before they retreated for having a French commission in his pocket, while it afforded an exhibition for Gallic civism, gave still but a sorry omen of success.

Before he had commenced his operations the French general felt difficulties which, in some degree, he was unprepared for. He came totally unprovided with money, and in the co-operation he was led from the reports of Irish agents to build upon as certain he was miserably disappointed. The first of these difficulties he endeavoured to overcome by the issue of assignats on the Irish Directory that was to be.

The first serious action Humbert had on encountering the royalist forces was signalised by a series of military mistakes, of which the French commander took the fullest advantage, and the memory of the loyalist discomfiture at Castlebar remains a discreditable page in the annals of our generalship.

It is almost impossible to conceive anything more disgraceful and unaccountable than the defeat of the royalist army at Castlebar. That the strength of the king's army fully warranted its commander in covering the town and taking an open position cannot be denied, but still, as there was some uncertainty touching the number of the assailants, in the event of disaster measures should have been arranged for rallying the troops within the town, which a very little trouble would have made thoroughly defensible against a force so inferior as Humbert's. That the general spirit of the troops was excellent many individual cases proved, and, with a superior cavalry and artillery, the latter particularly well served, the contest should not have lasted ten minutes.

HEROIC CONDUCT OF THE HIGHLAND SENTINEL

The party who defended the bridge of Castlebar, consisting of some gallant officers, some of the Longford, a few of the Kilkenny and Fraser Fencibles, suffered most severely, as they were exposed to a cross-fire both from the roads leading to it and from the houses on either side. The men often fell back, but were again rallied by their officers. At length most of the Royal Irish Artillery, who worked the gun, having been killed or wounded, it became useless, and the enemy were able to push forward a body of cavalry, whose charge was repulsed by this small party, and two of the foremost hussars killed within the ranks. By this charge, however, the numbers of the royalists were much reduced, and, having been deprived of the assistance of one captain and one subaltern, who were desperately wounded, they were at last obliged to retreat after having lost half their number.

'The French appeared men qualified not only to obtain but also to improve a victory, and with singular daring a party of hussars, not exceeding ten in number, hung on the rear of the retreating royalists and overtook and captured a gun, which they were about to turn on the runaways, when a superior number of Lord Roden's Foxhunters charged back, killed five, and drove off the rest. The slain were buried where they fell, and, in memory of the event, the place is still called French Hill.

'The artillery taken in this disgraceful defeat consisted of fourteen pieces, of which four were curricle guns. The courageous behaviour of the Fraser Fencibles has been mentioned with admiration as a conspicuous example of gallantry against desperate odds.'

The spirited and characteristic water-colour drawing executed by George Cruikshank to illustrate the landing of the Gallic legions in Mayo deals with a noteworthy instance of individual and solitary devotion as related by Musgrave:—

'The French approached the new gaol to break it open. It was guarded by a Highland Fraser sentinel, whom his friends had desired to retreat with them; he heroically refused to quit his post, which was elevated, with some steps leading to it. He charged and fired five times successively, and killed a Frenchman at every shot, but before he could charge the sixth time they rushed on him, beat out his brains, and threw him down the steps, with the sentry-box on his body.5

During the period that Humbert occupied Castlebar—that is, from the 27th of August until the morning of the 4th of September—the French behaved with the greatest moderation, protecting the Protestants from insult, and repressing every attempt at cruelty on the part of their ignorant and useless allies. Invariably, the invaders regarded the Irish mob who accompanied them as a pack of senseless savages, and no pains were taken to disguise these feelings of contempt. 'The French,' records Musgrave, 'ate the best of meat and bread, drank wine, beer, and coffee, and slept on good beds. They compelled the rebels to eat potatoes, drink whisky, and sleep on straw. They beat and abused them like dogs, in the name of liberty, equality, and fraternity. A volume would not contain an account of the brutal actions of the rebels; and the women, who were worse than the men, carried off hides, tallow, beef, cloth, and various other articles.

'The wonder was how the zealous papist should come to any terms of agreement with a set of men who boasted openly in their hearing "that they had just driven Mr. Pope out of Italy, and did not expect to find him so suddenly in Ireland." It astonished the French officers to hear the recruits when they offered their services declare "that they were come to take arms for France and the *Blessed Virgin*."'

To the Irish priesthood the French officers exhibited a marked antipathy. Frequently a latent hatred of Protestants became too apparent, but any attempt, and many were made, to give a religious turn to the war was on the French part furiously repelled.

ENDING OF THE FRENCH INVASION

No reinforcements had arrived from France; no insurrectionary movement in the other provinces followed the descent at Killalla and the unexpected success at Castlebar. The game was played; Lord Cornwallis was within thirty miles; another day, and surrender would be inevitable; but still a chance might be 'upon the die,' and, like a brave adventurer, Humbert determined to put it to the hazard. After mature consideration he decided to march in a northerly direction, as that part of the country he understood to be disaffected, and also the route leading through Sligo and Donegal was tolerably free from troops, and consequently more open to him. Accordingly, on the night of the 3rd of September he sent off his baggage and cannon, with part of his troops, towards Sligo, and about seven next morning set out with the remainder, about 400 in number. With the abandonment of the capital of Mayo, Humbert's Irish career may be said to have closed, and probably the most summary but faithful account of his extraordinary campaign is contained in his own report to the French Directory:—

'After having obtained the greatest successes, and made the arms of the French republic to triumph during my stay in Ireland, I have at length been obliged to submit to a superior force of 30,000 troops, commanded by Lord Cornwallis. I am a prisoner of war on my parole.' Never a despatch more brief, nor yet more true.

Four days had passed since the French and their auxiliaries had abandoned Castlebar (on being apprised of Humbert's retreat Colonel Crawford advanced, and at nine o'clock the same evening Castlebar was occupied by the royalists), and during that time they had been harassed continually. So closely were they pressed that the fusilade between their rear-guard and the advance of the royalists was almost incessant. His great superiority in cavalry enabled Lord Lake to hang closely on their rear, from which it was impossible to shake him off, and by mounting light infantry behind dragoons, so vigorously was Humbert pushed that he was obliged to halt the head of his column and receive an attack from the advancing enemy.

While forming the leading division the rear-guard, under Sarazin, were overtaken within a mile of Ballynamuck, and that general, who commanded *en second*, at once surrendered. Indeed, in doing this Sarazin exercised a sound discretion in preventing the useless expenditure of human blood, and, from the daring intrepidity of his character, the sacrifice, most painful to a soldier's feelings, would never have been made by him until every hope was over.

The following circumstances, as Musgrave has related, attended the surrender of the French:—'The Earl of Roden and Colonel Crawford, who led on the advanced guard, consisting of his lordship's Fencibles, perceiving an officer who seemed desirous to communicate with them, Lord Roden ordered his trumpet to sound, which was answered by the French, when his lordship and the colonel advanced into the French lines. The officer politely asked them what their wishes were. They answered to stop the effusion of blood, and desired them to surrender. The officer said that he did not command, but that he would go to General Humbert, which he accordingly did. Humbert came up, asked the same question, and received a similar answer. He then demanded half an hour to give a final answer, which was granted on condition that he halted his troops; to which he made no reply, but retreated with precipitation. Lord Roden then ordered his trumpet to sound the advance, and came up to the first and second brigade of the French army, who surrendered to about 300 cavalry under his lordship and Colonel Crawford. After this they advanced with about twenty dragoons and took possession of the French guns. Shortly after Humbert rallied his grenadiers, the only part of the army, except the chasseurs, that had not surrendered, consisting of about 400 men, who surrounded Lord Roden and his twenty dragoons. They were given in charge to the hussars. While they were their prisoners—which lasted about fifteen minutes—the French officers loaded the United Irishmen, their allies, with execrations for having deceived and disappointed them by inviting them to undertake a fruitless expedition. They also declared that the people of Ireland were the most treacherous and cowardly they ever knew. Lord Roden and Colonel Crawford continued prisoners till his regiment of Fencibles advanced in quest of their colonel, which the French hussars perceiving, requested that his lordship would desire them to halt,

as they meant to surrender, and by doing so he prevented them from being cut to pieces.'

According to Gordon's authority, 'the troops of General Humbert were found, when prisoners, to consist of 748 privates and 96 officers, a loss of 228 being sustained since their first landing at Killalla.' The story is incomplete without recounting the fate of their misguided auxiliaries. It would appear that the soldiers of the *grande nation* and their Irish allies were heartily tired of each other, and both sides complained bitterly, and apparently with reason.

From the commencement of Humbert's movement towards the north until his surrender, not an hour passed without the vengeance of the royalists felling on the deluded wretches, who still continued rather to embarrass than assist the French army while retreating. Every straggler that was overtaken was cut down by the Hompeschers and Foxhunters who hung upon Humbert's rear; and when the invaders laid down their arms at Ballinamuck, if blood could have atoned for treason, it was fearfully exacted, for the sword and halter were used with an unsparing hand. It is impossible to form any correct estimate of the number sacrificed to the fury of the soldiery. During the pursuit of Humbert, as the rebels preserved not even the semblance of order, but straggled where they pleased, it was not unusual to find them sleeping in dozens in the fields, some from fatigue, and more from drunkenness. No questions were asked; the *coup de sabre* when on march, the arm of the next tree, if halting, ended all inquiry. At Ballinamuck *va victis* was pronounced, no quarter was given, and, to use Musgrave's words, 'dreadful havoc' was made among the unfortunate wretches, who were excluded from mercy and cut down by the hundred.

REBELS DESTROYING A HOUSE AND FURNITURE

Probably the artist has executed this characteristic scene pertaining to the destructive proceedings which were so significant of the rebellion—*con amore*; it is sufficiently marked by George Cruikshank's peculiar genius for conveying a full sense of boisterous exuberance, wherein the tragic marches hand-in-hand with the grotesque, and humour of the broadest contrasts with terrible episodes, which weirdly impress the imagination. In short, this picture may be regarded as the typical contribution of the gifted illustrator to Maxwell's *History*, and, as such, speaks sufficiently for itself, telling its moving tale with that native force and graphic directness Cruikshank had always at command.

It may be realised that, to gratify their native love of fun, an Irish mob finds in the humours of any given situation the satisfaction of comic relief in contrast to absolutely grim terrorism; appreciative touches of these congenial qualities are conspicuous throughout Cruikshank's vividly pictorial realisations of the episodes of the rebellion of 1798. Herein souvenirs of the humorous touches of the amenities of Donnybrook Fair lend their spice of rough fun to relieve the gloomier horrors inseparable from the subject, while the spirit of general destruction is in full swing, and the intoxicating influence of wantonly wrecking everything at hand, or within reach, is producing chaos and spreading annihilation around; the whole spectacle of reckless ruin to characteristically conclude with a grand conflagration of everything destructible, to put the final touches to the tableau.

EMMETT PREPARING FOR THE INSURRECTION

Two names most intimately connected with the Irish Rebellion are surrounded by an atmosphere of sentiment and the glamour of romance, which endears their memories to their admirers at this distant date. The untoward fate of one, the unfortunate enthusiast Lord Edward Fitzgerald, commences the history of the insurrection; the last, Robert Emmett, comes to complete the story, his episode almost as an anticlimax. Both were lives of promise, miserably thrown away, and it is recognised that both these victims rebels destroying a house furniture of misapplied talents were worthy of a better fate, and capable of higher things.

Robert Emmett was the son of a respectable physician in Dublin, and was the younger brother of Thomas Adis Emmett, a gifted barrister who had been a conspicuous member of the rebel Directory in the fateful 1798. Robert Emmett was by natural gifts qualified to figure as a hero of romance, and his name is so regarded by sympathisers, even after the lapse of a century, wherein his fame has fitfully survived. He was a young man of fine talents rather than solidity of judgment, possessing uncommon eloquence, and no inconsiderable portion of courage and activity. He was not unqualified for the part he had undertaken, and for a service so pregnant with difficulty and danger his sanguine temperament was a necessary adjunct. He had quitted Ireland after the unfortunate termination of the former conspiracy, and resided in different parts of the Continent, but principally in France, till Christmas 1802, when he returned to his native country, filled

with ambitious projects of an unreasonable and uncompromisingly revolutionary nature.

‘A quotation from one of his speeches, when a lad at Dublin University, proves the early political bias of his mind. After a brilliant eulogy on the French republic, he concluded with a remark sufficiently expressive:—“When a people, advancing rapidly in knowledge and power, perceive at last how far their government is lagging behind them, what then, I ask, is to be done in such a case? Why, *pull the government up to the people!*” The consequences of indulging in such language at such a time may be imagined—Emmett was struck off the College roll.’—*Memoir of Robert Emmett.*

On his arrival in Ireland he first went into a state of the most perfect obscurity at the house of a Mrs. Palmer, at Harold’s Cross, where he assumed the name of Hewitt. The nature of his mission did not admit of his remaining in this retreat longer than was necessary to mature his plans and form his connections. About the end of April, a house and premises of some extent, formerly a malt-house, and which had been long unoccupied, were taken in Marshall’s Alley, Thomas Street, sufficiently obscure to escape detection, and yet near enough to the heart of the city to effect the most desperate purposes. In this place Emmett lodged for nearly two months, with no better accommodation than a *paillasse*, and surrounded by from fourteen to twenty associates. A depot of arms was here formed on a large scale; muskets and other weapons were procured from time to time to a considerable amount, and a large manufacture of pikes was secretly carried on. There was a group of tailor hands employed in making rebel uniforms of green.

‘One of these dépôts was set apart for the manufacture of gunpowder and the construction of weapons. Some idea of the industry with which Emmett accumulated these implements of deadly vengeance, and his sanguine reliance upon thousands responding to the tocsin of insurrection, may be formed from the catalogue of the contents of his magazine:—It comprised forty-five pounds of cannon-powder, in bundles; eleven boxes of fine powder; one hundred bottles filled with powder, enveloped with musket-balls and covered with canvas; two hundred and forty-six hand grenades, formed of ink-bottles filled with powder and encircled with buck-shot; sixty-two thousand rounds of musket-ball cartridge; three bushels of musket-balls; a quantity of tow mixed with tar and gunpowder and other combustible matter, for throwing against woodwork, which when ignited would cause an instantaneous conflagration; sky-rockets and other signals, etc.; false beams filled with combustibles, with not less than twenty thousand pikes.

‘The conspirators occasionally pressed not only horses but men into their service, and forced the latter to work at different employments necessary for the object in view while confined in the depot. At the same time stores of arms and gunpowder were deposited at the residences of others of their accomplices in convenient stations of the city. The whole of the conspiracy had, however, been nearly overthrown and exposed by an explosion which took place in Patrick Street. By the ability of the conspirators, or the security of their adversaries, the accident was overlooked, or at least represented as unconnected with any treasonable design. Emmett once more changed the place of his concealment, apprehending the explosion would lead to untimely disclosures, removing to one of his dépôts situated in Mass Lane. “Here he strove to make, as far as possible, by increased exertions, amends for the recent loss. So restless was he, that he sought no further repose than that he derived from occasionally reclining upon a mattress, placed in the midst of the workmen, from which he could by night and day observe the progress of, and direct and animate their labours.”

EMMETT PREPARING FOR THE INSURRECTION

‘At length the preparations were complete, or the funds of the conspirators exhausted, and the 23rd of July 1803 was appointed for a general insurrection. Though the persons immediately connected with the principals in the plot—Emmett, Dowdall, and Quigley—did not exceed from eighty to one hundred persons, they were so far misled as to the state of the public mind, that they expected the spirit of rebellion would pervade the kingdom. The stopping of the mail-coaches was to be the signal of revolt in the country. The immediate object of the insurgents in the metropolis was the castle (“as it was felt that to have command over the seat they might speedily secure the power of government”), and the vicinity of the depot in Thomas Street was calculated to favour the intended enterprise against this seat of the government. Various rumours had been afloat for a. few days previous, that “a rising,” as it was termed, was intended; but the reports were so contradictory that the government was unable to take any measures of precaution further than the doubling of patrols in certain stations. Towards dusk on the 23rd of July, Emmett prepared for the anticipated action by superintending the distribution of arms and ammunition (of which he had a large supply) amongst the

multitude that had congregated before the headquarters of the projected rebellion. But we must not omit to mention that previous to the evening the ill-success of the enterprise had been omened forth by the retreat of the Kildare men, who, after marching into the capital, were fortunately persuaded by their leaders to disband and return home.' What ensued has been graphically described by one of Emmett's coadjutors:—

'About six o'clock Emmett, Malachy, one or two others, and myself put on our green uniform, trimmed with gold lace, and selected our arms. The insurgents, who had all day been well plied with whisky' (this paragraph is most significant), 'began to prepare for commencing an attack upon the castle; and when all was ready, Emmett made an animated address to the conspirators. At eight precisely we sallied out of the depot, and when we arrived in Thomas Street the insurgents gave three deafening cheers.

'The consternation excited by our presence defies description. Every avenue emptied its curious hundreds, and almost every window exhibited half a dozen inquisitive heads, while peaceable shopkeepers ran to their doors, and beheld with amazement a lawless band of armed insurgents, in the midst of a peaceable city, an hour at least before dark. The scene at first might have appeared amusing to a careless spectator, from the singular and dubious character which the riot wore; but when the rocket ascended and burst over the heads of the people, the aspect of things underwent an immediate and wonderful change. The impulse of the moment was self-preservation, and those who, a few minutes before, seemed to look on with vacant wonder, now assumed a face of horror, and fled with precipitation. The wish to escape was simultaneous; and the eagerness with which the people fled before us impeded their flight, as they crowded upon each other in the entrance of alleys, courtways, and lanes; while the screams of women and children were frightful and heart-rending.

'"To the castle!" cried our enthusiastic leader, drawing his sword, and his followers appeared to obey. But when we reached the market-house our adherents had wonderfully diminished, there not being more than twenty insurgents with us.

'"Fire the rocket!" cried Malachy.

'"Hold awhile," said Emmett, snatching the match from the man's hand who was applying it. "Let no lives be unnecessarily lost. Run back and see what detains the men?"

'Malachy obeyed, and we remained near the market-house, waiting their arrival, until the soldiers approached.'

THE MURDER OF LORD KILWARDEN

Thus far Emmett was with his deluded followers, and the work was less bloodthirsty; but the hordes armed by their enthusiastic and visionary general of the moment were of a combustible nature, and having weapons in their hands, speedily began ruthlessly murdering innocent people:—'The conspirators assembled previously in the depot did not exceed the number of fifty, but pikes and other weapons were liberally dispersed among the mob, and the insurgents soon swelled to the amount, it is said, of about five hundred. The night was dark, and the scene is described as tremendous; groups of pikemen and other insurgents were dispersed in various parts of the vicinity of the scene of action, while others were calling out for arms, and led in crowds to the grand depot. Directly these mob-valiant ruffians secured their weapons, they set about employing them to deadly purpose.

It was thus that the life of Lord Kilwarden, the eminent and venerable chief-justice, was wantonly taken. Driving to the castle *via* Thomas Street, the carriage, unhappily for its inmates, fell into the thick of the rebels at the beginning of their excited career. It is related that the judge had formerly tried and sentenced to death a youth, convicted of treason, who, unlike his confederates, refused to accept pardon upon the condition of leaving the country. After the death of this misguided lad, his relatives, readily listening to every misrepresentation which flattered their resentment, became persuaded that the attorney-general had selected the youthful victim in question to suffer the utmost severity of the law (his companions having consented to expatriate themselves). One of his family connections, a person named Shannon, was an insurgent on the 23rd of July; and when Lord Kilwarden, hearing the popular cry of vengeance, exclaimed from his carriage, "It is I, Kilwarden, chief-justice of the King's Bench!"

"Then," cried Shannon, "you're the man that I want!" and plunged a pike into his lordship's body.'

The narrative as related by one of those present is as follows:—

‘It was during the height of the insurrection that the venerable magistrate, accompanied by his daughter, Miss Wolfe, and his nephew, a clergyman, arrived in Thomas Street in his way from his country-house to the castle. Lord Kilwarden and Mr. Wolfe, his nephew, were inhumanly dragged from the carriage and pierced with innumerable mortal wounds by the pikemen. Before he expired he was rescued by a party of military and of the police; and hearing some violent expression employed as to the punishment of the rebels, he had only time, before he breathed his last, to prefer a petition “that no man might suffer but by the laws of his country.” Such a death was more honourable than that of a commander who dies in the arms of Victory, and who possibly acts a part to secure a posthumous reputation. Miss Wolfe, by the humanity or the heedlessness of the mob, effected her escape, and, on foot and unattended, was one of the first who arrived at the castle to give notice of the horrors of the night. Colonel Browne, a gentleman greatly respected, was another victim of the multitude, and was assassinated in the same brutal and cowardly manner. On the first alarm he repaired to join his regiment, but uninformed of the precise station which was occupied by the rebels, he unfortunately, in the darkness of the night, fell in with the main body; he received a shot from a blunderbuss, and was almost immediately hewn to pieces.

‘Every casual passenger who was not murdered was forced to join the insurgents and armed with a pike. This happened even to some gentlemen of rank and character. The first check which the rebels experienced was from Mr. Edward Wilson, a police magistrate, who, at the head of only eleven men, had the courage to approach the scene of insurrection. He had hardly arrived at the spot before he found his little party surrounded by a body of nearly 300 pikemen. Undismayed by their hostile appearance, he called upon them to lay down their arms or he would fire. The rebels appeared somewhat confused, but one of them, bolder than the rest, advanced, and with his pike wounded Mr. Wilson in the belly, but was instantly shot dead by the wounded magistrate. The fire from his men threw the rest of the body of assailants into some confusion, but they presently opened to the right and left to make way for such of their party as had firearms, when Mr. Wilson thought it prudent to retreat towards the Coombe. The rebels soon after met with a more formidable assailant in Lieutenant Brady, of the 21st Fusileers, who, at the head of only forty men, had the gallantry to advance to the attack. He subdivided his little force into smaller parties, and though assailed by bottles and stones from the houses, and with shot from the alleys and entries, kept up so warm and well-directed a fire that the insurgents, numerous as they were, soon fled in different directions. Lieutenant Coltman, of the 9th regiment of foot, also at the head of only four men of his own regiment and some yeomanry of the Barrack division in coloured clothes, in all but twenty-eight, hastened to the scene of action, and was successful in dispersing the mob, and securing some of the most desperate of the offenders.

‘The military now poured in from all quarters; the rebels were routed with considerable slaughter, and, before twelve, the insurrection was completely quelled.’

The brief and sanguinary affray, which was fully detailed in the evidence given on the trial of the chief conspirator, we think will bear us out regarding the in competency of the leaders and the general inefficiency of an Irish mob. More was in Emmett’s favour than he was entitled to have expected. The government, although rumour was rife with alarm, had turned a deaf ear to every attempt to awake it from its culpable security. The detective police of that day, a crew of mercenary bloodhounds, showed that within the heart of the city treasonable plans could be matured, and not a functionary suspect it. To stimulate Sirr and his myrmidons to exertion, crime was not to be prevented but committed, and a regular price must first be placed upon the offender. The apathy of the government and the imbecility of the conspiracy were worthy of each other. On the night of the 23rd of July one hundred determined men, by a well-arranged *coup de main*, might have easily obtained possession of the castle.

Even with that success, twelve hours would have ended the treasonable triumph. More blood might have been shed, but the end would have been the same, and by noon the next day the insurrection would have terminated as it commenced—in slaughter.

TRIAL, CONVICTION, AND EXECUTION OF ROBERT EMMETT

The madly infatuated leaders of this desperate and futile attempt contrived to evade their deluded followers before the crisis of the outbreak, in spite of their conspicuous uniforms and trappings. Favoured by the darkness, Emmett and his lieutenants, decked in their warlike panoply, contrived to escape from the city which their rash enterprise had stirred into wild excitement, and headed to that haunt of outlawed and desperate malefactors, the mountain range of Wicklow, where they foiled to raise the late rebels. Under this rebuff, for better security, the party separated, each adopting the best means within his power to evade the now uplifted hand of outraged justice. Emmett, it is said, might possibly have quitted the country in a fishing boat, but his wild and ardent attachment to a daughter of the celebrated Curran induced him to return to the metropolis and seek a parting interview with his mistress. None but a madman would have risked the dangerous experiment; but Emmett appears to have been influenced in all his actions by the wildest impulse, and, accordingly, he regained the city safely, and again took up his quarters in his old concealment, Harold’s Cross. Here he was tracked by the bloodhound who had successfully trapped Lord Edward Fitzgerald and the many misguided enthusiasts who had similarly played with treason under mistaken ambition.

Arrested by Town-Major Sirr on the 25th of August, a special commission was immediately issued, Lord Norbury presiding. The evidence was clear, decisive, and direct, and went over and unmistakably proved the facts as already described.

The story of Emmett’s arrest, as related by Major Henry Charles Sirr, appropriately closes the history: ‘I went, in the evening of the 25th of August, to the house of one Palmer. I had heard there was a stranger in the back-parlour. I rode, accompanied by a man on foot; I desired the man to knock at the door. He did, and it was opened by a girl. I alighted, and ran directly into the back-parlour. I saw the prisoner sitting at dinner; the woman of the house was there, and the girl who opened the door was the daughter of the woman of the house. I desired them to withdraw. I asked the prisoner his name; he told me his name was Cunningham. I gave him in charge to the man who accompanied me, and went into the next room to ask the woman and daughter about him; they told me his name was Hewitt. I went back and asked how long he had been there?

He said he came that morning. He had attempted to escape before I returned, for he was bloody, and the man said he knocked him down with a pistol. I then went to Mrs. Palmer, who said he had lodged there for a month. I then judged he was a person of some importance. When I first went in there was a paper on the chair, which I put into my pocket (Emmett's fervid proclamation). I then went to the canal bridge for a guard, having desired him to be in readiness as I passed by. I planted a sentry over him, and desired the non-commissioned officer to surround the house with sentries while I searched it. I then examined Mrs. Palmer, and took down her account of the prisoner, during which time I heard a noise, as if an escape was attempted. I instantly ran to the back part of the house, as the most likely part for him to get out at; I saw him going off, and ordered a sentinel to fire, and then pursued him myself, regardless of the order. The sentry snapped, but the musket did not go off. I overtook the prisoner, and he said, "I surrender!" I searched him, and found some papers upon him.'

On the witness expressing concern at the necessity of the prisoner's being treated so roughly, the prisoner observed, 'that all was fair in war.' The prisoner, when brought to the castle, acknowledged that his name was Emmett.

In his address to the jury Mr. Conyngham Plunket, as counsel for the Crown, laid stress upon the revolutionary proclamation drawn up by Emmett, and pointed out the condemnatory nature of this incendiary document:—

'Under what circumstances is he taken? In the room in which he was, upon a chair near the door, is found an address to the government of the country, and in the very first paragraph of that address the composer of it acknowledges himself to be the head of a conspiracy for the overthrow of the government which he addresses, telling them, in diplomatic language, what conduct the undersigned will be compelled to adopt if they shall presume to execute the law. He is the leader, whose nod is a Fiat, and he warns them of the consequences!

'And how was this revolution to be effected? The proclamation conveys an insinuation that it was to be effected by their own force, entirely independent of foreign assistance. Why? Because it was well known that there remained in this country few so depraved, so lost to the welfare of their native land, that would not shudder at forming an alliance with France, and therefore the people of Ireland are told, "the effort is to be entirely your own, independent of foreign aid." But how does this tally with the time when the scheme was first hatched—the very period of the commencement of the war with France? How does this tally with the fact of consulting in the depot about co-operating with the French, which has been proved in evidence? But, gentlemen, out of the proclamation I convict him of duplicity. He tells the government of the country not to resist their mandate, or think they can effectually suppress rebellion by putting down the present attempt, but that "they will have to crush a greater exertion, rendered still greater by foreign assistance"; so that upon the face of the proclamation they avowed, in its naked deformity, the abominable plan of an alliance with the usurper of the French throne to overturn the ancient constitution of the land, and to substitute a new republic in its place.'

CONCLUSION OF EMMETT'S EXALTED DEFENCE

After the verdict of guilty was pronounced, the clerk of the Crown asked the condemned 'what he had to say why judgment of death and execution should not be awarded against him according to law?' Emmett, without precisely defending himself, calmly proceeded to pour forth an eloquent impassioned attack upon the executive. The concluding passages convey the general tendency of his exalted oratory:—

'I have been charged with that importance in the efforts to emancipate my countrymen as to be considered the keystone of the combination of Irishmen, or, as your lordship expressed it, "the life and blood of the conspiracy." You do me honour overmuch—you have given to a subaltern all the credit of a superior. There are men engaged in this conspiracy who are not only superior to me, but even to your computation of yourself, my lord; before the splendour of whose genius and virtues I should bow with respectful deference, and who would think themselves disgraced to be called your friend, and who would not disgrace themselves by shaking your blood-stained hand. [Again the judge, as frequently in the course of this bitter harangue of Emmett's, felt called upon to interrupt him.]

'What, my lord, shall you tell me on the passage to that scaffold which that tyranny, of which you are only the intermediary executioner, has erected for my murder, that I am accountable for all the blood that has and will be shed in this struggle of the oppressed against the oppressor? Shall you tell me this, and shall I be so very a slave as not to repel it?

'I do not fear to approach the Omnipotent Judge, to answer for the conduct of my whole life, and am I to be appalled and falsified by a mere remnant of mortality! By you, too, who, if it were possible to collect all the innocent blood that you have shed in your unhallowed ministry in one reservoir, your lordship might swim in it. [Here the judge interfered.]

'Let no man dare, when I am dead, to charge me with dishonour; let no man attaint my memory by believing that I could have engaged in any cause but of my country's liberty and independence, or that I became the pliant minion of power in the oppression or the miseries of my countrymen. The proclamation of the provisional government speaks for our views; no inference can be tortured from it to countenance barbarity or debasement at home, or subjection, humiliation, or treachery from abroad. I would not have submitted to a foreign oppressor, for the same reason that I would resist the present domestic oppressor. In the dignity of freedom I would have fought on the threshold of my country, and its enemies should only enter by passing over my lifeless corpse. And am I, who lived but for my country, and who have subjected myself to the dangers of the jealous and watchful oppressor and the bondage of the grave, only to give my countrymen their rights, and my country her independence. Am I to be loaded with calumny and not suffered to resent or repel it?

'If the spirits of the illustrious dead participate in the concerns and cares of those who are dear to them in this transitory life, O ever dear and venerable shade of my departed father, look down with scrutiny upon the conduct of your suffering son, and see if I have even for a moment deviated from those principles of morality and patriotism which it was your care to instil into my youthful mind, and for which I am now about to offer

up my life.

‘My lords, you are impatient for the sacrifice. The blood which you seek is not congealed by the artificial terrors that surround your victim; it circulates warmly and unruffled through the channels which God created for nobler purposes, but which you are bent to destroy, for purposes so grievous that they cry to heaven. Be ye patient! I have but a few words more to say. I am going to my cold and silent grave—my lamp of life is nearly extinguished—my race is run—the grave opens to receive me, and I sink into its bosom! I have but one request to ask at my departure from this world—it is the charity of its silence! Let no man write my epitaph; for as no man who knows my motives dare now vindicate them, let not prejudice or ignorance asperse them. Let them and me repose in obscurity and peace, and my tomb remain uninscribed, until other times and other men can do justice to my character. When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then, and not till then, let my epitaph be written. I have done!’

Execution followed fast upon conviction, and Emmett suffered the penalty of high treason on the following day. The scene of his crime was chosen as the place of his punishment, and in Thomas Street the unfortunate gentleman met his fate with a calm and manly resignation, which elicited the sympathy of all who witnessed the painful occurrence.

If any sparks of disaffection lingered in the country, the mad outbreak of this deluded man finally extinguished them. The democratic feeling ten years before rife in the north of Ireland, and prevalent among the Presbyterians, had, long before Emmett’s *emeute*, been generally repudiated; a political change had been wrought rapidly in Ulster, and the educated and intelligent portion of the kingdom, whom American connection and French example influenced for a time, had detected the unsound principles of theoretic liberty, and disowned the rotten foundations upon which mob-governments are superstructed. When Russell, an early example of the republican school, attempted to operate coincidently with Emmett’s deluded attempt in the north, not half a dozen fools could be found to listen to delusory principles which had been tested and found wanting; and when he later suffered the extreme penalty of the law at Downpatrick, the utmost charity to which his quondam admirers reached was to declare that he was insane—a conclusion no doubt correct.

THE END

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