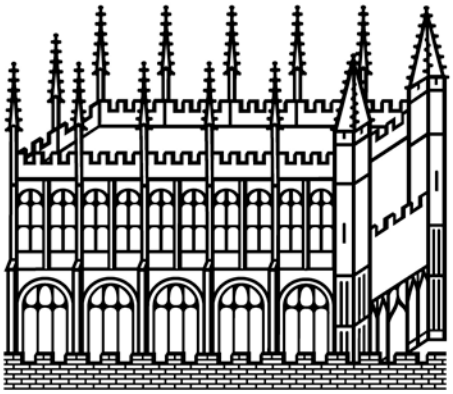

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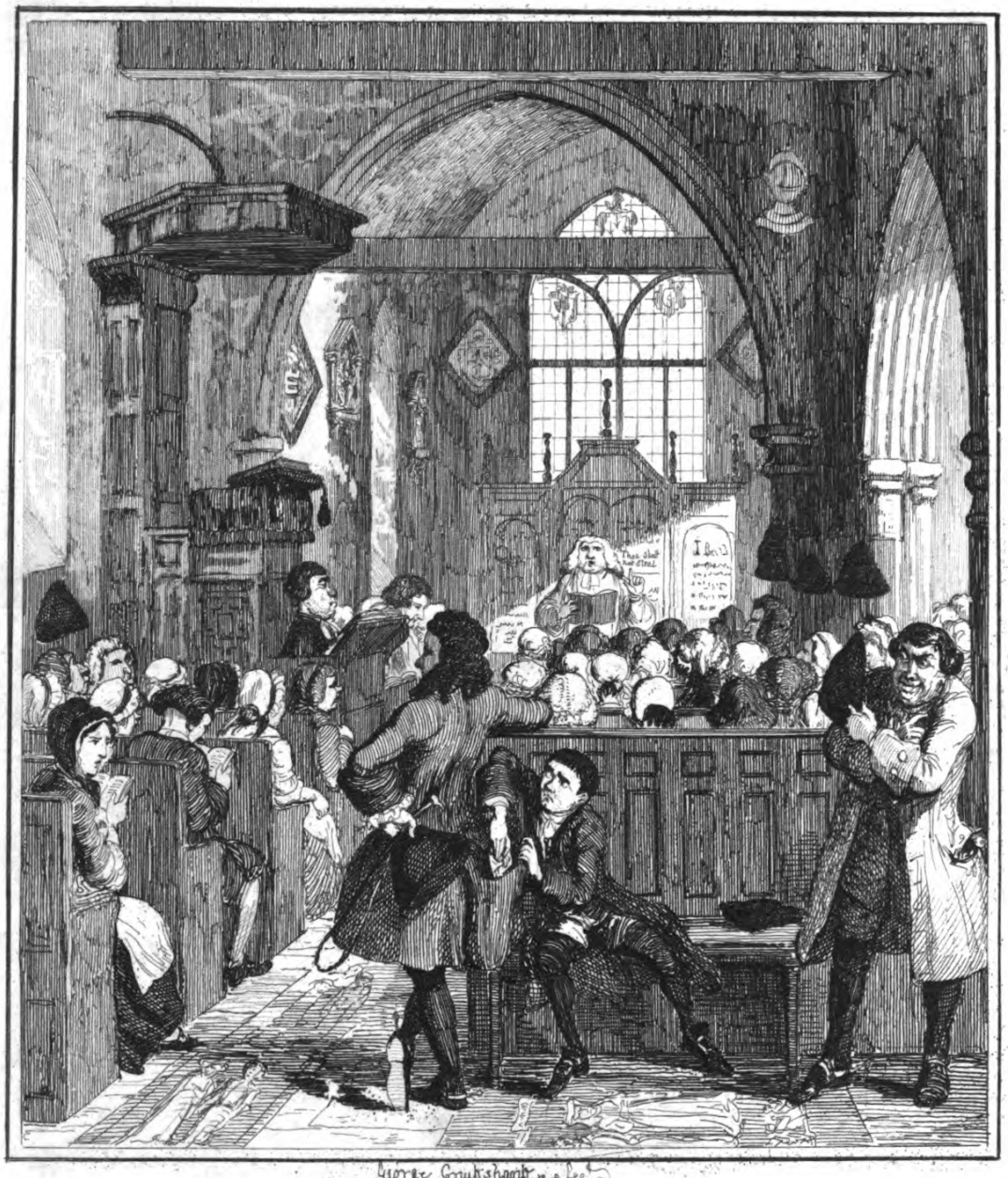

Frank Hopkins committing the robbery in Wilkinson's house

JACK SHEPPARD.

A ROMANCE.

BY W. HARRISON AINSWORTH, Esq.

AUTHOR OF "ROOKWOOD," AND "CRICHTON."

"Upon my word, friend," said I, "you have almost made me long to try what a robber I should make." "There's great art in it, if you did," quoth he. "Ah! but," said I, "there's a great deal in being hanged."—*Life and Actions of Guzman D'Alfaruche.*

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY GEORGE CRUIKSHANK.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CONTENTS

OF THE

SECOND VOLUME.

Epoch the Second,—1715.

THAMES DARRELL

Chapter		Page
XIII.	THE MAGDALENE.	3
XIV.	THE FLASH KEN.	31
XV.	THE ROBBERY AT WILLESDEN CHURCH.	45
XVI.	JONATHAN WILD'S HOUSE AT THE OLD BAILEY.	51
XVII.	THE NIGHT CELLAR.	71
XVIII.	HOW JACK SHEPPARD BROKE OUT OF THE CAGE AT WILLESDEN. . .	86
XIX.	GOOD AND EVIL.	98

Epoch the Third,—1724.

THE PRISON BREAKER

I.	THE RETURN.	107
II.	THE BURGLARY AT DOLLIS HILL. .	143
III.	JACK SHEPPARD'S QUARREL WITH JONATHAN WILD. . . .	153

Chapter		Page
IV.	JACK SHEPPARD'S ESCAPE FROM THE NEW PRISON.	160
V.	THE DISGUISE.	166
VI.	WINIFRED RECEIVES TWO PROPOSALS.	200
VII.	JACK SHEPPARD WARNS THAMES DARRELL.	212
VIII.	OLD BEDLAM.	227
IX.	OLD NEWGATE.	248
X.	HOW JACK SHEPPARD GOT OUT OF THE CONDEMNED HOLD	264

Epoch the Second.

1715.

THAMES DARRELL.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MAGDALENE.

THE household of the worthy carpenter, it may be conceived, was thrown into the utmost confusion and distress by the unaccountable disappearance of the two boys. As time wore on, and they did not return, Mr. Wood's anxiety grew so insupportable, that he seized his hat with the intention of sallying forth in search of them, though he did not know whither to bend his steps, when his departure was arrested by a gentle knock at the door.

" There he is !" cried Winifred, starting up, joyfully, and proving by the exclamation that her thoughts were dwelling upon one subject only. " There he is !"

"I fear not," said her father, with a doubtful shake of the head. "Thames would let himself in; and Jack generally finds an entrance through the backdoor or the shop-window, when he has been out at untimely hours. But, go and see who it is, love. Stay! I'll go myself."

His daughter, however, anticipated him. She flew to the door, but returned the next minute, looking deeply disappointed, and bringing the intelligence that it was "only Mrs. Sheppard."

"Who?" almost screamed Mrs. Wood.

"Jack Sheppard's mother," answered the little girl, dejectedly; "she has brought a basket of eggs from Willesden, and some flowers for you."

"For me!" vociferated Mrs. Wood, in indignant surprise. "Eggs for *me!* You mistake, child. They must be for your father."

"No; I 'm quite sure she said they 're for you," replied Winifred; "but she *does* want to see father."

"I thought as much," sneered Mrs. Wood.

"I 'll go to her directly," said Wood, bustling towards the door. "I dare say she has called to inquire about Jack."

"I dare say no such thing," interposed his better half, authoritatively; "remain where you are, sir."

"At all events, let me send her away, my dear," supplicated the carpenter, anxious to avert the impending storm.

"Do you hear me?" cried the lady, with increasing vehemence. "Stir a foot, at your peril."

"But, my love," still remonstrated Wood, "you know I 'm going to look after the boys——"

"After Mrs. Sheppard, you mean, sir," interrupted his wife, ironically. "Don't think to deceive me by your false pretences. Marry, come up! I 'm not so easily deluded. Sit down, I command you. Winny, show the person into this room. I 'll see her myself; and that's more than she bargained for, I 'll be sworn."

Finding it useless to struggle further, Mr.

Wood sank, submissively, into a chair, while his daughter hastened to execute her arbitrary parent's commission.

"At length, I have my wish," continued Mrs. Wood, regarding her husband with a glance of vindictive triumph. "I shall behold the shameless hussy, face to face; and, if I find her as good-looking as she 's represented, I don't know what I 'll do in the end; but I 'll begin by scratching her eyes out."

In this temper, it will naturally be imagined, that Mrs. Wood's reception of the widow, who, at that moment, was ushered into the room by Winifred, was not particularly kind and encouraging. As she approached, the carpenter's wife eyed her from head to foot, in the hope of finding something in her person or apparel to quarrel with. But she was disappointed. Mrs. Sheppard's dress — extremely neat and clean, but simply fashioned, and of the plainest and most unpretending material, —offered nothing assailable; and her demeanour was so humble, and her looks so modest, that—if she had been ill-looking—she might, possibly, have escaped the shafts of malice

preparing to be levelled against her. But, alas! she was beautiful—and beauty is a crime not to be forgiven by a jealous woman.

As the lapse of time and change of circumstances have wrought a remarkable alteration in the appearance of the poor widow, it may not be improper to notice it here. When first brought under consideration, she was a miserable and forlorn object; squalid in attire, haggard in looks, and emaciated in frame. Now, she was the very reverse of all this. Her dress, it has just been said, was neatness and simplicity itself. Her figure, though slight, had all the fulness of health; and her complexion—still pale, but without its former sickly cast,—contrasted agreeably, by its extreme fairness, with the dark brows and darker lashes that shaded eyes which, if they had lost some of their original brilliancy, had gained infinitely more in the soft and chastened lustre that replaced it. One marked difference between the poor outcast, who, oppressed by poverty, and stung by shame, had sought temporary relief in the stupifying draught,—that worst "medi-

cine of a mind diseased,"—and those of the same being, freed from her vices, and restored to comfort and contentment, if not to happiness, by a more prosperous course of events, was exhibited in the mouth. For the fresh and feverish hue of lip which years ago characterised this feature, was now substituted a pure and wholesome bloom, evincing a total change of habits; and, though the coarse character of the mouth remained, in some degree, unaltered, it was so modified in expression, that it could no longer be accounted a blemish. In fact, the whole face had undergone a transformation. All its better points were improved, while the less attractive ones (and they were few in comparison) were subdued, or removed. What was yet more worthy of note was, that the widow's countenance had an air of refinement about it, of which it was utterly destitute before, and which seemed to intimate that her true position in society was far above that wherein accident had placed her.

"Well, Mrs. Sheppard," said the carpenter, advancing to meet her, and trying to look

as cheerful and composed as he could; "what brings you to town, eh?—Nothing amiss, I trust?"

"Nothing whatever, sir," answered the widow. "A neighbour offered me a drive to Paddington; and, as I haven't heard of my son for some time, I couldn't resist the temptation of stepping on to inquire after him, and to thank you for your great goodness to us both. I've brought a little garden-stuff and a few new-laid eggs for you, ma'am," she added, turning to Mrs. Wood, who appeared to be collecting her energies for a terrible explosion, "in the hope that they may prove acceptable. Here 's a nosegay for you, my love," she continued, opening her basket, and presenting a fragrant bunch of flowers to Winifred, "if your mother will allow me to give it you."

"Don't touch it, Winny!" screamed Mrs. Wood, "it may be poisoned."

"I 'm not afraid, mother," said the little girl, smelling at the bouquet. "How sweet these roses are! Shall I put them into water?"

"Put them where they came from," re-

plied Mrs. Wood, severely, " and go to bed."

" But, mother, mayn't I sit up to see whether Thames returns ?" implored Winifred.

" What can it matter to you whether he returns or not, child," rejoined Mrs. Wood, sharply. " I 've spoken. And my word 's law—with *you*, at least," she added, bestowing a cutting glance upon her husband.

The little girl uttered no remonstrance; but, replacing the flowers in the basket, burst into tears, and withdrew.

Mrs. Sheppard, who witnessed this occurrence with dismay, looked timorously at Wood, in expectation of some hint being given as to the course she had better pursue; but, receiving none, for the carpenter was too much agitated to attend to her, she ventured to express a fear that she was intruding.

" Intruding !" echoed Mrs. Wood; " to be sure you are ! I wonder how you dare show your face in this house, hussy !"

" I thought you sent for me, ma'am," replied the widow, humbly.

" So I did," retorted Mrs. Wood; " and I did so to see how far your effrontery would carry you."

" I 'm sure I 'm very sorry. I hope I haven't given any unintentional offence ?" said the widow, again meekly appealing to Wood.

" Don't exchange glances with him under my very nose, woman !" shrieked Mrs. Wood; " I 'll not bear it. Look at me, and answer me one question. And, mind ! no prevaricating—nothing but the truth will satisfy me."

Mrs. Sheppard raised her eyes, and fixed them upon her interrogator.

" Are you not that man's mistress ?" demanded Mrs. Wood, with a look meant to reduce her supposed rival to the dust.

" I am no man's mistress," answered the widow, crimsoning to her temples, but preserving her meek deportment, and humble tone.

" That 's false !" cried Mrs Wood. " I 'm too well acquainted with your proceedings, madam, to believe that. Profligate women are never reclaimed. *He* has told me sufficient of you——"

"My dear," interposed Wood, "for goodness' sake——"

"I *will* speak," screamed his wife, totally disregarding the interruption; "I *will* tell this worthless creature what I know about her,—and what I think of her."

"Not now, my love—not now," entreated Wood.

"Yes, *now*," rejoined the infuriated dame; "perhaps, I may never have another opportunity. She has contrived to keep out of my sight up to this time, and I 've no doubt she 'll keep out of it altogether for the future."

"That was my doing, dearest," urged the carpenter; "I was afraid if you saw her that some such scene as this might occur."

"Hear me, madam, I beseech you," interposed Mrs. Sheppard, "and, if it please you to visit your indignation on any one, let it be upon me, and not on your excellent husband, whose only fault is in having bestowed his charity upon so unworthy an object as myself."

"Unworthy, indeed!" sneered Mrs. Wood.

"To him I owe everything," continued the

widow, " life itself—nay, more than life,—for, without his assistance I should have perished, body and soul. He has been a father to me and my child."

" I never doubted the latter point, I assure you, madam," observed Mrs. Wood.

" You have said," pursued the widow, " that she, who has once erred, is irreclaimable. Do not believe it, madam. It is not so. The poor wretch, driven by desperation to the commission of a crime which her soul abhors, is no more beyond the hope of reformation than she is without the pale of mercy. I have suffered — I have sinned — I have repented. And, though neither peace nor innocence can be restored to my bosom; though tears cannot blot out my offences, nor sorrow drown my shame; yet, knowing that my penitence is sincere, I do not despair that my transgressions may be forgiven."

" Mighty fine !" ejaculated Mrs. Wood, contemptuously.

" You cannot understand me, madam; and it is well you cannot. Blest with a fond husband, surrounded by every comfort, *you* have

never been assailed by the horrible temptations to which misery has exposed *me*. You have never known what it is to want food, raiment, shelter. You have never seen the child within your arms perishing from hunger, and no relief to be obtained. You have never felt the hearts of all hardened against you; have never heard the jeer or curse from every lip; nor endured the insult and the blow from every hand. I *have* suffered all this. I could resist the tempter *now*. I am strong in health,—in mind. But *then*—— Oh! madam, there are moments—moments of darkness, which overshadow a whole existence—in the lives of the poor houseless wretches who traverse the streets, when reason is well-nigh benighted; when the horrible promptings of despair can, alone, be listened to; and when vice itself assumes the aspect of virtue. Pardon what I have said, madam. I do not desire to extenuate my guilt—far less to defend it; but I would show you, and such as you—who, happily, are exempted from trials like mine—how much misery has to do with crime. And I affirm to you, on my own conviction, that she

who falls, because she has not strength granted her to struggle with affliction, *may* be reclaimed, —may repent, and be forgiven,—even as she, whose sins, 'though many, were forgiven her.'"

"It gladdens me to hear you talk thus, Joan," said Wood, in a voice of much emotion, while his eyes filled with tears, "and more than repays me for all I have done for you."

"If professions of repentance constitute a Magdalene, Mrs. Sheppard is one, no doubt," observed Mrs. Wood, ironically; "but I used to think it required something more than *mere words* to prove that a person's character was abused."

"Very right, my love," said Wood, "very sensibly remarked. So it does. But I can speak to that point. Mrs. Sheppard's conduct, from my own personal knowledge, has been unexceptionable for the last twelve years. During that period she has been a model of propriety."

"Oh! of course," rejoined Mrs. Wood; "I can't for an instant question such disinterested testimony. Mrs. Sheppard, I'm sure,

will say as much for you. He's a model of conjugal attachment and fidelity, a pattern to his family, and an example to his neighbours. Ain't he, madam?"

"He is, indeed," replied the widow, fervently; "more—much more than that."

"He's no such thing!" cried Mrs. Wood, furiously. "He's a base, deceitful, tyrannical, hoary-headed libertine—that's what he is. But, I'll expose him. I'll proclaim his misdoings to the world; and, then, we shall see where he'll stand. Marry, come up! I'll show him what an injured wife can do. If all wives were of my mind and my spirit, husbands would soon be taught their own insignificance. But a time *will* come (and that before long,) when our sex will assert its superiority; and, when we have got the upper hand, let 'em try to subdue us if they can. But don't suppose, madam, that anything I say has reference to you. I'm speaking of virtuous women—of WIVES, madam. Mistresses neither deserve consideration nor commiseration."

"I expect no commiseration," returned Mrs. Sheppard, gently, "nor do I need any.

But, rather than be the cause of any further misunderstanding between you and my benefactor, I will leave London and its neighbourhood for ever."

"Pray do so, madam," retorted Mrs. Wood, "and take your son with you."

"My son!" echoed the widow, trembling.

"Yes, your son, madam. If you can do any good with him, it's more than we can. The house will be well rid of him, for a more idle, good-for-nothing reprobate never crossed its threshold."

"Is this true, sir?" cried Mrs. Sheppard, with an agonised look at Wood. "I know you 'll not deceive me. Is Jack what Mrs. Wood represents him?"

"He 's not exactly what I could desire him to be, Joan," replied the carpenter, reluctantly. "But a ragged colt sometimes makes the best horse. He 'll mend, I hope."

"Never," said Mrs. Wood,—"he 'll never mend. He has taken more than one step towards the gallows already. Thieves and pickpockets are his constant companions."

"Thieves!" exclaimed Mrs. Sheppard, horror-stricken.

"Jonathan Wild and Blueskin have got him into their hands," continued Mrs. Wood.

"Impossible!" exclaimed the widow, wildly.

"If you doubt my word, woman," replied the carpenter's wife, coldly, "ask Mr. Wood."

"I know you 'll contradict it, sir," said the widow, looking at Wood as if she dreaded to have her fears confirmed,—"I know you will."

"I wish I could, Joan," returned the carpenter, sadly.

Mrs. Sheppard let fall her basket.

"My son," she murmured, wringing her hands piteously,—"my son the companion of thieves! My son in Jonathan Wild's power! It cannot be."

"Why not?" rejoined Mrs. Wood, in a taunting tone. "Your son's father was a thief; and Jonathan Wild (unless I 'm misinformed,) was his friend,—so it 's not unnatural he should show some partiality towards Jack."

"Jonathan Wild was my husband's bitterest enemy," said Mrs. Sheppard. "He first

seduced him from the paths of honesty, and then betrayed him to a shameful death, and he has sworn to do the same thing by my son. Oh, heavens; that I should have ever indulged a hope of happiness while that terrible man lives!"

"Compose yourself, Joan," said Wood; "all will yet be well."

"Oh, no,—no," replied Mrs. Sheppard, distractedly. "All cannot be well, if this is true. Tell me, sir," she added, with forced calmness, and grasping Wood's arm; "what has Jack done? Tell me in a word, that I may know the worst. I can bear anything but suspense."

"You 're agitating yourself unnecessarily, Joan," returned Wood, in a soothing voice. "Jack has been keeping bad company. That's the only fault I know of."

"Thank God for that!" ejaculated Mrs. Sheppard, fervently. "Then it is not too late to save him. Where is he, sir? Can I see him?"

"No, that you can't," answered Mrs. Wood; "he has gone out without leave, and has taken Thames Darrell with him. If I were Mr. Wood,

when he *does* return, I 'd send him about his business. I wouldn't keep an apprentice to set my authority at defiance."

Mr. Wood's reply, if he intended any, was cut short by a loud knocking at the door.

" 'Odd's-my-life!—what's that?" he cried, greatly alarmed.

" It 's Jonathan Wild come back with a troop of constables at his heels, to search the house," rejoined Mrs. Wood, in equal trepidation. " We shall all be murdered. Oh! that Mr. Kneebone were here to protect me!"

" If it *is* Jonathan," rejoined Wood, " it is very well for Mr. Kneebone he 's not here. He 'd have enough to do to protect himself, without attending to you. I declare I 'm almost afraid to go to the door. Something, I 'm convinced, has happened to the boys."

" Has Jonathan Wild been here to-day?" asked Mrs. Sheppard, anxiously.

" To be sure he has!" returned Mrs. Wood; " and Blueskin, too. They 're only just gone. Mercy on us! what a clatter," she added, as the knocking was repeated more violently than before.

While the carpenter irresolutely quitted the room, with a strong presentiment of ill upon his mind, a light quick step was heard descending the stairs, and, before he could call out to prevent it, a man was admitted into the passage.

"Is this Misther Wudd's, my pretty miss?" demanded the rough voice of the Irish watchman.

"It is," replied Winifred; "have you brought any tidings of Thames Darrell?"

"Troth have I!" replied Terence; "but, bless your angilic face, how did you contrive to guess that?"

"Is he well?—is he safe?—is he coming back," cried the little girl, disregarding the question.

"He's in St. Giles's roundhouse," answered Terence; "but tell Mr. Wudd I'm here, and have brought him a message from his unlawful son, and don't be detainin' me, my darlin', for there's not a minute to lose if the poor lad's to be rescued from the clutches of that thief and thieftaker o' the wurld, Jonathan Wild."

The carpenter, upon whom no part of this

hurried dialogue had been lost, now made his appearance, and having obtained from Terence all the information which that personage could impart respecting the perilous situation of Thames, he declared himself ready to start to Saint Giles's at once, and ran back to the room for his hat and stick; expressing his firm determination, as he pocketed his constable's staff with which he though it expedient to arm himself, of being direfully revenged upon the thief-taker: a determination in which he was strongly encouraged by his wife. Terence, meanwhile, who had followed him, did not remain silent, but recapitulated his story, for the benefit of Mrs. Sheppard. The poor widow was thrown into an agony of distress on learning that a robbery had been committed, in which her son (for she could not doubt that Jack was one of the boys,) was implicated; nor was her anxiety alleviated by Mrs. Wood, who maintained stoutly, that if Thames had been led to do wrong, it must be through the instrumentality of his worthless companion.

"And there you're right, you may dipind, marm," observed Terence. "Master Thames

Ditt—what's his blessed name?—has honesty written in his handsome phiz; but as to his companion, Jack Sheppard, I think you call him, he 's a born and bred thief. Lord bless you marm! we sees plenty on 'em in our purfession. Them young prigs is all alike. I seed he was one,—and a sharp un, too,—at a glance."

"Oh!" exclaimed the widow, covering her face with her hands.

"Take a drop of brandy before we start, watchman," said Wood, pouring out a glass of spirit, and presenting it to Terence, who smacked his lips as he disposed of it. "Won't you be persuaded, Joan?" he added, making a similar offer to Mrs. Sheppard, which she gratefully declined. "If you mean to accompany us, you may need it."

"You are very kind, sir," returned the widow, "but I require no support. Nothing stronger than water has passed my lips for years."

"We may believe as much of that as we please, I suppose," observed the carpenter's wife, with a sneer. "Mr. Wood," she con-

tinued, in an authoritative tone, seeing her husband ready to depart, "one word before you set out. If Jack Sheppard or his mother ever enter this house again, I leave it—that's all. Now, do what you please. You know *my* fixed determination."

Mr. Wood made no reply; but, hastily kissing his weeping daughter, and bidding her be of good cheer, hurried off. He was followed with equal celerity by Terence and the widow. Traversing what remained of Wych Street at a rapid pace, and speeding along Drury Lane, the trio soon found themselves in Kendrick Yard. When they came to the roundhouse, Terry's courage failed him. Such was the terror inspired by Wild's vindictive character, that few durst face him who had given him cause for displeasure. Aware that he should incur the thieftaker's bitterest animosity by what he had done, the watchman, whose wrath against Quilt Arnold had evaporated during the walk, thought it more prudent not to hazard a meeting with his master, till the storm had, in some measure, blown over. Accordingly, having given Wood such directions as he

thought necessary for his guidance, and received a handsome gratuity in return for his services, he departed.

It was not without considerable demur and delay on the part of Sharples that the carpenter and his companion could gain admittance to the roundhouse. Reconnoitring them through a small grated loophole, he refused to open the door till they had explained their business. This, Wood, acting upon Terry's caution, was most unwilling to do; but, finding he had no alternative, he reluctantly made known his errand and the bolts were undrawn. Once in, the constable's manner appeared totally changed. He was now as civil as he had just been insolent. Apologizing for their detention, he answered the questions put to him respecting the boys, by positively denying that any such prisoners had been entrusted to his charge, but offered to conduct him to every cell in the building to prove the truth of his assertion. He then barred and double-locked the door, took out the key, (a precautionary measure which, with a grim smile, he said he never omitted,) thrust it into his vest, and motion-

ing the couple to follow him, led the way to the inner room. As Wood obeyed, his foot slipped; and, casting his eyes upon the floor, he perceived it splashed in several places with blood. From the freshness of the stains, which grew more frequent as they approached the adjoining chamber, it was evident some violence had been recently perpetrated, and the carpenter's own blood froze within his veins as he thought, with a thrill of horror, that, perhaps on this very spot, not many minutes before his arrival, his adopted son might have been inhumanly butchered. Nor was this impression removed as he stole a glance at Mrs. Sheppard, and saw from her terrified look that she had made the same alarming discovery as himself. But it was now too late to turn back, and, nerving himself for the shock he expected to encounter, he ventured after his conductor. No sooner had they entered the room than Sharples, who waited to usher them in, hastily retreated, closed the door, and turning the key, laughed loudly at the success of his stratagem. Vexation at his folly in suffering himself to be thus entrapped kept Wood for

a short time silent. When he could find words, he tried by the most urgent solicitations to prevail upon the constable to let him out. But threats and entreaties—even promises were ineffectual; and the unlucky captive, after exhausting his powers of persuasion, was compelled to give up the point.

The room in which he was detained—that lately occupied by the Mohocks, who, it appeared, had been allowed to depart,—was calculated to inspire additional apprehension and disgust. Strongly impregnated with the mingled odours of tobacco, ale, brandy, and other liquors, the atmosphere was almost stifling. The benches running round the room, though fastened to the walls by iron clamps, had been forcibly wrenched off; while the table, which was similarly secured to the boards, was upset, and its contents—bottles, jugs, glasses, and bowls were broken and scattered about in all directions. Everything proclaimed the mischievous propensities of the recent occupants of the chamber.

Here lay a heap of knockers of all sizes, from the huge lion's head to the small brass

rapper: there, a collection of sign-boards, with the names and calling of the owners utterly obliterated. On this side stood the instruments with which the latter piece of pleasantry had been effected,—namely, a bucket filled with paint and a brush: on that was erected a trophy, consisting of a watchman's rattle, a laced hat, with the crown knocked out, and its place supplied by a lantern, a campaign wig saturated with punch, a torn steenkirk and ruffles, some half-dozen staves, and a broken sword.

As the carpenter's gaze wandered over this scene of devastation, his attention was drawn by Mrs. Sheppard towards an appalling object in one corner. This was the body of a man, apparently lifeless, and stretched upon a mattress, with his head bound up in a linen cloth, through which the blood had oosed. Near the body, which, it will be surmised, was that of Abraham Mendez, two ruffianly personages were seated, quietly smoking, and bestowing no sort of attention upon the new-comers. Their conversation was conducted in the flash language, and, though unintelligible to Wood, was easily

comprehended by his companion, who learnt, to her dismay, that the wounded man had received his hurt from her son, whose courage and dexterity formed the present subject of their discourse. From other obscure hints dropped by the speakers, Mrs. Sheppard ascertained that Thames Darrell had been carried off—where she could not make out—by Jonathan Wild and Quilt Arnold; and that Jack had been induced to accompany Blueskin to the Mint. This intelligence, which she instantly communicated to the carpenter, drove him almost frantic. He renewed his supplications to Sharples, but with no better success than heretofore; and the greater part of the night was passed by him and the poor widow, whose anxiety, if possible, exceeded his own, in the most miserable state imaginable.

At length, about three o'clock, as the first glimmer of dawn became visible through the barred casements of the roundhouse, the rattling of bolts and chains at the outer door told that some one was admitted. Whoever this might be, the visit seemed to have some reference to the carpenter, for, shortly afterwards,

Sharples made his appearance, and informed the captives they were free. Without waiting to have the information repeated, Wood rushed forth, determined as soon as he could procure assistance, to proceed to Jonathan Wild's house in the Old Bailey; while Mrs. Sheppard, whose maternal fears drew her in another direction, hurried off to the Mint.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FLASH KEN.

In an incredibly short space of time,—for her anxiety lent wings to her feet,—Mrs. Sheppard reached the debtors' garrison. From a scout stationed at the northern entrance, whom she addressed in the jargon of the place, with which long usage had formerly rendered her familiar, she ascertained that Blueskin, accompanied by a youth, whom she knew by the description must be her son, had arrived there about three hours before, and had proceeded to the Cross Shovels. This was enough for the poor widow. She felt she was now near her boy, and, nothing doubting her ability to rescue him from his perilous situation, she breathed a fervent prayer for his deliverance; and, bending her steps towards the tavern in question, revolved within her mind as she walked along the best means of accomplish-

ing her purpose. Aware of the cunning and desperate characters of the persons with whom she would have to deal,—aware, also, that she was in a quarter where no laws could be appealed to, nor assistance obtained, she felt the absolute necessity of caution. Accordingly, when she arrived at the Shovels, with which, as an old haunt in her bygone days of wretchedness she was well acquainted, instead of entering the principal apartment, which she saw at a glance was crowded with company of both sexes, she turned into a small room on the left of the bar, and, as an excuse for so doing, called for something to drink. The drawers at the moment were too busy to attend to her, and she would have seized the opportunity of examining, unperceived, the assemblage within, through a little curtained window that overlooked the adjoining chamber, if an impediment had not existed in the shape of Baptist Kettleby, whose portly person entirely obscured the view. The Master of the Mint, in the exercise of his two-fold office of governor and publican, was mounted upon a chair, and holding forth to his guests

in a speech, to which Mrs. Sheppard was unwillingly compelled to listen.

"Gentlemen of the Mint," said the orator, "when I was first called, some fifty years ago, to the important office I hold, there existed across the water three places of refuge for the oppressed and persecuted debtor."

"We know it," cried several voices.

"It happened, gentlemen," pursued the Master, "on a particular occasion, about the time I've mentioned, that the Archduke of Alsatia, the Sovereign of the Savoy, and the Satrap of Salisbury Court, met by accident at the Cross Shovels. A jolly night we made of it, as you may suppose; for four such monarchs don't often come together. Well, while we were smoking our pipes, and quaffing our punch, Alsatia turns to me and says, 'Mint,' says he, 'you're well off here.'—'Pretty well,' says I; 'you're not badly off at the Friars, for that matter.'—'Oh! yes we are,' says he.—'How so?' says I.—'It's all up with us,' says he; 'they've taken away our charter.'—'They can't,' says I.—'They have,' says he.—'They can't, I tell you,' says I, in a bit of a passion;

'its unconstitutional.'—'Unconstitutional or not,' says Salisbury Court and Savoy, speaking together, 'it's true. We shall become a prey to the Philistines, and must turn honest in self-defence.'—'No fear o' that,' thought I.—'I see how it 'll be,' observed Alsatia, 'everybody 'll pay his debts, and only think of such a state of things as that.'—'It's *not* to be thought of,' says I, thumping the table till every glass on it jingled; 'and I know a way as 'll prevent it.'—'What is it, Mint?' asked all three.—'Why, hang every bailiff that sets a foot in your territories, and you're safe,' says I.—'We 'll do it,' said they, filling their glasses, and looking as fierce as King George's grenadier guards; 'here's your health, Mint.' But, gentlemen, though they talked so largely, and looked so fiercely, they did *not* do it; they did *not* hang the bailiffs; and where are they?"

"Ay, where are they?" echoed the company, with indignant derision.

"Gentlemen," returned the Master, solemnly, "it is a question easily answered—they are NOWHERE! Had they hanged the bailiffs, the bailiffs would not have hanged

them. We ourselves have been similarly circumstanced. Attacked by an infamous and unconstitutional statute, passed in the reign of the late usurper, William of Orange, (for I may remark that, if the right king had been upon the throne, that illegal enactment would never have received the royal assent—the Stuarts—Heaven preserve 'em!—always siding with the debtors); attacked in this outrageous manner, I repeat, it has been all but '*up*' with us! But the vigorous resistance offered on that memorable occasion by the patriotic inhabitants of Bermuda to the aggressions of arbitrary power, secured and established their privileges on a firmer basis than heretofore; and, while their pusillanimous allies were crushed and annihilated, they became more prosperous than ever. Gentlemen, I am proud to say that *I* originated—that *I* directed those measures. I hope to see the day, when not Southwark alone, but London itself shall become one Mint,—when all men shall be debtors, and none creditors,—when imprisonment for debt shall be utterly abolished,—when highway-robbery shall be accounted a pleasant

pastime, and forgery an accomplishment,—when Tyburn and its gibbets shall be overthrown,—capital punishments discontinued,—Newgate, Ludgate, the Gatehouse, and the Compters razed to the ground,—Bridewell and Clerkenwell destroyed,—the Fleet, the King's Bench, and the Marshalsea remembered only by name! But, in the mean time, as that day may possibly be farther off than I anticipate, we are bound to make the most of the present. Take care of yourselves, gentlemen, and your governor will take care of you. Before I sit down, I have a toast to propose, which I am sure will be received, as it deserves to be, with enthusiasm. It is the health of a stranger,—of Mr. John Sheppard. His father was one of my old customers, and I am happy to find his son treading in his steps. He couldn't be in better hands than those in which he has placed himself. Gentlemen,—Mr. Sheppard's good health, and success to him!"

Baptist's toast was received with loud applause, and, as he sat down amid the cheers of the company, and a universal clatter of mugs and glasses, the widow's view was no

longer obstructed. Her eye wandered quickly over that riotous and disorderly assemblage, until it settled upon one group more riotous and disorderly than the rest, of which her son formed the principal figure. The agonized mother could scarcely repress a scream at the spectacle that met her gaze. There sat Jack, evidently in the last stage of intoxication, with his collar opened, his dress disarranged, a pipe in his mouth, a bowl of punch and a half-emptied rummer before him,—there he sat, receiving and returning, or rather attempting to return,—for he was almost past consciousness, — the blandishments of a couple of females, one of whom had passed her arm round his neck, while the other leaned over the back of his chair, and appeared from her gestures to be whispering soft nonsense into his ear.

Both these ladies possessed considerable personal attractions. The younger of the two, who was seated next to Jack, and seemed to monopolize his attention, could not be more than seventeen, though her person had all the maturity of twenty. She had delicate oval

features, light, laughing blue eyes, a pretty *nez retroussé*, (why have we not the term, since we have the best specimens of the feature?) teeth of pearly whiteness, and a brilliant complexion, set off by rich auburn hair, a very white neck and shoulders,—the latter, perhaps, a trifle too much exposed. The name of this damsel was Edgeworth Bess; and, as her fascinations will not, perhaps, be found to be without some influence upon the future fortunes of her boyish admirer, we have thought it worth while to be thus particular in describing them. The other *bona roba*, known amongst her companions as Mistress Poll Maggot, was a beauty on a much larger scale,—in fact, a perfect Amazon. Nevertheless, though nearly six feet high, and correspondingly proportioned, she was a model of symmetry, and boasted, with the frame of a Thalestris or a Trulla, the regular lineaments of the Medicean Venus. A man's laced hat,—whether adopted from the caprice of the moment, or habitually worn, we are unable to state,—cocked knowingly on her head, harmonized with her masculine appearance. Mrs.

Maggot, as well as her companion Edgeworth Bess, was showily dressed; nor did either of them disdain the aid supposed to be lent to a fair skin by the contents of the patchbox. On an empty cask, which served him for a chair, and opposite Jack Sheppard, whose rapid progress in depravity afforded him the highest satisfaction, sat Blueskin, encouraging the two women in their odious task, and plying his victim with the glass as often as he deemed it expedient to do so. By this time, he had apparently accomplished all he desired; for moving the bottle out of Jack's reach, he appropriated it entirely to his own use, leaving the devoted lad to the care of the females. Some few of the individuals seated at the other tables seemed to take an interest in the proceedings of Blueskin and his party, just as a by-stander watches any other game; but, generally speaking, the company were too much occupied with their own concerns to pay attention to anything else. The assemblage was for the most part, if not altogether, composed of persons to whom vice in all its aspects was too familiar to present much of

novelty, in whatever form it was exhibited. Nor was Jack by any means the only stripling in the room. Not far from him was a knot of lads drinking, swearing, and playing at dice as eagerly and as skilfully as any of the older hands. Near to these hopeful youths sat a fence, or receiver, bargaining with a clouter, or pickpocket, for a *suit*,—or, to speak in more intelligible language, a watch and seals, two *cloaks*, commonly called watch-cases, and a *wedge-lobb*, otherwise known as a silver snuff-box. Next to the receiver was a gang of housebreakers, laughing over their exploits, and planning fresh depredations; and next to the housebreakers came two gallant-looking gentlemen in long periwigs and riding-dresses, and equipped in all other respects for the road, with a roast fowl and a bottle of wine before them. Amid this varied throng,—varied in appearance, but alike in character,—one object alone, we have said, rivetted Mrs. Sheppard's attention; and no sooner did she in some degree recover from the shock occasioned by the sight of her son's debased condition, than, regardless of any other consideration ex-

cept his instant removal from the contaminating society by which he was surrounded, and utterly forgetting the more cautious plan she meant to have adopted, she rushed into the room, and summoned him to follow her.

"Halloa!" cried Jack, looking round, and trying to fix his inebriate gaze upon the speaker,—"who 's that?"

"Your mother," replied Mrs. Sheppard. "Come home directly, sir."

"Mother be ——!" returned Jack. "Who is it, Bess?"

"How should I know?" replied Edgeworth Bess. "But if it *is* your mother, send her about her business."

"That I will," replied Jack, "in the twinkling of a bed-post."

"Glad to see you once more in the Mint, Mrs. Sheppard," roared Blueskin, who anticipated some fun. "Come and sit down by me."

"Take a glass of gin, ma'am," cried Poll Maggot, holding up a bottle of spirit; "it used to be your favourite liquor, I 've heard."

"Jack, my love," cried Mrs. Sheppard, disregarding the taunt, "come away."

"Not I," replied Jack; "I 'm too comfortable where I am. Be off!"

"Jack!" exclaimed his unhappy parent.

"Mr. Sheppard, if you please, ma'am," interrupted the lad; "I allow nobody to call me Jack. Do I, Bess, eh?"

"Nobody whatever, love," replied Edgeworth Bess; "nobody but me, dear."

"And me," insinuated Mrs. Maggot. "My little fancy man 's quite as fond of me as of you, Bess. Ain't you, Jacky darling?"

"Not quite, Poll," returned Mr. Sheppard; "but I love you next to her, and both of you better than *her*," pointing with the pipe to his mother.

"Oh, heavens!" cried Mrs. Sheppard.

"Bravo!" shouted Blueskin. "Tom Sheppard never said a better thing than that—ho! ho!"

"Jack," cried his mother, wringing her hands in distraction, "you 'll break my heart!"

"Poh! poh!" returned her son; "women don't so easily break their hearts. Do they, Bess?"

N° Sheppard gets drunk & robs his Mother &c.

"Certainly not," replied the young lady appealed to, "especially about their sons."

"Wretch!" cried Mrs. Sheppard, bitterly.

"I say," retorted Edgeworth Bess, with a very unfeminine imprecation, "I shan't stand any more of that nonsense. What do you mean by calling me wretch, madam?" she added, marching up to Mrs. Sheppard, and regarding her with an insolent and threatening glance.

"Yes—what do you mean, ma'am?" added Jack, staggering after her.

"Come with me, my love, come—come," cried his mother, seizing his hand, and endeavouring to force him away.

"He shan't go," cried Edgeworth Bess, holding him by the other hand. "Here, Poll, help me!"

Thus exhorted, Mrs. Maggot lent her powerful aid, and, between the two, Jack was speedily relieved from all fears of being carried off against his will. Not content with this exhibition of her prowess, the Amazon lifted him up as easily as if he had been an infant, and placed him upon her shoulders, to the infinite

delight of the company, and the increased distress of his mother.

"Now, let's see who 'll dare to take him down," she cried.

"Nobody shall," cried Mr. Sheppard from his elevated position. "I 'm my own master now, and I 'll do as I please. I 'll turn cracksman, like my father—rob old Wood—he has chests full of money, and I know where they 're kept—I 'll rob him, and give the swag to you, Poll—I 'll—"

Jack would have said more; but, losing his balance, he fell to the ground, and, when taken up, he was perfectly insensible. In this state, he was laid upon a bench, to sleep off his drunken fit, while his wretched mother, in spite of her passionate supplications and resistance, was, by Blueskin's command, forcibly ejected from the house, and driven out of the Mint.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ROBBERY IN WILLESDEN CHURCH.

During the whole of the next day and night, the poor widow hovered like a ghost about the precincts of the debtors' garrison,—for admission (by the Master's express orders,) was denied her. She could learn nothing of her son, and only obtained one solitary piece of information, which added to, rather than alleviated her misery,—namely, that Jonathan Wild had paid a secret visit to the Cross Shovels. At one time, she determined to go to Wych Street, and ask Mr. Wood's advice and assistance, but the thought of the reception she was likely to meet with from his wife deterred her from executing this resolution. Many other expedients occurred to her; but after making several ineffectual attempts to get into the Mint unobserved, they were all abandoned.

At length, about an hour before dawn on the second day—Sunday—having spent the early part of the night in watching at the gates of the robber's sanctuary, and being almost exhausted from want of rest, she set out homewards. It was a long walk she had to undertake, even if she had endured no previous fatigue, but feeble as she was, it was almost more than she could accomplish. Daybreak found her winding her painful way along the Harrow Road; and, in order to shorten the distance as much as possible, she took the nearest cut, and struck into the meadows on the right. Crossing several fields, newly mown, or filled with lines of tedded hay, she arrived, not without great exertion, at the summit of a hill. Here her strength completely failed her, and she was compelled to seek some repose. Making her couch upon a heap of hay, she sank at once into a deep and refreshing slumber.

When she awoke, the sun was high in heaven. It was a bright and beautiful day: *so* bright, *so* beautiful, that even her sad heart was cheered by it. The air, perfumed with the delicious fragrance of the new-mown grass,

was vocal with the melodies of the birds; the thick foliage of the trees was glistening in the sunshine; all nature seemed happy and rejoicing; but, above all, the serene Sabbath stillness reigning around, communicated a calm to her wounded spirit.

What a contrast did the lovely scene she now gazed upon present to the squalid neighbourhood she had recently quitted! On all sides, expanded prospects of country the most exquisite and most varied. Immediately beneath her lay Willesden,—the most charming and secluded village in the neighbourhood of the metropolis—with its scattered farm-houses, its noble granges, and its old grey church tower just peeping above a grove of rook-haunted trees.

Towards this spot Mrs. Sheppard now directed her steps. She speedily reached her own abode,—a little cottage, standing in the outskirts of the village. The first circumstance that struck her on her arrival seemed ominous. Her clock had stopped—stopped at the very hour on which she had quitted the Mint! She had not the heart to wind it up again.

After partaking of some little refreshment, and changing her attire, Mrs. Sheppard prepared for church. By this time, she had so far succeeded in calming herself, that she answered the greetings of the neighbours whom she encountered on her way to the sacred edifice—if sorrowfully, still composedly.

Every old country church is beautiful, but Willesden is the most beautiful country church we know; and in Mrs. Sheppard's time it was even more beautiful than at present, when the hand of improvement has proceeded a little too rashly with alterations and repairs. With one or two exceptions, there were no pews; and, as the intercourse with London was then but slight, the seats were occupied almost exclusively by the villagers. In one of these seats, at the end of the aisle farthest removed from the chancel, the widow took her place, and addressed herself fervently to her devotions.

The service had not proceeded far, when she was greatly disturbed by the entrance of a person who placed himself opposite her, and sought to attract her attention by a number of little arts, surveying her, as he did so, with a

very impudent and offensive stare. With this person—who was no other than Mr. Kneebone —she was too well acquainted; having, more than once, been obliged to repel his advances; and, though his impertinence would have given her little concern at another season, it now added considerably to her distraction. But a far greater affliction was in store for her.

Just as the clergyman approached the altar, she perceived a boy steal quickly into the church, and ensconce himself behind the woollen-draper, who, in order to carry on his amatory pursuits with greater convenience, and at the same time display his figure (of which he was not a little vain) to the utmost advantage, preferred a standing to a sitting posture. Of this boy she had only caught a glimpse;—but that glimpse was sufficient to satisfy her it was her son,—and, if she could have questioned her own instinctive love, she could not question her antipathy, when she beheld, partly concealed by a pillar immediately in the rear of the woollen-draper, the dark figure and trucculent features of Jonathan Wild. As she looked in this direction, the

thief-taker raised his eyes—those grey, blood-thirsty eyes !—their glare froze the life-blood in her veins.

As she averted her gaze, a terrible idea crossed her. Why was he there? why did the tempter dare to invade that sacred spot? She could not answer her own questions, but vague fearful suspicions passed through her mind. Meanwhile, the service proceeded; and the awful command, "*Thou shalt not steal!*" was solemnly uttered by the preacher, when Mrs. Sheppard, who had again looked round towards her son, beheld a hand glance along the side of the woollen-draper. She could not see what occurred, though she guessed it; but she saw Jonathan's devilish triumphing glance, and read in it,—"Your son has committed a robbery—here—in these holy walls—he is mine—mine for ever !"

She uttered a loud scream, and fainted.

CHAPTER XVI.

JONATHAN WILD'S HOUSE IN THE OLD BAILEY.

JUST as St. Sepulchre's church struck one, on the eventful night of the 10th of June, (to which it will not be necessary to recur,) a horseman, mounted on a powerful charger, and followed at a respectful distance by an attendant, galloped into the open space fronting Newgate, and directed his course towards a house in the Old Bailey. Before he could draw in the rein, his steed—startled apparently by some object undistinguishable by the rider,—swerved with such suddenness as to unseat him, and precipitate him on the ground. The next moment, however, he was picked up, and set upon his feet by a person who, having witnessed the accident, flew across the road to his assistance.

"You 're not hurt, I hope, Sir Rowland?" inquired this individual.

"Not materially, Mr. Wild," replied the other, "a little shaken, that 's all. Curses light on the horse!" he added, seizing the bridle of his steed, who continued snorting and shivering, as if still under the influence of some unaccountable alarm; "what can ail him?"

"*I* know what ails him, your honour," rejoined the groom, riding up as he spoke; "he 's seen somethin' not o' this world."

"Most likely," observed Jonathan, with a slight sneer; "the ghost of some highwayman who has just breathed his last in Newgate, no doubt."

"May be," returned the man gravely.

"Take him home, Saunders," said Sir Rowland, resigning his faulty steed to the attendant's care, "I shall not require you further. Strange!" he added, as the groom departed; "Bay Stuart has carried me through a hundred dangers, but never played me such a trick before."

"And never should again, were he mine," rejoined Jonathan. "If the best nag ever foaled were to throw me in this unlucky spot, I 'd blow his brains out."

"What do you mean, sir?" asked Trenchard.

"A fall against Newgate is accounted a sign of death by the halter," replied Wild, with ill-disguised malignity.

"Tush!" exclaimed Sir Rowland, angrily.

"From that door," continued the thieftaker, pointing to the gloomy portal of the prison opposite which they were standing, "the condemned are taken to Tyburn. It's a bad omen to be thrown near that door."

"I didn't suspect you of so much superstition, Mr. Wild," observed the knight, contemptuously.

"Facts convince the most incredulous," answered Jonathan, drily. "I've known several cases where the ignominious doom I've mentioned has been foretold by such an accident as has just befallen you. There was Major Price — you must recollect him, Sir Rowland,—he stumbled as he was getting out of his chair at that very gate. Well, *he* was executed for murder. Then there was Tom Jarrot, the hackney-coachman, who was pitched off the box against yonder curbstone, and broke

his leg. It was a pity he didn't break his neck, for he was hanged within the year. Another instance was that of Toby Tanner—"

"No more of this," interrupted Trenchard; "where is the boy?"

"Not far hence," replied Wild. "After all our pains we were near losing him, Sir Rowland."

"How so," asked the other, distrustfully.

"You shall hear," returned Jonathan. "With the help of his comrade, Jack Sheppard, the young rascal made a bold push to get out of the roundhouse, where my janizaries had lodged him, and would have succeeded too, if, by good luck,— for the devil never deserts so useful an agent as I am, Sir Rowland,—I hadn't arrived in time to prevent him. As it was, my oldest and trustiest setter, Abraham Mendez, received a blow on the head from one of the lads that will deprive me of his services for a week to come,—if, indeed it does not disable him altogether. However, if I 've lost one servant, I 've gained another, that 's one comfort. Jack Sheppard is now wholly in my hands."

"What is this to me, sir?" said Trenchard, cutting him short.

"Nothing whatever," rejoined the thief-taker, coldly. "But it is much to me. Jack Sheppard is to me what Thames Darrell is to you—an object of hatred. I owed his father a grudge: that I settled long ago. I owe his mother one, and will repay the debt, with interest, to her son. I could make away with him at once, as you are about to make away with your nephew, Sir Rowland,—but that wouldn't serve my turn. To be complete, my vengeance must be tardy. Certain of my prey, I can afford to wait for it. Besides, revenge is sweetened by delay; and I indulge too freely in the passion to rob it of any of its zest. I 've watched this lad—this Sheppard—from infancy; and, though I have apparently concerned myself little about him, I have never lost sight of my purpose. I have suffered him to be brought up decently—honestly; because I would make his fall the greater, and deepen the wound I meant to inflict upon his mother. From this night I shall pursue a different course; from this night his ruin may be dated.

He is in the care of those who will not leave the task assigned to them—the utter perversion of his principles—half-finished. And when I have steeped him to the lips in vice and depravity; when I have led him to the commission of every crime; when there is neither retreat nor advance for him; when he has plundered his benefactor, and broken the heart of his mother—then—but not till then, I will consign him to the fate to which I consigned his father. This I have sworn to do—this I will do."

"Not unless your skull 's bullet-proof," cried a voice at his elbow; and, as the words were uttered, a pistol was snapped at his head, which,—fortunately or unfortunately, as the reader pleases,—only burnt the priming. The blaze, however, was sufficient to reveal to the thieftaker the features of his intended assassin. They were those of the Irish watchman.

"Ah! Terry O'Flaherty!" vociferated Jonathan, in a tone that betrayed not the slightest discomposure. "Ah! Terry O'Flaherty!" he cried, shouting after the Irishman, who took to his heels as soon as he found his murderous

attempt unsuccessful; "you may run, but you 'll not get out of my reach. I 'll put a brace of dogs on your track, who 'll soon hunt you down. You shall swing for this after next sessions, or my name 's not Jonathan Wild. I told you, Sir Rowland," he added, turning to the knight, and chuckling, "the devil never deserts me."

"Conduct me to your dwelling, sir, without further delay," said Trenchard, sternly,—"to the boy."

"The boy 's not at my house," replied Wild.

"Where is he, then?" demanded the other, hastily.

"At a place we call the Dark House at Queenhithe," answered Jonathan, "a sort of underground tavern or night-cellar, close to the river-side, and frequented by the crew of the Dutch skipper, to whose care he 's to be committed. You need have no apprehensions about him, Sir Rowland. He 's safe enough now. I left him in charge of Quilt Arnold and Rykhart Van Galgebrok—the skipper I spoke of—with strict orders to shoot him if he made

any further attempt at escape; and they 're not lads—the latter especially—to be trifled with. I deemed it more prudent to send him to the Dark House than to bring him here, in case of any search after him by his adoptive father—the carpenter Wood. If you choose, you can see him put on board the Zeeslang yourself, Sir Rowland. But, perhaps, you 'll first accompany me to my dwelling for a moment, that we may arrange our accounts before we start. I 've a few necessary directions to leave with my people, to put 'em on their guard against the chance of a surprise. Suffer me to precede you. This way, Sir Rowland."

The thieftaker's residence was a large dismal-looking habitation, separated from the street by a flagged court-yard, and defended from general approach by an iron railing. Even in the daylight, it had a sombre and suspicious air, and seemed to slink back from the adjoining houses, as if afraid of their society. In the obscurity in which it was now seen, it looked like a prison, and, indeed, it was Jonathan's fancy to make it resemble one as much as possible. The windows were grated, the

doors barred; each room had the name as well as the appearance of a cell; and the very porter who stood at the gate, habited like a gaoler, with his huge bunch of keys at his girdle, his forbidding countenance and surly demeanour seemed to be borrowed from Newgate. The clanking of chains, the grating of locks, and the rumbling of bolts must have been music in Jonathan's ears, so much pains did he take to subject himself to such sounds. The scanty furniture of the rooms corresponded with their dungeon-like aspect. The walls were bare, and painted in stone-colour; the floors, devoid of carpet; the beds, of hangings; the windows, of blinds; and, excepting in the thieftaker's own audience-chamber, there was not a chair or a table about the premises; the place of these conveniences being elsewhere supplied by benches, and deal-boards laid across joint-stools. Great stone staircases leading no one knew whither, and long gloomy passages, impressed the occasional visiter with the idea that he was traversing a building of vast extent; and, though this was not the case in reality the deception was so cleverly contrived that

it seldom failed of producing the intended effect. Scarcely any one entered Mr. Wild's dwelling without apprehension, or quitted it without satisfaction. More strange stories were told of it than of any other house in London. The garrets were said to be tenanted by coiners, and artists employed in altering watches and jewelry; the cellars to be used as a magazine for stolen goods. By some it was affirmed that a subterranean communication existed between the thieftaker's abode and Newgate, by means of which he was enabled to maintain a secret correspondence with the imprisoned felons: by others, that an underground passage led to extensive vaults, where such malefactors as he chose to screen from justice might lie concealed till the danger was blown over. Nothing, in short, was too extravagant to be related of it; and Jonathan, who delighted in investing himself and his residence with mystery, encouraged, and perhaps originated, these marvellous tales. However this may be, such was the ill report of the place that few passed along the Old Bailey without bestowing a glance of fearful curiosity at its

dingy walls, and wondering what was going on inside them; while fewer still, of those who paused at the door, read, without some internal trepidation, the formidable name — inscribed in large letters on its bright brass-plate —of JONATHAN WILD.

Arrived at his habitation, Jonathan knocked in a peculiar manner at the door, which was instantly opened by the grim-visaged porter just alluded to. No sooner had Trenchard crossed the threshold than a fierce barking was heard at the farther extremity of the passage, and, the next moment, a couple of mastiffs of the largest size rushed furiously towards him. The knight stood upon his defence; but he would unquestionably have been torn in pieces by the savage hounds, if a shower of oaths, seconded by a vigorous application of kicks and blows from their master, had not driven them growling off. Apologizing to Sir Rowland for this unpleasant reception, and swearing lustily at his servant for occasioning it by leaving the dogs at liberty, Jonathan ordered the man to light them to the audience-room. The command was sullenly obeyed, for the fellow did

not appear to relish the rating. Ascending the stairs, and conducting them along a sombre gallery, in which Trenchard noticed that every door was painted black, and numbered, he stopped at the entrance of a chamber; and, selecting a key from the bunch at his girdle, unlocked it. Following his guide, Sir Rowland found himself in a large and lofty apartment, the extent of which he could not entirely discern until lights were set upon the table. He then looked around him with some curiosity; and, as the thieftaker was occupied in giving directions to his attendant in an undertone, ample leisure was allowed him for investigation. At the first glance, he imagined he must have stumbled upon a museum of rarities, there were so many glass cases, so many open cabinets, ranged against the walls; but the next convinced him that if Jonathan was a virtuoso, his tastes did not run in the ordinary channels. Trenchard was tempted to examine the contents of some of these cases, but a closer inspection made him recoil from them in disgust. In the one he approached was gathered together a vast assortment of weapons, each of

which, as appeared from the ticket attached to it, had been used as an instrument of destruction. On this side was a razor with which a son had murdered his father; the blade notched, the haft crusted with blood: on that, a bar of iron, bent, and partly broken, with which a husband had beaten out his wife's brains. As it is not, however, our intention to furnish a complete catalogue of these curiosities, we shall merely mention that in front of them lay a large and sharp knife, once the property of the public executioner, and used by him to dissever the limbs of those condemned to death for high-treason; together with an immense two-pronged flesh-fork, likewise employed by the same terrible functionary to plunge the quarters of his victims in the caldrons of boiling tar and oil. Every gibbet at Tyburn and Hounslow appeared to have been plundered of its charnel spoil to enrich the adjoining cabinet, so well was it stored with skulls and bones, all purporting to be the relics of highwaymen famous in their day. Halters, each of which had fulfilled its destiny, formed the attraction of the next compartment; while

a fourth was occupied by an array of implements of housebreaking almost innumerable, and utterly indescribable. All these interesting objects were carefully arranged, classed, and, as we have said, labelled by the thieftaker.

From this singular collection Trenchard turned to regard its possessor, who was standing at a little distance from him, still engaged in earnest discourse with his attendant, and, as he contemplated his ruthless countenance, on which duplicity and malignity had set their strongest seals, he could not help calling to mind all he had heard of Jonathan's perfidiousness to his employers, and deeply regretting that he had placed himself in the power of so unscrupulous a miscreant.

Jonathan Wild, at this time, was on the high-road to the greatness which he subsequently, and not long afterwards, obtained. He was fast rising to an eminence that no one of his nefarious profession ever reached before him, nor, it is to be hoped, will ever reach again. He was the Napoleon of knavery, and established an uncontrolled empire over all the practitioners of crime. This was no light con-

quest; nor was it a government easily maintained. Resolution, severity, subtlety, were required for it; and these were qualities which Jonathan possessed in an extraordinary degree. The danger or difficulty of an exploit never appalled him. What his head conceived his hand executed. Professing to stand between the robber and the robbed, he himself plundered both. He it was who formed the grand design of a robber corporation, of which he should be the sole head and director, with the right of delivering those who concealed their booty, or refused to share it with him, to the gallows. He divided London into districts; appointed a gang to each district; and a leader to each gang, whom he held responsible to himself. The country was partitioned in a similar manner. Those whom he retained about his person, or placed in offices of trust, were for the most part convicted felons, who, having returned from transportation before their term had expired, constituted, in his opinion, the safest agents, inasmuch as they could neither be legal evidences against him, nor withhold any portion of the spoil of which he chose to

deprive them. But the crowning glory of Jonathan, that which raised him above all his predecessors in iniquity, and clothed his name with undying notoriety—was to come. When in the plenitude of his power, he commenced a terrible trade, till then unknown—namely, a traffic in human blood. This he carried on by procuring witnesses to swear away the lives of those persons who had incurred his displeasure, or whom it might be necessary to remove.

No wonder that Trenchard, as he gazed at this fearful being, should have some misgivings cross him.

Apparently, Jonathan perceived he was an object of scrutiny; for, hastily dismissing his attendant, he walked towards the knight.

"So, you 're admiring my cabinet, Sir Rowland," he remarked, with a sinister smile; "it *is* generally admired; and, sometimes by parties who afterwards contribute to the collection themselves,—ha! ha! This skull," he added, pointing to a fragment of mortality in the case beside them, "once belonged to Tom Sheppard, the father of the lad I spoke of just now.

In the next box hangs the rope by which he suffered. When I 've placed another skull and another halter beside them, I shall be contented."

" To business, sir !" said the knight, with a look of abhorrence.

" Ay, to business," returned Jonathan, grinning, " the sooner the better."

" Here is the sum you bargained for," rejoined Trenchard, flinging a pocket-book on the table; " count it."

Jonathan's eyes glistened as he told over the notes.

" You 've given me more than the amount, Sir Rowland," he said, after he had twice counted them, " or I 've missed my reckoning. There 's a hundred pounds too much."

" Keep it," said Trenchard, haughtily.

" I 'll place it to your account, Sir Rowland," answered the thieftaker, smiling significantly. " And now, shall we proceed to Queenhithe ?"

" Stay !" cried the other, taking a chair, " a word with you, Mr. Wild."

" As many as you please, Sir Rowland,"

replied Jonathan, resuming his seat. "I 'm quite at your disposal."

"I have a question to propose to you," said Trenchard, "relating to———" and he hesitated

"Relating to the father of the boy—Thames Darrell," supplied Jonathan. "I guessed what was coming. You desire to know who he was. Sir Rowland. Well, you *shall* know."

"Without further fee?" inquired the knight.

"Not exactly," answered Jonathan, drily. "A secret is too valuable a commodity to be thrown away. But I said I wouldn't drive a hard bargain with you, and I won't. We are alone, Sir Rowland," he added, snuffing the candles, glancing cautiously around, and lowering his tone, "and what you confide to me shall never transpire,—at least to your disadvantage."

"I am at a loss to understand you sir," said Trenchard.

"I 'll make myself intelligible before I 've done," rejoined Wild. "I need not remind you, Sir Rowland, that I am aware you are

deeply implicated in the Jacobite plot which is now known to be hatching."

"Ha!" ejaculated the other.

"Of course, therefore," pursued Jonathan, "you are acquainted with all the leaders of the proposed insurrection,—nay, must be in correspondence with them."

"What right have you to suppose this, sir?" demanded Trenchard, sternly.

"Have a moment's patience, Sir Rowland," returned Wild; "and you shall hear. If you will furnish me with a list of these rebels, and with proofs of their treason, I will not only insure your safety, but will acquaint you with the real name and rank of your sister Aliva's husband, as well as with some particulars which will never otherwise reach your ears, concerning your lost sister, Constance."

"My sister Constance!" echoed the knight; "what of her?"

"You agree to my proposal, then?" said Jonathan.

"Do you take me for as great a villain as yourself, sir?" said the knight, rising.

"I took you for one who wouldn't hesitate

to avail himself of any advantage chance might throw in his way," returned the thieftaker, coldly. " I find I was in error. No matter. A time *may* come,—and that ere long,—when you will be glad to purchase my secrets, and your own safety, at a dearer price than the heads of your companions."

" Are you ready ?" said Trenchard, striding towards the door.

" I am," replied Jonathan, following him, " and so," he added in an undertone, " are your captors."

A moment afterwards, they quitted the house.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE NIGHT-CELLAR.

AFTER a few minutes' rapid walking, during which neither party uttered a word, Jonathan Wild and his companion had passed Saint Paul's, dived down a thoroughfare on the right, and reached Thames-street.

At the period of this history, the main streets of the metropolis were but imperfectly lighted, while the less-frequented avenues were left in total obscurity; but, even at the present time, the maze of courts and alleys into which Wild now plunged, would have perplexed any one, not familiar with their intricacies, to thread them on a dark night. Jonathan, however, was well acquainted with the road. Indeed, it was his boast that he could find his way through any part of London blindfolded; and by this time, it would seem, he had nearly

arrived at his destination; for, grasping his companion's arm, he led him along a narrow entry which did not appear to have an outlet, and came to a halt. Cautioning the knight, if he valued his neck, to tread carefully, Jonathan then descended a steep flight of steps; and, having reached the bottom in safety, he pushed open a door, that swung back on its hinges as soon as it had admitted him; and, followed by Trenchard, entered the night-cellar.

The vault, in which Sir Rowland found himself, resembled in some measure the cabin of a ship. It was long and narrow, with a ceiling supported by huge uncovered rafters, and so low as scarcely to allow a tall man like himself to stand erect beneath it. Notwithstanding the heat of the season,—which was not, however, found particularly inconvenient in this subterranean region,—a large heaped-up fire blazed ruddily in one corner, and lighted up a circle of as villanous countenances as ever flame shone upon.

The guests congregated within the night-cellar were, in fact, little better than thieves; but thieves who confined their depredations

almost exclusively to the vessels lying in the pool and docks of the river. They had as many designations as grades. There were game watermen and game lightermen, heavy horsemen and light horsemen, scuffle-hunters, and long-apron men, lumpers, journeymen coopers, mud-larks, badgers, and rat-catchers—a race of dangerous vermin recently, in a great measure, extirpated by the vigilance of the Thames Police, but at this period flourishing in vast numbers. Besides these plunderers, there were others with whom the disposal of their pillage necessarily brought them into contact, and who seldom failed to attend them during their hours of relaxation and festivity;—to wit, dealers in junk, old rags, and marine stores, purchasers of prize-money, crimps, and Jew receivers. The latter formed by far the most knavish-looking and unprepossessing portion of the assemblage. One or two of the tables were occupied by groups of fat frowzy women in flat caps, with rings on their thumbs, and baskets by their sides; and no one who had listened for a single moment to their coarse language and violent abuse of each other, would require

to be told they were fish-wives from Billingsgate.

The present divinity of the cellar was a comely middle-aged dame, almost as stout, and quite as shrill-voiced, as the Billingsgate fish-wives above-mentioned. Mrs. Spurling, for so was she named, had a warm nut-brown complexion, almost as dark as a Creole; and a moustache on her upper lip, that would have done no discredit to the oldest dragoon in the King's service. This lady was singularly lucky in her matrimonial connexions. She had been married four times: three of her husbands died of hempen fevers; and the fourth, having been twice condemned, was saved from the noose by Jonathan Wild, who not only managed to bring him off, but to obtain for him the situation of under-turnkey in Newgate.

On the appearance of the thieftaker, Mrs. Spurling was standing near the fire superintending some culinary preparation; but she no sooner perceived him, than hastily quitting her occupation, she elbowed a way for him and the knight through the crowd, and ushered them, with much ceremony, into an inner room, where they found the objects of their search,

Quilt Arnold and Rykhart Van Galgebrok, seated at a small table, quietly smoking. This service rendered, without waiting for any farther order, she withdrew.

Both the janizary and the skipper arose as the others entered the room.

"This is the gentleman," observed Jonathan, introducing Trenchard to the Hollander, "who is about to intrust his young relation to your care."

"De gentleman may rely on my showing his relation all de attention in my power," replied Van Galgebrok, bowing profoundly to the knight; "but if any unforseen accident—such as a slip overboard—should befall de jonker on de voyage, he mushn't lay de fault entirely on my shoulders—haw! haw!"

"Where is he?" asked Sir Rowland, glancing uneasily around. "I do not see him."

"De jonker. He 's here," returned the skipper, pointing significantly downwards. "Bring him out, Quilt."

So saying, he pushed aside the table, and the janizary stooping down, undrew a bolt and opened a trap-door.

"Come out!" roared Quilt, looking into the aperture. "You 're wanted."

But as no answer was returned, he thrust his arm up to the shoulder into the hole, and with some little difficulty and exertion of strength, drew forth Thames Darrell.

The poor boy, whose hands were pinioned behind him, looked very pale, but neither trembled, nor exhibited any other symptom of alarm.

"Why didn 't you come out when I called you, you young dog?" cried Quilt in a savage tone.

"Because I knew what you wanted me for?" answered Thames firmly.

"Oh! you did, did you?" said the janizary. "And what do you suppose we mean to do with you, eh?"

"You mean to kill me," replied Thames, "by my cruel uncle's command. Ah! there he stands!" he exclaimed as his eye fell for the first time upon Sir Rowland. "Where is my mother?" he added, regarding the knight with a searching glance.

"Your mother is dead," interposed Wild, scowling,

"Dead!" echoed the boy. "Oh no—no! You say this to terrify me—to try me. But I will not believe you. Inhuman as he is, he would not kill her. Tell me, sir," he added, advancing towards the knight, "tell me this man has spoken falsely?—Tell me my mother is alive, and do what you please with me?"

"Tell him so, and have done with him, Sir Rowland," observed Jonathan coldly.

"Tell me the truth, I implore you," cried Thames. "Is she alive?"

"She is not," replied Trenchard, overcome by conflicting emotions, and unable to endure the boy's agonized look.

"Are you answered?" said Jonathan, with a grin worthy of a demon.

"My mother!—my poor mother!" ejaculated Thames, falling on his knees, and bursting into tears. "Shall I never see that sweet face again,—never feel the pressure of those kind hands more—nor listen to that gentle voice! Ah! yes, we shall meet again in heaven, where I shall speedily join you. Now then," he added more calmly, "I am ready to die. The only mercy you can show me is to kill me."

"Then we won 't even show you that mercy," retorted the thieftaker brutally. "So get up, and leave off whimpering. Your time isn't come yet."

"Mr. Wild," said Trenchard, "I shall proceed no further in this business. Set the boy free."

"If I disobey you, Sir Rowland," replied the thieftaker, "you 'll thank me for it hereafter. Gag him," he added, pushing Thames rudely toward Quilt Arnold, "and convey him to the boat."

"A word," cried the boy, as the janizary was preparing to obey his master's orders. "What has become of Jack Sheppard?"

"Devil knows!" answered Quilt; "but I believe he 's in the hands of Blueskin, so there 's no doubt he 'll soon be on the high-road to Tyburn."

"Poor Jack!" sighed Thames. "You needn 't gag me," he added, "I 'll not cry out."

"We won 't trust you, my youngster," answered the janizary. And, thrusting a piece of iron into his mouth, he forced him out of the room.

Sir Rowland witnessed these proceedings like one stupified. He neither attempted to prevent his nephew's departure, nor to follow him.

Jonathan kept his keen eye fixed upon him, as he addressed himself for a moment to the Hollander.

"Is the case of watches on board?" he asked in an under tone.

"Ja," replied the skipper.

"And the rings?"

"Ja."

"That 's well. You must dispose of the goldsmith's note I gave you yesterday, as soon as you arrive at Rotterdam. It 'll be advertised to-morrow."

"De duivel!" exclaimed Van Galgebrok "Very well. It shall be done as you direct. But about dat jonker," he continued, lowering his voice; "have you anything to add consarnin' him? It 's almosht a pity to put him onder de water."

"Is the sloop ready to sail?" asked Wild, without noticing the skipper's remark.

"Ja," answered Van; "at a minut's nodish."

"Here are your despatches," said Jonathan

with a significant look, and giving him a sealed packet. "Open them when you get on board —not before, and act as they direct you."

"I ondershtand," replied the skipper, putting his finger to his nose; "it shall be done."

"Sir Rowland," said Jonathan, turning to the knight, "will it please you to remain here till I return, or will you accompany us?"

"I will go with you," answered Trenchard, who, by this time, had regained his composure, and with it all his relentlessness of purpose.

"Come, then," said Wild, marching towards the door, "we 've no time to lose."

Quitting the night-cellar, the trio soon arrived at the river-side. Quilt Arnold was stationed at the stair-head, near which the boat containing the captive boy was moored. A few words passed between him and the thief-taker as the latter came up; after which, all the party—with the exception of Quilt, who was left on shore — embarked within the wherry, which was pushed from the strand and rowed swiftly along the stream—for the tide was in its favour—by a couple of watermen. Though scarcely two hours past midnight, it was perfectly light. The moon had

arisen, and everything could be as plainly distinguished as during the day. A thin mist lay on the river, giving the few craft moving about in it a ghostly look. As they approached London Bridge, the thieftaker whispered Van Galgebrok, who acted as steersman, to make for a particular arch—near the Surrey shore. The skipper obeyed, and in another moment, they swept through the narrow lock. While the watermen were contending with the eddies occasioned by the fall below the bridge, Jonathan observed a perceptible shudder run through Trenchard's frame.

"You remember that starling, Sir Rowland,' he said maliciously, "and what occurred on it, twelve years ago?"

"Too well," answered the knight, frowning. "Ah! what is that?" he cried, pointing to a dark object floating near them amid the boiling waves, and which presented a frightful resemblance to a human face.

"We 'll see," returned the thieftaker. And, stretching out his hand, he lifted the dark object from the flood.

It proved to be a human head, though with scarcely a vestige of the features remaining.

Here and there, patches of flesh adhered to the bones, and the dank dripping hair hanging about what had once been the face, gave it a ghastly appearance.

"It 's the skull of a *rebel*," said Jonathan, with marked emphasis on the word, "blown by the wind from a spike on the bridge above us. I don't know whose brainless head it may be, but it 'll do for my collection." And he tossed it carelessly into the bottom of the boat.

After this occurrence, not a word was exchanged between them until they came in sight of the sloop, which was lying at anchor off Wapping. Arrived at her side, it was soon evident, from the throng of seamen in Dutch dresses that displayed themselves, that her crew were on the alert, and a rope having been thrown down to the skipper, he speedily hoisted himself on deck. Preparations were next made for taking Thames on board. Raising him in his arms, Jonathan passed the rope round his body, and in this way the poor boy was drawn up without difficulty.

While he was swinging in mid air, Thames regarded his uncle with a stern look, and cried in a menacing voice, "We shall meet again."

"Not in this world," returned Jonathan. "Weigh anchor, Van!" he shouted to the skipper, "and consult your despatches."

"Ja—ja," returned the Hollander. And catching hold of Thames, he quitted the deck.

Shortly afterwards, he re-appeared with the information that the captive was safe below; and giving the necessary directions to his crew, before many minutes had elapsed, the Zeeslang spread her canvass to the first breeze of morning.

By the thieftaker's command, the boat was then rowed toward a muddy inlet, which has received in more recent times the name of Execution Dock. As soon as she reached this spot, Wild sprang ashore, and was joined by several persons,—among whom was Quilt Arnold, leading a horse by the bridle,—he hastened down the stairs to meet him. A coach was also in attendance, at a little distance.

Sir Rowland, who had continued absorbed in thought, with his eyes fixed upon the sloop as she made her way slowly down the river, disembarked more leisurely.

"At length I am my own master," mur-

mured the knight, as his foot touched the strand.

"Not so, Sir Rowland," returned Jonathan; "you are my prisoner."

"How!" ejaculated Trenchard, starting back and drawing his sword.

"You are arrested for high treason," rejoined Wild, presenting a pistol at his head, while he drew forth a parchment,—"here is my warrant."

"Traitor!" cried Sir Rowland—"damned—double-dyed traitor!"

"Away with him," vociferated Jonathan to his myrmidons, who, having surrounded Trenchard, hurried him off to the coach before he could utter another word,—"first to Mr. Walpole, and then to Newgate. And now, Quilt," he continued, addressing the janizary, who approached him with the horse, "fly to St. Giles's roundhouse, and if, through the agency of that treacherous scoundrel, Terry O'Flaherty, whom I've put in my Black List, old Wood should have found his way there, and have been detained by Sharples as I directed, you may release him. I don't care how soon he

learns that he has lost his adopted son. When I 've escorted yon proud fool to his new quarters, I 'll proceed to the Mint and look after Jack Sheppard."

With this, he mounted his steed and rode off.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW JACK SHEPPARD BROKE OUT OF THE CAGE AT WILLESDEN.

THE heart-piercing scream uttered by Mrs. Sheppard after the commission of the robbery in Willesden church was productive of unfortunate consequences to her son. Luckily, she was bereft of consciousness, and was thus spared the additional misery of witnessing what afterwards befell him. Startled by the cry, as may be supposed, the attention of the whole congregation was drawn towards the quarter whence it proceeded. Amongst others, a person near the door, roused by the shriek, observed a man make his exit with the utmost precipitation. A boy attempted to follow; but as the suspicions of the lookers-on were roused by the previous circumstances, the younger fugitive was seized and detained. Meanwhile, Mr. Kneebone, having been alarmed by something in the widow's look before her feelings found vent in the manner above described, thrust his hand instinctively into his coat in

search of his pocket-book,—about the security of which, as it contained several letters and documents implicating himself and others in the Jacobite plot, he was, not unnaturally, solicitous,—and finding it gone, he felt certain he had been robbed. Turning quickly round, in the hope of discovering the thief, he was no less surprised than distressed—for in spite of his faults, the woollen-draper was a good-natured fellow—to perceive Jack Sheppard in custody. The truth at once flashed across his mind. This, then, was the cause of the widow's wild inexplicable look,—of her sudden shriek! Explaining his suspicions in a whisper to Jack's captor, who proved to be a churchwarden and a constable, by name John Dump, —Mr. Kneebone begged him to take the prisoner into the churchyard. Dump instantly complied, and as soon as Jack was removed from the sacred edifice, his person was searched from head to foot—but without success. Jack submitted to this scrutiny with a very bad grace, and vehemently protested his innocence. In vain did the woollen-draper offer to set him free if he would restore the stolen article, or give up his associate, to whom it was supposed

he might have handed it. He answered with the greatest assurance, that he knew nothing whatever of the matter—had seen no pocket-book, and no associate to give up. Nor did he content himself with declaring his guiltlessness of the crime imputed to him, but began in his turn to menace his captor and accuser, loading the latter with the bitterest upbraidings. By this time, the churchyard was crowded with spectators, some of whom dispersed in different directions in quest of the other robber. But all that could be ascertained in the village was, that a man had ridden off a short time before in the direction of London. Of this man Kneebone resolved to go in pursuit; and leaving Jack in charge of the constable, he proceeded to the small inn, —which bore then, as it bears now, the name of the Six Bells,—where, summoning the hostler, his steed was instantly brought him, and, springing on its back, he rode away at full speed.

Meanwhile, after a consultation between Mr. Dump and the village authorities, it was agreed to lock up the prisoner in the cage. As he was conveyed thither, an incident occurred

that produced a considerable impression on the feelings of the youthful offender. Just as they reached the eastern outlet of the church-yard —where the tall elms cast a pleasant shade over the rustic graves—a momentary stoppage took place. At this gate two paths meet. Down that on the right the young culprit was dragged —along that on the left a fainting woman was borne in the arms of several females. It was his mother, and as he gazed on her pallid features and motionless frame, Jack's heart severely smote him. He urged his conductors to a quicker pace to get out of sight of the distressing spectacle, and even felt relieved when he was shut out from it and the execrations of the mob by the walls of the little prison.

The cage at Willesden was, and is—for it is still standing—a small round building about eight feet high, with a pointed tiled roof, to which a number of boards, inscribed with the names of the parish officers, and charged with a multitude of admonitory notices to vagrants and other disorderly persons, are attached. Over these boards the two arms of a guide-post serve to direct the way-farer—on the right hand to the neighbouring villages of

Neasdon and Kingsbury, and on the left to the Edgeware Road and the healthy heights of Hampstead. The cage has a strong door, with an iron grating at the top, and further secured by a stout bolt and padlock. It is picturesquely situated beneath a tree on the high road, not far from the little hostel before mentioned, and at no great distance from the church.

For some time after he was locked up in this prison Jack continued in a very dejected state. Deserted by his older companion in iniquity, and instigator to crime, he did not know what might become of him; nor, as we have observed, was the sad spectacle he had just witnessed, without effect. Though within the last two days he had committed several heinous offences, and one of a darker dye than any with which the reader has been made acquainted, his breast was not yet so callous as to be wholly insensible to the stings of conscience. Wearied at length with thinking on the past, and terrified by the prospect of the future, he threw himself on the straw with which the cage was littered, and endeavoured to compose himself to slumber. When he

awoke, it was late in the day; but though he heard voices outside, and now and then caught a glimpse of a face peeping at him through the iron grating over the door, no one entered the prison, or held any communication with him. Feeling rather exhausted, it occurred to him that possibly some provisions might have been left by the constable; and, looking about, he perceived a pitcher of water and a small brown loaf on the floor. He ate of the bread with great appetite, and having drunk as much as he chose of the water, poured the rest on the floor. His hunger satisfied, his spirits began to revive, and with this change of mood all his natural audacity returned. And here he was first visited by that genius which, in his subsequent career, prompted him to so many bold and successful attempts. Glancing around his prison, he began to think it possible he might effect an escape from it. The door was too strong, and too well secured, to break open,—the walls too thick: but the ceiling,—if he could reach it—there, he doubted not, he could make an outlet. While he was meditating flight in this way, and tossing about on the straw, he chanced upon an old broken

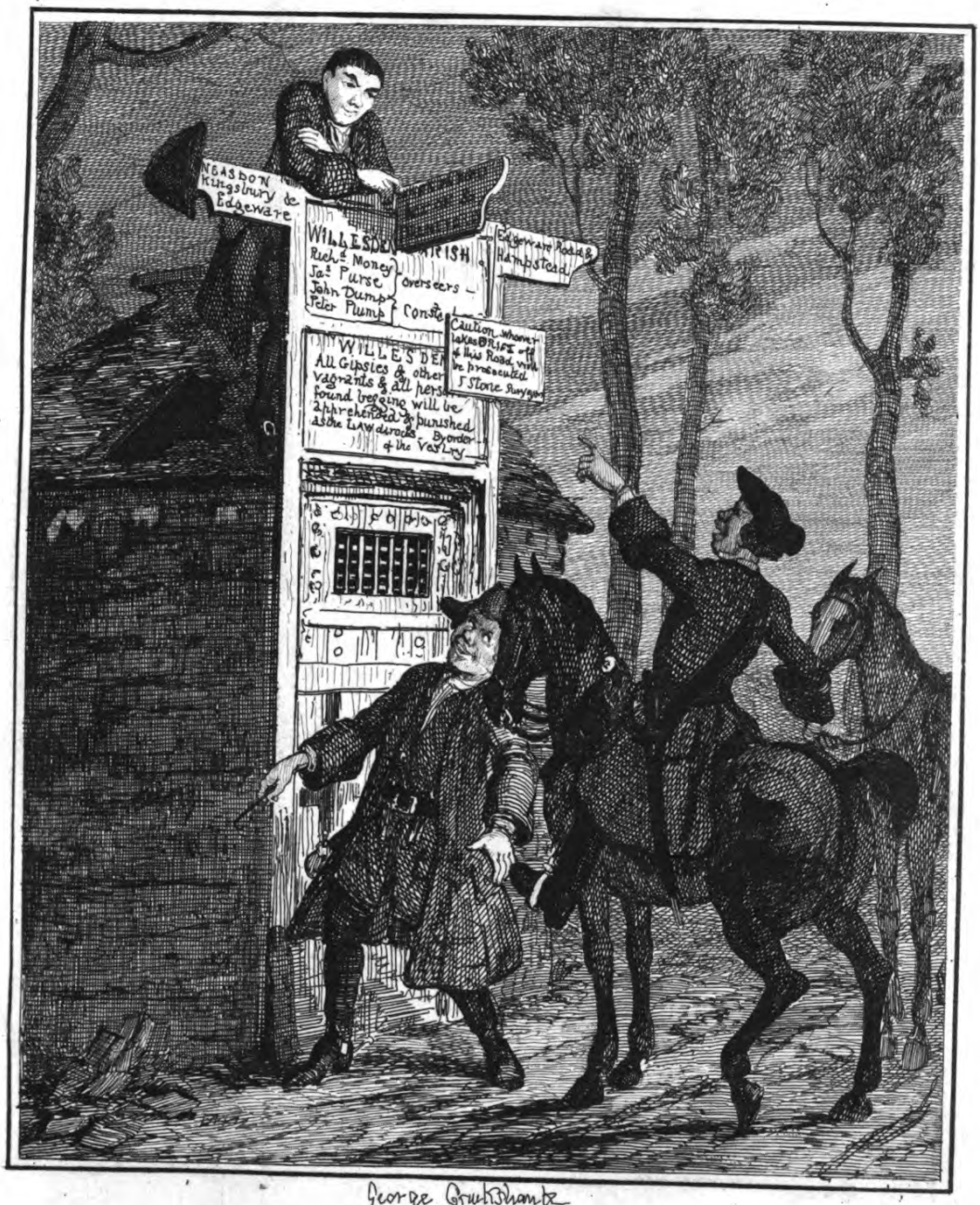
and rusty fork. Here was an instrument which might be of the greatest service to him in accomplishing his design. He put it carefully aside, resolved to defer the attempt till night. Time wore on somewhat slowly with the prisoner, who had to control his impatience in the best way he could; but as the shades of evening were darkening, the door was unlocked, and Mr. Dump popped his head into the cage. He brought another small loaf, and a can with which he replenished the pitcher, recommending Jack to be careful, as he would get nothing further till morning. To this Jack replied, that he should be perfectly contented, provided he might have a small allowance of gin. The latter request, though treated with supreme contempt by Mr. Dump, made an impression on some one outside; for not long after the constable departed, Jack heard a tap at the door, and getting up at the summons, he perceived the tube of a pipe inserted between the bars. At once devining the meaning of this ingenious device, he applied his mouth to the tube, and sucked away, while the person outside poured spirit into the bowl. Having drunk as much as he thought prudent, and

thanked his unknown friend for his attention, Jack again lay down on the straw, and indulged himself with another nap, intending to get up as soon as it was perfectly dark. The strong potation he had taken, combined with fatigue and anxiety he had previously undergone, made him oversleep himself, and when he awoke it was just beginning to grow light. Cursing himself for his inertness, Jack soon shook off his drowsiness, and set to work in earnest. Availing himself of certain inequalities in the door, he soon managed to climb up to the roof; and securing his feet against a slight projection in the wall, began to use the fork with great effect. Before many minutes elapsed, he had picked a large hole in the plaster, which showered down in a cloud of dust; and breaking off several laths, caught hold of a beam, by which he held with one hand, until with the other he succeeded, not without some difficulty, in forcing out one of the tiles. The rest was easy. In a few minutes more he had made a breach in the roof wide enough to allow him to pass through. Emerging from this aperture, he was about to descend, when he was alarmed by hearing

the tramp of horses' feet swiftly approaching, and had only time to hide himself behind one of the largest sign-boards before alluded to when two horsemen rode up. Instead of passing on, as Jack expected, these persons stopped opposite the cage, when one of them, as he judged from the sound, for he did not dare to look out of his hiding place, dismounted. A noise was next heard, as if some instrument were applied to the door with the intent to force it open, and Jack's fears were at once dispelled. At first, he had imagined they were officers of justice, come to convey him to a stronger prison; but the voice of one of the parties, which he recognized, convinced him they were his friends.

"Look quick, Blueskin, and be cursed to you!" was growled in the deep tones of Jonathan Wild. "We shall have the whole village upon us while you're striking the jigger. Use the gilt, man!"

"There's no need of picklock or crow-bar, here, Mr. Wild," cried Jack, placing his hat on the right arm of the guide-post, and leaning over the board, "I 've done the trick myself."



George Cruikshank

Jack Sheppard's escape from the Cage at Clerkenwell

"Why, what the devil's this?" vociferated Jonathan, looking up. "Have you broken out of the cage, Jack?"

"Something like it," replied the lad carelessly.

"Bravo!" cried the thieftaker approvingly.

"Well, that beats all I ever heard of!" roared Blueskin.

"But are you really there?"

"No, I 'm here," answered 'Jack, leaping down. "I tell you what, Mr. Wild," he added, laughing, "it must be a stronger prison than Willesden cage that can hold me."

"Ay, ay," observed Jonathan, "you 'll give the keepers of his Majesty's jails some trouble before you 're many years older, I'll warrant you. But get up behind, Blueskin. Some one may observe us."

"Come, jump up," cried Blueskin, mounting his steed, "and I 'll soon wisk you to town. Edgeworth Bess and Poll Maggot are dying to see you. I thought Bess would have cried her pretty eyes out when she heard you was nabbed. You need give yourself no more

concern about Kneebone. Mr. Wild has done his business."

"Ay—ay," laughed Jonathan. "The pocket-book you prigged contained the letters I wanted. He 's now in spring-ankle warehouse with Sir Rowland Trenchard. So get up, and let 's be off."

"Before I leave this place, I must see my mother."

"Nonsense," returned Jonathan gruffly. "Would you expose yourself to fresh risk? If it hadn't been for her you wouldn't have been placed in your late jeopardy."

"I don't care for that," replied Jack. "See her I *will*. Leave me behind: I 'm not afraid. I 'll be at the Cross Shovels in the course of the day."

"Nay, if you 're bent upon this folly," observed Wild, who appeared to have his own reasons for humouring the lad, "I shan't hinder you. Blueskin will take care of the horses, and I 'll go with you."

So saying, he dismounted; and flinging his bridle to his companion, and ordering him to ride off to a little distance, he followed Jack, who had quitted the main road, and struck

into a narrow path opposite the cage. This path, bordered on each side by high privet hedges of the most beautiful green, soon brought them to a stile.

"There 's the house," said Jack, pointing to a pretty cottage, the small wooden porch of which was covered with roses and creepers, with a little trim garden in front of it. "I 'll be back in a minute."

"Don't hurry yourself," said Jonathan, "I 'll wait for you here."

CHAPTER XIX.

GOOD AND EVIL.

As Jack opened the gate, and crossed the little garden, which exhibited in every part the neatness and attention of its owner, he almost trembled at the idea of further disturbing her peace of mind. Pausing with the intention of turning back, he glanced in the direction of the village church, the tower of which could just be seen through the trees. The rooks were cawing amid the boughs, and all nature appeared awaking to happiness. From this peaceful scene Jack's eye fell upon Jonathan, who, seated upon the stile, under the shade of an elder tree, was evidently watching him. A sarcastic smile seemed to play upon the thieftaker's lips; and abashed at his own irresolution, the lad went on.

After knocking for some time at the door without effect, he tried the latch, and to his

surprise found it open. He stepped in with a heavy foreboding of calamity. A cat came and rubbed herself against him as he entered the house, and seemed by her mewing to ask him for food. That was the only sound he heard.

Jack was almost afraid of speaking; but at length he summoned courage to call out "Mother!"

"Who 's there?" asked a faint voice from the bed.

"Your son," answered the boy.

"Jack," exclaimed the widow, starting up and drawing back the curtain. Is it indeed you, or am I dreaming?"

"You 're not dreaming, mother," he answered. "I 'm come to say good bye to you, and to assure you of my safety before I leave this place."

"Where are you going?" asked his mother.

"I hardly know," returned Jack; "but it 's not safe for me to remain much longer here."

"True," replied the widow, upon whom all the terrible recollections of the day before crowded, "I know it isn't. I won't keep you long. But tell me how have you escaped from

the confinement in which you were placed—come and sit by me—here—upon the bed—give me your hand—and tell me all about it."

Her son complied, and sat down upon the patch-work coverlet beside her.

"Jack," said Mrs. Sheppard, clasping him with a hand that burnt with fever, "I have been ill—dreadfully ill—I believe delirious—I thought I should have died last night—I won't tell you what agony you have caused me—I won't reproach you. Only promise me to amend—to quit your vile companions—and I will forgive you—will bless you. Oh! my dear, dear son, be warned in time. You are in the hands of a wicked, a terrible man, who will not stop till he has completed your destruction. Listen to your mother's prayers, and do not let her die broken-hearted."

"It is too late," returned Jack, sullenly; "I can't be honest, if I would."

"Oh! do not say so," replied his wretched parent. "It is never too late. I know you are in Jonathan Wild's power, for I saw him near you in the church; and if ever the enemy of mankind was permitted to take human form, I beheld him then. Beware of him, my son!

Mrs Sheppard expostulating with her Son.

Beware of him! You know not what villany he is capable of. Be honest, and you will be happy. You are yet a child; and though you have strayed from the right path, a stronger hand than your own has led you thence. Return, I implore of you, to your master,—to Mr. Wood. Acknowledge your faults. He is all kindness, and will overlook them for your poor father's sake—for mine. Return to him, I say—"

"I can't," replied Jack, doggedly.

"Can't!" repeated his mother. "Why not?"

"I *'ll* tell you," cried a deep voice from the back of the bed. And immediately afterwards the curtain was drawn aside, and disclosed the Satanic countenance of Jonathan Wild, who had crept into the house unperceived. "I 'll tell you, why he can't go back to his master," cried the thieftaker, with a malignant grin. "He has robbed him."

"Robbed him!" screamed the widow. "Jack!"

Her son averted his gaze.

"Ay, robbed him," reiterated Jonathan. "The night before last, Mr. Wood's house

was broken into and plundered. Your son was seen by the carpenter's wife in company with the robbers. Here," he added, throwing a handbill on the bed, "are the particulars of the burglary, with the reward for Jack's apprehension."

"Ah!" ejaculated the widow, hiding her face.

"Come," said Wild, turning authoritatively to Jack,—"you have overstayed your time."

"Do not go with him, Jack!" shrieked his mother. "Do not—do not!"

"He *must!*" thundered Jonathan, "or he goes to gaol."

"If you must go to prison, I will go with you," cried Mrs. Sheppard: "but avoid that man as you would a serpent."

"Come along," thundered Jonathan.

"Hear me, Jack!" shrieked his mother. "You know not what you do. The wretch you confide in has sworn to hang you. As I hope for mercy, I speak the truth!—let him deny it if he can."

"Pshaw!" said Wild. "I could hang him now if I liked. But he may remain with you if he pleases: *I* sha'n't hinder him."

"You hear, my son," said the widow eagerly. "Choose between good and evil;—between him and me. And mind, your life,—more than your life—hangs upon your choice."

"It does so," said Wild. "Choose, Jack."

The lad made no answer, but left the room.

"He is gone!" cried Mrs. Sheppard despairingly.

"For ever!" said the thieftaker, preparing to follow.

"Devil!" cried the widow, catching his arm, and gazing with frantic eagerness in his face, "how many years will you give my son before you execute your terrible threat?"

"NINE!" answered Jonathan sternly.

END OF THE SECOND EPOCH.

Epoch the Third.

1724.

THE PRISON-BREAKER.

CHAPTER I.

THE RETURN.

NEARLY nine years after the events last recorded, and about the middle of May, 1724, a young man of remarkably prepossessing appearance took his way, one afternoon, along Wych-street; and, from the curiosity with which he regarded the houses on the left of the road, seemed to be in search of some particular habitation. The age of this individual could not be more than twenty-one; his figure was tall, robust, and gracefully proportioned; and his clear grey eye and open countenance bespoke a frank, generous, and resolute nature. His features were regular, and finely-formed; his complexion bright and blooming,—a little shaded, however, by travel and exposure to the sun; and, with a praiseworthy contempt for

the universal and preposterous fashion then prevailing, of substituting a peruke for the natural covering of the head, he allowed his own dark-brown hair to fall over his shoulders in ringlets as luxuriant as those that distinguished the court gallant in Charles the Second's days—a fashion, which we do not despair of seeing revived in our own days. He wore a French military undress of the period, with high jack-boots, and a laced hat; and, though his attire indicated no particular rank, he had completely the air of a person of distinction. Such was the effect produced upon the passengers by his good looks and manly deportment, that few—especially of the gentler and more susceptible sex—failed to turn round and bestow a second glance upon the handsome stranger. Unconscious of the interest he excited, and entirely occupied by his own thoughts — which, if his bosom could have been examined, would have been found composed of mingled hopes and fears—the young man walked on till he came to an old house, with great, projecting, bay windows on the first floor, and situated as nearly as possible at the back of St. Clement's church. Here he

halted; and, looking upwards, read, at the foot of an immense sign-board, displaying a gaudily-painted angel with expanded pinions and an olive-branch, not the name he expected to find, but that of WILLIAM KNEEBONE, WOOLLEN-DRAPER.

Tears started to the young man's eyes on beholding the change, and it was with difficulty he could command himself sufficiently to make the inquiries he desired to do respecting the former owner of the house. As he entered the shop, a tall portly personage advanced to meet him, whom he at once recognised as the present proprietor. Mr. Kneebone was attired in the extremity of the mode. A full-curled wig descended half-way down his back and shoulders; a neckcloth of "right Mechlin" was twisted round his throat so tightly as almost to deprive him of breath, and threaten him with apoplexy; he had lace, also, at his wrists and bosom; gold clocks to his hose, and red heels to his shoes. A stiff, formally-cut coat of cinnamon-coloured cloth, with rows of plate buttons, each of the size of a crown piece, on the sleeves, pockets, and skirts, reached the middle of his legs; and his costume was com-

pleted by the silver-hilted sword at his side, and the laced hat under his left arm.

Bowing to the stranger, the woollen-draper very politely requested to know his business.

"I 'm almost afraid to state it," faltered the other; "but, may I ask whether Mr. Wood, the carpenter, who formerly resided here, is still living?"

"If you feel any anxiety on his account, sir, I 'm happy to be able to relieve it," answered Kneebone, readily. "My good friend, Owen Wood,—heaven preserve him!—*is* still living. And, for a man who 'll never see sixty again, he 's in excellent preservation, I assure you."

"You delight me with the intelligence," said the stranger, entirely recovering his cheerfulness of look. "I began to fear, from his having quitted the old place, that some misfortune must have befallen him."

"Quite the contrary," rejoined the woollen-draper, laughing good-humouredly. "Everything has prospered with him in an extraordinary manner. His business has thriven; legacies have unexpectedly dropped into his lap; and, to crown all, he has made a large fortune by a lucky speculation in South-Sea

stock,—made it, too, where so many others have lost fortunes, your humble servant amongst the number—ha! ha! In a word, sir, Mr. Wood is now in very affluent circumstances. He stuck to the shop as long as it was necessary, and longer, in my opinion. When he left these premises, three years ago, I took them from him; or rather—to deal frankly with you,—he placed me in them rent-free, for, I 'm not ashamed to confess it, I 've had losses, and heavy ones; and, if it hadn't been for him, I don't know where I should have been. Mr. Wood, sir," he added, with much emotion, "is one of the best of men, and would be the happiest, were it not that——" and he hesitated.

"Well, sir?" cried the other, eagerly.

"His wife is still living," returned Kneebone, drily.

"I understand," replied the stranger, unable to repress a smile. "But, it strikes me, I 've heard that Mrs. Wood was once a favourite of yours."

"So she was," replied the woollen-draper, helping himself to an enormous pinch of snuff with the air of a man who does not dislike to

be rallied about his gallantry,—"so she was. But those days are over—quite over. Since her husband has laid me under such a weight of obligation, I couldn't, in honour, continue—hem!" and he took another explanatory pinch. "Added to which, she is neither so young as she was, nor is her temper by any means improved—hem!"

"Say no more on the subject, sir," observed the stranger, gravely; "but let us turn to a more agreeable one—her daughter."

"That is a far more agreeable one, I must confess," returned Kneebone, with a self-sufficient smirk.

The stranger looked at him as if strongly disposed to chastise his impertinence.

"Is she married?" he asked, after a brief pause.

"Married!—no—no," replied the woollen-draper. Winifred Wood will never marry, unless the grave can give up its dead. When a mere child, she fixed her affections upon a youth named Thames Darrell, whom her father brought up, and who perished, it is supposed, about nine years ago; and she has determined to remain faithful to his memory."

"You astonish me," said the stranger, in a voice full of emotion.

"Why it *is* astonishing, certainly," remarked Kneebone, "to find any woman constant—especially to a girlish attachment; but such is the case. She has had offers innumerable; for where wealth and beauty are combined, as in her instance, suitors are seldom wanting. But she was not to be tempted."

"She is a matchless creature!" exclaimed the young man.

"So I think," replied Kneebone, again applying to the snuff-box, and by that means escaping the angry glance levelled at him by his companion.

"I have one enquiry more to make of you, sir," said the stranger, as soon as he had conquered his displeasure, "and I will then trouble you no further. You spoke just now of a youth whom Mr. Wood brought up. As far as I recollect, there were two. What has become of the other?"

"Why, surely you don't mean Jack Sheppard?" cried the woollen-draper in surprise.

"That was the lad's name?" returned the stranger.

"I guessed from your dress and manner, sir, that you must have been long absent from your own country," said Kneebone; "and now I'm convinced of it, or you wouldn't have asked that question. Jack Sheppard is the talk and terror of the whole town. The ladies can't sleep in their beds for him; and as to the men, they daren't go to bed at all. He 's the most daring and expert housebreaker that ever used a crow-bar. He laughs at locks and bolts; and the more carefully you guard your premises from him, the more likely are you to insure an attack. His exploits and escapes are in every body's mouth. He has been lodged in every roundhouse in the metropolis, and has broken out of them all, and boasts that no prison can hold him. We shall see. His skill has not been tried. At present, he is under the protection of Jonathan Wild."

"Does that villain still maintain his power?" asked the stranger sternly.

"He does," replied Kneebone, "and, what is more surprising, it seems to increase. Jonathan completely baffles and derides the ends of justice. It is useless to contend with him, even with right on your side. Some years ago,

in 1715, just before the Rebellion, I was rash enough to league myself with the Jacobite party, and by Wild's machinations got clapped into Newgate, whence I was glad to escape with my head upon my shoulders. I charged the thieftaker, as was the fact, with having robbed me, by means of the lad Sheppard, whom he instigated to the deed, of the very pocket-book he produced in evidence against me; but it was of no avail—I couldn't obtain a hearing. Mr. Wood fared still worse. Bribed by a certain Sir Rowland Trenchard, Jonathan kidnapped the carpenter's adopted son, Thames Darrell, and placed him in the hands of a Dutch Skipper, with orders to throw him overboard when he got out to sea; and though this was proved as clear as day, the rascal managed matters so adroitly, and gave such a different complexion to the whole affair, that he came off with flying colours. One reason, perhaps, of his success in this case might be, that having arrested his associate in the dark transaction, Sir Rowland Trenchard, on a charge of high treason, he was favoured by Walpole, who found his account in retaining such an agent. Be this as it may, Jonathan

remained the victor; and shortly afterwards,—at the price of a third of his estate, it was whispered,—he procured Trenchard's liberation from confinement."

At the mention of the latter occurrence, a dark cloud gathered upon the stranger's brow.

"Do you know anything further of Sir Rowland?" he asked.

"Nothing more than this," answered Kneebone,—"that after the failure of his projects, and the downfall of his party, he retired to his seat, Ashton Hall, near Manchester, and has remained there ever since, entirely secluded from the world."

The stranger was for a moment lost in reflection.

"And now, sir," he said, preparing to take his departure, "will you add to the obligation already conferred by informing me where I can meet with Mr. Wood?"

"With pleasure," replied the woollen-draper. He lives at Dollis Hill, a beautiful spot near Willesden, about four or five miles from town, where he has taken a farm. If you ride out there,—and the place is well worth a visit, for the magnificent view it commands of some

of the finest country in the neighbourhood of London,—you are certain to meet with him. I saw him yesterday, and he told me he shouldn't stir from home for a week to come. He called here on his way back, after he had been to Bedlam to visit poor Mrs. Shepdard."

"Jack's mother!" exclaimed the young man. "Gracious heaven!—is she the inmate of a mad-house?"

"She is, sir," answered the woollen-draper, sadly, "driven there by her son's misconduct. Alas! that the punishment of his offences should fall on her head. Poor soul! she nearly died when she heard he had robbed his master; and it might have been well if she had done so, for she never afterwards recovered her reason. She rambles continually about Jack, and her husband, and that wretch Jonathan, to whom, as far as can be gathered from her wild ravings, she attributes all her misery. I pity her from the bottom of my heart. But, in the midst of all her affliction, she has found a steady friend in Mr. Wood, who looks after her comforts, and visits her

constantly. Indeed, I 've heard him say that, but for his wife, he would shelter her under his own roof. That, sir, is what I call being a Good Samaritan."

The stranger said nothing, but hastily brushed away a tear. Perceiving he was about to take leave, Kneebone ventured to ask whom he had had the honour of addressing.

Before the question could be answered, a side-door was opened, and a very handsome woman of Amazonian proportions presented herself, and marched familiarly up to Mr. Kneebone. She was extremely showily dressed, and her large hooped petticoat gave additional effect to her lofty stature. As soon as she noticed the stranger, she honoured him with an extremely impudent stare, and scarcely endeavoured to disguise the admiration with which his good looks impressed her.

" Don't you perceive, my dear Mrs. Maggot, that I 'm engaged," said Kneebone, a little disconcerted.

" Who 've you got with you?" demanded the Amazon, boldly.

" The gentleman is a stranger to me, Poll,"

replied the woollen-draper, with increased embarrassment. "I don't know his name." And he looked at the moment as if he had lost all desire to know it.

"Well, he 's a pretty fellow at all events," observed Mrs. Maggot, eyeing him from head to heel with evident satisfaction;—"a devilish pretty fellow!"

"Upon my word, Poll," said Kneebone, becoming very red, "you might have a little more delicacy than to tell him so before my face."

"What!" exclaimed Mrs. Maggot, drawing up her fine figure to its full height; "because I condescend to live with you, am I never to look at another man,—especially at one so much to my taste as this? Don't think it!"

"You had better retire, madam," said the woollen-draper, sharply, "if you can't conduct yourself with more propriety."

"Order those who choose to obey you," rejoined the lady scornfully. "Though you lorded it over that fond fool, Mrs. Wood, you shan't lord it over me, I can promise you. That for you!" And she snapped her fingers in his face."

"Zounds!" cried Kneebone, furiously. "Go to your own room, woman, directly, or I 'll make you!"

"Make me!" echoed Mrs. Maggot, bursting into a loud contemptuous laugh. "Try!"

Enraged at the assurance of his mistress, the woollen-draper endeavoured to carry his threat into execution, but all his efforts to remove her were unavailing. At length, after he had given up the point from sheer exhaustion, the Amazon seized him by the throat, and pushed him backwards with such force that he rolled over the counter.

"There!" she cried, laughing, "that 'll teach you to lay hands upon me again. You should remember, before you try your strength against mine, that when I rescued you from the watch, and you induced me to come and live with you, I beat off four men, any of whom was a match for you—ha! ha!"

"My dear Poll!" said Kneebone, picking himself up, "I intreat you to moderate yourself."

"Intreat a fiddlestick!" retorted Mrs. Maggot: "I'm tired of you, and will go back to my old lover, Jack Sheppard. He 's worth a

dozen of you. Or, if this good-looking young fellow will only say the word, I'll go with him."

"You may go, and welcome, madam!" rejoined Kneebone, spitefully. "But, I should think, after the specimen you've just given of your amiable disposition, no person would be likely to saddle himself with such an incumbrance."

"What say you, sir?" said the Amazon, with an engaging leer at the stranger. "*You* will find me tractable enough; and, with *me* by your side, you need fear neither constable nor watchman. I've delivered Jack Sheppard from many an assault. I can wield a quarter-staff as well as a prize-fighter, and have beaten Figg himself at the broadsword. Will you take me?"

However tempting Mrs. Maggot's offer may appear, the young man thought fit to decline it, and, after a few words of well-merited compliment on her extraordinary prowess, and renewed thanks to Mr. Kneebone, he took his departure.

"Good bye!" cried Mrs. Maggot, kissing her hand to him. "I'll find you out. And

now," she added, glancing contemptuously at the woollen-draper, "I 'll go to Jack Sheppard."

"You shall first go to Bridewell, you jade!" rejoined Kneebone. "Here, Tom," he added, calling to a shop-boy, "run and fetch a constable."

"He had better bring half-a-dozen," said the Amazon, taking up a cloth-yard wand, and quietly seating herself; "one won't do."

On leaving Mr. Kneebone's house, the young man hastened to a hotel in the neighbourhood of Covent Garden, where, having procured a horse, he shaped his course towards the west end of the town. Urging his steed along Oxford Road,—as that great approach to the metropolis was then termed,—he soon passed Marylebone Lane, beyond which, with the exception of a few scattered houses, the country was completely open on the right, and laid out in pleasant fields and gardens; nor did he draw in the rein until he arrived at Tyburn-gate, where, before he turned off upon the Edgeware Road, he halted for a moment, to glance at the place of execution. This "fatal retreat for the unfortunate

brave" was marked by a low wooden railing, within which stood the triple tree. Opposite the gallows was an open gallery, or scaffolding, like the stand at a race-course, which, on state occasions, was crowded with spectators. Without the inclosure were reared several lofty gibbets, with their ghastly burthens. Altogether, it was a hideous and revolting sight. Influenced, probably, by what he had heard from Mr. Kneebone, respecting the lawless career of Jack Sheppard, and struck with the probable fate that awaited him, the young man, as he contemplated this scene, fell into a gloomy reverie. While he was thus musing, two horsemen rode past him; and, proceeding to a little distance, stopped likewise. One of them was a stout square-built man, with a singularly swarthy complexion, and harsh forbidding features. He was well mounted, as was his companion; and had pistols in his holsters, and a hanger at his girdle. The other individual, who was a little in advance, was concealed from the stranger's view. Presently, however, a sudden movement occurred, and disclosed his features, which were those of a young man of nearly his own age. The

dress of this person was excessively showy, and consisted of a scarlet riding-habit, lined and faced with blue, and bedizened with broad gold lace, a green silk-knit waistcoat, embroidered with silver, and decorated with a deep fringe, together with a hat tricked out in the same gaudy style. His figure was slight, but well-built; and, in stature he did not exceed five feet four. His complexion was pale; and there was something sinister in the expression of his large black eyes. His head was small and bullet-shaped, and he did not wear a wig, but had his sleek black hair cut off closely round his temples. A mutual recognition took place at the same instant between the stranger and this individual. Both started. The latter seemed inclined to advance and address the former; but suddenly changing his mind, he shouted to his companion in tones familiar to the stranger's ear; and, striking spurs into his steed, dashed off at full speed along the Edgeware Road. Impelled by a feeling, into which we shall not pause to inquire, the stranger started after them; but they were better mounted, and soon distanced him. Remarking that they struck off at a

turning on the left, he took the same road, and soon found himself on Paddington-Green. A row of magnificent, and even then venerable, elms threw their broad arms over this pleasant spot. From a man, who was standing beneath the shade of one of these noble trees, information was obtained that the horsemen had ridden along the Harrow Road. With a faint view of overtaking them, the pursuer urged his steed to a quicker pace. Arrived at Westbourne-Green — then nothing more than a common covered with gorse and furzebushes, and boasting only a couple of cottages and an alehouse—he perceived through the hedges the objects of his search slowly ascending the gentle hill that rises from Kensall-Green.

By the time he had reached the summit of this hill, he had lost all trace of them; and the ardour of the chase having in some measure subsided, he began to reproach himself for his folly, in having wandered—as he conceived—so far out of his course. Before retracing his steps, however, he allowed his gaze to range over the vast and beautiful prospect spread out beneath him, which is now hidden from the traveller's view by the high walls of

the General Cemetery, and can, consequently, only be commanded from the interior of that attractive place of burial,—and which, before it was intersected by canals and railroads, and portioned out into hippodromes, was exquisite indeed. After feasting his eye upon this superb panorama, he was about to return, when he ascertained from a farmer that his nearest road to Willesden would be down a lane a little further on, to the right. Following this direction, he opened a gate, and struck into one of the most beautiful green lanes imaginable; which, after various windings, conducted him into a more frequented road, and eventually brought him to the place he sought. Glancing at the finger-post over the cage, which has been described as situated at the outskirts of the village, and seeing no direction to Dollis Hill, he made fresh inquiries as to where it lay, from an elderly man, who was standing with another countryman near the little prison.

"Whose house do you want, master?" said the man, touching his hat.

"Mr. Wood's," was the reply.

"There is Dollis Hill," said the man, point-

ing to a well-wooded eminence about a mile distant, "and there," he added, indicating the roof of a house just visible above a grove of trees "is Mr. Wood's. If you ride past the church, and mount the hill, you 'll come to Neasdon, and then you 'll not have above half a mile to go."

The young man thanked his informant, and was about to follow his instructions, when the other called after him—

"I say, master, did you ever hear tell of Mr. Wood's famous prentice?"

"What apprentice?" asked the stranger, in surprise.

"Why, Jack Sheppard, the notorious housebreaker,—him as has robbed half Lunnun, to be sure. You must know, sir, when he was a lad, the day after he broke into his master's house in Wych Street, he picked a gentleman's pocket in our church, during sarvice time,—that he did, the heathen. The gentleman catched him i' th' fact, and we shut him up for safety i' that pris'n. But," said the fellow, with a laugh, "he soon contrived to make his way out on it, though. Ever since he's become so famous, the folks about here ha' christened

it Jack Sheppard's cage. His mother used to live i' this village, just down yonder; but when her son took to bad ways, she went distracted,— and now she 's i' Bedlam, I've heerd."

"I tell e'e what, John Dump," said the other fellow, who had hitherto preserved silence, "I don't know whether you talkin' o' Jack Sheppard has put him into my head or not; but I once had him pointed out to me, and if that *were* him as I seed then, he 's just now ridden past us, and put up at the Six Bells."

"The deuce he has!" cried Dump. "If you were sure o' that we might seize him, and get the reward for his apprehension."

"That 'ud be no such easy matter," replied the countryman. "Jack's a desperate fellow, and is always well armed; besides, he has a comrade with him. But I'll tell e'e what we *might* do——"

The young man heard no more. Taking the direction pointed out, he rode off. As he passed the Six Bells, he noticed the steeds of the two horsemen at the door; and glancing into the house, perceived the younger of the

two in the passage. The latter no sooner beheld him than he dashed hastily into an adjoining room. After debating with himself whether he should further seek an interview, which, though now in his power, was so sedulously shunned by the other party, he decided in the negative; and contenting himself with writing upon a slip of paper the hasty words,—"You are known by the villagers,—be upon your guard,"—he gave it to the ostler, with instructions to deliver it instantly to the owner of the horse he pointed out, and pursued his course.

Passing the old rectory, and still older church, with its reverend screen of trees, and slowly ascending a hill side, from whence he obtained enchanting peeps of the spire and college of Harrow, he reached the cluster of well-built houses which constitute the village of Neasdon. From this spot a road, more resembling the drive through a park than a public thoroughfare, led him gradually to the brow of Dollis Hill. It was a serene and charming evening, and twilight was gently stealing over the face of the country. Bordered by fine timber, the road occasionally

offered glimpses of a lovely valley, until a wider opening gave a full view of a delightful and varied prospect. On the left lay the heights of Hampstead, studded villas, while farther off a hazy cloud marked the position of the metropolis. The stranger concluded he could not be far from his destination, and a turn in the road showed him the house.

Beneath two tall elms, whose boughs completely overshadowed the roof, stood Mr. Wood's dwelling,—a plain, substantial, commodious farmhouse. On a bench at the foot of the trees, with a pipe in his mouth, and a tankard by his side, sat the worthy carpenter, looking the picture of good-heartedness and benevolence. The progress of time was marked in Mr. Wood by increased corpulence and decreased powers of vision, — by deeper wrinkles and higher shoulders, by scantier breath and a fuller habit. Still he looked hale and hearty, and the country life he led had imparted a ruddier glow to his cheek. Around him were all the evidences of plenty. A world of hay-stacks, bean-stacks, and straw-ricks flanked the granges adjoining his habitation; the yard was crowded with poultry,

pigeons were feeding at his feet, cattle were being driven towards the stall, horses led to the stable, a large mastiff was rattling his chain, and stalking majestically in front of his kennel, while a number of farming-men were passing and repassing about their various occupations. At the back of the house, on a bank, rose an old-fashioned terrace-garden, full of apple-trees and other fruit-trees in blossom, and lively with the delicious verdure of early spring.

Hearing the approach of the rider, Mr. Wood turned to look at him. It was now getting dusk, and he could only imperfectly distinguish the features and figure of the stranger.

"I need not ask whether this is Mr. Wood's," said the latter, "since I find him at his own gate."

"You are right, sir," said the worthy carpenter, rising. "I am Owen Wood, at your service."

"You do not remember me, I dare say," observed the stranger.

"I can't say I do," replied Wood. "Your voice seems familiar to me—and—but I 'm

getting a little deaf—and my eyes don't serve me quite so well as they used to do, especially by this light."

"Never mind," returned the stranger, dismounting; "you 'll recollect me by and by, I 've no doubt. I bring you tidings of an old friend."

"Then you 're heartily welcome, sir, whoever you are. Pray, walk in. Here, Jem, take the gentleman's horse to the stable—see him dressed and fed directly. Now, sir, will you please to follow me?"

Mr. Wood then led the way up a rather high and, according to modern notions, incommodious flight of steps, and introduced his guest to a neat parlour, the windows of which were darkened by pots of flowers and creepers. There was no light in the room; but, notwithstanding this, the young man did not fail to detect the buxom figure of Mrs. Wood, now more buxom and more gorgeously arrayed than ever,—as well as a young and beautiful female, in whom he was at no loss to recognise the carpenter's daughter.

Winifred Wood was now in her twentieth year. Her features were still slightly marked

by the disorder alluded to in the description of her as a child,—but that was the only drawback to her beauty. Their expression was so amiable, that it would have redeemed a countenance a thousand times plainer than hers. Her figure was perfect,—tall, graceful, rounded,—and, then, she had deep liquid blue eyes, that rivalled the stars in lustre. On the stranger's appearance, she was seated near the window busily occupied with her needle.

"My wife and daughter, sir," said the carpenter, introducing them to his guest.

Mrs. Wood, whose admiration for masculine beauty was by no means abated, glanced at the well-proportioned figure of the young man, and made him a very civil salutation. Winifred's reception was kind, but more distant, and after the slight ceremonial she resumed her occupation.

"This gentleman brings us tidings of an old friend, my dear," said the carpenter.

"Ay, indeed! And who may that be?" inquired his wife.

"One whom you may perhaps have forgotten," replied the stranger, "but who can never forget the kindness he experienced at

your hands, or at those of your excellent husband."

At the sound of his voice every vestige of colour fled from Winifred's cheeks, and the work upon which she was engaged fell from her hand.

"I have a token to deliver to you," continued the stranger, addressing her.

"To me?" gasped Winifred.

"This locket," he said, taking a little ornament attached to a black ribband from his breast, and giving it her,—"do you remember it?"

"I do—I do!" cried Winifred.

"What 's all this?" exclaimed Wood in amazement.

"Do you not know me, father?" said the young man, advancing towards him, and warmly grasping his hand. "Have nine years so changed me, that there is no trace left of your adopted son?"

"God bless me!" ejaculated the carpenter, rubbing his eyes, "can—can it be?"

"Surely," screamed Mrs. Wood, joining the group, "it isn't Thames Darrell come to life again?"

"It is—it is!" cried Winifred, rushing

towards him, and flinging her arms round his neck,—"it is my dear—dear brother!"

"Well, this is what I never expected to see," said the carpenter, wiping his eyes; "I hope I'm not dreaming! Thames, my dear boy, as soon as Winny has done with you, let me embrace you."

"My turn comes before yours, sir," interposed his better half. "Come to my arms, Thames! Oh! dear! Oh! dear!"

To repeat the questions and congratulations which now ensued, or describe the extravagant joy of the carpenter, who, after he had hugged his adopted son to his breast with such warmth as almost to squeeze the breath from his body, capered around the room, threw his wig into the empty fire-grate, and committed various other fantastic actions, in order to get rid of his superfluous satisfaction—to describe the scarcely less extravagant raptures of his spouse, or the more subdued, but not less heartfelt delight of Winifred, would be a needless task, as it must occur to every one's imagination. Supper was quickly served; the oldest bottle of wine was brought from the cellar; the strongest barrel of ale was tapped; but not one of the

party could eat or drink—their hearts were too full.

Thames sat with Winifred's hand clasped in his own, and commenced a recital of his adventures, which may be briefly told. Carried out to sea by Van Galgebrok, and thrown overboard, while struggling with the waves, he had been picked up by a French fishing-boat, and carried to Ostend. After encountering various hardships and privations for a long time, during which he had no means of communicating with England, he, at length, found his way to Paris, where he was taken notice of by Cardinal Dubois, who employed him as one of his secretaries, and subsequently advanced to the service of Philip of Orleans, from whom he received a commission. On the death of his royal patron, he resolved to return to his own country; and, after various delays, which had postponed it to the present time, he had succeeded in accomplishing his object.

Winifred listened to his narration with the profoundest attention; and, when it concluded, her tearful eye and throbbing bosom told how deeply her feelings had been interested.

The discourse, then, turned to Darrell's old

playmate, Jack Sheppard; and Mr. Wood, in deploring his wild career, adverted to the melancholy condition to which it had reduced his mother.

"For my part, it's only what I expected of him," observed Mrs. Wood, and I'm sorry and surprised he hasn't swung for his crimes before this. The gallows has groaned for him for years. As to his mother, I've no pity for her. She deserves what has befallen her."

"Dear mother, don't say so," returned Winifred. "One of the consequences of criminal conduct, is the shame and disgrace which —worse than any punishment the evil-doer can suffer—is brought by it upon the innocent relatives; and, if Jack had considered this, perhaps he would not have acted as he has done, and have entailed so much misery on his unhappy parent."

"I always detested Mrs. Sheppard," cried the carpenter's wife bitterly; "and, I repeat, Bedlam's too good for her."

"My dear," observed Wood, "you should be more charitable——"

"Charitable!" repeated his wife, "that's your constant cry. Marry, come up! I've

been a great deal too charitable. Here's Winny always urging you to go and visit Mrs. Sheppard in the asylum, and take her this, and send her that;—and I've never prevented you, though such mistaken liberality 's enough to provoke a saint. And, then, forsooth, she must needs prevent your hanging Jack Sheppard after the robbery in Wych-Street, when you might have done so. Perhaps you'll call that charity: *I* call it defeating the ends of justice. See what a horrible rascal you've let loose upon the world!"

"I'm sure, mother," rejoined Winifred, "if any one was likely to feel resentment, I was; for no one could be more frightened. But I was sorry for poor Jack—as I am still, and hoped he would mend."

"Mend!" echoed Mrs. Wood, contemptuously, "he 'll never mend till he comes to Tyburn."

"At least, I will hope so," returned Winifred. "But, as I was saying, I was most dreadfully frightened on the night of the robbery. Though so young at the time, I remember every circumstance distinctly. I was sitting up, lamenting your departure, dear Thames,

when, hearing an odd noise, I went to the landing, and, by the light of a dark lantern, saw Jack Sheppard stealing up stairs, followed by two men with crape on their faces. I'm ashamed to say that I was too much terrified to scream out—but ran and hid myself."

"Hold your tongue!" cried Mrs. Wood. I declare you throw me into an ague. Do you think *I* forget it? Didn't they help themselves to all the plate and the money—to several of my best dresses, and, amongst others, to my favourite kincob gown; and I 've never been able to get another like it! Marry, come up! I 'd hang 'em all, if I could. Were such a thing to happen again, I 'd never let Mr. Wood rest till he brought the villains to justice."

"I hope such a thing never *will* happen again, my dear," observed Wood, mildly; "but, when it does, it will be time to consider what course we ought to pursue."

"Let them attempt it, if they dare!" cried Mrs. Wood, who had worked herself into a passion; "and, I'll warrant 'em, the boldest robber among 'em shall repent it, if he comes across me."

"No doubt, my dear," acquiesced the carpenter, "no doubt."

Thames, who had been more than once on the point of mentioning his accidental rencounter with Jack Sheppard, not being altogether without apprehension, from the fact of his being in the neighbourhood,—now judged it more prudent to say nothing on the subject, from a fear of increasing Mrs. Wood's displeasure; and he was the more readily induced to do this, as the conversation began to turn upon his own affairs. Mr. Wood could give him no further information respecting Sir Rowland Trenchard than what he had obtained from Kneebone; but begged him to defer the further consideration of the line of conduct he meant to pursue until the morrow, when he hoped to have a plan to lay before him, of which he would approve.

The night was now advancing, and the party began to think of separating. As Mrs. Wood, who had recovered her good humour, quitted the room, she bestowed a hearty embrace on Thames, and she told him, laughingly, that she would "defer all *she* had to propose to him until to-morrow."

To-morrow! She never beheld it.

After an affectionate parting with Winifred, Thames was conducted by the carpenter to his sleeping apartment—a comfortable cosy chamber; such a one, in short, as can only be met with in the country, with its dimity-curtained bed, its sheets fragrant of lavender, its clean white furniture, and an atmosphere breathing of freshness. Left to himself, he took a survey of the room, and his heart leaped as he beheld over the chimney-piece, a portrait of himself. It was a copy of the pencil sketch taken of him nine years ago by Winifred, and awakened a thousand tender recollections.

When about to retire to rest, the rencounter with Jack Sheppard again recurred to him, and he half blamed himself for not acquainting Mr. Wood with the circumstances, and putting him upon his guard against the possibility of an attack. On weighing the matter over, he grew so uneasy that he resolved to descend, and inform him of his misgivings. But, when he got to the door with this intention, he became ashamed of his fears; and feeling convinced that Jack—bad as he might be—was not capable of such atrocious conduct as to

plunder his benefactor twice, he contented himself with looking to the priming of his pistols, and placing them near him, to be ready in case of need, he threw himself on the bed, and speedily fell asleep.

CHAPTER II.

THE BURGLARY AT DOLLIS HILL.

THAMES DARRELL'S fears were not, however groundless. Danger, in the form he apprehended, was lurking outside: nor was he destined to enjoy long repose. On receiving the warning note from the ostler, Jack Sheppard and his companion left Willesden, and taking—as a blind—the direction of Harrow, returned at night-fall by a by-lane to Neasdon, and put up at a little public-house called the Spotted Dog. Here they remained till midnight when, calling for their reckoning and their steeds, they left the house.

It was a night well-fitted to their enterprise, calm, still, and profoundly dark. As they passed beneath the thick trees that shade the road to Dollis Hill, the gloom was almost impenetrable. The robbers proceeded singly, and kept on the grass skirting the road, so that no noise was made by their horses' feet.

As they neared the house, Jack Sheppard, who led the way, halted, and addressed his companion in a low voice :—

"I don't half like this job, Blueskin," he said; "it always went against the grain. But, since I 've seen the friend and companion of my childhood, Thames Darrell, I 've no heart for it. Shall we turn back?"

"And disappoint Mr. Wild, captain?" remonstrated the other, in a deferential tone. "You know this is a pet project. It might be dangerous to thwart him."

"Pish!" cried Jack: "I don't value his anger a straw. All our fraternity are afraid of him; but *I* laugh at his threats. He daren't quarrel with me: and if he does, let him look to himself. I 've my own reasons for disliking this job."

"Well, you know I always act under your orders, captain," returned Blueskin; "and if you give the word to retreat, I shall obey, of course: but I know what Edgeworth Bess will say when we go home empty-handed."

"Why, what will she say?" inquired Sheppard.

"That we were afraid," replied the other; "but never mind her."

"Ay; but I do mind her," cried Jack, upon whom his comrade's observation had produced the desired effect. "We 'll do it."

"That 's right, captain," rejoined Blueskin. "You pledged yourself to Mr. Wild——"

"I did," interrupted Jack; and I never yet broke an engagement. Though a thief, Jack Sheppard is a man of his word."

"To be sure he is," acquiesced Blueskin. "I should like to meet the man who would dare to gainsay it."

"One word before we begin, Blueskin," said Jack, authoritatively; "in case the family should be alarmed—mind, no violence. There 's one person in the house whom I wouldn't frighten for the world."

"Wood's daughter, I suppose?" observed the other."

"You 've hit it," answered Sheppard.

"What say you to carrying her off, captain?" suggested Blueskin. "If you 've a fancy for the girl, we might do it."

"No—no," laughed Jack. "Bess wouldn't bear a rival. But if you wish to do old Wood a friendly turn, you may bring off his wife."

"I shouldn't mind ridding him of her," said

Blueskin, gruffly; "and if she comes in my way, may the devil seize me if I don't make short work with her!"

"You forget," rejoined Jack, sternly, "I've just said I'll have no violence—mind that."

With this, they dismounted; and fastening their horses to a tree, proceeded towards the house. It was still so dark, that nothing could be distinguished except the heavy masses of timber by which the premises were surrounded; but as they advanced, lights were visible in some of the windows. Presently they came to a wall, on the other side of which the dog began to bark violently; but Blueskin tossed him a piece of prepared meat, and uttering a low growl, he became silent. They then clambered over a hedge, and scaling another wall, got into the garden at the back of the house. Treading with noiseless step over the soft mould, they soon reached the building. Arrived there, Jack felt about for a particular window; and having discovered the object of his search, and received the necessary implements from his companion, he instantly commenced operations. In a few seconds, the shutter flew open,—then the window,—and they were in the room.

Jack now carefully closed the shutters, while Blueskin struck a light, with which he set fire to a candle. The room they were in was a sort of closet, with the door locked outside; but this was only a moment's obstacle to Jack, who with a chisel forced back the bolt. The operation was effected with so much rapidity and so little noise, that even if any one had been on the alert, he could scarcely have detected it. They then took off their boots, and crept stealthily up stairs, treading upon the point of their toes so cautiously, that not a board creaked beneath their weight. Pausing at each door on the landing, Jack placed his ear to the key-hole, and listened intently. Having ascertained by the breathing which room Thames occupied, he speedily contrived to fasten him in. He then tried the door of Mr. Wood's bedchamber—it was locked, with the key left in it. This occasioned a little delay; but Jack, whose skill as a workman in the particular line he had chosen was unequalled, and who laughed at difficulties, speedily cut out a panel by means of a centre-bit and knife, took the key from the other side, and unlocked the door. Covering his face with a

crape mask, and taking the candle from his associate, Jack entered the room; and, pistol in hand, stepped up to the bed, and approached the light to the eyes of the sleepers. The loud noise proceeding from the couch proved that their slumbers were deep and real; and unconscious of the danger in which she stood, Mrs. Wood turned over to obtain a more comfortable position. During this movement, Jack grasped the barrel of his pistol, held in his breath, and motioned to Blueskin, who bared a long knife, to keep still. The momentary alarm over, he threw a piece of wash leather over a bureau, so as to deaden the sound, and instantly broke it open with a small crow-bar. While he was filling his pockets with golden coin from this store, Blueskin had pulled the plate-chest from under the bed, and having forced it open, began filling a canvass bag with its contents,— silver coffee-pots, chocolate-dishes, waiters, trays, tankards, goblets, and candlesticks. It might be supposed that these articles, when thrust together into the bag, would have jingled; but these skilful practitioners managed matters so well that no noise was made. After rifling the room of every-

Jack Sheppard & Blueskin in M.rs Woods bed room.

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thing portable, including some of Mrs. Wood's ornaments and wearing apparel, they prepared to depart. Jack then intimated his intention of visiting Winifred's chamber, in which several articles of value were known to be kept; but as, notwithstanding his reckless character, he still retained a feeling of respect for the object of his boyish affections, he would not suffer Blueskin to accompany him, so he commanded him to keep watch over the sleepers—strictly enjoining him, however, to do them no injury. Again having recourse to the centre-bit,—for Winifred's door was locked,—Jack had nearly cut out a panel, when a sudden outcry was raised in the carpenter's chamber. The next moment, a struggle was heard, and Blueskin appeared at the door, followed by Mrs. Wood.

Jack instantly extinguished the light, and called to his comrade to come after him.

But Blueskin found it impossible to make off,—at least with the spoil,—Mrs. Wood having laid hold of the canvass-bag.

"Give back the things!" cried the lady. "Help!—help, Mr. Wood!"

"Leave go! thundered Blueskin—"leave go—you 'd better!"—and he held the sack as firmly as he could with one hand, while with the other he searched for his knife.

"No, I won't leave go!" screamed Mrs. Wood. "Fire!—murder—thieves!—I 've got one of 'em!"

"Come along," cried Jack.

"I can't," answered Blueskin. "This she-devil has got hold of the sack. Leave go, I tell you!" and he forced open the knife with his teeth.

"Help! — murder! — thieves!" screamed Mrs. Wood; — "Owen—Owen!—Thames, help!"

"Coming!" cried Mr. Wood, leaping from the bed. "Where are you?"

"Here," replied Mrs. Wood. "Help—I 'll hold him!"

"Leave her," cried Jack, darting down stairs, amid a furious ringing of bells,—"the house is alarmed,—follow me!"

"Curses light on you!" cried Blueskin, savagely; "since you won't be advised, take your fate."

And seizing her by the hair, he pulled back her head, and drew the knife with all his force across her throat. There was a dreadful stifled groan, and she fell heavily upon the landing.

The screams of the unfortunate woman had aroused Thames from his slumbers. Snatching up his pistols, he rushed to the door, but to his horror found it fastened. He heard the struggle on the landing, the fall of the heavy body, the groan, — and excited almost to frenzy by his fears, he succeeded in forcing open the door. By this time, several of the terrified domestics appeared with lights. A terrible spectacle was presented to the young man's gaze: — the floor deluged with blood — the mangled and lifeless body of Mrs. Wood, — Winifred fainted in the arms of a female attendant, — and Wood standing beside them almost in a state of distraction. Thus, in a few minutes, had this happy family been plunged into the depths of misery. At this juncture, a cry was raised by a servant from below, that the robbers were flying through the garden. Darting to a window looking in that direction, Thames threw it up, and dis-

charged both his pistols, but without effect. In another minute, the tramp of horses' feet told that the perpetrators of the outrage had effected their escape.

CHAPTER III.

JACK SHEPPARD'S QUARREL WITH JONATHAN WILD.

SCARCELY an hour after the horrible occurrence just related, as Jonathan Wild was seated in the audience-chamber of his residence at the Old Bailey, occupied, like Peachum, (for whose portrait he sat,) with his account-books and registers, he was interrupted by the sudden entrance of Quilt Arnold, who announced Jack Sheppard and Blueskin.

"Ah!" cried Wild, laying down his pen and looking up with a smile of satisfaction. "I was just thinking of you Jack. What news. Have you done the trick at Dollis Hill?—brought off the swag—eh?"

"No;" answered Jack, flinging himself sullenly into a chair, "I 've not."

"Why how's this?" exclaimed Jonathan. "Jack Sheppard failed! I 'd not believe it, if any one but himself told me so."

"I 've not failed," returned Jack, angrily; "but we 've done too much."

"I 'm no reader of riddles," said Jonathan. "Speak plainly."

"Let this speak for me," said Sheppard, tossing a heavy bag of money towards him. "You can generally understand that language. There 's more than I undertook to bring. It has been purchased by blood!"

"What! have you cut old Wood's throat?" asked Wild, with great unconcern, as he took up the bag.

"If I *had*, you'd not have seen me here," replied Jack, sullenly. "The blood that has been spilt is that of his wife."

"It was her own fault," observed Blueskin, moodily. "She wouldn't let me go. I did it in self-defence."

"I care not why you did it," said Jack, sternly. "We work together no more."

"Come, come, captain," remonstrated Blueskin. "I thought you 'd have got rid of your ill-humour by this time. You know as well as I do that it was accident."

"Accident or not," rejoined Sheppard; "you 're no longer pal of mine."

"And so this is my reward for having made you the tip-top cracksman you are," muttered

Blueskin;—"to be turned off at a moment's notice, because I silenced a noisy woman. It 's too hard. Think better of it."

"My mind 's made up," rejoined Jack, coldly,—"we part to-night."

"I 'll not go," answered the other. "I love you like a son, and will follow you like a dog. You 'd not know what to do without me, and shan't drive me off."

"Well!" remarked Jonathan, who had paid little attention to the latter part of the conversation; "this is an awkward business certainly; but we must do the best we can in it. You must keep out of the way till it 's blown over. I can accommodate you below."

"I don't require it," returned Sheppard. "I 'm tired of the life I 'm leading. I shall quit it and go abroad."

"I 'll go with you," said Blueskin.

"Before either of you go, you will ask my permission," said Jonathan, coolly.

"How!" exclaimed Sheppard. "Do you mean to say you will interfere—"

"I mean to say this," interrupted Wild, with contemptuous calmness, "that I 'll neither allow you to leave England nor the

profession you 've engaged in. I would'nt allow you to be honest even if you could be so,—which I doubt. You are my slave—and such you shall continue."

"Slave?" echoed Jack.

"Dare to disobey," continued Jonathan: "neglect my orders, and I will hang you."

Sheppard started to his feet.

"Hear me," he cried, restraining himself with difficulty. "It is time you should know whom you have to deal with. Henceforth, I utterly throw off the yoke you have laid upon me. I will neither stir hand nor foot for you more. Attempt to molest me, and I split. You are more in my power than I am in yours. Jack Sheppard is a match for Jonathan Wild, any day."

"That he is," added Blueskin, approvingly.

Jonathan smiled contemptuously.

"One motive alone shall induce me to go on with you," said Jack.

"What 's that?" asked Wild.

"The youth whom you delivered to Van-Galgebrok,—Thames Darrell, is returned."

"Impossible!" cried Jonathan. "He was thrown overboard, and perished at sea."

"He is alive," replied Jack, "I have seen him, and might have conversed with him if I had chosen. Now, I know you can restore him to his rights, if you choose. Do so; and I am yours as heretofore."

"Humph!" exclaimed Jonathan.

"Your answer!" cried Sheppard. "Yes, or no?"

"I will make no terms with you," rejoined Wild, sternly. "You have defied me, and shall feel my power. You have been useful to me, or I would not have spared you thus long. I swore to hang you two years ago, but I deferred my purpose."

"Deferred!" echoed Sheppard.

"Hear me out," said Jonathan. "You came hither under my protection, and you shall depart freely,—nay, more, you shall have an hour's grace. After that time, I shall place my setters on your heels."

"You cannot prevent my departure," replied Jack, dauntlessly, "and therefore your offer is no favour. But I tell you in return, I shall take no pains to hide myself. If you want me, you know where to find me."

"An hour," said Jonathan, looking at his watch,—"remember!"

"If you send for me to the Cross Shovels in the Mint, where I'm going with Blueskin, I will surrender myself without resistance," returned Jack.

"You will spare the officers a labour then," rejoined Jonathan.

"Can't I settle this business, captain," muttered Blueskin, drawing a pistol.

"Don't harm him," said Jack, carelessly: "he dares not do it."

So saying, he left the room.

"Blueskin," said Jonathan, as that worthy was about to follow, "I advise you to remain with me."

"No," answered the ruffian, moodily. "If you arrest him, you must arrest me also."

"As you will," said Jonathan, seating himself.

Jack and his comrade went to the Mint, where he was joined by Edgeworth Bess, with whom he sat down most unconcernedly to supper. His revelry, however, was put an end to at the expiration of the time mentioned

by Jonathan, by the entrance of a posse of constables with Quilt Arnold and Abraham Mendez at their head. Jack, to the surprise of all his companions, at once surrendered himself: but Blueskin would have made a fierce resistance, and attempted a rescue if he had not been ordered by his leader to desist. He then made off. Edgeworth Bess, who passed for Sheppard's wife, was secured. They were hurried before a magistrate, and charged by Jonathan Wild with various robberies; but, as Jack Sheppard stated that he had most important disclosures to make, as well as charges to bring forward against his accuser, he was committed with his female companion to the New Prison in Clerkenwell for further examination.

CHAPTER IV.

JACK SHEPPARD'S ESCAPE FROM THE NEW PRISON.

In consequence of Jack Sheppard's desperate character, it was judged expedient by the keeper of the New Prison to load him with fetters of unusual weight, and to place him in a cell which, from its strength and security, was called the Newgate Ward. The ward in which he was confined, was about six yards in length, and three in width, and in height, might be about twelve feet. The windows which were about nine feet from the floor, had no glass; but were secured by thick iron bars, and an oaken beam. Along the floor ran an iron bar to which Jack's chain was attached, so that he could move along it from one end of the chamber to the other. No prisoner except Edgeworth Bess was placed in the same cell with him. Jack was in excellent spirits; and by his wit, drollery, and agreeable demeanour, speedily became a great favourite

with the turnkey, who allowed him every indulgence consistent with his situation. The report of his detention caused an immense sensation. Numberless charges were preferred against him, amongst others, information was lodged of the robbery at Dollis Hill, and murder of Mrs. Wood, and a large reward offered for the apprehension of Blueskin ; and as, in addition to this, Jack had threatened to impeach Wild, his next examination was looked forward to with the greatest interest.

The day before this examination was appointed to take place—the third of the prisoner's detention — an old man, respectably dressed, requested permission to see him. Jack's friends were allowed to visit him; but, as he had openly avowed his intention of attempting an escape, their proceedings were narrowly watched. The old man was conducted to Jack's cell by the turnkey, who remained near him during the interview. He appeared to be a stranger to the prisoner, and the sole motive of his visit, curiosity. After a brief conversation, which Sheppard sustained with his accustomed liveliness, the old man turned to Bess and addressed a few words of

common-place gallantry to her. While this was going on, Jack suddenly made a movement which attracted the turnkey's attention; and during that interval the old man slipped some articles wrapped in a handkerchief into Bess's hands, who instantly secreted them in her bosom. The turnkey looked round the next moment, but the manœuvre escaped his observation. After a little further discourse the old man took his departure.

Left alone with Edgeworth Bess, Jack burst into a loud laugh of exultation.

"Blueskin's a friend in need," he said. "His disguise was capital; but I detected it in a moment. Has he given you the tools?"

"He has," replied Bess, producing the handkerchief.

"Bravo!" cried Sheppard, examining its contents, which proved to be a file, a chisel, two or three gimblets, and a piercer. "Jonathan Wild shall find it's not easy to detain me. As sure as he's now living, I'll pay him a visit in the Old Bailey before morning. And then I'll pay off old scores. It's almost worth while being sent to prison to have the pleasure of escaping. I shall now be

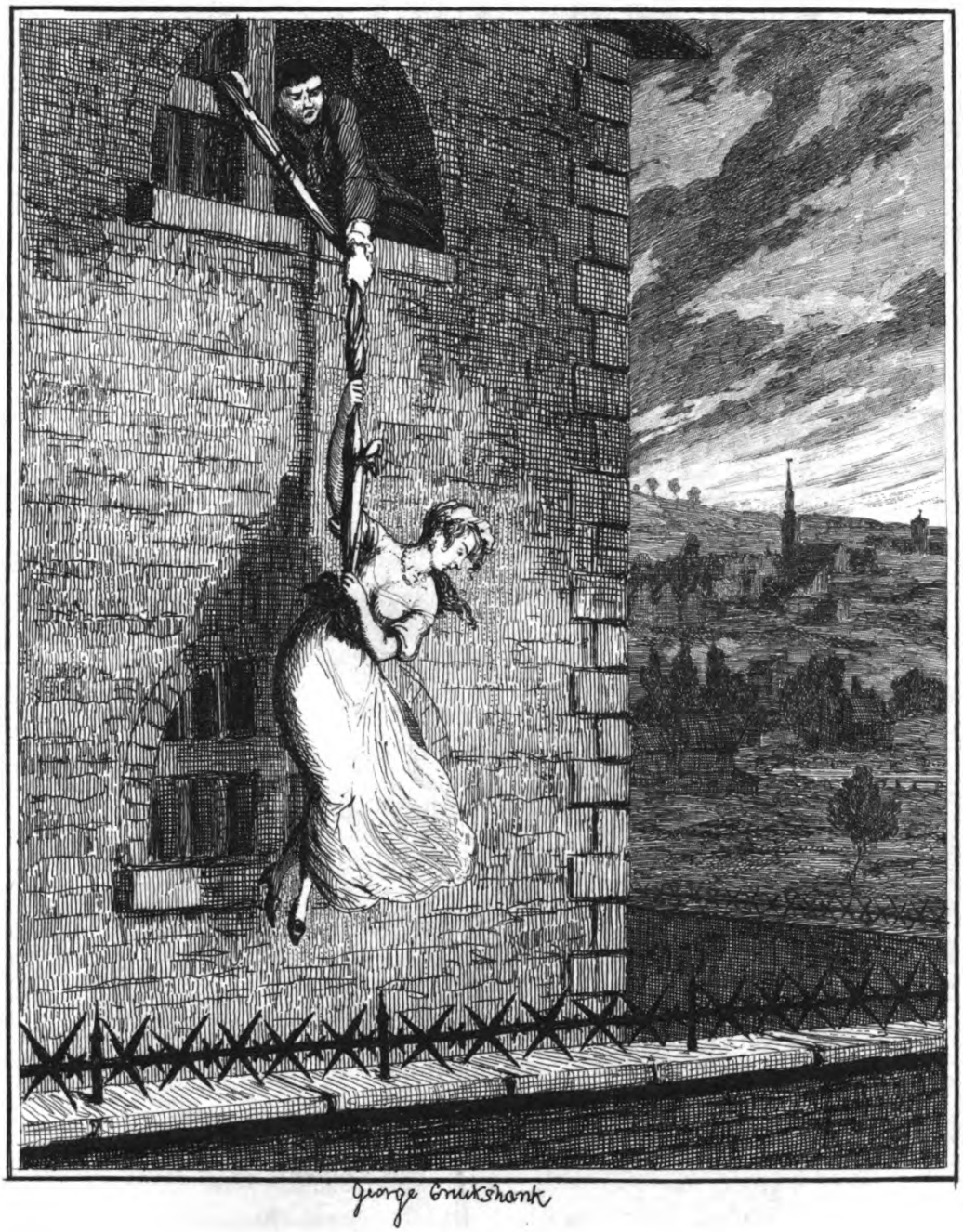
able to test my skill." And running on in this way, he carefully concealed the tools.

Whether the turnkey entertained any suspicions of the old man, Jack could not tell, but that night he was more than usually rigorous in his search; and having carefully examined the prisoners and finding nothing to excite his suspicions, he departed tolerably satisfied.

As soon as he was certain he should be disturbed no more, Jack set to work, and with the aid of the file in less than an hour had freed himself from his fetters. With Bess's assistance he then climbed up to the window, which, as has just been stated, was secured by iron bars of great thickness crossed by a stout beam of oak. The very sight of these impediments, would have appalled a less courageous spirit than Sheppard's — but nothing could daunt him. To work then he went, and with wonderful industry filed off two of the iron bars. Just as he completed this operation, the file broke. The oaken beam, nine inches in thickness, was now the sole but most formidable obstacle to his flight. With his

gimblet he contrived to bore a number of holes so close together that at last one end of the bar, being completely pierced through, yielded; and pursuing the same plan with the other extremity, it fell out altogether.

This last operation was so fatiguing, that for a short time he was obliged to pause to recover the use of his fingers. He then descended; and having induced Bess to take off some part of her clothing, he tore the gown and petticoat into shreds and twisted them into a sort of rope which he fastened to the lower bars of the window. With some difficulty he contrived to raise her to the window, and with still greater difficulty to squeeze her through it —her bulk being much greater than his own. He then made a sort of running noose, passed it over her body, and taking firmly hold of the bars, prepared to guide her descent. But Bess could scarcely summon resolution enough to hazard the experiment; and it was only on Jack's urgent intreaties, and even threats, that she could be prevailed on to trust herself to the frail tenure of the rope he had prepared.



Jack Sheppard in company with Edgeworth Bess. escaping from Clerkenwell Prison.

At length, however, she threw herself off; and Jack carefully guiding the rope she landed in safety.

The next moment he was by her side.

But the great point was still unaccomplished. They had escaped from the New Prison, it is true; but the wall of Clerkenwell Bridewell, by which that jail was formerly surrounded, and which was more than twenty feet high, and protected by formidable and bristling *chevaux de frise*, remained to be scaled. Jack, however, had an expedient for mastering this difficulty. He ventured to the great gates, and by inserting his gimblets into the wood at intervals, so as to form points upon which he could rest his foot, he contrived to ascend them; and when at the top, having fastened a portion of his dress to the spikes, he managed, not without considerable risk, to draw up his female companion. Once over the iron spikes, Bess exhibited no reluctance to be let down on the other side of the wall. Having seen his mistress safe down, Jack instantly descended, leaving the best part of his clothes, as a memorial of his flight, to the jailor.

And thus he effected his escape from the New Prison.

CHAPTER V.

THE DISGUISE.

In a hollow in the meadows behind the prison whence Jack Sheppard had escaped,—for, at this time, the whole of the now thickly-peopled district north of Clerkenwell Bridewell was open country, stretching out in fertile fields in the direction of Islington—and about a quarter of a mile off, stood a solitary hovel, known as Black Mary's Hole. This spot, which still retains its name, acquired the appellation from an old crone who lived there, and who, in addition to a very equivocal character for honesty, enjoyed the reputation of being a witch. Without enquiring into the correctness of the latter part of the story, it may be sufficient to state, that Black Mary was a person in whom Jack Sheppard thought he could confide, and, as Edgeworth Bess was incapable of much further exertion, he determined to leave her in the old woman's care till the following

night, while he shifted for himself and fulfilled his design—for, however rash or hazardous a project might be, if once conceived, Jack always executed it,—of visiting Jonathan Wild at his house in the Old Bailey.

It was precisely two o'clock on the morning of Whitmonday, the 25th of May 1724, when the remarkable escape before detailed was completed: and, though it wanted full two hours to daybreak, the glimmer of a waning moon prevented it from being totally dark. Casting a hasty glance, as he was about to turn an angle of the wall, at the great gates and upper windows of the prison, and perceiving no symptoms of pursuit, Jack proceeded towards the hovel at a very deliberate pace, carefully assisting his female companion over every obstacle in the road, and bearing her in his arms when, as was more than once the case, she sank from fright and exhaustion. In this way he crossed one or two public gardens and a bowling-green, — the neighbourhood of Clerkenwell then abounded in such places of amusement,— passed the noted Ducking Pond, where Black Mary had been frequently immersed; and,

striking off to the left across the fields, arrived in a few minutes at his destination.

Descending the hollow, or rather excavation, —for it was an old disused clay-pit, at the bottom of which the cottage was situated,—he speedily succeeded in arousing the ancient sibyl, and having committed Edgeworth Bess to her care, with a promise of an abundant reward in case she watched diligently over her safety, and attended to her comforts till his return,— to all which Black Mary readily agreed,—he departed with a heart lightened of half its load.

Jack's first object was to seek out Blueskin, whom he had no doubt he should find at the New Mint, at Wapping, for the Old Mint no longer afforded a secure retreat to the robber; and, with this view, he made the best of his way along a bye-lane leading towards Hockley-in-the-Hole. He had not proceeded far when he was alarmed by the tramp of a horse, which seemed to be rapidly approaching, and he had scarcely time to leap the hedge and conceal himself behind a tree, when a tall man, enveloped in an ample cloak, with his hat pulled over his brows, rode by at full speed. Another

horseman followed quickly at the heels of the first; but just as he passed the spot where Jack stood, his steed missed its footing, and fell. Either ignorant of the accident, or heedless of it, the foremost horseman pursued his way without even turning his head.

Conceiving the opportunity too favourable to be lost, Jack sprang suddenly over the hedge, and before the man, who was floundering on the ground with one foot in the stirrup, could extricate himself from his embarrassing position, secured his pistols, which he drew from the holsters, and held them to his head. The fellow swore lustily, in a voice which Jack instantly recognised as that of Quilt Arnold, and vainly attempted to rise and draw his sword.

"Dog!" thundered Sheppard, putting the muzzle of the pistol so close to the janizary's ear, that the touch of the cold iron made him start, "don't you know me?"

"Blood and thunder!" exclaimed Quilt, opening his eyes with astonishment. "It can't be Captain Sheppard!"

"It *is*," replied Jack; "and you had better have met the devil on your road than me. Do you remember what I said when you took me

at the Mint four days ago? I told you my turn would come. It *has* come,—and sooner than you expected."

"So I find, captain," rejoined Quilt, submissively; "but you 're too noble-hearted to take advantage of my situation. Besides, I acted for others, and not for myself."

"I know it," replied Sheppard, "and therefore I spare your life."

"I was sure you wouldn't injure me, captain," remarked Quilt, in a wheedling tone, while he felt about for his sword; "you 're far too brave to strike a fallen man."

"Ah! traitor!" cried Jack, who had noticed the movement; "make such another attempt, and it shall cost you your life." So saying, he unbuckled the belt to which the janizary's hanger was attached, and fastened it to his own girdle.

"And now," he continued, sternly, "was it your master who has just ridden by?"

"No," answered Quilt, sullenly.

"Who, then?" demanded Jack. "Speak, or I fire!"

"Well, if you *will* have it, it 's Sir Rowland Trenchard."

"Sir Rowland Trenchard!" echoed Jack, in amazement. "What are you doing with him?"

"It's a long story, captain, and I've no breath to tell it,—unless you choose to release me," rejoined Quilt.

"Get up, then," said Jack, freeing his foot from the stirrup. "Now—begin."

Quilt, however, seemed unwilling to speak.

"I should be sorry to proceed to extremities," continued Sheppard, again raising the pistol.

"Well, since you force me to betray my master's secrets," replied Quilt, sullenly, "I've ridden express to Manchester to deliver a message to Sir Rowland."

"Respecting Thames Darrell?" observed Jack.

"Why, how the devil did you happen to guess that?" cried the janizary.

"No matter," replied Sheppard. "I'm glad to find I'm right. You informed Sir Rowland that Thames Darrell was returned?"

"Exactly so," replied Quilt, "and he instantly decided upon returning to London with

me. We 've ridden post all the way, and I' m horribly tired, or you wouldn't have mastered me so easily."

"Perhaps not," replied Jack, to whom an idea had suddenly occurred. "Now, sir, I 'll trouble you for your coat. I 've left mine on the spikes of the New Prison, and must borrow yours."

"Why, surely you can't be in earnest, captain. You wouldn't rob Mr. Wild's chief janizary?"

"I 'd rob Mr. Wild himself if I met him," retorted Jack. "Come, off with it, sirrah, or I 'll blow out your brains, in the first place, and strip you afterwards."

"Well, rather than you should commit so great a crime, captain, here it is," replied Quilt, handing him the garment in question. "Anything else?"

"Your waistcoat."

"'Zounds! captain, I shall get my death of cold. I was in hopes you 'd be content with my hat and wig."

"I shall require them as well," rejoined Sheppard; "and your boots."

"My boots! Fire and fury! They won't fit you; they are too large. Besides, how am I to ride home without them?"

"Don't distress yourself," returned Jack, "you shall walk. Now," he added, as his commands were reluctantly obeyed, "help me on with them."

Quilt knelt down, as if he meant to comply; but, watching his opportunity, he made a sudden grasp at Sheppard's leg, with the intention of overthrowing him.

But Jack was too nimble for him. Striking out his foot, he knocked half a dozen teeth down the janizary's throat; and, seconding the kick with a blow on the head from the butt-end of the pistol, stretched him, senseless and bleeding on the ground.

"Like master like man," observed Jack as he rolled the inanimate body to the side of the road. "From Jonathan Wild's confidential servant what could be expected but treachery?"

With this, he proceeded to dress himself in Quilt Arnold's clothes, pulled the wig over his face and eyes so as completely to conceal his features, slouched the hat over his brows, drew

the huge boots above his knees, and muffled himself up in the best way he could. On searching the coat, he found, amongst other matters, a mask, a key, and a pocket-book. The latter appeared to contain several papers, which Jack carefully put by, in the hope that they might turn out of importance in a scheme of vengeance which he meditated against the thieftaker. He then mounted the jaded hack, which had long since regained its legs, and was quietly browsing the grass at the road-side, and, striking spurs into its side, rode off. He had not proceeded far when he encountered Sir Rowland, who, having missed his attendant, had returned to look after him.

"What has delayed you?" demanded the knight, impatiently.

"My horse has had a fall," replied Jack, assuming to perfection—for he was a capital mimic—the tones of Quilt Arnold. "It was some time before I could get him to move."

"I fancied I heard voices," rejoined Sir Rowland.

"So did I," answered Jack; "we had better move on. This is a noted place for highwaymen."

"I thought you told me that the rascal who has so long been the terror of the town—Jack Sheppard—was in custody."

"So he is," returned Jack; "but there's no saying how long he may remain so. Besides, there are greater rascals than Jack Sheppard at liberty, Sir Rowland."

Sir Rowland made no reply, but angrily quickened his pace. The pair then descended Saffron-hill, threaded Field-lane, and, entering Holborn, passed over the little bridge which then crossed the muddy waters of Fleet-ditch, mounted Snow-hill, and soon drew in the bridle before Jonathan Wild's door. Aware of Quilt Arnold's mode of proceeding, Jack instantly dismounted, and, instead of knocking, opened the door with the pass-key. The porter instantly made his appearance, and Sheppard ordered him to take care of the horses.

"Well, what sort of journey have you had, Quilt?" asked the man as he hastened to assist Sir Rowland to dismount.

"Oh! we've lost no time, as you perceive," replied Jack. "Is the governor within?"

"Yes; you 'll find him in the audience-chamber. He has got Blueskin with him."

"Ah! indeed! what's he doing here?" inquired Jack.

"Come to buy off Jack Sheppard, I suppose," replied the fellow. "But it won't do. Mr. Wild has made up his mind; and, when that's the case, all the persuasion on earth won't turn him. Jack will be tried to-morrow; and, as sure as my name's Obadiah Lemon he'll take up his quarters at the King's-Head," pointing to Newgate, "over the way."

"Well, we shall see," replied Jack. "Look to the horses, Obadiah. This way, Sir Rowland."

As familiar as Quilt Arnold himself with every part of Wild's mysterious abode, as well as with the ways of its inmates, Jack, without a moment's hesitation, took up a lamp which was burning in the hall, and led his companion up the great stone stairs. Arrived at the audience-chamber, he set down the light upon a stand, threw open the door, and announced in a loud voice, but with the perfect intonation of the person he represented,—"Sir Rowland Trenchard."

Jonathan, who was engaged in conversation with Blueskin, instantly arose, and bowed with cringing ceremoniousness to the knight. The latter haughtily returned his salutation, and flung himself, as if exhausted, into a chair.

"You've arrived sooner than I expected, Sir Rowland," observed the thieftaker. "Lost no time on the road—eh?—I didn't expect you till to-morrow at the earliest. Excuse me an instant while I dismiss this person.—You've your answer, Blueskin," he added, pushing that individual, who seemed unwilling to depart, towards the door; "it's useless to urge the matter further. Jack is registered in the Black Book."

"One word before I go," urged Blueskin.

"Not a syllable," replied Wild. "If you talk as long as an Old Bailey counsel, you'll not alter my determination."

"Won't my life do as well as his?" supplicated the other.

"Humph!" exclaimed Jonathan, doubtfully. "And you would surrender yourself—eh?"

"I'll surrender myself at once, if you'll engage to bring him off; and you'll get the re-

ward from old Wood. It's two hundred pounds. Recollect that."

"Faithful fellow!" murmured Jack. "I forgive him his disobedience."

"Will you do it?" persisted Blueskin.

"No," replied Wild; "and I've only listened to your absurd proposal to see how far your insane attachment to this lad would carry you."

"I *do* love him," cried Blueskin, "and that's the long and short of it. I've taught him all he can do; and there isn't his fellow, and never will be again. I've seen many a clever cracksman, but never one like him. If you hang Jack Sheppard, you'll cut off the flower o' the purfession. But I'll not believe it of you. It's all very well to read him a lesson, and teach him obedience; but you've gone far enough for that."

"Not quite," rejoined the thieftaker, significantly.

"Well," growled Blueskin, "you've had my offer."

"And you my warning," retorted Wild. "Good night!"

"Blueskin," whispered Jack, in his natural

tones, as the other passed him, "wait without."

"Powers o' mercy!" cried Blueskin starting.

"What 's the matter?" demanded Jonathan, harshly.

"Nothin'—nothin'," returned Blueskin; "only I thought—"

"You saw the hangman, no doubt," said Jack. "Take courage, man; it is only Quilt Arnold. Come, make yourself scarce. Don 't you see Mr. Wild's busy." And then he added, in an under tone, "Conceal yourself outside, and be within call."

Blueskin nodded, and left the room. Jack affected to close the door, but left it slightly ajar.

"What did you say to him?" inquired Jonathan, suspiciously.

"I advised him not to trouble you farther about Jack Sheppard," answered the supposed janizary.

"He seems infatuated about the lad," observed Wild. "I shall be obliged to hang him to keep him company. And now, Sir Rowland," he continued, turning to the knight, "to our own concerns. It 's a long time since we met, eight years and more. I hope you 've enjoyed

your health. 'S life! you are wonderfully altered. I should scarcely have known you."

The knight was indeed greatly changed. Though not much passed the middle term of life, he seemed prematurely stricken with old age. His frame was wasted, and slightly bent; his eyes were hollow, his complexion haggard, and his beard, which had remained unshorn during his hasty journey, was perfectly white. His manner, however, was as stern and haughty as ever, and his glances retained their accustomed fire.

"I did not come hither to consult you as to the state of my health, sir," he observed, displeased by Jonathan's allusion to the alteration in his appearance.

"True," replied Wild. "You were no doubt surprised by the unlooked-for intelligence I sent you of your nephew's return?"

"Was it *unlooked-for* on your part?" demanded the knight, distrustfully.

"On my soul, yes," rejoined Jonathan. "I should as soon have expected the bones of Tom Sheppard to reunite themselves and walk out of that case, as Thames Darrell to return. The skipper, Van Galgebrok, affirmed

to me,—nay, gave me the additional testimony of two of his crew,— that he was thrown overboard. But it appears he was picked up by fishermen, and carried to France, where he has remained ever since, and where it would have been well for him if he had remained altogether."

"Have you seen him?" asked Trenchard.

"I have," replied Wild; "and nothing but the evidence of my senses would have made me believe he was living, after the positive assurance I received to the contrary. He is at present with Mr. Wood, — the person whom you may remember adopted him, — at Dollis Hill, near Willesden; and it 's a singular but fortunate circumstance, so far as we are concerned, that Mrs. Wood chanced to be murdered by Blueskin, the fellow who just left the room, on the very night of his return, as it has thrown the house into such confusion, and so distracted them, that he has had no time as yet for hostile movements.

"And what course do you propose to pursue in reference to him?" asked Sir Rowland.

"My plan is a very simple one," rejoined

the thieftaker, smiling bitterly. "I would treat him as you treated his father, Sir Rowland."

"Murder him!" cried Trenchard, shuddering.

"Ay, murder him, if you like the term," returned Wild. "I should call it putting him out of the way. But, no matter how you phrase it, the end is the same."

"I cannot consent to it," replied Sir Rowland firmly. "Since the sea has spared him, I will spare him. It is in vain to struggle against the arm of fate. I will shed no more blood."

"And perish upon the gibbet," rejoined Jonathan, contemptuously.

"Flight is still left me," replied Trenchard. "I can escape to France."

"And do you think I'll allow you to depart," cried Jonathan in a menacing tone, "and compromise *my* safety? No, no. We are linked together in this matter, and must go through with it. You cannot—shall not retreat."

"Death and hell!" cried Sir Rowland, rising and drawing his sword; "do you

think you can shackle my free will, villain?"

"In this particular instance I do, Sir Rowland," replied Jonathan, calmly, "because you are wholly in my power. But be patient, I am your fast friend. Thames Darrell MUST die. Our mutual safety requires it. Leave the means to me."

"More blood! more blood!" cried Trenchard, passing his hand with agony across his brow. "Shall I never banish those horrible phantoms from my couch—the father with his bleeding breast and dripping hair!—the mother with her wringing hands and looks of vengeance and reproach! — And must another be added to their number—their son! Horror!—let me be spared this new crime! And yet the gibbet— my name tarnished — my escutcheon blotted by the hangman!—No, I cannot submit to that."

"I should think not," observed Jonathan, who had some practice in the knight's moods, and knew how to humour him. "It 's a miserable weakness to be afraid of bloodshed. The general who gives an order for wholesale carnage never sleeps a wink the less

soundly for the midnight groans of his victims, and we should deride him as a coward if he did. And life is much the same, whether taken in battle, on the couch, or by the road-side. Besides those whom I've slain with my own hands, I 've brought upwards of thirty persons to the gallows. Most of their relics are in yonder cases; but I don't remember that any of them have disturbed my rest. The mode of destruction makes no difference. It 's precisely the same thing to me to bid my janizaries cut Thames Darrell's throat, as to order Jack Sheppard's execution."

As Jonathan said this, Jack's hand involuntarily sought a pistol.

" But to the point," continued Wild, unconscious of the peril in which the remark had placed him, — " to the point. On the terms that procured your liberation from Newgate, I will free you from this new danger."

" Those terms were a third of my estate," observed Trenchard bitterly.

" What of that? " rejoined Jonathan. " Any price was better than your head. If Thames Darrell escapes, you will lose both life and property."

"True, true," replied the knight, with an agonized look; "there is no alternative."

"None whatever," rejoined Wild. "Is it a bargain?"

"Take half of my estate—take all—my life, if you will—I am weary of it!" cried Trenchard passionately.

"No," replied Jonathan, "I 'll not take you at your word, as regards the latter proposition. We shall both, I hope, live to enjoy our shares—long after Thames Darrell is forgotten—ha! ha! A third of your estate I accept. And as these things should always be treated as matters of business, I 'll just draw up a memorandum of our arrangement."

And, as he spoke, he took up a sheet of paper, and hastily traced a few lines upon it.

"Sign this," he said, pushing the document towards Sir Rowland.

The knight mechanically complied with his request.

"Enough!" cried Jonathan, eagerly pocketing the memorandum. "And now, in return for your liberality, I 'll inform you of a secret

with which it is important you should be acquainted."

"A secret!" exclaimed Trenchard. "Concerning whom?"

"Mrs. Sheppard," replied Jonathan, mysteriously.

"Mrs. Sheppard!" echoed Jack, surprised out of his caution.

"Ah!" exclaimed Wild, looking angrily towards his supposed attendant.

"I beg pardon, sir," replied Jack, with the accent and manner of the janizary; "I was betrayed into the exclamation by my surprise that anything in which Sir Rowland Trenchard was interested could have reference to so humble a person as Mrs. Sheppard."

"Be pleased, then, in future not to let your surprise find vent in words," rejoined Jonathan, sternly. "My servants, like Eastern mutes, must have eyes, and ears,—and *hands*, if need be,—but no tongues. You understand me, sirrah?"

"Perfectly," replied Jack. "I 'm dumb."

"Your secret?" demanded Trenchard, impatiently.

"I need not remind you, Sir Rowland," replied Wild, "that you had two sisters—Aliva and Constance."

"Both are dead," observed the knight, gloomily.

"Not so;" answered Wild. "Constance is yet living."

"Constance alive! Impossible!" ejaculated Trenchard.

"I 've proofs to the contrary," replied Jonathan.

"If this is the case, where is she?"

"In Bedlam," replied the thieftaker, with a Satanic grin.

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed the knight, upon whom a light seemed suddenly to break. "You mentioned Mrs. Sheppard. What has she to do with Constance Trenchard?"

"Mrs. Sheppard *is* Constance Trenchard," replied Jonathan, maliciously.

Here Jack Sheppard was unable to repress an exclamation of astonishment.

"Again," cried Jonathan, sternly: "beware!"

"What!" vociferated Trenchard. "My

sister the wife of one condemned felon! the parent of another! It cannot be."

"It *is* so, nevertheless," replied Wild. "Stolen by a gipsy when scarcely five years old, Constance Trenchard, after various vicissitudes, was carried to London, where she lived in great poverty, with the dregs of society. It is useless to trace out her miserable career; though I can easily do so if you require it. To preserve herself, however, from destitution, or what she considered worse, she wedded a journeyman carpenter, named Sheppard."

"Alas! that one so highly born should submit to such a degradation?" groaned the knight.

"I see nothing surprising in it," rejoined Jonathan. "In the first place, she had no knowledge of her birth; and, consequently, no false pride to get rid of. In the second, she was wretchedly poor, and assailed by temptations of which you can form no idea. Distress like hers might palliate far greater offences than she ever committed. With the same inducements we should all do the same thing. Poor

girl! she was beautiful once; so beautiful as to make *me*, who care little for the allurements of women, fancy myself enamoured of her."

Jack Sheppard again sought his pistol, and was only withheld from levelling it at the thief-taker's head, by the hope that he might gather some further information respecting his mother. And he had good reason before long to congratulate himself on his forbearance.

"What proof have you of the truth of this story?" inquired Trenchard.

"This," replied Jonathan, taking a paper from a portfolio, and handing it to the knight, "this written evidence, signed by Martha Cooper, the gipsy, by whom the girl was stolen, and who was afterwards executed for a similar crime. It is attested, you will observe, by the Reverend Mr. Purney, the present ordinary of Newgate."

"I am acquainted with Mr. Purney's handwriting," said Jack, advancing, "and can at once decide whether this is a forgery or not."

"Look at it, then," said Wild, giving him the portfolio.

"It 's the ordinary's signature, undoubtedly," replied Jack.

And as he gave back the portfolio to Sir Rowland he contrived, unobserved, to slip the precious document into his sleeve, and from thence into his pocket.

"And, does any of our bright blood flow in the veins of a ruffianly housebreaker?" cried Trenchard, with a look of bewilderment. "I 'll not believe it."

"Others may, if you won't," muttered Jack, retiring. "Thank heaven! I 'm not basely born."

"Now, mark me," said Jonathan, "and you 'll find I don't do things by halves. By your father, Sir Montacute Trenchard's will, you are aware,—and, therefore, I need not repeat it, except for the special purpose I have in view,—you are aware, I say, that, by this will, in case your sister Aliva, died without issue, or, on the death of such issue, the property reverts to Constance and *her* issue."

"I hear," said Sir Rowland, moodily.

"And I," muttered Jack.

"Thames Darrell once destroyed," pursued Jonathan, "Constance — or, rather, Mrs. Sheppard—becomes entitled to the estates;

which eventually — provided he escaped the gallows—would descend to her son."

"Ha!" exclaimed Jack, drawing in his breath, and leaning forward with intense curiosity.

"Well, sir?" gasped Sir Rowland.

"But this need give you no uneasiness," pursued Jonathan; "Mrs. Sheppard, as I told you, is in Bedlam, an incurable maniac; while her son is in the New Prison, whence he will only be removed to Newgate and Tyburn."

"So you think," muttered Jack, between his ground teeth.

"To make your mind perfectly easy on the score of Mrs. Sheppard," continued Jonathan; "after we 've disposed of Thames Darrell, I'll visit her in Bedlam; and, as I understand I form one of her chief terrors, I 'll give her such a fright that I 'll engage she shan't long survive it."

"Devil!" muttered Jack, again grasping his pistol. But, feeling secure of vengeance, he determined to abide his time.

"And now, having got rid of the minor obstacles," said Jonathan, "I 'll submit a plan for the removal of the main difficulty. Thames

Darrell, I 've said, is at Mr. Wood's at Dollis-hill, wholly unsuspicious of any designs against him, and, in fact, entirely ignorant of your being acquainted with his return, or even of his existence. In this state, it will be easy to draw him into a snare. To-morrow night—or rather to-night, for we are fast verging on another day—I propose to lure him out of the house by a stratagem which I am sure will prove infallible; and, then, what so easy as to knock him on the head. To make sure work of it, I 'll superintend the job myself. Before mid-night, I 'll answer for it, it shall be done. My janizaries shall go with me. You hear what I say, Quilt?" he added, looking at Jack.

"I do," replied Sheppard.

"Abraham Mendez will like the task,—for he has entertained a hatred to the memory of Thames Darrell ever since he received the wound in the head, when the two lads attempted to break out of St. Giles's roundhouse. I 've despatched him to the New Prison. But I expect him back every minute."

"The New Prison!" exclaimed Sheppard. "What is he gone there for?"

"With a message to the turnkey to look after his prisoner," replied Wild, with a cunning smile. "Jack Sheppard had a visiter, I understand, yesterday, and may make an attempt to escape. It 's as well to be on the safe side."

"It is," replied Jack.

At this moment, his quick ears detected the sound of foot-steps on the stairs. He drew both his pistols, and prepared for a desperate encounter.

"There is another mystery I would have solved," said Trenchard, addressing Wild; "you have told me much, but not enough."

"What do you require further?" asked Jonathan.

"The name and rank of Thames Darrell's father," said the knight.

"Another time," replied the thieftaker, evasively.

"I will have it now," rejoined Trenchard, "or our agreement is void.

"You cannot help yourself, Sir Rowland," replied Jonathan, contemptuously.

"Indeed!" replied the knight, drawing his

sword, "the secret, villain, or I will force it from you."

Before Wild could make any reply, the door was thrown violently open, and Abraham Mendez rushed into the room, with a face of the utmost consternation.

"He hash eshcaped!" cried the Jew.

"Who? Jack!" exclaimed Jonathan.

"Yesh," replied Abraham. "I vent to de New Prish'n, and on wishitin' his shell vid de turnkey, vot should ve find but de shains on de ground, de vinder broken, and Jack and Agevorth Besh gone."

"Damnation!" cried Jonathan, stamping his foot with uncontrollable rage. "I 'd rather have given a thousand pounds than this had happened. But he might have broken out of prison, and yet not got over the wall of Clerkenwell Bridewell. Did you search the yard, fool?"

"Ve did," replied Abraham; "and found his fine goat and ruffles torn to shtrips on de shpikes near de creat cate. It vosh plain he vent dat vay."

Jonathan gave utterance to a torrent of imprecations.

While he thus vented his rage, the door again opened, and Quilt Arnold rushed into the room, bleeding, and half-dressed.

"'Sblood! what's this?" cried Jonathan, in the utmost surprise. "Quilt Arnold, is that you?"

"It is, sir," sputtered the janizary. "I've been robbed, maltreated, and nearly murdered by Jack Sheppard."

"By Jack Sheppard!" exclaimed the thief-taker.

"Yes; and I hope you'll take ample vengeance upon him," said Quilt.

"I will, when I catch him, rely on it," rejoined Wild.

"You needn't go far to do that," returned Quilt; "there he stands."

"Ay, here I am," said Jack, throwing off his hat and wig, and marching towards the group, amongst whom there was a general movement of surprise at his audacity. "Sir Rowland, I salute you as your nephew."

"Back, villain!" said the knight, haughtily.

"I disown you. The whole story of your relationship is a fabrication."

"Time will show," replied Jack with equal haughtiness. "But, however, it may turn out, I disown *you*."

"Well, Jack," said Jonathan, who had looked at him with surprise not unmixed with admiration, "you are a bold and clever fellow, I must allow. Were I not Jonathan Wild, I 'd be Jack Sheppard. I 'm almost sorry I 've sworn to hang you. But, it can't be helped. I 'm a slave to my word. Were I to let you go, you 'd say I feared you. Besides, you 've secrets which must not be disclosed. Nab and Quilt to the door! Jack, you are my prisoner."

"And you flatter yourself you can detain me?" laughed Jack.

"At least I 'll try," replied Jonathan, sarcastically. "You must be a cleverer lad than even *I* take you for, if you get out of this place."

"What ho! Blueskin!" shouted Jack.

"Here I am, captain," cried a voice from without. And the door was suddenly thrown

open, and the two janizaries felled to the ground by the strong arm of the stalwart robber.

"Your boast, you see, was a little premature, Mr. Wild," said Sheppard. "Adieu, my worthy uncle. Fortunately, I've secured the proof of my birth."

"Confusion!" thundered Wild. "Close the doors below! Loose the dogs! Curses! they don't hear me! I'll ring the alarm-bell." And he raised his arm with the intention of executing his purpose, when a ball from Jack's pistol passed through the back of his hand, shattering the limb. "Aha! my lad!" he cried, without appearing to regard the pain of the wound; "now I 'll show you no quarter." And, with the uninjured hand he drew a pistol, which he fired, but without effect, at Jack.

"Fly, captain, fly!" vociferated Blueskin; "I shan't be able to keep these devils down. Fly! They shall knock me on the head — curse 'em! — before they shall touch you."

"Come along!" cried Jack, darting through the door. "The key 's on the outside—quick! quick!"

Instantly alive to this chance, Blueskin broke away. Two shots were fired at him by Jonathan; one of which passed through his hat, and the other through the fleshy part of his arm; but he made good his retreat. The door was closed—locked,—and the pair were heard descending the stairs.

"Hell's curses!" roared Jonathan. "They 'll escape. Not a moment is to be lost."

So saying, he took hold of a ring in the floor, and disclosed a flight of steps, down which he hurried, followed by the janizaries. This means of communication instantly brought them to the lobby. But Jack and his companion were already gone.

Jonathan threw open the street-door. Upon the pavement near the court lay the porter, who had been prostrated by a blow from the butt-end of a pistol. The man, who was just able to move, pointed towards Giltspur-street. Jonathan looked in that

direction, and beheld the fugitives riding off in triumph.

"To-night it is *their* turn," said Jonathan, binding up his wounded fingers with a handkerchief. "To-morrow it will be *mine*."

CHAPTER VI.

WINIFRED RECEIVES TWO PROPOSALS.

THE tragical affair at Dollis Hill, it need scarcely be said, was a dreadful blow to the family. Mr. Wood bore up with great fortitude against the shock, attended the inquest, delivered his evidence with composure, and gave directions afterwards for the funeral, which took place on the day but one following —Sunday. As soon, however, as the last solemn rites were over, and the remains of the unfortunate woman committed to their final resting-place in Willesden churchyard, his firmness completely deserted him, and he sank beneath the weight of his affliction. It was fortunate that by this time Winifred had so far recovered, as to be able to afford her father the best and only solace that, under the circumstances, he could have received,—her personal attentions.

The necessity which had previously existed of leaving the ghastly evidence of the murderous deed undisturbed,—the presence of the mangled corpse,—the bustle of the inquest, at which her attendance was required,—all these circumstances produced a harrowing effect upon the young girl's imagination. But when all was over, a sorrowful calm succeeded, and, if not free from grief, she was tranquil. As to Thames, though deeply and painfully affected by the horrible occurrence that had marked his return to his old friends, he was yet able to control his feelings, and devote himself to the alleviation of the distress of the more immediate sufferers by the calamity.

It was Sunday evening — a soft delicious evening, and, from the happy, *cheerful* look of the house, none would have dreamed of the dismal tragedy so lately acted within its walls. The birds were singing blithely amid the trees, —the lowing of the cows resounded from the yard,—a delicious perfume from the garden was wafted through the open window,—at a distance, the church-bells of Willesden were heard tolling for evening service. All these

things spoke of peace;—but there are seasons when the pleasantest external influences have a depressing effect on the mind, by painfully recalling past happiness. So, at least, thought one of two persons who were seated together in a small back-parlour of the house at Dollis Hill. She was a lovely girl, attired in deep mourning, and having an expression of profound sorrow on her charming features. Her companion was a portly handsome man, also dressed in a full suit of the deepest mourning, with the finest of lace at his bosom and wrists, and a sword in a black sheath by his side. These persons were Mr. Kneebone and Winifred.

The funeral, it has just been said, took place on that day. Amongst others who attended the sad ceremony was Mr. Kneebone. Conceiving himself called upon, as the intimate friend of the deceased, to pay this last tribute of respect to her memory, he appeared as one of the chief mourners. Overcome by his affliction, Mr. Wood had retired to his own room, where he had just summoned Thames. Much to her annoyance, therefore, Winifred was left

alone with the woollen-draper, who following up a maxim of his own, "that nothing was gained by too much bashfulness," determined to profit by the opportunity. He had only been prevented, indeed, by a fear of Mrs. Wood from pressing his suit long ago. This obstacle removed, he thought he might now make the attempt. Happen what might, he could not be in a worse position.

"We have had a sad loss, my dear Winifred," he began,—"for I must use the privilege of an old friend, and address you by that familiar name,—we have had a sad loss in the death of your lamented parent, whose memory I shall for ever revere."

Winifred's eyes filled with tears. This was not exactly what the woollen-draper desired. So he resolved to try another tack.

"What a very remarkable thing it is," he observed, applying to his snuff-box, "that Thames Darrell, whom we all supposed dead," —Kneebone in his heart sincerely wished he *had* been so,—"should turn out to be alive after all. Strange, I shouldn't know him when he called on me."

"It *is* strange," replied Winifred, artlessly. "*I* knew him at once."

"Of course," rejoined Kneebone, a little maliciously, "but that 's easily accounted for. May I be permitted, as a very old and very dear friend of your lamented parent, whose loss I shall ever deplore, to ask you one question?"

"Undoubtedly," replied Winifred.

"And you will answer it frankly?"

"Certainly."

"Now for it," thought the woollen-draper. "I shall, at least, ascertain how the land lies. —Well, then, my dear," he added aloud, "do you still entertain the strong attachment you did to Captain Darrell?"

Winifred's cheeks glowed with blushes, and fixing her eyes, which flashed with resentment, upon the questioner, she said,

"I have promised to answer your question, and I will do so. I love him as a brother."

"*Only* as a brother?" persisted Kneebone.

If Winifred remained silent, her looks would have disarmed a person of less assurance than the woollen-draper.

"If you knew how much importance I attach to your answer," he continued, passionately, "you would not refuse me one. Were Captain Darrell to offer you his hand, would you accept it?"

"Your impertinence deserves very different treatment, sir," said Winifred; "but, to put an end to this annoyance, I will tell you—I would not."

"And why not?" asked Kneebone, eagerly.

"I will not submit to be thus interrogated," said Winifred, angrily.

"In the name of your lamented parent, whose memory I shall for ever revere, I implore you to answer me," urged Kneebone, "why —why would you not accept him?"

"Because our positions are different," replied Winifred, who could not resist this appeal to her feelings.

"You are a paragon of prudence and discretion," rejoined the woollen-draper, drawing his chair closer to hers. "Disparity of rank is ever productive of unhappiness in the married state. When Captain Darrell's birth is ascertained, I 've no doubt he 'll turn out a noble-

man's son. At least, I hope so for his sake as well as my own," he added, mentally. "He has quite the air of one. And now, my angel, that I am acquainted with your sentiments on this subject, I shall readily fulfil a promise which I made to your lamented parent, whose loss I shall ever deplore."

"A promise to my mother?" said Winifred, unsuspiciously.

"Yes, my angel, to *her*—rest her soul! She extorted it from me, and bound me by a so lemn oath to fulfil it."

"Oh! name it."

"You are a party concerned. Promise me that you will not disobey the injunctions of her whose memory we must both of us ever revere. Promise me."

"If in my power—certainly. But, what is it? What *did* you promise?"

"To offer you my heart, my hand, my life," replied Kneebone, falling at her feet.

"Sir!" exclaimed Winifred, rising.

"Inequality of rank can be no bar to *our* union," continued Kneebone. "Heaven be praised, *I* am not the son of a nobleman."

In spite of her displeasure, Winifred could not help smiling at the absurdity of this address. Taking this for encouragement, her suitor proceeded still more extravagantly. Seizing her hand, he covered it with kisses.

"Adorable girl!" he cried, in the most impassioned tone, and with the most impassioned look he could command. "Adorable girl, I have long loved you to desperation. Your lamented mother, whose loss I shall ever deplore, perceived my passion, and encouraged it. Would she were alive to back my suit!"

"This is beyond all endurance," said Winifred, striving to withdraw her hand. "Leave me, sir; I insist."

"Never!" rejoined Kneebone, with increased ardour,—"never, till I receive from your own lips the answer which is to make me the happiest or the most miserable of mankind. Hear me, adorable girl! You know not the extent of my devotion. No mercenary consideration influences me. Love—admiration for your matchless beauty alone sways me. Let your father—if he chooses, leave all his wealth to his adopted son. I care not. Possessed of

you, I shall have a treasure such as kings could not boast."

"Pray cease this nonsense," said Winifred, "and quit the room, or I will call for assistance."

At this juncture, the door opened, and Thames entered the room. As the woollen-draper's back was towards him, he did not perceive him, but continued his passionate addresses.

"Call as you please, beloved girl," he cried, "I will not stir till I am answered. You say that you only love Captain Darrell as a brother——"

"Mr. Kneebone!"

"That you would not accept him were he to offer——"

"Be silent, sir."

"He then," continued the woollen-draper, "is no longer considered——"

"How, sir?" cried Thames, advancing, "what is the meaning of your reference to my name? Have you dared to insult this lady? If so——"

"Insult her!" replied Kneebone, rising,

and endeavouring to hide his embarrassment under a look of defiance. "Far from it, sir. I have made her an honourable proposal of marriage, in compliance with the request of her lamented parent, whose memory——"

"Dare to utter that falsehood in my hearing again, scoundrel," interrupted Thames fiercely, "and I will put it out of your power to repeat the offence. Leave the room! leave the house, sir! and enter it again at your peril."

"I shall do neither, sir," replied Kneebone, "unless I am requested by this lady to withdraw,—in which case I shall comply with her request. And you have to thank her presence, hot-headed boy, that I do not chastise your insolence as it deserves."

"Go, Mr. Kneebone,—pray go!" implored Winifred. "Thames, I entreat——"

"Your wishes are my laws, beloved girl," replied Kneebone, bowing profoundly. "Captain Darrell," he added, sternly, "you shall hear from me."

"When you please, sir," said Thames, coldly.

And the woollen-draper departed.

"What is all this, dear Winny?" inquired Thames, as soon as they were alone.

"Nothing—nothing," she answered, bursting into tears. "Don't ask me about it now."

"Winny," said Thames, tenderly, "something which that self-sufficient fool has said has so far done me a service in enabling me to speak upon a subject which I have long had upon my lips, but have not had courage to utter."

"Thames!"

"You seem to doubt my love," he continued,—"you seem to think that change of circumstances may produce some change in my affections. Hear me then, now, before I take one step to establish my origin, or secure my rights. Whatever those rights may be, whoever I am, my heart is yours. Do you accept it?"

"Dear Thames!"

"Forgive this ill-timed avowal of my love. But, answer me. Am I mistaken? Is your heart mine?"

"It is—it is; and has ever been," replied Winifred, falling upon his neck.

Lovers' confidences should be respected. We close the chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

JACK SHEPPARD WARNS THAMES DARRELL.

On the following night—namely Monday,—the family assembled together, for the first time since the fatal event, in the chamber to which Thames had been introduced on his arrival at Dollis Hill. As this had been Mrs. Wood's favourite sitting-room, and her image was so intimately associated with it, neither the carpenter nor his daughter could muster courage to enter it before. Determined, however, to conquer the feeling as soon as possible, Wood had given orders to have the evening meal served there; but, notwithstanding all his good resolutions upon his first entrance, he had much ado to maintain his self-command. His wife's portrait had been removed from the walls, and the place it had occupied was only to be known by the cord by which it had been suspended.

The very blank, however, affected him more deeply than if it had been left. Then a handkerchief was thrown over the cage, to prevent the bird from singing; it was *her* favourite canary. The flowers upon the mantel-shelf were withered and drooping—*she* had gathered them. All these circumstances,—slight in themselves, but powerful in their effect,—touched the heart of the widowed carpenter, and added to his depression.

Supper was over. It had been discussed in silence. The cloth was removed, and Wood, drawing the table as near the window as possible—for it was getting dusk—put on his spectacles, and opened that sacred volume from which the best consolation in affliction is derived, and left the lovers—for such they may now be fairly termed—to their own conversation. Having already expressed our determination not to betray any confidences of this sort, which, however interesting to the parties concerned, could not possibly be so to others, we shall omit also the "love passages," and proceeding to such topics as may have general interest, take up the discourse at the point

when Thames Darrell expressed his determination of starting for Manchester, as soon as Jack Sheppard's examination had taken place.

"I am surprised we have received no summons for attendance to-day," he remarked; "perhaps the other robber may be secured."

"Or Jack have escaped," remarked Winny.

"I don't think that's likely. But, this sad affair disposed of, I will not rest till I have avenged my murdered parents."

"'*The avenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer,*'" said Wood, who was culling for himself certain texts from the scriptures.

"It is the voice of inspiration," said Thames; "and I receive it as a solemn command. The villain has enjoyed his security too long."

"'*Bloody and deceitful men shall not live half their days,*'" said Wood, reading aloud another passage.

"And yet, *he* has been spared thus long; perhaps with a wise purpose," rejoined Thames. "But, though the storm has spared him, *I* will not."

"'*No doubt,*'" said Wood, who had again

turned over the leaves of the sacred volume,— "'*no doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he escaped the seas, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.*'"

"No feelings of consanguinity shall stay my vengeance," said Thames, sternly. "I will have no satisfaction but his life."

"'*Thou shalt take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer which is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death,*" said Wood, referring to another text.

"Do not steel your heart against him, dear Thames," interposed Winifred.

"'*And thine eye shall not pity,*'" said her father, in a tone of rebuke, "'*but, life shall be for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.*'"

As these words were delivered by the carpenter with stern emphasis, a female servant entered the room, and stated that a gentleman was at the door, who wished to speak with Captain Darrell on business of urgent importance.

"With me?" said Thames. "Who is it?"

"He didn't give his name, sir," replied the maid; "but he 's a young gentleman."

"Don't go near him, dear Thames," said Winifred; "he may have some ill intention."

"Pshaw!" cried Thames. "What! refuse to see a person who desires to speak with me. Say I will come to him."

"Law! miss," observed the maid, "there 's nothing mischievous in the person's appearance, I 'm sure. He 's as nice and civil-spoken a gentleman as need be; by the same token," she added, in an under tone, "that he gave me a span new crown piece."

"'*The thief cometh in the night, and the troop of robbers spoileth without,*'" said Wood, who had a text for every emergency.

"Lor' ha' mussy, sir!—how you *do* talk," said the woman; "this is no robber, I 'm sure. I should have known at a glance if it was. He 's more like a lord than——"

As she spoke, steps were heard approaching; the door was thrown open, and a young man marched boldly into the room.

The intruder was handsomely, even richly,

attired in a scarlet riding-suit, embroidered with gold; a broad belt, to which a hanger was attached, crossed his shoulders; his boots rose above his knee, and he carried a laced hat in his hand. Advancing to the middle of the chamber, he halted, drew himself up, and fixed his dark, expressive eyes, on Thames Darrell. His appearance excited the greatest astonishment and consternation amid the group. Winifred screamed. Thames sprang to his feet, and half drew his sword, while Wood, removing his spectacles to assure himself that his eyes did not deceive him, exclaimed in a tone and with a look that betrayed the extremity of surprise—"Jack Sheppard!"

"Jack Sheppard!" echoed the maid. "Is this Jack Sheppard? Oh, la! I 'm undone! We shall all have our throats cut! Oh! oh!" And she rushed, screaming, into the passage where she fell down in a fit.

The occasion of all this confusion and dismay, meanwhile, remained perfectly motionless; his figure erect, and with somewhat of dignity in his demeanour. He kept his keen

eyes steadily fixed on Thames, as if awaiting to be addressed.

"Your audacity passes belief," cried the latter, as soon as his surprise would allow him utterance. "If you have contrived to break out of your confinement, villain, this is the last place where you ought to show yourself."

"And, therefore, the first I would visit," replied Jack, boldly. "But, pardon my intrusion. I was *resolved* to see you. And, fearing you might not come to me, I forced my way hither, even with certainty of discomposing your friends."

"Well, villain!" replied Thames, "I know not the motive of your visit. But, if you have come to surrender yourself to justice, it is well. You cannot depart hence."

"Cannot?" echoed Jack, a slight smile crossing his features. "But, let that pass. My motive in coming hither is to serve you, and save your life. If you choose to requite me by detaining me, you are at liberty to do so. I shall make no defence. That I am not ignorant of the reward offered for my capture this will show," he added, taking a large pla-

card headed '*Murder*' from his pocket, and throwing it on the floor. "My demeanour ought to convince you that I came with no hostile intention. And, to show you that I have no intention of flying, I will myself close and lock the door. There is the key. Are you now satisfied?"

"No," interposed Wood, furiously, "I shall never be satisfied till I see you hanged on the highest gibbet at Tyburn."

"A time may come when you will be gratified, Mr. Wood," replied Jack, calmly.

"May come! — it *will* come! — it *shall* come!" cried the carpenter, shaking his hand menacingly at him. "I have some difficulty in preventing myself from becoming your executioner. Oh! that I should have nursed such a viper!"

"Hear me, sir," said Jack.

"No, I won't hear you, murderer," rejoined Wood.

"I am no murderer," replied Sheppard. "I had no thought of injuring your wife, and would have died rather than commit so foul a crime."

"Think not to delude me, audacious wretch," cried the carpenter. "Even if you

are not a principal, you are an accessary. If you had not brought your companion here, it would not have happened. But you shall swing, rascal,—you shall swing."

"My conscience acquits me of all share in the offence," replied Jack, humbly. "But the past is irremediable, and I did not come hither to exculpate myself. I came to save *your* life," he added, turning to Thames.

"I was not aware it was in danger," rejoined Darrell.

"Then you ought to be thankful to me for the warning. You *are* in danger."

"From some of your associates?"

"From your uncle, from *my* uncle,—Sir Rowland Trenchard."

"What means this idle boasting, villain?" said Thames. "*Your* uncle, Sir Rowland?"

"It is no idle boasting," replied the other. "You are cousin to the housebreaker, Jack Sheppard."

"If it were so, he would have great reason to be proud of the relationship, truly," observed Wood, shrugging his shoulders.

"It is easy to make an assertion like this," said Thames, contemptuously.

"And equally easy to prove it," replied Jack, giving him the paper he had abstracted from Wild. "Read that."

Thames hastily cast his eyes over it, and transferred it, with a look of incredulity, to Wood.

"Gracious heavens! this is more wonderful than all the rest," cried the carpenter, rubbing his eyes. "Thames, this is no forgery."

"You believe it, father?"

"From the bottom of my heart. I always thought Mrs. Sheppard superior to her station."

"So did I," said Winifred. "Let me look at the paper."

"Poor soul!—poor soul!" groaned Wood, brushing the tears from his vision. "Well, I 'm glad she 's spared this. Oh! Jack, Jack, you 've much to answer for!"

"I have, indeed," replied Sheppard, in a tone of contrition.

"If this document is correct," continued Wood, "and I am persuaded it is so,—you are as unfortunate as wicked. See what your misconduct has deprived you of—see what

you might have been. This is retribution."

"I feel it," replied Jack, in a tone of agony, "and I feel it more on my poor mother's account than my own."

"She has suffered enough for you," said Wood.

"She has, she has," said Jack, in a broken voice.

"Weep on, reprobate," cried the carpenter, a little softened. "Those tears will do you good."

"Do not distress him, dear father," said Winifred; "he suffers deeply. Oh, Jack! repent, while it is yet time, of your evil conduct. I will pray for you."

"I cannot repent.—I cannot pray," replied Jack, recovering his hardened demeanour. "I should never have been what I am, but for you."

"How so?" inquired Winifred.

"I loved you," replied Jack,—"don't start —it is over now—I loved you, I say, as a boy, *hopelessly*, and it made me desperate. And now I find, when it is too late, that I *might* have

deserved you—that I am as well born as Thames Darrell. But I mustn't think of these things, or I shall grow mad. I have said your life is in danger, Thames. Do not slight my warning. Sir Rowland Trenchard is aware of your return to England. I saw him last night at Jonathan Wild's, after my escape from the New Prison. He had just arrived from Manchester, whence he had been summoned by that treacherous thief taker. I overheard them planning your assassination. It is to take place to-night."

"Oh heavens!" screamed Winifred, while her father lifted up his hands in silent horror.

"And when I further tell you," continued Jack, "that, after yourself and my mother, *I* am the next heir to the estates of my grandfather, Sir Montacute Trenchard, you will perhaps own that my caution is sufficiently disinterested."

"Could I credit your wild story, I might do so," returned Thames, with a look of perplexity.

"Here are Jonathan Wild's written instructions to Quilt Arnold," rejoined Sheppard, producing the pocket-book he had found in the

janizary's clothes. "This letter will vouch for me that a communication has taken place between your enemies."

Thames glanced at the despatch, and, after a moment's reflection, inquired, "In what way is the attempt upon my life to be made?"

"That I couldn't ascertain," replied Jack; "but I advise you to be upon your guard. For aught I know, they may be in the neighbourhood at this moment."

"Here!" ejaculated Wood, with a look of alarm. "Oh lord! I hope not."

"This I do know," continued Jack,—"Jonathan Wild superintends the attack."

"Jonathan Wild!" repeated the carpenter, trembling. "Then it 's all over with us. Oh dear!—how sorry I am I ever left Wych-street. We may be all murdered in this unprotected place, and nobody be the wiser."

"There 's some one in the garden at this moment," cried Jack; "I saw a face at the window."

"Where—where?" cried Thames.

"Don't stir," replied Jack. "I will at once convince you of the truth of my assertions,

and ascertain whether the enemy really is at hand."

So saying, he advanced towards the window, threw open the sash, and called out in the voice of Thames Darrell,

"Who 's there?"

He was answered by a shot from a pistol. The ball passed over his head, and lodged in the ceiling.

"I was right," replied Jack, returning as coolly as if nothing had happened. "It is Jonathan. Your uncle—*our* uncle is with him. I saw them both."

"May I trust you?" cried Thames, eagerly.

"You may," replied Jack; "I 'll fight for you to the last gasp."

"Follow me, then," cried Thames, drawing his sword, and springing through the window.

"To the world's end," answered Jack, darting after him.

"Thames! — Thames!" cried Winifred, rushing to the window. "He will be murdered!—Help!"

"My child! — my love!" cried Wood, dragging her forcibly back.

Two shots were fired, and presently the clashing of swords was heard below.

After some time, the scuffle grew more and more distant, until nothing could be heard.

Wood, meanwhile, had summoned his men-servants, and having armed them with such weapons as could be found, they proceeded to the garden, where the first object they encountered was Thames Darrell, extended on the ground, and weltering in his blood. Of Jack Sheppard or the assailants they could not discover a single trace.

As the body was borne to the house in the arms of the farming-men, Mr. Wood fancied he heard the exulting laugh of Jonathan Wild.

CHAPTER VIII.

OLD BEDLAM.

When Thames Darrell and Jack Sheppard sprang through the window, they were instantly assailed by Wild, Trenchard, and their attendants. Jack attacked Jonathan with such fury, that he drove him into a shrubbery, and might perhaps have come off the victor, if his foot had not slipped as he made a desperate lunge. In this state it would have been all over with him, as, being stunned by the fall, it was some moments before he could recover himself, if another party had not unexpectedly come to his rescue. This was Blueskin, who burst through the trees, and sword in hand assaulted the thieftaker. As soon as Jack gained his legs, he perceived Blueskin lying, as he thought, dead in the plantation, with a severe cut across his temples, and while he was stooping to assist him, he heard groans at a little

distance. Hastening in the direction of the sound, he discovered Thames Darrell, stretched upon the ground.

"Are you hurt, Thames?" asked Jack, anxiously.

"Not dangerously, I hope," returned Thames; "but fly—save yourself."

"Where are the assassins?" cried Sheppard.

"Gone," replied the wounded man. "They imagine their work is done. But I may yet live to thwart them."

"I will carry you to the house, or fetch Mr. Wood," urged Jack.

"No, no," rejoined Thames; "fly—or I will not answer for your safety. If you desire to please me, you will go."

"And leave you thus?" rejoined Jack. "I cannot do it."

"Go, I insist," cried Thames, "or take the consequences upon yourself. I cannot protect you."

Thus urged, Jack reluctantly departed. Hastening to the spot where he had tied his horse to a tree, he vaulted into the saddle, and

rode off across the fields,—for he was fearful of encountering the hostile party,—till he reached the Edgeware Road. Arrived at Paddington, he struck across Marylebone Fields,—for as yet the New Road was undreamed of,—and never moderated his speed until he reached the city. His destination was the New Mint. At this place of refuge, situated in the heart of Wapping, near the river-side, he arrived in less than an hour, in a complete state of exhaustion.

In consequence of the infamous abuse of its liberties, an act for the entire suppression of the Old Mint was passed in the ninth year of the reign of George the First, not many months before the date of the present epoch of this history; and as, after the destruction of Whitefriars, which took place in the reign of Charles the Second, owing to the protection afforded by its inmates to the Levellers and Fifth-monarchy-men, when the inhabitants of Alsatia crossed the water, and settled themselves in the borough of Southwark,—so now, driven out of their fastnesses, they again migrated, and recrossing the Thames, settled in Wapping, in a miserable quarter between Artichoke Lane and

Nightingale Lane, which they termed the New Mint. Ousted from his old retreat, the Cross Shovels, Baptist Kettleby opened another tavern, conducted upon the same plan as the former, which he denominated the Seven Cities of Refuge. His subjects, however, were no longer entirely under his control; and, though he managed to enforce some little attention to his commands, it was evident his authority was waning fast. Aware that they would not be allowed to remain long unmolested, the New Minters conducted themselves so outrageously, and with such extraordinary insolence, that measures were at this time being taken for their effectual suppression.

To the Seven Cities of Refuge Jack proceeded. Having disposed of his steed and swallowed a glass of brandy, without taking any other refreshment, he threw himself on a couch, where he sank at once into a heavy slumber. When he awoke it was late in the day, and he was surprised to find Blueskin seated by his bed-side, watching over him with a drawn sword on his knee, a pistol in each hand, and a blood-stained cloth bound across his brow.

"Don't disturb yourself," said his follower, motioning him to keep still; "it 's all right."

"What time is it?" inquired Jack.

"Past noon," replied Blueskin. "I didn't awake you, because you seemed tired."

"How did you escape?" asked Sheppard, who, as he shook off his slumber, began to recall the events of the previous night.

"Oh, easily enough," rejoined the other. "I suppose I must have been senseless for some time; for, on coming to myself, I found this gash in my head, and the ground covered with blood. However, no one had discovered me, so I contrived to drag myself to my horse. I thought if you were living, and not captured, I should find you here,—and I was right. I kept watch over you, for fear of a surprise on the part of Jonathan. But what 's to be done?"

"The first thing I do," replied Jack, "will be to visit my poor mother in Bedlam."

"You 'd better take care of your mother's son instead," rejoined Blueskin. "It 's runnin' a great risk."

"Risk, or no risk, I shall go," replied Jack.

"Jonathan has threatened to do her some mischief. I am resolved to see her, without delay, and ascertain if it 's possible to remove her."

"It 's a hopeless job," grumbled Blueskin, "and harm will come of it. What are you to do with a mad mother at a time when you need all your wits to take care of yourself?"

"Don't concern yourself further about me," returned Jack. "Once for all, I shall go."

"Won't you take me?"

"No; you must await my return here."

"Then I must wait a long time," grumbled Blueskin. "You 'll never return."

"We shall see," replied Jack. "But, if I should *not* return, take this purse to Edgeworth Bess. You 'll find her at Black Mary's Hole."

And, having partaken of a hasty breakfast, he set out. Taking his way along East Smithfield, mounting Little Tower-hill, and threading the Minories and Hounsditch, he arrived without accident or molestation, at Moorfields.

Old Bethlehem, or Bedlam,—every trace of which has been swept away, and the hospital for lunatics removed to Saint George's Field,—was a vast and magnificent structure. Erected

in Moorfields in 1675, upon the model of the Tuileries, it is said that Louis the Fourteenth was so incensed at the insult offered to his palace, that he had a counterpart of St. James's built for offices of the meanest description. The size and grandeur of the edifice, indeed, drew down the ridicule of several of the wits of the age: by one of whom—the facetious Tom Brown—it was said, "Bedlam is a pleasant place, and abounds with amusements;—the first of which is the building, so stately a fabric for persons wholly insensible of the beauty and use of it: the outside being a perfect mockery of the inside, and admitting of two amusing queries,—Whether the persons that ordered the building of it, or those that inhabit it, were the maddest? and, whether the name and thing be not as disagreeable as harp and harrow." By another—the no less facetious Ned Ward—it was termed, "A costly college for a crack-brained society, raised in a mad age, when the chief of the city were in a great danger of losing their senses, and so contrived it the more noble for their own reception; or they would never have flung away so much money to so foolish a

purpose." The cost of the building exceeded seventeen thousand pounds. However the taste of the architecture may be questioned, which was the formal French style of the period, the general effect was imposing. Including the wings, it presented a frontage of five hundred and forty feet. Each wing had a small cupola; and, in the centre of the pile rose a larger dome, surmounted by a gilded ball and vane. The asylum was approached by a broad gravel walk, leading through a garden edged on either side by a stone balustrade, and shaded by tufted trees. A wide terrace then led to large iron gates, over which were placed the two celebrated figures of Raving and Melancholy Madness, executed by the elder Cibber, and commemorated by Pope in the Dunciad, in the well-known lines:—

> " Close to those walls where Folly holds her throne,
> And laughs to think Monroe would take her down,
> Where, o'er the gates, by his famed father's hand,
> *Great Cibber's brazen, brainless brothers stand.*"

Internally, it was divided by two long galleries, one over the other. These galleries were separated in the middle by iron grates.

The wards on the right were occupied by male patients, on the left by the females. In the centre of the upper gallery was a spacious saloon, appropriated to the governors of the asylum. But, the besetting evil of the place, and that which drew down the severest censures of the writers above-mentioned, was that this spot, —which of all others should have been most free from such intrusion—was made a public exhibition. There all the loose characters thronged, assignations were openly made, and the spectators diverted themselves with the vagaries of its miserable inhabitants.

Entering the outer gate, and traversing the broad gravel walk before-mentioned, Jack ascended the steps, and was admitted, on feeing the porter, by another iron gate, into the hospital. Here he was almost stunned by the deafening clamour resounding on all sides. Some of the lunatics were rattling their chains; some shrieking; some singing; some beating with frantic violence against the doors. Altogether, it was the most dreadful noise he had ever heard. Amidst it all, however, there

were several light-hearted and laughing groups walking from cell to cell, to whom all this misery appeared matter of amusement. The doors of several of the wards were thrown open for these parties, and as Jack passed, he could not help glancing at the wretched inmates. Here was a poor half-naked creature, with a straw crown on his head, and a wooden sceptre in his hand, seated on the ground with all the dignity of a monarch on his throne. There was a mad musician, seemingly rapt in admiration of the notes he was extracting from a child's violin. Here was a terrific figure gnashing his teeth, and howling like a wild beast;—there a lover, with hands clasped together, and eyes turned passionately upward. In this cell was a huntsman, who had fractured his skull while hunting, and was perpetually hallooing after the hounds;—in that, the most melancholy of all, the grinning gibbering lunatic, the realization of "moody madness, laughing wild."

Hastening from this heart-rending spectacle, Jack soon reached the grating that divided the

men's compartment from that appropriated to the women. Inquiring for Mrs. Sheppard, a matron offered to conduct him to her cell.

"You 'll find her quiet enough to-day, sir," observed the woman, as they walked along; "but she has been very outrageous latterly. Her nurse says she may live some time; but she seems to me to be sinking fast."

"Heaven help her!" sighed Jack. "I hope not."

"Her release would be a mercy," pursued the matron. "Oh! sir, if you 'd seen her as I 've seen her, you 'd not wish her a continuance of misery."

As Jack made no reply, the woman proceeded,

"They say her son's taken at last, and is to be hanged. I 'm glad of it, I 'm sure; for it's all owing to him his poor mother's here. See what crime does, sir. Those who act wickedly bring misery on all connected with them. And so gentle as the poor creature is, when she 's not in her wild fits—it would melt a heart of stone to see her. She will cry for days and nights together. If Jack Sheppard

could behold his mother in this state, he'd have a lesson he'd never forget—ay, and a severer one than even the hangman could read him. Hardened as he may be, that would touch him. But he has never been near her—never."

Rambling in this way, the matron at length came to a halt, and taking out a key, pointed to a door and said, "This is Mrs. Sheppard's ward, sir."

"Leave us together, my good woman," said Jack, putting a guinea into her hand.

"As long as you please, sir," answered the matron, dropping a curtsey. "There, sir," she added, unlocking the door, "you can go in. Don't be frightened of her. She 's not mischievous—and besides she 's chained, and can't reach you."

So saying, she retired, and Jack entered the cell.

Prepared as he was for a dreadful shock, and with his nerves strung to endure it, Jack absolutely recoiled before the appalling object that met his gaze. Cowering in a corner upon a heap of straw sat his unfortunate mother,

the complete wreck of what she had been. Her eyes glistened in the darkness—for light was only admitted through a small grated window —like flames, and, as she fixed them on him, their glances seemed to penetrate his very soul. A piece of old blanket was fastened across her shoulders, and she had no other clothing except a petticoat. Her arms and feet were uncovered, and of almost skeleton thinness. Her features were meagre, and ghastly white, and had the fixed and horrible stamp of insanity. Her head had been shaved, and around it was swathed a piece of rag, in which a few straws were stuck. Her thin fingers were armed with nails as long as the talons of a bird. A chain, riveted to an iron belt encircling her waist, bound her to the wall. The cell in which she was confined was about six feet long and four wide; the walls were scored all over with fantastic designs, snatches of poetry, short sentences and names, —the work of its former occupants, and of its present inmate.

When Jack entered the cell, she was talking to herself in the muttering unconnected

way peculiar to her distracted condition; but, after her eye had rested on him some time, the fixed expression of her features relaxed, and a smile crossed them. This smile was more harrowing even than her former rigid look.

"You are an angel," she cried, with a look beaming with delight.

"Rather a devil," groaned her son, "to have done this."

"You are an angel, I say," continued the poor maniac; "and my Jack would have been like you, if he had lived. But he died when he was a child—long ago—long ago—long ago."

"Would he had done so!" cried Jack.

"Old Van told me if he grew up he would be hanged. He showed me a black mark under his ear, where the noose would be tied. And so I 'll tell you what I did—"

And she burst into a laugh that froze Jack's blood in his veins.

"What did you do?" he asked, in a broken voice.

"I strangled him—ha! ha! ha!—strangled him while he was at my breast—ha! ha!"—And then with a sudden and fearful change of

look, she added, "That's what has driven me mad. I killed my child to save him from the gallows—oh! oh! One man hanged in a family is enough. If I'd not gone mad, they would have hanged me."

"Poor soul!" ejaculated her son.

"I'll tell you a dream I had last night," continued the unfortunate being. "I was at Tyburn. There was a gallows erected, and a great mob round it—thousands of people, and all with white faces like corpses. In the midst of them there was a cart with a man in it—and that man was Jack—my son Jack—they were going to hang him. And opposite to him, with a book in his hand,—but it could'nt be a prayer-book,—sat Jonathan Wild, in a parson's cassock and band. I knew him in spite of his dress. And when they came to the gallows, Jack leaped out of the cart, and the hangman tied up Jonathan instead—ha! ha! How the mob shouted and huzzaed—and I shouted too—ha! ha! ha!"

"Mother!" cried Jack, unable to endure this agonizing scene longer. "Don't you know me, mother?"

"Ah!" shrieked Mrs. Sheppard. "What's that?—Jack's voice!"

"It is," replied her son.

"The ceiling is breaking! the floor is opening! he is coming to me!" cried the unhappy woman.

"He stands before you," rejoined her son.

"Where?" she cried. "I can't see him. Where is he?"

"Here," answered Jack.

"Are you his ghost, then?"

"No—no," answered Jack. "I am your most unhappy son."

"Let me touch you, then; let me feel if you are really flesh and blood," cried the poor maniac, creeping towards him on all fours.

Jack did not advance to meet her. He could not move; but stood like one stupified, with his hands clasped together, and eyes almost starting out of their sockets, fixed upon his unfortunate parent.

"Come to me!" cried the poor maniac, who had crawled as far as the chain would permit her,—"come to me!" she cried, extending her thin arm towards him.

Jack fell on his knees beside her.

"Who are you?" inquired Mrs. Sheppard, passing her hands over his face, and gazing at him with a look that made him shudder.

"Your son," replied Jack, — "your miserable, repentant son."

"It is false," cried Mrs. Sheppard. "You are not. Jack was not half your age when he died. They buried him in Willesden churchyard after the robbery."

"Oh, God!" cried Jack, "she does not know me. Mother—dear mother!" he added, clasping her in his arms. "Look at me again."

"Off!" she exclaimed, breaking from his embrace with a scream. "Don't touch me. I'll be quiet. I'll not speak of Jack or Jonathan. I won't dig their graves with my nails. Don't strip me quite. Leave me my blanket! I'm very cold at night. Or, if you must take off my clothes, don't dash cold water on my head. It throbs cruelly."

"Horror!" cried Jack.

"Don't scourge me," she cried, trying to hide herself in the farthest corner of the cell.

"The lash cuts to the bone. I can't bear it. Spare me, and I 'll be quiet—quiet—quiet!"

"Mother!" said Jack, advancing towards her.

"Off!" she cried with a prolonged and piercing shriek. And she buried herself beneath the straw, which she tossed above her head with the wildest gestures.

"I shall kill her if I stay longer," muttered her son, completely terrified.

While he was considering what would be best to do, the poor maniac, over whose bewildered brain another change had come, raised her head from under the straw, and, peeping round the room, asked in a low voice, "If they were gone?"

"Who?" inquired Jack.

"The nurses," she answered.

"Do they treat you ill?" asked her son.

"Hush!" she said, putting her lean fingers to her lips. "Hush!—come hither, and I 'll tell you."

Jack approached her.

"Sit beside me," continued Mrs. Sheppard.

"And, now I 'll tell you what they do. Stop! we must shut the door, or they 'll catch us. See!" she added, tearing the rag from her head,—"I had beautiful black hair once. But they cut it all off."

"I shall go mad myself if I listen to her longer," said Jack, attempting to rise. "I must go."

"Don't stir, or they'll chain you to the wall," said his mother detaining him. "Now, tell me why they brought you here?"

"I came to see you, dear mother!" answered Jack.

"Mother!" she echoed,—"mother! why do you call me by that name?"

"Because you are my mother."

"What!" she exclaimed, staring eagerly in his face. "Are you my son? Are you Jack?"

"I am," replied Jack. "Heaven be praised she knows me at last."

"Oh, Jack!" cried his mother, falling upon his neck, and covering him with kisses.

"Mother—dear mother!" said Jack, bursting into tears.

"You will never leave me," sobbed the poor woman, straining him to her breast.

"Never—never!"

The words were scarcely pronounced, when the door was violently thrown open, and two men appeared at it. They were Jonathan Wild and Quilt Arnold.

"Ah!" exclaimed Jack, starting to his feet.

"Just in time," said the thieftaker. "You are my prisoner, Jack."

"You shall take my life first," rejoined Sheppard.

And, as he was about to put himself into a posture of defence, his mother clasped him in her arms.

"They shall not harm you, my love!" she exclaimed.

The movement was fatal to her son. Taking advantage of his embarrassed position, Jonathan and his assistant rushed upon him, and disarmed him.

"Thank you, Mrs. Sheppard," cried the thieftaker, as he slipped a pair of handcuffs over Jack's wrists, "for the help you have given us

in capturing your son. Without you, we might have had some trouble."

Aware, apparently in some degree, of the mistake she had committed, the poor maniac sprang towards him with frantic violence, and planted her long nails in his cheek.

"Keep off, you accursed jade!" roared Jonathan,—"Keep off, I say, or—" And he struck her a violent blow with his clenched hand.

The miserable woman staggered, uttered a deep groan, and fell senseless on the straw.

"Devil!" cried Jack; "that blow shall cost you your life."

"It 'll not need to be repeated, at all events," rejoined Jonathan, looking with a smile of malignant satisfaction at the body. "And, now, —to Newgate.

CHAPTER IX.

OLD NEWGATE.

At the beginning of the twelfth century,—whether in the reign of Henry the First, or Stephen is uncertain,—a fifth gate was added to the four principal entrances of the city of London; then, it is almost needless to say, surrounded by ramparts, moats, and other defences. This gate, called *Newgate*, "as being latelier builded than the rest," continued, for upwards of three hundred years, to be used as a place of imprisonment for felons and trespassers; at the end of which time, having grown old, ruinous, and "horribly loathsome," it was rebuilt and enlarged by the executors of the renowned Sir Richard Whittington, *the* Lord Mayor of London: whence it afterwards obtained amongst a certain class of students, whose examinations were conducted with some strictness at the Old Bailey, and their highest degrees taken at

Hyde-park-corner, the appellation of Whittington's College, or, more briefly, the Whit. It may here be mentioned that this gate, destined to bequeath its name—a name, which has since acquired a terrible significance,—to every successive structure erected upon its site, was granted, in 1400, by charter by Henry the Sixth to the citizens of London, in return for their royal services, and thenceforth became the common gaol to that city and the county of Middlesex. Nothing material occurred to Newgate, until the memorable year 1666, when it was utterly destroyed by the Great Fire. It is with the building raised after this direful calamity that our history has to deal.

Though by no means so extensive or commodious as the modern prison, Old Newgate was a large and strongly-built pile. The body of the edifice stood on the south side of Newgate Street, and projected at the western extremity far into the area opposite Saint Sepulchre's Church. One small wing lay at the north of the gate, where Giltspur Street Compter now stands; and the Press Yard, which was detached from the main building, was situated at the

back of Phœnix Court. The south or principal front, looking *down* the Old Bailey, and not *upon it*, as is the case of the present structure, with its massive walls of roughened free-stone, —in some places darkened by the smoke, in others blanched, by exposure to the weather,— its heavy projecting cornice, its unglazed doubly-grated windows, its gloomy porch decorated with fetters, and defended by an enormous iron door, had a stern and striking effect. Over the Lodge, upon a dial was inscribed the appropriate motto, "*Venio sicut fur.*" The Gate, which crossed Newgate Street, had a wide arch for carriages, and a postern, on the north side, for foot-passengers. Its architecture was richly ornamental, and resembled the style of a triumphal entrance to a capital, rather than a dungeon, having battlements and hexagonal towers, and being adorned on the western side with a triple range of pilasters of the Tuscan order, amid the intercolumniations of which were niches embellished with statues. The chief of these was a figure of Liberty, with a cat at her feet, in allusion to the supposed origin of the fortunes of its former founder, Sir Richard Wit-

tington. On the right of the postern against the wall was affixed a small grating, sustaining the debtor's box; and any pleasure which the passer-by might derive from contemplating the splendid structure above described was damped at beholding the pale faces and squalid figures of the captives across the bars of its strongly-grated windows. Some years after the date of this history, an immense ventilator was placed at the top of the Gate, with the view of purifying the prison, which, owing to its insufficient space and constantly-crowded state, was never free from that dreadful and contagious disorder, now happily unknown, the gaol-fever. So frightful, indeed, were the ravages of this malady, to which debtors and felons were alike exposed, that its miserable victims were frequently carried out by cart-loads, and thrown into a pit in the burial-ground of Christ-church, without ceremony.

Old Newgate was divided into three separate prisons,—the Master's Side, the Common Side, and the Press Yard. The first of these, situated at the south of the building, with the exception of one ward over the gateway, was allotted

to the better class of debtors, whose funds enabled them to defray their chamber-rent, fees, and garnish. The second, comprising the bulk of the gaol, and by many degrees worse in point of accommodation, having several dismal and noisome wards under ground, was common both to debtors and malefactors,—an association little favourable to the morals or comforts of the former, who, if they were brought there with any notions of honesty, seldom left with untainted principles. The last,—in all respects the best and airiest of the three, standing, as has been before observed, in Phœnix Court, at the rear of the main fabric,—was reserved for state-offenders, and such persons as chose to submit to the extortionate demands of the keeper: from twenty to five hundred pounds premium, according to the rank and means of the applicant, in addition to a high weekly rent, being required for accommodation in this quarter. Some excuse for this rapacity may perhaps be found in the fact, that five thousand pounds was paid for the purchase of the Press Yard by Mr. Pitt, the then governor of Newgate. This gentleman, tried for high treason, in 1716, on suspicion of

aiding Mr. Forster, the rebel general's escape, but acquitted, reaped a golden harvest during the occupation of his premises by the Preston rebels, when a larger sum was obtained for a single chamber than (in the words of a sufferer on the occasion) "would have paid the rent of the best house in Saint James's Square or Piccadilly for several years."

Nor was this all. Other, and more serious impositions, inasmuch as they affected a poorer class of persons, were practised by the underlings of the gaol. On his first entrance, a prisoner, if unable or unwilling to comply with the exactions of the turnkeys, was thrust into the Condemned Hold with the worst description of criminals, and terrified by threats into submission. By the old regulations, the free use of strong liquors not being interdicted, a tap-house was kept in the Lodge, and also in a cellar on the Common Side,—under the superintendence of Mrs. Spurling, formerly, it may be remembered, the hostess of the Dark House at Queenhithe,—whence wine, ale, and brandy of inferior quality were dispensed, in false

measures, and at high prices, throughout the prison, which in noise and debauchery rivalled, if it did not surpass, the lowest tavern.

The chief scene of these disgusting orgies,—the cellar, just referred to,—was a large low-roofed vault, about four feet below the level of the street, perfectly dark, unless when illumined by a roaring fire, and candles stuck in pyramidal lumps of clay, with a range of butts and barrels at one end, and benches and tables at the other, where the prisoners, debtors and malefactors, male and female, assembled as long as their money lasted, and consumed the time in drinking, smoking, and gaming with cards and dice. Above was a spacious hall, connected with it by a flight of stone steps, at the further end of which stood an immense grated door, called in the slang of the place "The Jigger," through the bars of which the felons in the upper wards were allowed to converse with their friends, or if they wished to enter the room, or join the revellers below, they were at liberty to do so, on payment of a small fine. Thus, the same system of plunder was

every where carried on. The gaolers robbed the prisoners: the prisoners robbed one another.

Two large wards were situated in the Gate; one of which, the Stone Ward, appropriated to the master debtors, looked towards Holborn; the other called the Stone Hall, from a huge stone standing in the middle of it, upon which the irons of criminals under sentence of death were knocked off previously to their being taken to the place of execution, faced Newgate-street. Here the prisoners took exercise; and a quaint, but striking picture has been left of their appearance when so engaged, by the author of the English Rogue. "At my first being acquainted with the place," says this writer, in the 'Miseries of a Prison,' "the prisoners, methought, walking up and down the Stone Hall, looked like so many wrecks upon the sea. Here the ribs of a thousand pounds beating against the Needles—those dangerous rocks, credulity; here floated, to and fro, silks, stuffs, camlets, and velvet, without giving place to each other, according to their dignity; here rolled so many pipes of canary, whose bung-

holes lying open, were so damaged that the merchant may go hoop for his money." A less picturesque, but more truthful, and, therefore, more melancholy description of the same scene, is furnished by the shrewd and satirical Ned Ward, who informs us, in the "Delectable History of Whittington's College," that "When the prisoners are disposed to recreate themselves with walking, they go up into a spacious room, called the Stone Hall; where, when you see them taking a turn together, it would puzzle one to know which is the gentleman, which the mechanic, and which the beggar, for they are all suited in the same garb of squalid poverty, making a spectacle of more pity than executions; only to be out at the elbows is in fashion here, and a great indecorum not to be threadbare."

In an angle of the Stone Hall was the Iron Hold, a chamber containing a vast assortment of fetters and handcuffs of all weights and sizes. Four prisoners, termed "The Partners," had charge of this hold. Their duty was to see who came in, or went out; to lock up, and open the different wards; to fetter such pri-

soners as were ordered to be placed in irons; to distribute the allowances of provision; and to maintain some show of decorum; for which latter purpose they were allowed to carry whips and truncheons. When any violent outrage was committed,—and such matters were of daily, sometimes hourly, occurrence,—a bell, the rope of which descended into the hall, brought the whole of the turnkeys to their assistance. A narrow passage at the north of the Stone Hall led to the Bluebeard's room of this enchanted castle, a place shunned even by the reckless crew who were compelled to pass it. It was a sort of cooking-room, with an immense fire-place flanked by a couple of cauldrons, and was called Jack Ketch's Kitchen, because the quarters of persons executed for treason were there boiled by the hangman in oil, pitch, and tar, before they were affixed on the city gates, or on London Bridge. Above this revolting spot was the female debtor's ward; below it a gloomy cell, called Tangier; and, lower still, the Stone Hold, a most terrible and noisome dungeon, situated underground, and unvisited by a single ray of daylight. Built

and paved with stone, without beds, or any other sort of protection from the cold, this dreadful hole, accounted the most dark and dismal in the prison, was made the receptacle of such miserable wretches as could not pay the customary fees. Adjoining it was the Lower Ward,—"Though, in what degree of latitude it was situated," observes Ned Ward, "I cannot positively demonstrate, unless it lay ninety degrees beyond the North Pole; for, instead of being dark there but half a year, it is dark all the year round." It was only a shade better than the Stone Hold. Here were imprisoned the fines; and, "perhaps," adds the before-cited authority, "if he behaved himself, an outlawed person might creep in among them." Ascending the gate once more on the way back, we find over the Stone Hall another large room, called Debtors' Hall, facing Newgate-street, with "very good air and light." A little too much of the former, perhaps; as the windows being unglazed, the prisoners were subjected to severe annoyance from the weather and easterly winds.

Of the women felon's rooms nothing has yet

been said. There were two. One called Waterman's Hall, a horrible place adjoining the postern under the gate, whence, through a small barred aperture, they solicited alms from the passengers: the other, a large chamber, denominated My Lady's Hold, was situated in the highest part of the gaol, at the northern extremity. Neither of these wards had beds, and the unfortunate inmates were obliged to take their rest on the oaken floor. The condition of the rooms was indescribably filthy and disgusting; nor were the habits of the occupants much more cleanly. In other respects, they were equally indecorous and offensive. "It is with no small concern," writes an anonymous historian of Newgate, "that I am obliged to observe that the women in every ward of this prison are exceedingly worse than the worst of the men, not only in respect to their mode of living, but more especially as to their conversation, which, to their great shame, is as profane and wicked as hell itself can possibly be."

There were two Condemned Holds,—one for

each sex. That for the men lay near the Lodge, with which it was connected by a dark passage. It was a large room, about twenty feet long and fifteen broad, and had an arched stone roof. In fact, it had been anciently the right hand postern under the gate leading towards the city. The floor was planked with oak, and covered with iron staples, hooks, and ring-bolts, with heavy chains attached to them. There was only one small grated window in this hold, which admitted but little light.

Over the gateway towards Snow Hill were two strong wards, called the Castle and the Red Room. They will claim particular attention hereafter.

Many other wards,—especially on the Master Debtor's side, — have been necessarily omitted in the foregoing hasty enumeration. But there were two places of punishment which merit some notice from their peculiarity. The first of these, the Press Room, a dark close chamber, near Waterman's Hall, obtained its name from an immense wooden machine kept in it, with which such prisoners as refused to

plead to their indictments were pressed to death—a species of inquisitorial torture not discontinued until so lately as the early part of the reign of George the Third, when it was abolished by an express statute. Into the second, denominated the Bilbowes,—also a dismal place,—refractory prisoners were thrust, and placed in a kind of stocks, whence the name.

The Chapel was situated in the south-east angle of the gaol; the ordinary at the time of this history being the Reverend Thomas Purney; the deputy chaplain, Mr. Wagstaff.

Much has been advanced by modern writers respecting the demoralising effect of prison society; and it has been asserted, that a youth once confined in Newgate, is certain to come out a confirmed thief. However this may be now, it was unquestionably true of old Newgate. It was the grand nursery of vice,—"a famous university," observes Ned Ward, in the London Spy, "where, if a man has a mind to educate a hopeful child in the daring science of padding; the light-fingered subtlety of shop-

lifting; the excellent use of jack and crow; for the silently drawing bolts, and forcing barricades; with the knack of sweetening; or the most ingenious dexterity of picking pockets; let him but enter in this college on the Common Side, and confine him close to his study but for three months; and if he does not come out qualified to take any degree of villainy, he must be the most honest dunce that ever had the advantage of such eminent tutors."

To bring down this imperfect sketch of Newgate to the present time, it may be mentioned that, being found inadequate to the purpose required, the old gaol was pulled down in 1770. Just at the completion of the new gaol, in 1780, it was assailed by the mob during the Gordon riots, fired, and greatly damaged. The devastations, however, were speedily made good; and, in two years more, it was finished.

It is a cheering reflection, that in the present prison, with its clean, well-whitewashed, and well-ventilated wards, its airy courts, its infirmary, its improved regulations, and its humane

and intelligent officers, many of the miseries of the old gaol are removed. For these beneficial changes society is mainly indebted to the unremitting exertions of the philanthropic HOWARD.

CHAPTER X.

HOW JACK SHEPPARD GOT OUT OF THE CONDEMNED HOLD.

MONDAY, the 31st of August 1724,—a day long afterwards remembered by the officers of Newgate,—was distinguished by an unusual influx of visitors to the Lodge. On that morning the dead warrant had arrived from Windsor, ordering Sheppard for execution, (since his capture by Jonathan Wild in Bedlam, as related in a former chapter, Jack had been tried, convicted, and sentenced to death,) together with three other malefactors, on the following Friday. Up to this moment, hopes had been entertained of a respite, strong representations in his favour having been made in the highest quarter; but now that his fate seemed sealed, the curiosity of the sight-seeing public to behold him was redoubled. The prison gates were besieged like the entrance of a booth at a fair; and the Condemned Hold,

where he was confined, and to which visitors were admitted at the moderate rate of a guinea a-head, had quite the appearance of a show-room. As the day wore on, the crowds diminished,—many who would not submit to the turnkey's demands were sent away ungratified, —and at five o'clock, only two strangers, Mr. Shotbolt, the head turnkey of Clerkenwell Prison, and Mr. Griffin, who held the same office in Westminster Gatehouse, were left in the Lodge. Jack, who had formerly been in the custody of both these gentlemen, gave them a very cordial welcome; apologized for the sorry room he was compelled to receive them in; and when they took leave, insisted on treating them to a double bowl of punch, which they were now discussing with the upper gaoler, Mr. Ireton, and his two satellites, Austin and Langley. At a little distance from the party, sat a tall, sinister-looking personage, with harsh inflexible features, a gaunt but muscular frame, and large bony hands. He was sipping a glass of cold gin and water, and smoking a short black pipe. His name was

Marvel, and his avocation, which was as repulsive as his looks, was that of public executioner. By his side sat a remarkably stout dame, to whom he paid as much attention as it was in his iron nature to pay. She had a nut-brown skin, a swarthy upper lip, a merry black eye, a prominent bust, and a tun-like circumference of waist. A widow for the fourth time, Mrs. Spurling, (for she it was,) either by her attractions of purse or person, had succeeded in moving the stony heart of Mr. Marvel, who, as he had helped to deprive her of her former husbands, thought himself in duty bound to offer to supply their place. But the lady was not so easily won; and though she did not absolutely reject him, gave him very slight hopes. Mr. Marvel, therefore, remained on his probation. Behind Mrs. Spurling stood her negro attendant, Caliban; a hideous, misshapen, malicious monster, with broad hunched shoulders, a flat nose, and ears like those of a wild beast, a head too large for his body, and a body too long for his legs. This horrible piece of deformity, who acted as drawer and cellarman,

and was a constant butt to the small wits of the gaol, was nicknamed the Black Dog of Newgate.

In the general survey of the prison, taken in the preceding chapter, but little was said of the Lodge. It may be well, therefore, before proceeding farther, to describe it more minutely. It was approached from the street by a flight of broad stone steps, leading to a ponderous door, plated with iron, and secured on the inner side by huge bolts, and a lock, with wards of a prodigious size. A little within stood a second door, or rather wicket, lower than the first, but of equal strength, and surmounted by a row of sharp spikes. As no apprehension was entertained of an escape by this outlet,—nothing of the kind having been attempted by the boldest felon ever incarcerated in Newgate,—both doors were generally left open during the day-time. At six o'clock, the wicket was shut; and at nine, the gaol was altogether locked up. Not far from the entrance, on the left, was a sort of screen, or partition-wall, reaching from the floor to the ceiling, formed of thick oaken planks riveted

together by iron bolts, and studded with broad-headed nails. In this screen, which masked the entrance of a dark passage communicating with the Condemned Hold, about five feet from the ground, was a hatch, protected by long spikes set six inches apart, and each of the thickness of an elephant's tusk. The spikes almost touched the upper part of the hatch: scarcely space enough for the passage of a hand being left between their points and the beam. Here, as has already been observed, condemned malefactors were allowed to converse with such of their guests as had not interest or money enough to procure admission to them in the hold. Beyond the hatch, an angle, formed by a projection in the wall of some three or four feet, served to hide a door conducting to the interior of the prison. At the farther end of the Lodge, the floor was raised to the height of a couple of steps; whence the whole place, with the exception of the remotest corner of the angle before-mentioned, could be commanded at a single glance. On this elevation a table was now placed, around which sat the turnkeys and their guests, regaling themselves on the fragrant beverage provided by the pri-

soner. A brief description will suffice for them. They were all stout ill-favoured men, attired in the regular gaol-livery of scratch wig and snuff-coloured suit; and had all a strong family likeness to each other. The only difference between the officers of Newgate and their brethren was, that they had enormous bunches of keys at their girdles, while the latter had left their keys at home.

"Well, I 've seen many a gallant fellow in my time, Mr. Ireton," observed the chief turnkey of Westminster Gatehouse, as he helped himself to his third glass of punch; "but I never saw one like Jack Sheppard."

"Nor I," returned Ireton, following his example: "and I 've had some experience too. Ever since he came here, three months ago, he has been the life and soul of the place; and now the dead warrant has arrived, instead of being cast down, as most men would be, and as all others *are*, he 's gayer than ever. Well, *I* shall be sorry to lose him, Mr. Griffin. We 've made a pretty penny by him—sixty guineas this blessed day."

"No more!" cried Griffin, incredulously;

"I should have thought you must have made double that sum at least."

"Not a farthing more, I assure you," rejoined Ireton, pettishly; "we 're all on the square here. I took the money myself, and *ought* to know."

"Oh! certainly," answered Griffin; "certainly."

"I offered Jack five guineas as his share," continued Ireton; "but he wouldn't take it himself, and gave it to the poor debtors and felons, who are now drinking it out in the cellar on the Common Side."

"Jack 's a noble fellow," exclaimed the head-gaoler of Clerkenwell Prison, raising his glass; "and, though he played me a scurvy trick, I' ll drink to his speedy deliverance."

"At Tyburn, eh, Mr. Shotbolt?" rejoined the executioner. "I 'll pledge you in that toast with all my heart."

"Well, for my part," observed Mrs. Spurling, "I hope he may never see Tyburn. And, if I 'd my own way with the Secretary of State, he never *should*. It 's a thousand pities to hang so pretty a fellow. There haven't

been so many ladies in the Lodge since the days of Claude Du Val, the gentleman highwayman; and they all declare it 'll break their hearts if he 's scragged."

"Bah!" ejaculated Marvel, gruffly.

"You think our sex has no feeling, I suppose, sir," cried Mrs. Spurling, indignantly; "but I can tell you we have. And, what 's more, I tell you, if Captain Sheppard *is* hanged, you need never hope to call *me* Mrs. Marvel."

"'Zounds!" cried the executioner, in astonishment. "Do you know what you are talking about, Mrs. Spurling? Why, if Captain Sheppard should get off, it 'ud be fifty guineas out of my way. There 's the grand laced coat he wore at his trial, which I intend for my wedding-dress."

"Don't mention such a thing, sir," interrupted the tapstress. "I could'nt bear to see you in it. You 're speaking of the trial brings the whole scene to my mind. Ah! I shall never forget the figure Jack cut on that occasion. What a buzz of admiration ran round the court as he appeared! And, how handsome and composed he looked! Everybody

wondered that such a stripling could commit such desperate robberies. His firmness never deserted him till his old master, Mr. Wood, was examined. Then he *did* give way a bit. And when Mr. Wood's daughter,—to whom, I 've heard tell, he was attached years ago,—was brought up, his courage forsook him altogether, and he trembled, and could scarcely stand. Poor young lady! *She* trembled too, and was unable to give her evidence. When sentence was passed there wasn't a dry eye in the court."

"Yes, there was one," observed Ireton.

"I guess who you mean," rejoined Shotbolt. "Mr. Wild's."

"Right," answered Ireton. "It 's strange the antipathy he bears to Sheppard. I was standing near Jack at that awful moment, and beheld the look Wild fixed on him. It was like the grin of a fiend, and made my flesh creep on my bones. When the prisoner was removed from the dock, we met Jonathan as we passed through the yard. He stopped us, and, addressing Jack in a taunting tone, said, 'Well, I 've been as good as my word!'—

'True,' replied Sheppard; 'and I'll be as good as mine!' And so they parted."

"And I hope he will, if it's anything to Jonathan's disadvantage," muttered Mrs. Spurling, half aside.

"I'm surprised Mr. Wild hasn't been to inquire after him to-day," observed Langley; "it's the first time he's missed doing so since the trial."

"He's gone to Enfield after Blueskin, who has so long eluded his vigilance," rejoined Austin. "Quilt Arnold called this morning to say so. Certain information, it seems, has been received from a female, that Blueskin would be at a flash-ken near the Chase at five o'clock to day, and they're all set out in the expectation of nabbing him."

"Mr. Wild had a narrow escape lately, in that affair of Captain Darrell," observed Shotbolt.

"I don't exactly know the rights of that affair," rejoined Griffin, with some curiosity.

"Nor any one else, I suspect," answered Ireton, winking significantly. "It's a mysterious transaction altogether. But, as much

as is known is this: Captain Darrell, who resides with Mr. Wood at Dollis Hill, was assaulted and half-killed by a patry of ruffians, headed, he swore, by Mr. Wild, and his uncle, Sir Rowland Trenchard. Mr. Wild, however, proved, on the evidence of his own servants, that he was at the Old Bailey at the time; and Sir Rowland proved that *he* was in Manchester. So the charge was dismissed. Another charge was then brought against them by the captain, who accused them of kidnapping him when a boy, and placing him in the hands of a Dutch skipper, named Van Galgebrok, with instructions to throw him overboard, which was done, though he afterwards escaped. But this accusation, for want of sufficient evidence, met with the same fate as the first, and Jonathan came off victorious. It was thought, however, if the skipper *could* have been found, that the result of the case would have been materially different. This was rather too much to expect; for we all know, if Mr. Wild wishes to keep a man out of the way, he 'll speedily find the means to do so."

"Ay, ay," cried the gaolers, laughing.

"*I* could have given awkward evidence in

that case, if I 'd been so inclined," said Mrs. Spurling, " ay and found Van Galgebrok too. But I never betray an old customer."

" Mr. Wild is a great man," said the hangman, replenishing his pipe, " and we owe him much, and ought to support him. Were any thing to happen to him, Newgate wouldn't be what it is, nor Tyburn either."

" Mr. Wild has given you some employment, Mr. Marvel," remarked Shotbolt.

" A little, sir," replied the executioner, with a grim smile. " Out of the twelve hundred subjects I 've tucked up, I may safely place half to his account. If ever he requires my services, he shall find I 'm not ungrateful. And though I say it that shouldn't say it, no man can tie a better knot. Mr. Wild, gentlemen, and the nubbin'-cheat."

" Fill your glasses, gentlemen," observed Ireton, " and I 'll tell you a droll thing Jack said this morning. Amongst others who came to see him, was a Mr. Kneebone, a woollen-draper in Wych Street, with whose pockets, it appears, Jack, when a lad, made a little too free. As this gentleman was going away, he said to Jack

in a jesting manner, 'that he should be glad to see him to-night at supper.' Upon which the other answered, 'that he accepted his invitation with pleasure, and would make a point of waiting upon him.' Ha! ha! ha!"

"*Did* he say so?" cried Shotbolt. "Then I advise you to look sharply after him, Mr. Ireton; for may I be hanged myself if I don't believe he 'll be as good as his word."

At this juncture, two women, very smartly attired in silk hoods and cloaks, appeared at the door of the Lodge.

"Ah! who have we here?" exclaimed Griffin.

"Only Jack's two wives—Edgeworth Bess and Poll Maggot," replied Austin, laughing.

"They can't go into the Condemned Hold," said Ireton, consequentially; "it 's against Mr. Wild's orders. They must see the prisoner at the hatch."

"Very well, sir," replied Austin, rising and walking towards them. "Well, my pretty dears," he added,—"come to see your husband, eh? You must make the most of your time. You won't have him long. You 've heard the news, I suppose?"

"That the dead warrant 's arrived," returned Edgeworth Bess, bursting into a flood of tears; "oh, yes! we 've heard it."

"How does Jack bear it?" inquired Mrs. Maggot.

"Like a hero," answered Austin.

"I knew he would," replied the Amazon. "Come, Bess,—no whimpering. Don't unman him. Are we to see him here?"

"Yes, my love."

"Well, then, lose no time in bringing him to us," said Mrs. Maggot. There 's a guinea to drink our health," she added, slipping a piece of money into his hand.

"Here, Caliban," shouted the under-turnkey, "unlock Captain Sheppard's padlock, and tell him his wives are in the Lodge waiting to see him."

"Iss, Massa Austin," replied the black. And taking the keys, he departed on the errand.

As soon as he was gone, the two women divested themselves of their hoods and cloaks, and threw them, as if inadvertently, into the farthest part of the angle in the wall. Their beautifully proportioned figures and rather over-

displayed shoulders attracted the notice of Austin, who inquired of the chief turnkey "whether he should stand by them during the interview?"

"Oh! never mind them," said Mrs. Spurling, who had been hastily compounding another bowl of punch. "Sit down, and enjoy yourself. I 'll keep a look out that nothing happens."

By this time Caliban had returned, and Jack appeared at the hatch. He was wrapped in a loose dressing-gown of light material, and stood near the corner where the women's dresses had just been thrown down, quite out of sight of all the party, except Mrs. Spurling, who sat on the right of the table.

"Have you got Jonathan out of the way?" he asked, in an eager whisper.

"Yes, yes," replied Edgeworth Bess. "Patience Kite has lured him to Enfield on a false scent after Blueskin. You need fear no interruption from him, or any of his myrmidons."

"That 's well!" cried Jack. "Now stand before me, Poll. I 've got the watch-spring saw in my sleeve. Pretend to weep both of

you as loudly as you can. This spike is more than half cut through. I was at work at it yesterday and the day before. Keep up the clamour for five minutes, and I 'll finish it."

Thus urged, the damsels began to raise their voices in loud lamentation.

"What the devil are you howling about?" cried Langley. "Do you think we are to be disturbed in this way? Make less noise, hussies, or I 'll turn you out of the Lodge."

"For shame, Mr. Langley," rejoined Mrs. Spurling: "I blush for you, sir! To call yourself a man, and interfere with the natural course of affection! Have you no feeling for the situation of those poor disconsolate creatures, about to be bereaved of all they hold dear? Is it nothing to part with a husband to the gallows? I 've lost four in the same way, and know what it is." Here she began to blubber loudly for sympathy.

"Comfort yourself, my charmer," said Mr. Marvel, in a tone intended to be consolatory. "I 'll be their substitute."

"*You!*" cried the tapstress, with a look of horror: "Never!"

"Confusion!" muttered Jack, suddenly pausing in his task, "the saw has broken just as I am through the spike."

"Can 't we break it off?" replied Mrs. Maggot.

"I fear not," replied Jack, despondingly.

"Let 's try, at all events," returned the Amazon.

And grasping the thick iron rod, she pushed with all her force against it, while Jack seconded her efforts from within. After great exertions on both parts, the spike yielded to their combined strength, and snapped suddenly off.

"Holloa—what 's that?" cried Austin, starting up.

"Only my darbies," returned Jack, clinking his chains.

"Oh! that was all, was it?" said the turnkey, quietly re-seating himself.

"Now, give me the woollen cloth to tie round my fetters," whispered Sheppard. "Quick."

"Here it is," replied Edgeworth Bess.

"Give me your hand, Poll, to help me

George Cruikshank

Jack Sheppard escaping from the condemned hold in Newgate.

through," cried Jack, as he accomplished the operation. "Keep a sharp look out, Bess."

"Stop!" interposed Edgeworth Bess; "Mr Langley is getting up, and coming this way. We 're lost."

"Help me through at all hazards, Poll," cried Jack, straining towards the opening.

"The danger's past," whispered Bess. "Mrs. Spurling has induced him to sit down again. Ah! she looks this way, and puts her finger to her lips. She comprehends what we 're about. We 're all safe!"

"Don't lose a moment then," cried Jack, forcing himself into the aperture, while the Amazon, assisted by Bess, pulled him through it.

"There!" cried Mrs. Maggot, as she placed him without noise upon the ground; "you 're safe so far."

"Come, my disconsolate darlings," cried Austin, "it only wants five minutes to six. I expect Mr. Wild here presently. Cut it as short as you can."

"Only two minutes more, sir," intreated Edgeworth Bess, advancing towards him in

such a manner as to screen Jack, who crept into the farthest part of the angle,—"only two minutes, and we've done."

"Well, well, I 'm not within a minute," rejoined the turnkey.

"We shall never be able to get you out unseen, Jack," whispered Poll Maggot. "You must make a bold push."

"Impossible," replied Sheppard, in the same tone. "That would be certain destruction. I can't run in these heavy fetters. No: I must face it out. Tell Bess to slip out, and I'll put on her cloak and hood."

Meanwhile, the party at the table continued drinking and chatting as merrily as before.

"I can't help thinking of Jack Sheppard's speech to Mr. Kneebone," observed Shotbolt, as he emptied his tenth tumbler; "I'm sure he's meditating an escape, and hopes to accomplish it to-night."

"Poh! poh!" rejoined Ireton; it was mere idle boasting. I examined the Condemned Hold myself carefully this morning, and didn't find a nail out of its place. Recollect, he 's chained to the ground by a great horse-pad-

lock, and is never unloosed except when he comes to that hatch. If he escapes at all, it must be before our faces."

"It wouldn't surprise me if he did," remarked Griffin. "He 's audacity enough for anything. He got out in much the same way from the Gatehouse,—stole the keys, and passed through a room where I was sitting half-asleep in a chair."

"Caught you napping, eh?" rejoined Ireton, with a laugh. "Well, he won't do that here. I'll forgive him if he does."

"And so will I," said Austin. "We 're too wide awake for that. Ain't we, partner?" he added, appealing to Langley, whom punch had made rather dozy.

"I should think so," responded the lethargic turnkey, with a yawn.

During this colloquy, Jack had contrived unobserved to put on the hood and cloak, and being about the size of the rightful owner, presented a very tolerable resemblance to her. This done, Edgeworth Bess, who watched her opportunity, slipped out of the Lodge.

"Halloa!" exclaimed Austin, who had

caught a glimpse of her departing figure, "one of the women is gone!"

"No—no," hastily interposed Mrs. Spurling; they 're both here. Don't you see they 're putting on their cloaks?"

"That 's false!" rejoined Marvel, in a low tone; "I perceive what has taken place."

"Oh! goodness!" ejaculated the tapstress, in alarm. "You won't betray him."

"Say the word, and I 'm mum," returned the executioner. "Will you be mine?"

"It 's a very unfair advantage to take—very," replied Mrs. Spurling; "however, I consent."

"Then I 'll lend a helping hand. I shall lose my fees and the laced coat. But it 's better to have the bride without the weddin' dress, than the weddin' dress without the bride."

At this moment, Saint Sepulchre's clock struck six.

"Close the wicket, Austin," vociferated Ireton, in an authoritative tone.

"Good bye!" cried Jack, as if taking leave of his mistresses, "to-morrow, at the same time."

"We'll be punctual," replied Mrs. Maggot. "Good bye, Jack! Keep up your spirits."

"Now for it!—life or death!" exclaimed Jack, assuming the gait of a female, and stepping towards the door.

As Austin rose to execute his principal's commands, and usher the women to the gate, Mrs. Spurling and Marvel rose too. The latter walked carelessly towards the hatch, and leaning his back against the place whence the spike had been removed, so as completely to hide it, continued smoking his pipe as coolly as if nothing had happened.

Just as Jack gained the entrance, he heard a man's footstep behind him, and aware that the slightest indiscretion would betray him, he halted, uncertain what to do.

"Stop a minute, my dear," cried Austin. "You forget that you promised me a kiss the last time you were here."

"Won't one from me do as well?" interposed Mrs. Maggot.

"Much better," said Mrs. Spurling, hastening to the rescue. "I want to speak to Edgeworth Bess myself."

So saying, she planted herself between Jack and the turnkey. It was a moment of breathless interest to all engaged in the attempt.

"Come—the kiss!" cried Austin, endeavouring to pass his arm familiarly round the Amazon's waist.

"Hands off!" she exclaimed, "or you'll repent it."

"Why, what'll you do?" demanded the turnkey.

"Teach you to keep your distance!" retorted Mrs. Maggot, dealing him a buffet that sent him reeling several yards backwards.

"There! off with you!" whispered Mrs. Spurling, squeezing Jack's arm, and pushing him towards the door, "and, don't come here again."

Before Austin could recover himself, Jack and Mrs. Maggot had disappeared.

"Bolt the wicket!" shouted Ireton, who, with the others, had been not a little entertained by the gallant turnkey's discomfiture.

This was done, and Austin returned with a crest-fallen look to the table. Upon which

Mrs. Spurling, and her now accepted suitor, resumed their seats.

"You 'll be as good as your word, my charmer," whispered the executioner.

"Of course," responded the widow, heaving a deep sigh. "Oh! Jack! Jack!—you little know what a price I 've paid for you!"

"Well, I 'm glad those women are gone," remarked Shotbolt. "Coupling their presence with Jack's speech, I couldn't help fearing some mischief might ensue."

"That reminds me he 's still at large," returned Ireton. "Here, Caliban, go and fasten his padlock."

"Iss, Massa Ireton," replied the black.

"Stop, Caliban," interposed Mrs. Spurling, who wished to protract the discovery of the escape as long as possible. "Before you go, bring me the bottle of pine-apple rum I opened yesterday. I should like Mr. Ireton and his friends to taste it. It is in the lower cupboard. Oh! you haven't got the key—then *I* must have it, I suppose. How provoking!" she added, pretending to rummage her pockets;

"one never *can* find a thing when one wants it."

"Never mind it, my dear Mrs. Spurling," rejoined Ireton; "we can taste the rum when he returns. We shall have Mr. Wild here presently, and I wouldn't for the world—Zounds!" he exclaimed, as the figure of the thieftaker appeared at the wicket, "here he is. Off with you, Caliban! Fly, you rascal!"

"Mr. Wild here!" exclaimed Mrs. Spurling in alarm. "Oh gracious! he's lost."

"Who's lost?" demanded Ireton.

"The key," replied the widow.

All the turnkeys rose to salute the thieftaker, whose habitually-sullen countenance looked gloomier than usual. Ireton rushed forward to open the wicket for him.

"No Blueskin, I perceive, sir," he observed, in a deferential tone, as Wild entered the Lodge.

"No," replied Jonathan, moodily. I've been deceived by false information. But the wench who tricked me shall bitterly repent it. I hope this is all. I begin to fear I might be

purposely got out of the way. Nothing has gone wrong here?"

"Nothing whatever," replied Ireton. "Jack is just gone back to the Condemned Hold. His two wives have been here."

"Ha!" exclaimed Jonathan, with a sudden vehemence that electrified the chief turnkey; "what's this! a spike gone! 'Sdeath! the women, you say, have been here. He has escaped."

"Impossible, sir," replied Ireton, greatly alarmed.

"Impossible!" echoed Wild, with a fearful imprecation. "No, sir, it's quite possible—more than possible. It's certain. I'll lay my life he's gone. Come with me to the Condemned Hold directly, and, if I find my fears confirmed, I'll—"

He was here interrupted by the sudden entrance of the black, who rushed precipitately into the room, letting fall the heavy bunch of keys in his fright.

"O Massa Ireton! Massa Wild!" ejaculated Caliban, "Shack Sheppart gone!"

"Gone? you black devil!—Gone?" cried Ireton.

"Iss, Massa. Caliban sarch ebery hole in de place, but Shack no dere. Only him big hoss padlock—noting else."

"I knew it," rejoined Wild, with concentrated rage; "and he escaped you all, in broad day, before your faces. You may well say it's impossible! His Majesty's gaol of Newgate is admirably guarded, I must say. Ireton, you are in league with him."

"Sir," said the chief turnkey, indignantly.

"You *are*, sir," thundered Jonathan; "and, unless you find him, you shan't hold your place a week. I don't threaten idly, as you know. And you, Austin; and you Langley I say the same thing to you."

"But, Mr. Wild," implored the turnkeys.

"I've said it," rejoined Jonathan, peremptorily. "And you, Marvel, you must have been a party—"

"I, sir!"

"If he's not found, I'll get a new hangman."

"Zounds!" cried Marvel, "I—"

"Hush!" whispered the tapstress, "or I retract my promise."

"Mrs. Spurling," said Jonathan, who overheard the whisper, "you owe your situation to me. If you have aided Jack Sheppard's escape, you shall owe your discharge to me also."

"As you please, sir," replied the tapstress, coolly. "And the next time Captain Darrell wants a witness, I promise you he shan't look for one in vain."

"Ha! hussy, dare you threaten?" cried Wild; but, checking himself, he turned to Ireton and asked, "How long have the women been gone?"

"Scarcely five minutes," replied the latter.

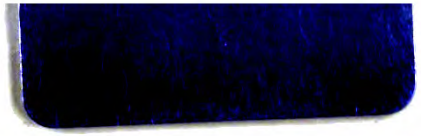
"One of you fly to the market," returned Jonathan; "another to the river; a third to the New Mint. Disperse in every direction. We'll have him yet. A hundred pounds to the man who takes him."

So saying, he rushed out, followed by Ireton and Langley.

"A hundred pounds!" exclaimed Shotbolt. "That's a glorious reward. Do you think he'll pay it?"

"I'm sure of it," replied Austin.

"Then I'll have it before to-morrow morning," said the keeper of the New Prison, to himself. "If Jack Sheppard sups with Mr. Kneebone, I'll make one of the party."

END OF SECOND VOLUME.

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