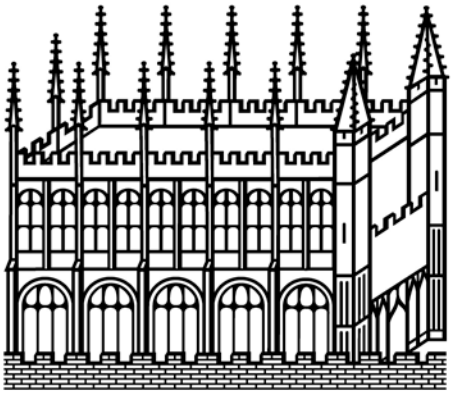

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# DE PROFUNDIS

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## A Tale of the Social Deposits

BY

WILLIAM GILBERT

AUTHOR OF "SHIRLEY HALL ASYLUM," "MARGARET MEADOWS," ETC.

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# DE PROFUNDIS.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE DESTROYING ANGEL PASSES OVER THE RENTS.

WE must now return to our hero and his wife. The poultry trade flourished with them remarkably well, so much so that they had already contrived to put by several pounds in the savings bank. Meffy conducted his part of the business satisfactorily enough. Duke every evening gave him an account of the day's sales, paying him the price agreed on, and the stipulated royalty on the profits. Twice a week, at the appointed spot in the neighbourhood of Kennington Common, Duke met Meffy's friend from the country and received from him a basket of poultry, sometimes larger than at other times, but always fresh and good, if occasionally a

little skinny. As soon as Duke had received them he returned home, and the mortuary toilet of the deceased birds commenced. In this the skill and experience of Mrs. Duke were of great use to her husband, although she invariably left all the artistic points—such as trussing them so as to make them look plump, singeing them, putting on the powder so as to diminish as much as possible any appearance of age, and other matters of the same kind—entirely to the superior delicacy of touch of her husband. When everything was ready, Duke would don his smock-frock, which Jemima used to keep as scrupulously clean as those we see in ballets at the Victoria Theatre—where, in fact, she had acquired her notions of a pastoral life—and start on his round. He had contrived by his civility to obtain a very respectable *clientèle,* so much so that he had more than once entertained the question of taking a small shop in the Wandsworth Road, and adding to the poultry trade the tripe and dogs' meat business; but Jemima very justly reminded him how dangerous a failing was ambition, and as he very properly looked upon her as his better half, he subdued his aspirations till their circumstances should be based upon a more solid foundation than they were at that moment, flourishing as they seemed to be.

On the morning after the Monday evening on

which the scene we have narrated took place at Mr. Mostyn's, when Jessie Morgan went to give notice at the savings bank that she intended withdrawing her ten pounds, Meffy called on Duke and Jemima as he descended the staircase, and told them he had come to bid them good bye for some days. He could not say how long, probably a fortnight. He had an uncle who was very ill who wished to see him, and although he did not expect to inherit anything by his death, still it was only Christian-like on his part to see the old man on his death-bed. Jemima thoroughly agreed with him, and told him it was very kind of him to go and do so. Meffy seemed pleased at her approval, and then, addressing Duke, he told him that the poultry would arrive as usual, and that he had better not pay the carrier when he brought it, but keep the money till his (Meffy's) return, when they could settle everything, including the rent. Duke, of course, had no further objection to offer than his sorrow at losing Meffy's society for the time he should be absent, but as there was no alternative he shook hands with his friend and wished him a happy journey, at least as happy as was possible considering the melancholy nature of his errand. Jemima fully concurred in her husband's good wishes, and Meffy left them.

During the first week of Meffy's absence things went on with Duke and his wife in a perfectly satis-

factory manner, so much so that on the Saturday evening, when taking stock, they found their week's returns to have been greater than any they had had since they commenced their new line of business. One thing only gave them any annoyance, and that was that the last quantity of poultry they had received from the country had been far greater than usual, and a considerable portion of it remained yet unsold, but as the weather was cold, and their out-house well adapted for the purpose, there was little risk in their keeping it till the Monday in a perfect state of preservation.

On the Monday, as usual, Duke started for the beat he was accustomed to take on that day of the week, and he returned home somewhat later than usual, it being nearly six o'clock. He had made a very successful day of it; in fact, when he entered his house he had but one fowl left. Its exceptional state, perhaps, after all was not much to be wondered at, as it had by no means a pleasant appearance. It was thin and scraggy, and the skin of its legs told it had formerly been younger. Indeed, Duke was somewhat ashamed of it, if the truth must be told, and had resolved he would not again offer it to his customers. Jemima approved of the resolution he had come to, and they then deliberated what should be done with

it. Jemima opined that it would be rather hard eating if boiled, and uneatable if roasted, but at the same time she quoted, unknowingly of course, the Italian proverb that "an old cock makes good broth," and submitted that it might be tried in that shape. From this Duke dissented, as he had a truly British aversion to "slops" of any kind, but at the same time he saw no objection to its being boiled for their supper. While the discussion was going on, some one tapped at the door, and on being told to come in, Gobby made his appearance. He was evidently agitated about something, for there was a disturbed appearance on his countenance very different from its usual placid cast.

"I say, mate," he said, addressing Duke, "I wish you or your missus would lend us a hand. That poor girl, the soldier's wife, is very bad."

"What is the matter with her?" inquired Mrs. Duke.

"Why, you see, she has never been well since she was confined about six weeks since, but has been getting worse and worse. It's consumption, the doctor says, and he gave her something to rub her chest with, but I suspect starvation is a precious deal nearer the mark."

"Don't her husband do anything for her?"

"What can he do?" said Gobby; "he's now with his regiment in Dublin, and he could not help her

much if he was here. He sent her ten shillings the week before last, but she was owing pretty well the whole of it for rent."

"How is the baby?"

"Dying, I think. I don't believe it will live till morning, and I ain't over sure the mother will either."

"What has she had to-day?" inquired Mrs. Duke.

"Nothing at all; leastwise, I got her a hot saveloy, but she said it made her sick. Now, I say, missus, do come; it will be very kind of you if you will. There isn't a soul for her to speak to but myself, and I ain't much use."

"Well," said Mrs. Duke, "go back, and I will be over in two or three minutes."

"Well, that's very kind of you," said Gobby; and he left the house.

No sooner had he gone than Mrs. Duke proposed to her husband that they should put the fowl on the fire which had occasioned their conversation, and make some broth for the poor creature, and to this proposition of his wife's Duke gave a ready assent. Jemima then brought forward her best saucepan, wiped it out with her apron, filled it with water, and hastily arranging the fowl, placed it in it. She threw some fresh coals on the fire, placed the saucepan on them, and then went down on her

knees to blow up a flame. While she was thus occupied, another person knocked at the door and was told to come in. No second invitation was needed, for the door immediately opened, and Jemima, imagining it was Gobby, went on with her occupation, leaving Duke, who was seated on a chair leaning his head on the table, and half asleep after the fatigues of the day, to answer him.

"I say, Jemmy Ducks, are you good-natured to-night?" said a hoarse female voice.

Jemima, in astonishment, turned her head round to see the visitor, and to her intense disgust recognised Mrs. O'Flaherty. Duke was as much surprised as his wife, but said nothing, as he had hardly recovered himself from his doze. Jemima, before answering, placed the bellows on the ground, and rose from her knees, but even then her indignation was so great she could not find words to express her feelings. It was more than she as a loving wife could bear, to hear such a creature as Mrs. O'Flaherty speak to her husband with such familiarity; and more than that, not only to make such a base parody on his name, which had been given him in honour of the Duke of Wellington, but also to convey in it an allusion to his present line of business. Drawing her gigantic form up to its full proportions she prepared herself to speak with a dignity calculated to overpower the impudent intruder, but Mrs.

O'Flaherty was too quick for her. Pretending to be unconscious even of the presence of the virtuous Jemima, she broke in with, "Ducks, be a good fellow, and lend us a hand. There's that poor fellow Stride so ill to-night, I hardly think he'll live till morning. The dispensary doctor says that nothing but good food will keep him up, and that I can't get him, for I'm hard up. I wouldn't ask you, Ducks, if I could, and God knows I've tried hard enough to-night. But I can get nothing, either by fair means or foul. Whenever I went into a public-house and saw any of my old pals, and asked them to lend me a tanner, they all refused me, but offered me a glass of gin. When I told them I should be thankful for it if they'd let me take it to a poor devil I had got at home, they laughed at me and said I only wanted to prig the glass it was in. Well, then I thought I'd try what I could do somewhere else, but it was all useless. If I went into a shop or spoke to a respectable person, I always found a Bobby at my elbow."

"And quite right too, ma'am," said Jemima, with great dignity.

"Who spoke to you, ma'am?" said Mrs. O'Flaherty. "Mind your own business, and speak when you're spoken to."

"I think, ma'am," said Jemima, her dignity and her temper rising at the same time, "when you speak

to my husband in that familiar way I have a right to interfere, and I will."

"Now be quiet," said Duke, "both of you. Is it really true that Stride is so bad as you say?"

"Go over and judge for yourself," said Mrs. O'Flaherty. "I will remain here rather than make your wife jealous."

"Jealous, indeed, ma'am," said Jemima. "Jealous of such a thing as you are. I must be low indeed."

Patience under provocation was hardly one of Mrs. O'Flaherty's attributes, and she commenced a retort in terms we are hardly at liberty to quote. Duke, however, again interfered.

"If you will come over with me, I will go at once," he said to Mrs. O'Flaherty.

"Thank you," said that lady, in a sardonic manner, "but I've a character to lose, and I shall not go with you."

Mrs. Duke laughed sarcastically, and the danger between the two ladies of coming to extremities was again apparent, and poor Duke hardly knew how to act. He wished to help Stride if he could, but he was afraid of leaving Mrs. O'Flaherty and his wife together.

Mrs. O'Flaherty understood him. "Ducks," said she, "go over and see Stride. I will remain outside your door till you come back, so that your wife can see me if she likes. You are a good fellow," she con-

tinued, "and I should be sorry to annoy you, or I should like to pitch into that beauty of yours amazingly."

Duke thought the better way to put a termination to the scene would be for him to go at once. He inquired whether there was a light in Stride's room.

"Where was I to get a light from?" was the answer. "There's a fire, but I was obliged to break up one of my two chairs to make that."

"Which is his room?" inquired Duke, who only knew Stride by sight.

"The top one, to be sure. Take care how you go up the staircase, because it's rather dangerous."

Duke immediately crossed over to the other side of the Rents, and Mrs. O'Flaherty placed herself outside Duke's door, where she remained, singing at the top of her voice, "Oh, she is beautiful," to let Mrs. Duke know she was there. Jemima in the meantime remained in her room, her mind the while offering a singular psychological study. She was seated on a chair half-way between the door and the fireplace, her eye fixed on the saucepan, and her opposite ear listening to the song of Mrs. O'Flaherty, which she rightly interpreted to be one of defiance. The fire was burning brightly, and the saucepan was boiling, so, that giving her little anxiety, she could bring her mind to bear the better on Mrs. O'Flaherty. The longer she listened the stronger grew her anger,

and an almost irrepressible desire came over her to come into personal collision with her annoyer. Still she restrained herself, her innate dignity telling her she would lose caste, even if she succeeded in the battle, by mixing her name up with that of a creature of the kind. But the desire increased, and she was on the point of giving way to it when, fortunately, Mrs. O'Flaherty was silent for a moment, and the next Duke entered, the last of her words which reached Mrs. Duke's ears being, "You are a good fellow, Ducks, after all."

Jemima received her husband in anything but a gracious manner. She felt annoyed with him for his conduct to Mrs. O'Flaherty, and that lady's last words by no means shed oil on the troubled waters. Duke, however, took no notice of his wife's ill humour, but simply contented himself with asking how the chicken broth was getting on. He received no answer. He repeated the question with no better success. "Jemima," said Duke, with considerable (for him) sternness of manner, "don't let us have any ill humour. That poor fellow Stride is dying, and that vixen has behaved very well to him. Some time you may want help yourself, and you will be grateful to those who are kind to you, and you ought to be pleased to see kindness in others."

Jemima was more touched by the words of her husband than she would have been by a sermon

from the Archbishop of Canterbury. She answered him not a word, but stooping down, she kissed him on the forehead as he stood upright, and then attended to the broth. Finding everything progressing satisfactorily, she left it in charge of her husband, and crossed over the Rents to Gobby's.

Of the visit of Duke to Stride there is little to be told, and that little very sad. Duke, when he got to the house, with great difficulty succeeded in getting upstairs. When he entered the poor man's room he could hardly breathe, so fœtid was the atmosphere. The room was a picture of abject misery. The window panes, with one exception, were all broken, but most of them had wisps of straw or hay, or rags, thrust into them to keep out the cold. Yet through the broken tiles in more than one place it entered, forming the only ventilation the room possessed. A little fire, not more in bulk than might be held in the two hands, was on the hearthstone, which not only was sufficient to shed a dim light in the room, but to prove by some of the unburnt portions of the fuel that Mrs. O'Flaherty's statement was true, that it was made of the parts of her broken chair. On a sort of bed or mattress on the ground, apparently composed of flock, hay, and shavings mixed together, with a scanty torn coverlid over him, was poor Stride. Death had already set his seal upon his brow, but he was perfectly placid and resigned. Duke stooped

down to him and said kindly, "I dare say you do not know who I am, but I live in the Rents over the way. Mrs. O'Flaherty tells me you are very ill, and I have come to know if I can do anything for you."

"I am very much obliged to you," said the sick man; "if you could give me my Bible, which is on the window-sill, and get me a candle, it is all that I want; I know I am going, and I thank God for it."

"Certainly," said Duke, "I will send you a candle; but don't you want anything to eat?"

"No, thank you. Mrs. O'Flaherty says I ought to eat something or I shall die, but I do not care about it; the sooner I die the better, for my life is a trouble to others, and no comfort to myself."

"But," said Duke kindly, "can't I do anything else for you?"

"Nothing that I know of, thank you; at least nothing that I have a right to ask you to do for me, although, God knows, it gives me great sorrow to think of it."

"What is it?" said Duke.

"That I shall be buried by the parish."

When Duke was entering his own house he saw (and heard) Mrs. O'Flaherty standing at the door. "There's half-a-crown," he said, "get a candle for Stride, and anything else he wants. I will see him to-morrow before I go out." The answer was the

one already quoted, which aroused Mrs. Duke's anger.

Jemima, when she reached Gobby's house, made her way up the dark staircase as well as she could, and entered the room where the poor soldier's wife lay. The furniture was of the poorest, still vastly superior to that in Stride's chamber. Here, at any rate, was an apology for a decent bed. A fireplace was in the chimney, and in it was some fire. There was, moreover, a small old three-legged table, on which burned a candle, and a dilapidated chair. Jemima proceeded at once to the bed, and placed herself on the side opposite to Gobby. The poor creature looked at her with that painful smile on her countenance that those who have had much experience with poor helpless sick women must have often remarked they show to those who visit them on a mission of mercy.

"I have been making you some nice chicken-broth," said Jemima; "as soon as it is done I will bring it over. My husband is looking after it."

The poor woman bowed her head as if to thank her, but said nothing; she was too weak to speak.

"How is the baby?" inquired Jemima.

The soldier's wife pulled down the ragged counterpane sufficiently for Jemima to see an emaciated, pallid little infant, in whom no human skill could put a week's life. It was apparently asleep, nestling, with its eyes half open, against its mother's side, yet

more probably was quiet from sheer want of vital stamina to cry. The mother first slightly bent her head to look at the child, and then raised her eyes with that peculiarly imploring expression of countenance with which women show their sick babies to those they have reliance in.

"What a nice little fellow," said Jemima soothingly (Jemima, naturally good as she was, had heavier sins to answer for than that falsehood). The poor mother again cast her eyes for a moment on her child, and then raising them filled with tears, said, in a voice "so low that nothing stood 'twixt it and silence:" "How I wish it could live till he sees it."

There was not, however, the slightest prospect of such a happiness for the poor woman; and Jemima, willing as she was to please the mother, had not the face to encourage her, so she turned the conversation on the usual subject of keeping her strength up, and remaining quiet, and not worrying herself for her baby's sake. "Now do see, dear, if you cannot go to sleep for half-an-hour, and when you wake up I will go for the chicken-broth, as it will be done by that time."

Mrs. O'Flaherty, immediately after receiving Duke's half-crown, spent a shilling of it in buying some milk, some gin, some bread and butter, and a candle. She then returned home, and after sticking the candle in an old bottle she lighted it, and taking

a little saucepan from her own room she proceeded to warm the milk. When it was ready she put it into a teacup, and placing a little gin in it, she took it to the bedside, and raising Stride's head, with great gentleness she put the teacup to his lips. The poor creature had great difficulty in swallowing, and turned his head aside from it, which appeared to enrage Mrs. O'Flaherty greatly, and she showered on him a volley of abuse as if to encourage him. To please her he made a second attempt to swallow, but it was unsuccessful, and Mrs. O'Flaherty, without one moment ceasing her abuse, placed the teacup beside her, and then lowered the patient's head on his pillow. The language of the virago, and her exquisite gentleness of manner and touch in handling him, formed a singular contrast. She was evidently a most experienced nurse; where she had acquired her experience it is impossible to say.

Finding he was in great pain, she resolved on dressing his wound. For that purpose she first removed the Bible from his bed. This she did with singular reverence, the more so as no one had ever seen her inside a church. Whenever he asked for the Bible she always brought it to him without a word of abuse, but by no persuasion could he get her to read it to him, although he frequently implored her, his eyesight being bad; yet her refusals were also free from any objectionable language. She now

proceeded to uncover the ghastly wound and apply to it the dressing she had that morning received from the hospital. All this was done gently, rapidly, and skilfully, and the poor fellow felt a momentary ease as she gently replaced his head on his pillow of rags. For a moment she was silent, when noticing Stride's lips move, she bent forward to catch more easily his words. "What a pity it is," he said, "that you who are so good should use such bad language!" Mrs. O'Flaherty gave a sort of satirical chuckle, but for the moment remained silent. Presently she said, bitterly, "I suppose, Stride, you think I ought to repent and become respectable. It ain't so easy a job as you seem to think. Three or four years ago I determined to try it; I was really sorry for my behaviour; perhaps sometimes I am now, but that is neither here nor there. Well, I went to a parson who preaches a great deal to his fallen sisters, as he calls them. I told him how sorry I was, and how much I wished to become respectable. He looked at me doubtfully for a moment. 'What is your age?' he said. 'Forty-five, sir,' I answered. He shook his head sorrowfully. 'I am afraid,' he said, 'there is very little faith to be placed in the repentance of a woman when once she has passed forty.' No, Stride, what I am I shall remain. Everybody hates me—perhaps they are right—and I hate everybody in return."

Then after a few minutes' silence, she said, with greater feeling in her tone and manner than those who knew her would have considered possible for her to assume, "Stride, if ever I have offended you, and I dare say I have, forgive me, I never meant it. It's my way, and I could not help it." Stride was too weak to answer, but he put out his hand for her to take. "How cold your hand is!" she said; "put it under the clothes again." She assisted him in doing so, threw her ragged shawl over him on the bed to increase the warmth, and then seated herself at the foot of the bed. Here she sat quietly for some time, her head bent on her breast. Presently she raised her eyes, and glanced at her patient. He was quiet, perfectly so, and his breathing could hardly be heard. "Poor devil," she said; "I'm glad you're easy, anyhow." She then resumed her former position, and was silent for more than half an hour. Finding Stride perfectly quiet and easy, she rose from her seated position, and after placing the candle on the chimney-piece, so that it might not attract his attention, she left the room and softly descended to her own. There, groping about, with considerable ease however, for there was but little furniture, she contrived to find a flat pint bottle, like those occasionally seen in gin shops; she put it in her pocket, and without troubling herself about bonnet or shawl, she left the house.

In the other sick room, Jemima sat quietly giving the dying woman what aid she could till she imagined the broth was ready, Gobby standing by the other side of the bed, perfectly silent and motionless. She then rose, and telling Gobby in a whisper not to leave the room till she returned, she descended the stairs, and crossed over to her own house. There she found her husband on duty over the chicken broth, which Jemima tasted and pronounced excellent. She then took it from the fire and poured some of it into a basin, and after placing in it as much pepper and salt as was requisite for the seasoning, she requested Duke would go to bed that he might with greater certainty rise early and refreshed the next morning. Duke, who implicitly obeyed his wife in everything, had already commenced his night toilet before she had closed the door, but was arrested by hearing the sound of Jemima's voice as if in anger. She was answered by another voice still more angry than her own, and in a few moments the altercation became serious, and Duke ceased his undressing and rushed out to take his wife's part. When outside the door, he found Jemima and Mrs. O'Flaherty in violent dispute, Mrs. O'Flaherty making use of language we must decline repeating, and Jemima, we regret to add, was raising her voice to an extent she would have shuddered at the idea of in her quieter mo-

ments. The dispute increased in intensity notwithstanding all Duke's attempts at peace-making, when fortunately, a policeman passing the end of the Rents and hearing the noise, immediately interposed his authority. Jemima now for the first time became aware of the impropriety of her conduct, and she darted rapidly into her patient's house, leaving her husband and the policeman together. Of course Mrs. O'Flaherty was acquainted with the policeman, and she immediately appealed to him for protection from the unprovoked attack of Jemima, but the policeman most ungallantly paid no attention to her complaint, and told her that if she did not immediately make herself scarce, he would lock her up for making a disturbance. Mrs. O'Flaherty took the hint, and returned to her own home, complaining the while of the wickedness of the world in general and policemen in particular. The policeman remained talking with Duke for a few minutes after her departure, and then went on his beat, and Duke betook himself to his house, and shortly afterwards was in bed, but for some hours was not asleep.

Mrs. Duke, when she again entered the sick room, found the baby was crying and its mother attempting to calm it. Both the child's cry and the mother's voice told how little of life remained in either. So weak was the mother that in spite of her exertions to raise herself on her elbow, she was

unable to do so. Jemima took the infant from her and placed it for the moment in Gobby's arms, while she arranged the bed of the mother. She placed the pillow in such a manner as to allow her to sit up to take the broth, and then raised her to a sitting position, but the moment afterwards she was obliged to alter it again, for the poor creature had fainted in consequence of the exertion. So severe was the fainting fit, that Jemima became greatly alarmed lest life was extinct, but presently her patient somewhat recovered. As soon as she was sensible, Jemima took a teaspoon and commenced feeding her with the chicken broth. The sick woman swallowed it with great difficulty. Presently she made a movement with her hand indicative of not wishing for more. She became paler, if possible, slightly turned her head on her pillow, and then remained motionless. The baby in Gobby's arms again commenced its faint cry, but its mother took no notice of it. Jemima, judging from her silence, thought that perhaps she would like to sleep, and whispered to Gobby that he would do well to take the infant down into his own room for a little while, that it might not disturb its mother. Gobby, without reply, walked with it to the door, and Jemima, taking up the candle, lighted him downstairs, and having procured him a light, left him.

Gobby now employed himself in walking to and

fro in his little room, trying to calm the baby the while by imitating, as closely as his hoarse voice would allow him, the tones of a nurse trying to induce a fractious infant to sleep. But all without avail; the low, moaning cry still continued. He stopped short in his walk, and uncovering its face, looked at it for a moment, and then sorrowfully shook his head. He covered the baby up again and recommenced his walk, determining to try what effect his singing would have on it, and commenced, in an intended sweet tone of voice, a song, of which the following is a verse:

"As we sailed down the river clear,
The twenty-eighth day of May,
Every ship that we passed by,
We heard the sailors say—

"'There goes a crew of clever lads,
We're sorry for to say,
That for some crime or else another
They're going to Botany Bay.'"

The music had no soothing effect on the baby, and it kept up unceasingly its low faint cry. Gobby stopped in his singing, and opening his cupboard, took from it a little jug, at the bottom of which remained a few tea-spoonfuls of milk from his tea. He then took a small piece of bread, and soaking it in the milk, placed it to the baby's lips, thinking it might be hungry. The poor infant answered his kindness

only by increasing somewhat its cry; and Gobby, finding it could not swallow, again replaced the jug in the cupboard, and recommenced his singing:—

"There is a girl in London town,
A girl I know full well,
If e'er I get my *libertie*
Along with her I'll dwell.
If e'er I get my *libertie*
I'll forsake all other girls,
I'll quit all evil company,
And adieu to New South Wales."

He continued his ditty (it was apparently the only one he knew), and he flattered himself with good effect, for the baby became somewhat quieter. Pleased with his success he sang somewhat louder and in a more jovial tone, and the baby's cry ceased entirely. He paused for a moment in his singing, and listened. Suddenly an inexplicable, solemn feeling came over him he could not account for. Breathlessly he removed the flannel from before its face, and in a moment he knew all—the baby was a corpse!

Gobby reverently replaced the piece of flannel over the face of the child, and remained for a moment in doubt what steps he should take. At last he resolved to seek Jemima, and ask her advice. He crept breathlessly and without his shoes upstairs, so as not to attract the attention of the mother; but careful as he was Jemima heard him. When he saw

her the expression of her countenance told that something sad was going on in the room—the poor mother was dying. When he entered, the last mechanical, spasmodical movement which precedes death was all that remained of life. The two stood by the bedside, Gobby with the dead infant in his arms, watching the mother's dissolution. They had but a little time to wait, and "dust was dust." The returned convict did not attempt to restrain his tears, and the tall, heavy, corpulent, one-eyed woman was positively beautiful from the expression of her countenance. They placed the poor woman straight in her bed, and Gobby replaced the infant on her breast; then, leaving a candle burning on the table, they silently and sorrowfully left the room.

The next morning, when Duke woke, he went over to inquire after Stride. The door of the poor fellow's room was open, and he walked in. On the foot of the bed was seated Mrs. O'Flaherty, apparently asleep, and evidently drunk, for beside her was the pint bottle of gin, empty. On the bed lay poor Stride, happily dead. Duke attempted to arouse the drunken woman, but in vain, all the answer he could get was, "What's the odds?"

Although we shall somewhat anticipate the current of events, we will first narrate the funerals of those who have just quitted our stage, and then return and continue our story. Poor Stride was, as he dreaded,

buried by the parish; fortunately for him he was where it could give him no annoyance. He had no mourner. Mrs. O'Flaherty, to do her justice, had resolved on acting in that capacity, but a slight dispute with a lady in the Broadway, followed by an invitation from a policeman to accompany him to the station-house, and a request from the magistrate to seclude herself from public observation for the space of fourteen days, prevented her. In plain English, Mrs. O'Flaherty found her hand in the pocket of a lady with whom she was unacquainted, and the said lady, disregarding Mrs. O'Flaherty's excuse, that "it was so cold one was glad to put one's hand anywhere," gave her then and there in charge, and in prison she remained for some time after the funeral was over. She had already constituted herself Stride's executor, and had given notice to the parish authorities that a funeral would be required. Her treatment of the few effects of her deceased friend was somewhat singular. The Bible she took for herself. She had not the slightest title to it, but she evidently did not look upon the act she had committed as a theft, for she did not in any way attempt to conceal it, but treated it openly with great reverence, and placed it carefully on the top of an old chest of drawers, the only decent piece of furniture she had in her room. His clothes were poor indeed, but those who have

noticed the business transacted in old clothes in very poor neighbourhoods know full well that nothing is too mean or ragged to find a purchaser. These, singular to say, she did not touch, but left them in the hands of the parish undertaker's men. As the poor fellow had nothing more, there was no disputing about his effects, and in two days after his decease the earth covered the mortal remains of a quiet, inoffensive, much-enduring man.

The soldier's poor young wife, though buried by the parish, had more respect shown her. Gobby did all that he could in order that the funeral should be as *comfortable* as possible. Jemima, for reasons which we will explain hereafter, did not appear in the matter. When the poor creature was placed in her coffin, Gobby took great care that the infant's head should lean on her arm and on the left side, "so that it might be nearest her heart." He then tried to get some flowers to place in the coffin, as "they used to do in the part of the world he came from," wherever that might have been. The time was winter, and no flowers were to be had, at least not with his limited resources, and he bought some sweet herbs instead. When it was time to take the body to the grave he waited down in the Rents with the crowd, quietly smoking his pipe. As the body passed him, as a mark of respect he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and followed the funeral,

though at a considerable distance. When it arrived in the graveyard he placed himself some forty or fifty feet off while the service was being read. He took off his hat, but turned his head slightly another way, as if he wished it to be thought it was for his own convenience he did so, and not that he was attending the funeral. When the clergyman had finished Gobby put on his hat to watch the gravediggers fill up the grave. The men appeared in a hurry, and took up full spadefuls of earth and flung them heavily on the coffin. Noticing this, he advanced to them.

"I say, mates," said he, "you need not pitch it in so heavily as that."

"Are you afraid it will wake her?" asked one.

"No, but it would seem kinder if you did it more quietly."

"Did you know her?"

"Yes, well, and she was as good a creature as ever lived."

"I did not know you knew her," said the gravedigger, using far less force in his work; "who was she?"

"She was the wife of a soldier, and her husband's away."

"Poor thing," said the gravedigger, evidently totally uninterested in the history of the deceased, but perfectly willing to sympathise with the feelings of her

living friend. "Poor thing, that's very bad though," and the conversation continued in the same strain till his work was done. The gravedigger then commenced treading the ground in, not stamping, but doing it very gently, and when he had finished he smoothed the earth down with his spade with considerable care. "Thankee, mate," said Gobby, when he had finished. "All right," said the gravedigger, cleaning his spade with a piece of an old coffin he had picked up.

Gobby walked home sad enough; he continued there till the evening, and then, possibly thinking that a little exertion might have the effect of raising his spirits, he took up his bag and left the house. An hour afterwards he was seen near Kensington Church, pressing his wares on the passers-by. He had obtained a singular collection from some merchant, or, what is far more probable, in consequence of his continued attendance on the soldier's wife for some days past he had been unable to provide a new stock, and so had made a collection of the remaining portions of his old stocks and formed them into what, in custom-house phraseology, is termed a "rummage sale." A short quotation from his address will show the reader the varied character of his wares:—

"A collection of forty-five favourite songs sung before her Majesty at Windsor, and containing, besides all the new and fashionable nigger melodies,

the celebrated songs of 'I'd be a butterfly,' 'The light guitar,' 'The sea, the sea, the open sea,' 'I've been roaming,' 'Cherry ripe,' 'My heart and lute,' 'Come dwell with me.' Also a piece of glass on which any lady wishing to know the initials of the man she is to marry has only to breathe upon it and they will immediately appear and vanish again as soon as she has seen them. This has been shown to the members of the Geological Society, who declared it was the greatest curiosity in animated nature. Likewise an entertaining collection of the newest riddles: 'When is a door not a door?—When its a-jar.' 'Why can't a bishop eat his apron?—Because it goes against his stomach.' 'When is a man thinner than a lath?—When he's a shaving.' 'What is the first thing a young lady does when she goes into church?—She looks out for the hymns (hims).' 'Why is an oyster the most wonderful animal in nature?—Because he's got a beard and he's got no chin, and he's taken out of his bed to be tucked in.' 'Why is a novel writer the most wonderful of men?—Because his tale (tail) comes out of his head.' And forty others. The whole (including all the articles I have mentioned) are well adapted for a long evening's amusement, and are now to be sold for the small charge of one penny."

## CHAPTER II.

### SOME MORE OF MR. MEFFY'S HANDIWORK AGAIN.

DUKE, on the morning after Stride's death, dressed himself in his countryman's attire and proceeded to the usual place of rendezvous near Kennington Common. When there he had to wait for some time, Meffy's agent not having arrived. He seated himself very composedly on his basket, and beguiled the time by thinking of the sad end of poor Stride and the disgraceful state of inebriety of Mrs. O'Flaherty. He was not without some terror that the virago, when she had recovered from her drunken condition, would again renew her quarrel with Jemima. The more he thought on this point the more anxious did he become, and he looked round impatiently for the man who was to bring the poultry, that he might return with it to the Rents, and while drawing and plucking

the fowls he could keep an eye on Mrs. O'Flaherty's movements as well. No man with poultry was, however, in sight, but a plain-looking, respectable, strong-built man was, and moreover he was advancing leisurely towards Duke, not as if he wished to speak to him, but simply because his road lay in his direction. When, however, he had reached Duke, he stopped, and in a countryman's tone of voice he asked him which was the way to Vauxhall Bridge, as he had that morning come up from the country and had lost himself. Duke immediately informed him, and in return asked if he had seen a man with a basket of poultry on his arm, as he had expected to meet one there. The stranger said that he had not, but that if he came across him he would send him to Duke. Then civilly wishing our hero good morning, the stranger continued on his road.

About a quarter of an hour afterwards Duke's correspondent arrived with a quantity of remarkably fine poultry, which was transferred into Duke's basket, who immediately turned his steps homewards. He had not proceeded far before he met the stranger who had accosted him a quarter of an hour before.

"Can't you find your way?" said Duke.

"No I can't at all," replied the stranger, eyeing Duke's basket attentively.

"I am going that way myself," said Duke; "I will show it you, if you like."

The stranger thanked Duke very warmly for his civility, and they started off together. The first public-house they arrived at the countryman insisted on treating Duke, who, nothing loth, accepted the invitation. When they again continued their road, the stranger found, probably as he had expected, that the beer had considerably loosened Duke's tongue, and the pair talked together in a very friendly manner. The conversation was led by the stranger, who talked of many things, but poultry in particular. Although from the country, he knew nothing about poultry, and asked Duke if keeping them was profitable. Duke replied he knew nothing about breeding poultry, but he thought it must be; "but," he continued with great caution, not wishing to get another competitor into the market, "there ain't much got by selling them." The stranger inquired if Duke kept a shop, and in what manner the London markets were supplied. Duke, unfortunately, did not keep a shop; he got his living by selling poultry about the streets. The stranger inquired if he had been long in the line?

"About three months," said Duke.

"Then," said the stranger, "you must be pretty well up in the trade. You've got a hawker's license of course?"

"Of course," said Duke, colouring slightly.

They had now arrived at the bridge, and the

stranger politely insisted on paying the toll for both, which Duke would not allow, and they continued their road together as amicably as possible. When they had arrived at the Middlesex side of the bridge the stranger asked Duke to show him Rochester Row, as he wanted to make a call there. Duke not only promised he would, but offered to go that way to his own house, saying it did not make ten yards' difference. At last they reached Rochester Row, and when they had arrived opposite the police-station the stranger stopped and told Duke he was going no further, and was obliged to him for having conducted him so far; "but," he continued, "I am a policeman, though in plain clothes, and I should not be doing my duty if I did not ask you to show me your license." Duke was aghast. The fact was he had no license; the one he had taken out had long since expired, and he had never renewed it. However, he determined to put the best face he could on the matter, and asked the stranger how he could be sure he was a policeman. The man replied quietly that he had only his word to offer in proof, it was true, but if he would ask any of the policemen opposite he would find out that it was a fact. "I preferred," he continued, "asking you myself, being in plain clothes, as it would be more pleasing to your feelings than if I was in uniform." Duke, finding there was no way of avoiding the question, replied

that his license was at home, as he did not consider it necessary to have it always in his pocket.

"But that's against the law," said the policeman. "You had better come in here and send for your license, and then you can go on quietly enough."

"But," said Duke, catching at a straw, "I am not selling poultry now, and I do not require my license."

"You forget," said the detective, "that when you were in the public-house you offered to sell a couple of fowls to the landlord, and the bargain only went off because he would not give you within a shilling of your money."

Duke remembered the circumstance full well, and made no further remark, but accompanied the policeman into the station-house. They, however, treated him civilly enough, and allowed him to sit down while a messenger was sent to Jemima for the license.

Jemima, after she had performed the last sad offices for the soldier's wife, returned to her own home; and after Duke had left she threw herself, dressed as she was, on the bed, and in a few moments was fast asleep; nor did she wake till the messenger from the police-office tapped at her window. She was somewhat surprised and alarmed at the man's appearance, but he told her there was no occasion for her to worry herself, it was only as a matter of

form the inspector wanted to see the license. She found it with some little difficulty, and when the man was gone she again threw herself on the bed, but could not sleep. A certain indefinable sensation of fear came over her she could not account for. She turned over and over again the words of the messenger, that there was no occasion to be afraid, that her husband had especially sent word for her to be quite easy on the matter, and not to trouble herself to come to the station, as he should be home in half an hour; still she could not shake off the foreboding that some misfortune was hanging over her. She determined on waiting the half hour named, but as the time advanced her anxiety became in proportion greater. The half hour expired, but Duke did not arrive. Jemima now rose from her bed, and while resolving to wait some time longer, began dressing herself to leave the house. She had now waited fully an hour, and Duke had not made his appearance, and she determined to run the risk of his displeasure and follow him to the police-station. When she arrived there she found matters worse than she had imagined, but not so much so as to cause her any alarm. She heard that Duke's licence had not been renewed since he first entered the fish-hawking business, and that the case would have to go before the magistrate. He would impose a fine which Duke would have no

difficulty in paying, and it would be a warning to him to be more careful in future.

The case was called, and Duke was placed in the dock, and the basket of poultry on a table in sight of the magistrate. The inspector of police told his worship that although on the charge-sheet the prisoner was only accused of selling poultry in the streets without a hawker's licence, he had now a far more serious charge to bring against him—that of illegal possession. For some time past a systematic robbery of poultry had been carried on in the stable-yards of gentlemen's houses in the neighbourhood of Tooting, Carshalton, Mitcham, and other localities in Surrey, and the police had been on the outlook for the thieves, but without success. That morning, from information he had received, he had placed a detective on a spot near Kennington Common, in the hope of taking two persons engaged in the robbery, one of the thieves and the receiver. The latter he thought they had caught, and he was the prisoner now at the bar for selling poultry in the streets without a hawker's licence; but, with the magistrate's permission, he would charge him with receiving goods knowing them to be stolen. He had no doubt, if his worship would grant a remand for a few days, he should be perfectly able to bring the charge home against the prisoner. After a few questions his worship granted the re-

mand asked for, and Duke was removed from the bar.

Before he entered the van Jemima had an interview with her husband, and a sorrowful one it was. His perception, naturally exceedingly blunt, was now sharpened to a point that allowed him to perceive that he had been made a dupe of, and that he should be punished as being guilty of an act of dishonesty of which he was morally innocent. Jemima could not help him on the occasion. In matters of her modest housewifery her intelligence was perhaps upon a par with others of her class, but it was now utterly useless. All she could do was to cry, and that she did with a will, indeed so bitterly did she weep that the gaoler, albeit not particularly susceptible on occasions of the kind, fairly sympathised with her, and brought her a glass of water unasked for. After Duke had left the station for the House of Detention, Jemima went back to her home, and there fairly sobbed herself into a state of comparative quietness. The next day she again attended at the police-court to ask one of the policemen to introduce her to an attorney to defend her husband. One was found who took the case on the condition he should be paid in advance, which was immediately done.

It would be a waste of time to narrate the proceedings of the next day; suffice it to say, it

was made clear to the magistrate that Duke was a systematic receiver of stolen poultry, and he was sentenced to three months' imprisonment with hard labour.

For some days after Duke was sentenced, Jemima passed her time miserably enough. She only left the house after night-fall, and then only to obtain what was necessary for her housekeeping. She had a horror of being seen. It was the first time the stigma of dishonesty had fallen on them, and she felt it acutely. Her pain was somewhat modified by the fact that at any rate the stigma was utterly undeserved. A more honest couple than Duke and his wife never existed, but we must state the truth, their integrity had but little sense to support it, and they had fallen victims to the designs of an unmitigated scoundrel.

A week had passed over, and Jemima's sorrow for her husband and for the disgrace unjustly cast on them continued as profound as ever, but she began to perceive the necessity of making head against her low spirits. She looked around, but for some time without success, for some object which might employ her thoughts, so as to distract her attention somewhat from weightier matters. Her cogitations at last resolved themselves into a desire for the only occupation open to her likely to afford her the slightest interest, and that was cleaning up the

place. Clearing her mind by a deep sigh, she arose from her chair and sought her pail and scrubbing-brush. She first determined on attacking Meffy's room, and working down *secundum artem* to her own. She had had the key left with her by that worthy, and with it she opened the door. She entered the room and looked around her with some surprise. She had, it was true, only been in once since Meffy had left, but it appeared to her as if the things, and they were few, had been moved. She reflected for a moment, but the longer she thought over the subject the more certain the fact appeared to her. At last she attempted to persuade herself she must be mistaken, and commenced her work. She scrubbed on vigorously, and evidently experienced considerable mental solace from her labour. When she had finished she cast her eye over the room and felt pleased with its artistic appearance. The cleaning of the staircase was a joint work between the blind basket-maker's wife and Jemima, week and week about, and now it was Mrs. Duke's turn. She worked on unceasingly, and in a short time she had got to the bottom. Her own room now underwent a thorough cleansing. Her customary cleaning work being completed she reflected in what other manner she could employ her time. After a little reflection she made up her mind. In the little back storehouse or room a quantity of bricks had been piled

up since they had taken the house. There formerly had been a stove there, which had been removed, and which the landlord had promised to replace, but had not kept his word. The bricks which had been taken down had remained, however, carefully built up in the corner of the room. Jemima had often thought of removing these into the little yard, and now it appeared to her just the occupation likely to distract her thoughts from unpleasant subjects. She commenced her task, and continued it till not a dozen bricks remained, when removing one she perceived under it what seemed a parcel wrapped in a piece of brown paper. She cleared the other bricks from around it and at last brought to light a small packet neatly folded up. She immediately took it up and carried it into the sitting-room, when she cautiously unfolded it. When she reached the contents she was perfectly overcome with surprise. They were composed entirely of bank notes, and for such large amounts that Jemima was somewhat puzzled to read the words on them. At last, by dint of spelling them over, and then counting them, she found the packet contained eleven bank notes for two hundred pounds each.

Jemima, when she had fully realised the fact, nearly fainted. She remained seated in her chair for some time utterly bewildered, and found some difficulty in persuading herself she was not in a

dream. Still she was obliged to admit she was perfectly awake, for there on her knees before her were the bank notes. Clearing her mind at last she resolved on her course of action. Not one thought of appropriating them to her own use ever entered her mind. There was but one idea that struck her, and that she acted upon, and sought for no other. She determined on taking the notes to the police-station in Scotland Yard, and giving them up, as doubtless the person who had lost them had already sent there about them. To resolve and to execute were with Jemima on the occasion almost one and the same thing, and she immediately put on her bonnet and shawl and proceeded to the central police-station, where she asked to see the inspector. The policeman she spoke to inquired what her business was, but Jemima, actuated by a feeling of prudence in an affair of such magnitude, pursed up her lips, and with an air of great determination said she would speak to no one but an inspector. The policeman smiled, and told her she would have to wait there a little while, as the inspector was at that moment engaged.

Jemima, nothing annoyed at the man's manner, seated herself quietly in a chair, awaiting the time the inspector should be at liberty. She now occupied herself in looking round the office, and reading as well as she could the various notices and placards

pasted on the walls. Some were simply regulations for carriages attending some fête, others were descriptions of runaway bankrupts, or rewards for lost or stolen property. But there was one placard which particularly riveted her attention: it was headed "Murder." It was some distance from her, and she could not read the whole, but this word "Murder" so completely attracted her eye to it, that there was no possibility of looking at the others. It almost seemed as if she was mixed up in the affair somehow, and yet no human being could have been more free from a sin of the kind than herself. The longer she sat the stronger the fascination became, and she felt relieved when at last the policeman touched her on the shoulder and told her the inspector would see her.

Jemima followed the man to the inspector's desk, and taking the notes from her pocket, she told him her tale succinctly and clearly. The inspector at first made no remark. He simply laid his hands on the notes, and then fixed his eye steadfastly on some object at the other side of the room with such earnestness that Jemima also turned round, and found he was looking at the placard headed "Murder" which had so strongly attracted her notice.

When the inspector withdrew his eye from the placard, he first asked Jemima for her name and

address, slightly raising his eyebrows when she said "Smith's Rents." He then asked if she were married, and on being answered that she was, he asked what her husband was employed in, and why he had not brought the money himself. This was a terrible blow to Jemima; what answer to make she knew not. She coloured and was confused, and the inspector noticed her confusion, but with the tact of an experienced officer he made no remark. He told Jemima he would send a man with her to examine the place she found the notes in. Jemima begged he would not, as it would look so bad for her to return with a policeman, but the inspector kindly told her that he would send one in plain clothes, who would walk some distance behind her, so that no notice would be taken by either the passers-by or the inhabitants of the "Rents" of the circumstance.

When Jemima arrived at her house she immediately conducted the policeman to the heap of bricks, who examined them attentively. Although well practised in the command of his countenance, it was easy to perceive his suspicions were aroused, and that he did not believe Jemima's statement. He then inquired what other lodgers lived in her house, and she informed him that a blind basket-maker and his family lived in the top room, and a gentleman of the name of Meffy had the first floor. The policeman

appeared now much interested in her conversation, and particularly inquired into different circumstances connected with Mr. Meffy's history; what sort of a looking man he was, what was his occupation, and especially where he was then; and when he heard he was in the country, he was most particular in asking the reason of his going out of town.

As the policeman was leaving the house he turned round, and apparently without the slightest interest in the question beyond keeping up a casual conversation, inquired, "By-the-by, where is Walters now?" Mrs. Duke informed him that she did not know; she hardly knew the man by sight; she had seen him pass the house very often, and sometimes he might have said good morning, but nothing more.

"But he's a pal of your husband's, aint he?"

"No," said Mrs. Duke, "my husband knows no more of him than you do."

"When did you see Walters?"

"I do not exactly know; I was too much occupied with my own troubles to think of him."

"But, I say," said the policeman, "what day was it your husband got into trouble?"

"Last Tuesday week," said Jemima.

"Where was he on the Monday night?"

"I don't remember; oh, he was at home."

"You are sure of that?"

"Quite certain," said Jemima, after a moment's consideration; "what do you want to know for?"

"Only curiosity," said the policeman, bidding her good night.

# CHAPTER III.

### IN WHICH THE WEALTHY CHARACTER DISAPPEARS.

WE must now return to Mr. Mostyn's house and trace the events which occurred there. The reader will remember that Jessie had given notice one Monday evening during the absence of her master in the country, of her intention to draw from the savings-bank a portion of her money, which she was to apply for the following Monday. It is on this last evening that we take up the thread of our narrative. Edward Walters had promised Jessie he would call on her at an early hour, so that he might take charge of the house during her absence. Between six and seven o'clock in the evening he arrived, and immediately afterwards Jessie put on her bonnet and shawl, and proceeded to the savings-bank offices.

She had not been gone five minutes when a low

single knock was heard at the door, which was immediately opened by Edward Walters, and Mr. Meffy entered. Edward led him into the parlour, and inquired of him whether he had seen his (Edward Walters's) father.

"Yes; I have just left him with a cab," was the reply.

"I suppose he has taken care of the coachman?"

"He has done better," said Meffy; "he drives it himself."

"He's a downy cove, the old one is," said young Walters.

"Yes, pretty well for that. He has got his badge and number all complete, and is capitally made up."

"When did you see him?"

"About two minutes ago."

"Where?"

"Close round the corner. He will wait there with the cab till he's wanted. If you go for him, don't pretend to know him. Ask him, you know, if he's hired, as you would any other fellow."

"What's all that for?" asked Edward Walters.

"Why, what a fool you are," said Meffy. "The police will not suspect anything then, if they should happen to catch a glimpse of us. You can then tell him to drive up here, and we can put the bags into the cab, and you may drive off as hard as you please."

"And why not you as well?"

"Don't you think," said Meffy, "that one is enough? I am not sure whether it would not be better to leave the swag entirely in your father's hands."

"I don't see," said Edward Walters, "why we shouldn't put the chest bodily into the cab. It would save time, and the things would not be half so likely to jog about and make a noise."

"Now," said Meffy, losing all patience, "you put me into a funk to think I've got to do with such a fool. I'm sure the whole affair will blow up. First of all, you are as suspicious as you can be that somebody intends doing you—first me and then your own father. Why, if you only think a moment, with so many respectable silver refiners about (for in a case of this kind we need not even go to a fence), we can change those things into money as easily as we could get two shillings and sixpence for half-a-crown; but what should we do with the box? It would be sure to give a clue to the police somehow or other. In nine cases out of ten, when these things are blown it's always through the box, or the jewel-case, or something of the kind, being found. Those bags could not lead to any identity," pointing to two blue canvas bags he had thrown upon the table; "but if a plate-chest was found either in your crib or mine, it might lead to serious consequences. If we said it had formerly held our family plate, it's ten to one the

beak would not believe us. But we may as well set to work at once."

Walters made no remark, but taking up the candlestick, preceded Meffy upstairs.

As soon as they had entered Mr. Mostyn's bedroom, Meffy took the candle from his friend and walked straight up to the escritoire. He carefully, and evidently with the eye of an artist, examined the lock, and then took from his pocket a bunch of skeleton keys and a file. Having placed the light in Walters's hand, who looked on for some time in silence, Meffy tried the keys, but none of them seemed to answer. He did not, however, either lose patience or even express by word or look the slightest annoyance, but as each failed he proceeded to try the next on the bunch, and yet with no better success. At last one key, which he had tried with greater perseverance than the rest, he took from the keyhole, and looked at it for some moments attentively, as if absorbed in some deep calculation. Walters, who appeared to get impatient at the slowness of Meffy's movements, asked him if he intended to sleep there that night.

"Not exactly," said Meffy; "but more haste less speed, you know."

"Oh, hang all that nonsense," said Walters, now getting fairly annoyed. "Get to work, will you? or let me." So saying, he placed the candlestick on

the bed and took from his pocket a neat sort of crowbar, known by the profession as a jemmy. It consisted of two pieces of polished steel, each about a foot long, with one end flattened so as to be easily inserted like a wedge. He commenced rapidly screwing the two pieces together, so as to make one lever of the whole. Meffy watched him silently till he had finished, and then asked him in a stern tone what he was going to do with it.

"Why," said Walters, "you are so long humbugging over your work, I may as well take a spell at it myself."

"Take my advice," said Meffy, his usual calm, quiet countenance getting livid with passion. "Take my advice, and don't try it."

"Why not?"

"Because I think it very likely you'll get yourself lagged for your pains."

"Are you going to split?" said Walters, trying to play the bully.

"Not unless the reward is a good one," said Meffy, with a sneer. "Now, let us understand each other. Are you going to have your way, or am I to have mine? Now, say at a word."

Walters sulkily threw the crowbar on the bed, in sign of submission, but said nothing. Meffy then drew his handkerchief from his pocket and placed it on the bed, then, holding a key over it, he commenced

skilfully and rapidly filing a portion of it away, the particles of metal falling on his handkerchief, so as to leave no trace on the bed. A moment afterwards he tried it in the lock, but still it would not turn. Not in the slightest way discomposed, nor pretending to notice the expression of ill humour and disgust on the countenance of Walters, he quietly took the key from the lock and commenced filing it as before over the handkerchief. Again he tried it in the lock, and this time it turned easily. The ill humour on the face of Edward Walters immediately vanished, and an expression of intense anxiety and curiosity supplied its place. Meffy now drew back the lid of the escritoire, and an immense mass of papers, some loose and others tied up in bundles, presented itself to the eyes of the two thieves. But the expression of their countenances differed extremely. Meffy, before touching them, looked at them with great intentness, as resolving in what manner he would commence the inspection; while Walters, after waiting a moment and finding his companion did not touch the papers, put on a look of defiance and plunged his hand into the midst of them. This attempt at insubordination completely enraged Meffy, and, seizing Walters's arm, he drew it back violently.

"You clumsy brute," he exclaimed, "will you leave them alone? Don't touch anything till I tell you,

or I'll give up the job, and then get on without me if you can."

"I'll tell you what it is," said Walters, savagely, "if you think you're going to be my master, you're mistaken. I know you, Meffy, and you won't do me, I can tell you."

"Wait a moment," said Meffy, coolly; "just hand me that other key." Walters mechanically turned round to obey him, and in an instant Meffy had closed the door of the escritoire and placed the key in his pocket.

"Now," said he, "do what you can without me. One of us must be master, and we may as well find out which of the two it will be."

"I don't know what you're after, Meffy," said Walters, trying to conceal his rage; "but if you don't mind what you're about the girl will be back, and then we shall lose all."

Whether this had any effect on Meffy it is difficult to say, so well had that gentleman his countenance under command, but he addressed Walters with considerably more friendliness in his tone than he had hitherto used.

"Walters," he said, "I don't want either to quarrel or act unfairly by you, but you annoy me; you are so precious clumsy. Hold the light and leave me alone, and I shall have done in two minutes."

Walters, without saying a word, held the candle

again for him, and Meffy once more opened the escritoire.

He now began cautiously to feel the papers, and with a touch so light that he hardly displaced them, although he contrived to insert his hand to the very bottom of the mass. Presently he said, "There is nothing worth having here, but I suspect there is a false back to it. Help me to take out the papers."

In a few moments the papers were on the bed, and Meffy rapidly examined the back. In less than a minute he had made up his mind that the back was false, and he began to touch the different parts to find the secret. At last he succeeded. He pressed heavily with a key the head of a screw in the woodwork, and the same moment the false back fell forward and disclosed a row of three small drawers. Edward Walters gave a low exclamation of satisfaction, and even Meffy's fish-like eye lighted up with animation. He first opened one drawer, but it was empty; the second, however, recompensed him for his disappointment, for in it was a roll of paper. He opened it and found it contained a bundle of bank notes. Edward Walters could hardly restrain himself from seizing them as Meffy opened the roll, when the attention of both was arrested by a cab driving up to the door.

"Put in those papers," said Meffy, "and let us be

off. Never mind the plate; here is enough for both."

So saying, he rapidly replaced the false back.

"Never mind the papers," said Walters; "let them be."

"Do as I tell you," said Meffy, replacing some of them, holding the bank-notes in his hand the while. Walters obeyed him, and the papers were thrust back in a heap, and Meffy locked the escritoire, when the cabman's double knock was again heard at the street-door.

"What the devil does the old fool mean," muttered Meffy, "by making that row? I told him not to come till he was sent for. Pick up that thing," he said, pointing to the crowbar, and thrusting file, false keys, and his handkerchief into his pocket. Then flinging his cap on his head, and repeating, "Pick up that, will you?" Meffy turned to the door, carrying the candle, and Walters followed him with the crowbar in his hand.

"Don't bring it that way," said Meffy; "unscrew it, will you? Do you want to be seen with a jemmy in your hand?"

"Wait a moment," said Walters; "wait a moment, Meffy, and we'll go together."

Meffy turned round angrily. "What are you afraid of?" he said.

"Nothing; only let's have fair play."

"Who wants anything else?" said Meffy, turning round; "but where are the bags?"

"On the chair."

"Fetch them, will you?"

"Well, but stop a moment."

Meffy, who by this time had gained the head of the stairs, only descended the faster, and after placing the candle in the parlour, he opened the street-door before Walters had succeeded in finding the bags.

"What the devil do you want here?" said Meffy, in a tone of great surprise, to an old gentleman muffled up to the throat with a great coat and shawl. "Who are you?"

"And what are you doing in my house?" said the stranger, attempting to seize him.

Meffy for the moment seemed almost paralysed, and could not find an excuse.

"Cabman," said the old gentleman trying to detain Meffy, "call a policeman."

The cabman, who was busy in getting a box out of the cab, did not hear him, and continued his work. Meffy, seeing the affair was getting too dangerous for trifling, made an effort and released himself from Mr. Mostyn (for it was he), and rushed away as rapidly as his limping pace would allow him, and was soon lost in the obscurity.

Edward Walters was for a moment puzzled in what

manner to act. He was at the head of the staircase trying to unscrew the crowbar, the two bags under his arm. At first he thought of rushing past and escaping, but by the time he had resolved on this another person entered the narrow passage. This was the cabman, who with Mr. Mostyn and two boxes he had placed on the floor, completely blocked up the passage.

"Just wait here a moment," said Mr. Mostyn to the cabman, "till a policeman comes by. I saw one on the other side of the road. Oh, here he comes."

The policeman came up to the door at the moment, and Walters found all chance of escape cut off from him. He immediately crept up stairs and entered a small back garret. Groping his way he found a bedstead, and the next moment he had concealed himself beneath it.

By this time the policeman and Mr. Mostyn were in conversation. Mr. Mostyn had informed him that a man had rushed out of the house, and he was afraid he was a thief.

"What sort of a man was he, sir?"

"I had no time to pay attention. I should not know him again from Adam."

"Perhaps, sir, it was only your servant's young man. He has been here very often lately."

"I know he has," said Mr. Mostyn, "and that is

the reason I came up to town. One of the neighbours wrote to me about it."

By this time they had entered the parlour. By the light of the candle they perceived that some bread and cheese and two glasses were on the table, but no beer.

"I'd bet anything," said the policeman, "she invited him to supper, and has gone for the beer. You'll see her back presently."

"She never enters this house again," said her master. "I fully trusted that woman, and I find there is no more reliance to be placed in her than in the rest of them."

"Had you not better see if you've lost anything, sir? if not, I can go on my beat."

"Certainly," said Mr. Mostyn; "let me pay the cabman first."

A slight altercation, of course, occurred between the old man and the cabman, but in the end everything was amicably settled and the cab drove off.

At first Mr. Mostyn was on the point of asking the policeman to accompany him up-stairs, but upon second thoughts the suspicious old man considered he might be showing the room in which he kept his treasures to the policeman, and he requested the latter would sit down while he went up-stairs to examine the house. The policeman without remark seated himself, probably thinking some bread and cheese, at

least, might be in store for him when Mr. Mostyn came down, and, lighted only by his own lantern, he remained quietly below till the old gentleman had finished his search. Mr. Mostyn first carefully examined his own room. He found the cupboard which contained his plate-chest fast locked, his escritoire the same, and everything about the room appeared to be in the most perfect order. This satisfactory state of things somewhat pacified the old man as to the danger of robbery, but his anger against Jessie for leaving the house continued unabated. He descended into the parlour, and told the policeman that evidently nothing had been taken, but that Jessie, for her disobedience of orders, should never again be allowed to enter his house. The policeman, eyeing wistfully the bread and cheese, said Mr. Mostyn would be perfectly justified, as one half the robberies in private houses arose from servants letting in strange men; but his ready acquiescence with the remark procured him no invitation. After waiting a few moments longer in the vain hope of a shilling, and finally offering to carry the two small boxes containing the old gentleman's luggage, which were in the passage, up-stairs for him, he prepared to depart. Although Mr. Mostyn declined the offer of carrying the boxes up-stairs, he accepted it so far as to allow him to bring them into the parlour and place them in a corner out of

the way. The policeman readily obeyed, and then stood for a moment expecting a gratuity, but he received instead only a curt good-night, and an especial request that he would keep a good look-out on the premises till the next morning. The disappointed policeman said nothing, but left the house, inwardly determining that he would not again enter the street that night unless obliged, and even then he would pass Mr. Mostyn's house with his eyes shut.

As soon as Mr. Mostyn was alone he put up the chain of the front door, and then seated himself in the parlour muttering to himself as was his wont, and abusing poor Jessie to his heart's content. He continued in this frame of mind till he heard Jessie insert the key of the street-door in the lock and partially open the door, but as the chain was up she could not enter. Her master, with a feeling almost of satisfaction, rose from his chair and went to the door.

"What do you mean, you hussy," he said, "by leaving the house when I told you you were not to do so?"

"If you please, sir," said Jessie, as soon as she had recovered from her surprise, "I only went to the post-office."

"Don't tell me a lie," said her master; "you know you did not go to the post-office. It would not have taken you ten minutes, and I have been here half

an hour. What business had you to have a man in the house?"

"It was only my cousin, sir. He only came to London this morning, and I thought there would be no harm in asking him in."

"That is another lie. He has been here before, several times. A neighbour wrote to me about your goings on, and that is the reason I have come up, and I find it all true. Go about your business. There is half-a-crown for you to get a bed; come here to-morrow and I will pay you your wages, and I'll have nothing more to say to you."

As he said this he flung the half-crown on the pavement, and taking the key from Jessie, he closed the street-door and bolted it.

He then went again into the parlour, muttering to himself in a half audible manner. After remaining thus for half an hour, he rose from his chair, and taking his keys from his pocket, he proceeded to open one of his boxes for the purpose of taking from it his dressing-gown. That done, he took up his candle and went up-stairs into his bedroom.

During the whole of this time Edward Walters had been lying concealed under the bed in the back attic listening to every sound. He heard the door shut after the policeman, and he knew that Mr. Mostyn remained in the house, but still he could

hear nothing of Jessie. He determined to remain quietly in the position he was in till he heard her return, and then, after her master was in bed, he calculated he should have but little difficulty in leaving the house. Presently, as he began to be accustomed to his situation, he commenced turning over in his mind the affairs of the evening. He soon perceived that in all probability he should never receive one penny of the money in Meffy's hands. He knew too well the cunning, unscrupulous character of that gentleman not to feel certain he would not easily be found, and that as soon as he had changed the bank-notes he would depart into some other locality, or most probably set sail for America, and all trace of him be lost. And in what position would he, Edward Walters, be? He who had concocted the whole affair, and had had by far the greater part of the trouble and danger, would receive nothing. It was no use thinking of revenging himself on Meffy, angry as he was with him; that would do no good. After all, if he kept his pluck up, he might not go away empty-handed yet. There was still the plate left, and if he could only get Jessie to assist him, he might do well enough with that. True, it was kept in the old man's bedroom, but there would be little difficulty in overcoming him. Why did not Jessie return?—what could detain her? Presently he heard Mr. Mostyn

come up-stairs, enter his bedroom, and lock the door. Here was a difficulty he had not calculated on. Possibly, after all, Mr. Mostyn would not go to bed till Jessie's return. No, of course he would not. Still he would wait a little longer, and, if possible, he would not leave without his share of the plunder. He now crept cautiously from under the bed, and seated himself upon it, the two bags under his arm, and the crowbar in his hand. In this position he remained for more than two hours, listening earnestly the while for Jessie's return. At last he gave up the point, and determined to escape from the house, as Jessie's conduct seemed to him inexplicable.

Edward Walters rose from the bed and approached the head of the stairs. He listened attentively, and thought he heard some one moving in Mr. Mostyn's room. He stepped down nearer the door, and could not only distinguish that some one was moving, but also heard a voice, although he could not distinguish the words. He advanced nearer the door, and could see the light of the candle shining through the keyhole. Still he could not understand the words Mr. Mostyn uttered, nor did he hear any other voice. He now concluded that as Jessie had not returned Mr. Mostyn was sitting up for her. The idea of possessing himself of the plate again entered his mind, and he stole up once more to his hiding-place

leaving the door open that he might listen the more attentively.

We must now return to Mr. Mostyn. After he had locked his door he seated himself in an easy-chair in his room and tried to collect his thoughts, but in vain. He was in a state of such nervous agitation that his mind at the moment could hardly be said to be in a sane state. Fatigue and irritation from his journey, combined with the annoyance he had met with on his return home, had completely thrown his reasoning powers off their equilibrium. He had acquired the habit of muttering to himself whenever his mind was particularly occupied on any subject, but now his agitation was so great that he spoke quite loud. The particular object of his anger was of course Jessie. He had trusted her implicitly when he would have trusted no other human being, and she had deceived him. There was no gratitude to be found in the world. He had paid her far higher wages than any other servant in the neighbourhood received, but all was useless to obtain fidelity. He did not remember that the only reason for his employing Jessie was that a servant was necessary for his comfort, and that the higher sum than ordinary that he paid her was simply to secure services which he imagined were valuable to him. He simply gave the more as he considered the commodity was the more valuable.

Fatigue now began to obtain its natural ascendency over the exhausted frame of the old man, and he fell into an uneasy doze, from time to time waking up as he bent forward in his chair ; still no idea of seeking his bed entered his mind. As each successive jerk awakened him, his anger against Jessie diminished. He almost regretted that he had dismissed her. His arguments were now expostulatory rather than passionate, and it is more than probable if Jessie had that moment stood before him all would have been forgiven, subject to her being daily reminded of her fault. In this state of half-waking, half-sleeping, he remained till it was considerably past midnight, when he determined to retire to his bed. The cold of the night appeared to act as a sedative to his brain, and with greater calmness than he had hitherto shown he began to undress himself. Suddenly he stopped short, as if a serious idea had crossed his mind. He remembered that he had contented himself with simply seeing that the lid of the escritoire and the door of the cupboard which held his plate-chest were fastened, without seeing that their contents were safe. He discontinued undressing, and again put on his dressing-gown, determining that he would see that all was secure before he went to sleep. He now sought in his pockets for his keys, but he could not find them. He became greatly agitated, thinking he might have

lost them, and he again seated himself on his chair to collect his thoughts. In a few minutes he rose again with a sigh of relief. He remembered that he had taken his dressing-gown out of his box in the parlour, and that most probably he had left his keys below. He now thrust his feet into his slippers, and taking the candle in his hand, he unlocked his door and proceeded down-stairs. To his great satisfaction he found his keys in the lock of the box he had opened. He first closed it with some difficulty, and then went leisurely up to his room. He did not, as before, close his door, but left it ajar.

The first article he proceeded to examine was his plate chest. He opened the door of the cupboard easily enough. He then placed the candle on a chair beside him, and going down on his knees, he prepared to open the plate chest. He had chosen the key from the bunch, and had placed it in the lock, when he suddenly stopped and gazed with an expression of considerable anxiety on the chest. He was endeavouring to recollect whether he had not left two articles outside on the lid, there not being room for them in the inside. He was fairly puzzled in the matter, and he passed his hand across his brow as if trying to collect his thoughts on the subject. The more he reflected on it the more certain he felt he had done so. Somewhat alarmed, he now proceeded to open the chest, when his attention was

attracted to a sound near him. He turned round and saw approaching him a young man with apparently some weapon in his hand. Completely terrified at the apparition, he screamed violently, "Help! Murder!" He had commenced a third word, but he stopped. A fearful blow with the steel crowbar had fallen on the bald head of the old man, and he lay stretched and senseless on the floor. Edward Walters, who had listened to his going downstairs and watched his return, had noticed he had not locked his door. The devil had suggested to him that he could easily frighten the old man, but had whispered no word of murder. He stealthily descended the stairs, and finding the room-door open had entered. He threw the two bags on the ground, and raising the crowbar in air with the intention of frightening the old man, advanced towards him. Mr. Mostyn's exclamations alarmed him, and the devil advised him to silence him. He did so, and not content with a blow, the devil whispered to him that the old man might recover. Walters, to prevent it, and maddened with a horrible feeling of blood-thirst, struck another blow. This was not so well aimed, yet was perhaps more deadly. He struck somewhat short of his mark, and the flattened, sharp edge of the instrument struck the old man on the throat, dividing the jugular vein and carotid artery. In a moment the floor was covered with blood, to which

Walters paid no attention. He threw the crowbar beside him, and going down on his knees he opened the chest. The sight of the silver plate it contained was insufficient completely to rivet his attention, yet he hurriedly stretched forth his hand to reach one of the bags. He rapidly took piece after piece from the chest, and thrust each into the bag without waiting to see whether it were silver or merely plated. He continued his occupation, trying the while to fix his thoughts on his booty, but a terribly uneasy sensation weighed on him, each moment increasing in intensity. Still he went on. Presently, the dead silence of the room became insupportable to him. The whole scene appeared more like a terrible vision than a reality. Still he continued filling the bag, and still the horrible sensation increased. The bag was now nearly full, and he stretched forth his hand behind him to reach the other. In doing so he kept his eye rigidly fixed on the chest. He dared not whisper to himself what was on the floor, and he endeavoured to fix his thoughts on his prize. Presently he reached the bag, but a damp sensation of warmth was on his hand. He knew perfectly well from what cause it arose, but it did not terrify him, for it was a sensation of reality, and for the moment destroyed the horrible feeling which had oppressed him the moment before. He commenced filling the

second bag. Suddenly a deep, unearthly sigh, which seemed to proceed from the body, frightened him, and he closed the lid of the chest. Slowly he turned round his head and gazed at the ghastly spectacle of the dying man. At that moment a glance of intelligence beamed from his eye sternly on the assassin. Another deep sigh escaped from his breast, and all was silent—the silence of death. This natural termination of his brutality completely terrified the wretch. He arose from his knees, and throwing his cap on his head, he took one of the bags in his right hand, and with the candle in his left he descended the stairs. He placed the bag in the parlour, and then left the room to go for the other. He had no sooner placed his foot on the stairs, than his courage failed him. The deep silence of the house alarmed him so much that he could not advance a step. He then resolved to go for his father, for the idea struck him if there was a living being in the place his courage would return. He placed the candle in the parlour, and opening the door, he cautiously looked into the street to see if any one were in sight. All was perfectly still; not a person was to be seen. He left the door ajar, and rapidly rushed to the corner of the street to find the cab.

"What, come at last?" said his father, "I thought you were going to sleep there."

" Come at once," said his son, " and don't talk."

Walters drove the cab to the door. His son was again frightened, for it was wide open ; there was no cause however for his alarm, for it was only a gust of wind that had done it. The father got off the box, and his son told him to come quickly into the house. He did so, and closed the door after him.

" Stay there a moment," said Edward, snatching up the candle, " I shall be down directly." He again attempted to mount the stairs, but was again unable. While deliberating within himself whether he would inform his father of what had occurred, the latter heard the horse move. He immediately opened the street door, and a gust of wind blew out the candle in his son's hand. It was now an utter impossibility for him to go up-stairs, and he gave up the attempt. He descended the few stairs he had mounted, and went into the parlour, and there took up the bag and followed his father, closing the street-door after him.

" Stay," said his father, " I have left my hat indoors."

" D—n the hat ! leave it alone. There is my cap for you."

" Well ; but I want my hat."

" I can't help it ; the door is shut, and I have not got the key. Now drive on as fast as you can."

So saying, he opened the cab door, and placed the

bag in it, and getting in himself he again told his father with an oath to drive on. The old man obeyed, and in a few moments, to Edward Walters's intense satisfaction, they had left the street.

# CHAPTER IV.

### FATHER AND SON.

THE cab drove on down the Borough and across London Bridge towards Brick Lane, Spitalfields. There the father had engaged a room in a wretched court, from which he had proposed they should carry on operations. When they had arrived young Walters jumped from the cab.

"Do you think the horse will stand still?" he said to his father; "if so you had better come with me." His father said he thought he would stand quietly as he had driven there very rapidly. Beyond that he had a great curiosity to see what sort of a prize they had got. He silently followed his son, and they both entered the house, an old woman on the ground-floor having opened the door for them. They mounted the stairs silently to a back room and entered it.

The elder Walters now drew from his pocket a box of lucifers and a small candle. He struck a light and lighted the candle, which he placed on the chimney-piece, and then turned round to speak to his son. But not a word could he utter. He turned pale, and seemed on the point of fainting, so strong was the impression his son's appearance made on him. He was literally covered with blood.

"What's the matter with you?" said the son savagely, knowing at the time the reason of his father's pallor.

"Ned," stammered his father, "tell me the truth; is he dead?"

"And suppose he is; do you think I was going to be taken?"

"You don't mean to say it's the old man," said the father; "I thought he was in the country?"

"And so did I; but he came home and caught me."

"And Meffy, where is he?"

"He cut it, like a white-livered cur as he is, as soon as he found himself in danger."

"My God! what is to be done?" said the father in a tone of despair.

"What's to be done? why, get rid of the swag, to be sure, and the sooner you set about it the better."

"I'll have nothing to do with it," said the elder Walters.

"You don't mean to say you're afraid?"

"No; but I'll not mix myself up in a murder case."

"Yes," said his son with a sneer, "you're a respectable man, certainly."

"No matter what I am; I am not, at any rate, bad enough to mix myself up in a case like this."

"You don't mean to say you're going to leave me alone in it. By Heaven, if I thought so I'd cleave your brain open as I did the old man's."

"And perhaps the best thing you could do," said the father. "But I don't want to leave you, God knows, although I'll have nothing to do with the affair. Bad as I am, I had never blood on my hands yet, and I don't intend beginning now. And if you'd take my advice you'd drop it at once. A reward will be offered, and you may depend upon it Meffy will split."

"Not he. He is in for it pretty well as deep as I am. He's got a pocketful of bank-notes."

"No matter; I know him well, and one way or another he'll bring it about. Stow those things away somewhere, and make yourself scarce at once. I tell you again I'll have nothing to do with it."

"But how can I cut it?" said the son. "I can't go out with my things covered with blood, and I have not got a five-shilling piece in the world."

"I'll go home," said his father, "and pack up some clothes for you, and bring them back as soon as I can. I ain't got much money, but what I have I'll bring you. Once more, take my advice and be off as soon as you can." So saying he took up the cap to depart, but by the light of the candle he perceived some marks of his son's blood-stained fingers on it. "This won't do at all," he said, "I'll leave it here." His son merely sneered, but made no answer.

The elder Walters now drew a handkerchief from his pocket, which he tied round his head, and then left the house. When he had arrived at the entrance to the court, to his horror he found the cab was no longer there. He had been so occupied in his conversation with his son that he had forgotten it. He now rushed up the street in the direction his horse's head stood, and at the first turning he found the brute had been stopped by a policeman.

"Thank you, mate," said Walters, out of breath. "I thought I had lost him."

"Well, it was an even bet," said the policeman. "I was just going to take him to the green-yard; but what have you done with your hat?"

"Well," said Walters, at hazard, "as I was coming over London Bridge a gust of wind caught it and carried it over into the water."

"It'll be a godsend for some waterman," said the policeman as Walters was getting on his box.

"Yes, it will," was the reply, as Walters drove off.

He drove as rapidly as he could to Smith's Rents, and arrived before daybreak. He was somewhat puzzled what to do with his cab, when fortunately he met one of the young thieves as he was returning from night duty. He asked him to hold the horse for him, which he willingly promised to do. Walters then rushed into his house, and without disturbing his wife he got a light and proceeded rapidly to collect such of his son's clothes as he could find, and then tied them up in a bundle. He opened a drawer and took from it all the money it contained—about five pounds—which he placed in his pocket, and was upon the point of leaving the house when the idea struck him that the cab might possibly be stained with blood. It would have been imprudent for him to have made the inspection at that moment, as he must have used a light, which would have been difficult; besides, the young thief would have seen him, so he took a shoe-brush with him, to brush it, if he should have occasion, as soon as it was daylight.

He took the handkerchief from his head and put on a hat, and after extinguishing the candle, left the house. He thanked the young thief for the care he had taken of the horse, and he then mounted the box and drove off. When he had arrived in Brick Lane, the horse was so tired that there was no fear

of his moving, and Walters took out the bundle and ran rapidly with it into the house. There he found Edward had been making preparations to leave, as he had advised him. He had inserted a piece of wood up the chimney, so as to act as a shelf, and on it he had placed the bag containing the plate. Walters then asked his son if he had told Meffy where to find them, and expressed his satisfaction when he heard he had not. He then gave his son the money. "And now," said he, "let me advise you to be off as soon as possible."

He now left the house, and this time he found the horse had remained on the spot he had left him. Day was now rapidly breaking, and he examined the interior of the cab, and found in it several blood-spots. These he brushed carefully away, and then taking from under the cushions the real number-plate of the cab, he replaced it for the sham one he had used, and then drove the cab back to the yard.

"You've had a good night's work out of that hoss," said the stable-man, examining the beast with a critical eye.

"And you have got the money for his work," said Walters, leaving the yard.

# CHAPTER V.

### EDWARD WALTERS ESCAPES.

POOR Jessie slept but little the night of her dismissal. Her mind was too much agitated, not only at the difficulty she would find herself in to obtain another situation, but also as to the means by which her lover would be able to make his escape. She did not rise very early, for, like most of her class, the idea of not being obliged to get up was to her a sort of luxury, disturbed as she was, and she tried, but without success, to enjoy it. However, she could not remain in bed all day, so about nine o'clock she dressed herself and took her breakfast. About eleven she left the house, and with a palpitating heart proceeded to Mr. Mostyn's. When she arrived, she found the house hermetically closed; not a shutter, curtain, nor window was open. She knocked more

than once, but no one answered the door. She became exceedingly nervous, but without any reason to offer to herself for the feeling. The uneasy sensation became more oppressive, and she returned to her lodgings. There she consoled herself by writing a letter in extraordinary characters and worse orthography to her lover, telling him she had left her situation, and giving him her address; and then putting on her bonnet and shawl, she started off with it to Smith's Rents. She found only Mrs. Walters at home, and she left the letter with her without further remark than requesting her to give it to her son as soon as she might see him. Jessie then returned to get her dinner.

She had not left the Rents more than ten minutes when young Walters, terribly pale, entered the house. His mother was so alarmed at his appearance that it was some minutes before she remembered the letter. When she placed it in her son's hands, she received, in lieu of thanks, a considerable amount of abuse for not having given it immediately she saw him. She attempted some excuse, but instead of listening to her he tore open the letter and hurriedly read the contents. As soon as he had finished, he told his mother to get him pens, ink, and paper, and immediately wrote an answer. It was short, and without signature or address. He merely told Jessie to meet him that evening at eight o'clock precisely at the

Piccadilly entrance to Hyde Park ; not on any account to go to Mr. Mostyn's till she had seen him, nor in fact to leave the house, and to tear up the letter as soon as she had read it. He then borrowed of his mother all the money she had got, which was only a few shillings, and afterwards abruptly left her. He now hurried as rapidly as he could to Jessie's lodgings, and when near the house he gave a street boy a penny to take the letter, instructing him to ask to see Jessie herself, standing the while a short distance off, watching the boy. The door was opened, and he could perceive that it was not Jessie that opened it, but the woman of the house. She left the boy for a moment, and then he saw Jessie come to the door and take the letter from his hand, and all being now arranged to his satisfaction, he departed.

At eight precisely Jessie was at the place of meeting, but her lover was not there. This added greatly to the disquietude the letter had caused her, written as it was in so mysterious a manner. She remained till nine, and she then thought she would walk a little into the Park, as the policeman at the entrance appeared to be watching her. She had hardly proceeded a hundred yards, when some one touched her on the arm, and on turning round she found it was her lover. A sensation of relief immediately came over her, and she clutched his arm with the strength almost of an iron vice. Walters

said nothing, but walked with her rapidly into the obscurity of some trees, and then for the first time he spoke to her, after first carefully looking around him.

"Did I not frighten you with my letter?"

"Indeed you did; I never was so surprised in my life."

"But did you keep indoors all day, as I asked you?"

"Certainly I did; I should not do anything you told me not."

"And did any one come after you?"

"No one at all; nobody knows where I am. When that sulky old brute sent me away I hardly knew where to go to at first myself. I knew something of a woman who lived near where I am, and I first went there to see if she could give me a bed, but I found she had gone away."

"And who sent you where you are?"

"Oh, I waited about for some time till I saw a policeman, and I asked him where I could get a bed in a respectable house."

"D——n! you don't say so?"

"Well, what was I to do? I knew no one; but don't be angry with me, I did not talk to him for two minutes."

"What did he say to you besides?"

"Nothing whatever beyond telling me where to

go to. Oh, you don't suppose, dear, I'd stop talking to any man in the streets, especially a stranger," said Jessie, utterly mistaking the reason of her lover's agitation.

"No, no, I'm sure of that; but you are certain he said nothing else?"

"Nothing whatever."

"And he did not come about the house this morning?"

"Oh dear no, not that I know of; but I shouldn't know him again if I did see him. Now tell me, dear, why did you not like my going to Mr. Mostyn's? He owes me my wages, and he shall pay me; besides, I have not a stitch with me more than I stand upright in."

Young Walters made her no answer, but remained for some moments deeply absorbed in thought, occasionally looking round nervously the while.

"You did not hear me, you naughty boy," said Jessie, playfully jogging his arm. "You are thinking of somebody else, I am sure. I shall be jealous in my turn, if you don't mind."

"Jessie," said Walters, "you must not go near Mr. Mostyn's again."

"Why not, dear?"

"Because the old fellow is dead."

Jessie made no answer, but a terrible sensation of dread came over her. She could hardly realise the

news. She stood trembling for some time, clutching nervously the arm of her lover, and at last, when she was a little more composed, she said:

"Oh, you are joking, dear. Why do you frighten me in that manner?"

"I am not joking; what I tell you is the truth. Old Mostyn is dead."

"How did you know it?"

"I heard it from my father."

"And how did he die?"

"They say he has been murdered, and if so, both you and I will be suspected."

"I," said Jessie, indignantly leaving her lover's arm; "I will give myself up to the police immediately."

"Stop," said Walters, now getting terribly frightened; "they say he has been robbed as well."

"A reason the more," said Jessie: "I never took a farthing wrongfully from any one;" and she was on the point of quitting her lover.

"For God's sake, Jessie, stop one moment and listen to reason. There is no doubt you will get off, but what will become of me? They will trace out that I was in the house; and although I am as innocent of it as the babe unborn, it is very probable they will hang me for it. Oh, if you love me, and I am sure you do, do nothing rash."

Jessie was silent for some moments. At last she

caught hold of Walters's arm, and with much hysteria in her tone, said:

"Edward, as there is a God above us, did you have anything to do with it?"

"Jessie, how can you ask me such a question? I would have starved before doing anything of the kind."

"Do you know who did it?"

Walters was silent for a moment.

"Edward," she repeated, "tell me once more, do you know who did it?"

"No, I don't, Jessie; but I have my suspicions."

"Who was it?"

"Jessie, don't ask me; I cannot tell you. If it's the man I believe, I am more likely to be hung than he is, for I never will give up his name."

"Edward," said she seriously, after a moment's silence, "was it—that father of yours?"

"Jessie, don't ask me; guess it if you like."

"My God, what shall I do?" said the poor girl.

"Go," said he, "and say you did not do it, and give me in charge. You will hang me by it, although I would at any time lay down my life to save yours."

The girl made no further attempt to go.

"Edward," she said, "what am I to do?"

"Have you got the money from the savings bank?"

"I have, and I will willingly give it all to you if you can save yourself."

The scoundrel hesitated for a moment. His first thought was to take the money; but then he reflected that if the girl remained behind she might serve as a clue to detect him. He need have been under no alarm, but, a villain himself, he doubted the good faith of every one; besides, the thought also occurred to him that when Jessie heard of the particulars of the murder, her love for him would change into horror, and she might tell all she knew.

"Jessie," he said at last, "you don't know me, nor how I love you. I will not go without you."

"Where would you go to if I went with you?"

"The money you have is sufficient to pay the passage money of both of us to America. Come with me, and as soon as we arrive I will marry you, and we shall do well enough there. Work is plentiful and the wages are good."

"But I have nothing to go in."

"You won't want much, and what you will want we can get in Liverpool; ships are always sailing from there, and we shall soon be safe."

"But how shall we manage to go?"

"Go quietly back to your lodgings and pay the woman. Then meet me to-morrow at the North-Western station at five o'clock. Leave the house

without any one in the street seeing you. Say you are going to Harwich to see your mother, and no one will suspect you. Do they know your name at your lodging?"

"No, they do not."

"Say it's Thompson, and I will pass under the same name. When you see me at the parliamentary train do not speak to me or notice me, but take your ticket. I will take care to sit by you. I have not money enough to pay my fare. Now, do you understand all?"

"Yes, I think I do. Let me repeat it."

She did so, and proved she had got her lesson perfectly.

"That will do capitally," said her lover. "Oh, how happy I shall be when we are together in America. You have no idea what a bad fellow that father of mine is."

"He seemed to me," said Jessie, "to be a very good-natured man."

"He'd cheat a very angel himself," said the amiable son. "Now go, Jessie dear; keep up your courage and meet me at five. You know where the station is?"

"Yes; I have been there before. Good night."

Poor Jessie attempted to move, but her strength failed her.

"Walters," she said, "it seems to me like a terrible dream. It can't be true."

"True it is, to my sorrow," said he. "Now be a dear girl, and keep your courage up. Remember if you break down it will be my ruin, and that will be cruel indeed, when you know how much I love you."

Jessie made another effort and left her lover, who plunged still deeper into the darkness of the park.

Although Jessie's courage upheld her for some time during her walk homewards, it weakened considerably as she got nearer the house. When she entered the street in which it was situated, it returned for a moment, as she wished to enter unobserved, and caution for the time banished fear. She then called the woman of the house, and told her it was her intention to leave the next morning by the parliamentary train to Harwich, and requested her to call her in time. She had sent on her luggage to the station, she said, so she should have nothing to carry. The woman of the house, who was too well accustomed to erratic tenants, both male and female, to make any remark on Jessie's statement, promised to call her as desired, and inquired what she would like for breakfast. Jessie requested she would have some coffee ready for her, and she should require nothing more. She then paid the woman the money owing to her, as well as for the next morning's breakfast, for although she did not intend to touch it, she

had too much honesty to let the woman be at any loss on her account, and then, after telling her if any one called to inquire after Miss Thompson to say she had gone down to see her mother at Harwich, she bade the woman good night and went to bed.

Fortunately for Jessie no other person slept in her room that night, or the disturbed manner of the agitated girl must have aroused their attention if not suspicion. Continually she tried to sleep, but as usual when it is too ardently wooed, sleep refused to visit her. Finding it impossible to close her eyes for five minutes together, she got up, dressed herself in the dark, and paced backward and forward in her little room. Then the thought struck her that the woman of the house would hear her footsteps and suspect something wrong, and she again flung herself, dressed as she was, on the bed.

She now attempted to think coolly over her position, but it was impossible. All she wished for most on earth (her marriage with Edward Walters) would now be soon realised—at any rate, as soon as the ship arrived in America; and her satisfaction at this for some time deadened her thoughts to the murder of Mr. Mostyn. Then she began to think in what manner it could have occurred, and how the murderer could have got into the house. There was no doubt in her mind that the murder was committed by the elder Walters, but how could he have

perpetrated it? He must certainly have been let in by his son before Mr. Mostyn arrived, but how did her lover manage to leave the house and the father remain in it? These reflections gave rise to most unpleasant thoughts, which, although she drove them away almost as soon as formed, contrived to return again to her almost immediately. So pertinaciously, in fact, did they press themselves upon her imagination, that she burst into a violent fit of sobbing, so strong as almost to approach an hysterical fit, when suddenly she remembered that her lover had been particular in ascertaining if she had got the money from the savings bank, that they might be able to pay their passage to America—a necessity which would not have arisen had he been one of the parties who murdered Mr. Mostyn, as in that case he would have had plenty of money, Jessie knowing full well how valuable was the silver plate her master possessed. This suggestion gave her great consolation; so much so that the hysterical symptoms changed from crying to laughing, and she had considerable difficulty in subduing them. At length, finding the house and street perfectly quiet, she resolved to go, although it was barely two o'clock, to the place of meeting. She listened carefully first at her room door, and judging from their deep breathing that the inmates of the house must be fast in their first sleep, she cautiously descended the stairs, opened

the street door, and then looked anxiously to the right and left to see if there were any passers-by, or if the house were watched. All was quiet as the grave; no one was to be seen; and Jessie, after quietly closing the door after her, hurried away till she was completely out of any possible danger of being followed.

In the meantime young Walters had remained in the darker parts of the park till it was time to close the gates, and he then hung about the different streets near the Euston Square station till Jessie should arrive and it would be time for the train to start. About four o'clock he saw a female figure approaching the spot near which he was standing, and on nearer approach he found it was Jessie. Although contrary to his resolution, he spoke to her, and asked if she had contrived to quit her lodgings without suspicion or being noticed. She told him she had; that she had followed his advice in every particular, and nothing could have succeeded better. He asked her for some money, and Jessie placed a couple of sovereigns in his hand. "I will get the tickets for you," he said, "and will contrive to slip one of them into your hand, but do not speak to me. Take care also you choose a tolerably empty carriage, so that I can sit by you. You are a dear good girl, and I love you better than my own life. Now leave me." Jessie did as she was

told, and the pair continued to lounge about different streets till the time for taking the tickets.

We must now explain the reasons which induced Edward Walters to quit the booty he had risked his life for, and seek safety in flight, before the slightest knowledge or suspicion of his crime had been made public. Previous to committing the murder he had had no intention of perpetrating so foul a crime, and the probabilities before him, in case the theft were detected, were simply those which attend on every villany of the kind—a lengthened imprisonment. At the time of the murder he had no power of reasoning whatever. It was merely a stolid, brutal action. The devil had placed the opportunity in his way, and had instigated the deed, and he had done it. After the murder, the intense excitement of the moment had shut out from him every thought but of the particular action he was at the moment engaged in. Cunning was natural to him, and he concealed his booty with considerable cold blood and tact, and then after washing his hands and getting the traces of blood from his person, he left the house. He afterwards wandered for some time, mechanically and without purpose, about the streets in the northern part of London, as if to get as far as possible from the scene of his crime. He now began to reflect more coolly over his position, and the more attention he gave it the more desperate it appeared. In the first place,

he was certain that as soon as the murder should be discovered a large reward would be offered for the apprehension of the murderers, and that would immediately stimulate Mr. Meffy to action. He rightly judged there would be no act of treachery or falsehood that gentleman would not be guilty of, if he found the slightest probability of turning it to his own advantage. True he was even more implicated in the robbery than himself, and if that were discovered the suspicion of murder would be equally strong against him ; but with the intense cunning Meffy possessed, it was almost a certainty he would contrive to conceal his implication in both the robbery and murder, while he could show the strongest proof of his (Walters's) concern in the transaction. Besides that, Meffy had simply possessed himself of the money, and that he could conceal without difficulty, changing occasionally one of the smaller notes as he required it for his use, and keeping the rest concealed till the whole affair had blown over ; whereas it was impossible for Walters to sell the plate without arousing suspicion. If he took it to a respectable dealer, he would refuse to purchase it from him without a reference ; and if he sold it to one of those agents usually employed by thieves, it was more than probable the purchaser himself would be the first to give notice to the police and claim the reward. Where to go to also puzzled

him. To the lodging he had left would be dangerous, and there was no other place open for him but his father's house. He had already resolved that if the affair were detected, he would let his parent bear the brunt, and therefore he wished to be seen at the house in the Rents as seldom as possible. Still, he wanted to act in conjunction with his father, and he determined seeking him immediately. The murder in all probability had not yet been made public, and there would be less danger in his now visiting him than later.

He therefore started off for Smith's Rents, and, as has been already stated, when he arrived there he found his father from home. The receipt of Jessie's letter seemed to inspire him with a plan of operation. If she had still the money with her she had received from the savings bank, it was sufficient to enable him to start for America, and when once there, if the affair succeeded sufficiently well to allow his father to obtain possession of the plate they had concealed, he could easily bully the old man out of it by threatening he would write a letter implicating him, while he in a distant land would be safe. With this intention he wrote to Jessie to meet him in the park, and the result of that interview, as the reader is aware, was that they should start together for America.

The time had now arrived to issue the tickets for

the parliamentary train, and the usual large crowd of applicants surrounded the booking-office. They were of all classes, from people of apparently the highest respectability, though poor, to the dirty half-drunken railway navigator. One of the most noticeable features was the number of children and mere infants accompanying the women, the elder clinging tightly to their mothers' skirts, the younger sleeping through the confusion and hustling that surrounded them. All pushed eagerly forward to the booking-place as if there were a danger of their being left behind if they were not among the first to take their tickets. The women appeared even more anxious than the men, and it was singular to notice the poor mother pushing her way with her apparently unmanageable flock of children, with one at her breast, to the paying-place; and still more curious and pleasing to notice the rough gallantry the motley group which surrounded it offered her. Not an unkind expression or impatient word was uttered, but every one assisted her as they best could. The courteous behaviour of even the lowest class of English society to women with children is a redeeming point in the frequent brutality of their character. In no country is it more noticeable. We have frequently remarked in the crush-room at the opera on a crowded night behaviour to women which would hardly have passed without

remark at the paying-place of a parliamentary third-class train.

Jessie placed herself at the extremity of the hall, watching attentively her lover's movements while Walters mixed with the throng, waiting his turn to take his tickets. Presently he began to feel nervous; the confined position he was in in the crowd seemed to irritate him; he felt a sensation of overpowering restraint which he could not resist or escape from. As he slowly advanced nearer the paying-place the feeling increased, and he pressed forward so roughly as to inconvenience the persons around him. "I say, mate," said a man before him, good-humouredly, "you need not be in such a hurry, the ship won't sail without you. They expect you on board."

Although this was said simply as a piece of what is technically called chaff, without point or meaning, it told with terrific effect on the murderer. He imagined his movements and motives were known, and that he was watched. Desperate when excited, he was when without excitement as arrant a coward as ever lived. He would have staggered, and perhaps sunk, had not the dense crowd upheld him and carried him with it towards the paying-place. When he had arrived at the money-taker's box he had to be twice asked to what place he was going before he could collect himself to give an answer.

When he had obtained his tickets he left the office and proceeded into the open air, and Jessie, after a moment's delay, followed him. He hurriedly slipped a ticket into her hand, and told her to go back again and choose a carriage in which there was plenty of room, and to keep a place beside her for him. He would, he said, follow her at a distance, and mark into which carriage she entered. She followed his advice, and chose a convenient compartment, and a minute before the train started her lover entered it and placed himself beside her.

No conversation or sign of recognition took place between them till the train was some forty or fifty miles from London, when Walters, as it stopped at a station, got out and beckoned, after he had looked carefully around him, to Jessie to follow. She obeyed him, and he then spoke to her affectionately, at any rate cajolingly. He entered another carriage with her, mixing with a number of countrymen that entered it. One of them, after a short time, began talking to Walters about America, saying he had been advised to emigrate there as wages were good, and asking what sort of a place it was. Walters shortly replied that he knew nothing about it, and changed the conversation; but the remark, made purely at hazard, frightened him, and it was some time before he recovered his composure.

When the train had arrived at Liverpool, before

even seeking a lodging, Walters, who had been there before, walked with Jessie to the quays, and commenced reading the posting bills of vessels to New York. At last he found one which was to leave on the morrow. The placard of course spoke in the highest manner of the accommodation, &c., on board, and concluded by stating that the steerage passage-money was only seven pounds for each adult. Walters and Jessie, immediately they had mastered the address of the agents, proceeded to the office, and paid for two berths. Notice was given that they must be on board the steam tenders the next afternoon at two at the latest, and they then left the place to make what purchases they should require for the voyage. That ended, they sought out an obscure lodging-house for the night, and the next day, without further inconvenience than the alarm every trifling circumstance that appeared to bear in the most remote manner on the murder gave Walters, they embarked on board the ship and set sail for America.

# CHAPTER VI.

### THEODORE WALTERS AT FAULT.

WE must now return to the murder of Mr. Mostyn, and the manner of its discovery. The day after it took place the house remained closed. This however excited no surprise, as none of the neighbours were aware of Mr. Mostyn's return, and though they had, it would have caused no astonishment, as he was not acquainted with any of them and none were interested in him. The day afterwards some surprise was manifested by some of the other servant girls in the street, who were on speaking terms with Jessie, at not seeing her doing the door-steps in the morning, nor standing at the door in the evening, especially as her master was away. None surmised that she might have shut up the house and left it for a day or two on a visit of

her own, Jessie's well-known habits preventing a supposition of the kind. The third day came, and the house still remaining closed, Jessie's friends became anxious about her, and each in her turn mentioned her anxiety to the policeman on the beat. He took but little notice of their communication, considering it to be simply one of those many excuses which maids-of-all-work employ to break ground with an attractive member of the force. However, X 97 kept his eye on the house each time he passed it, and from the dead silence which appeared to hang over it he at last began to imagine it was not simply an excuse on the part of his fair informants to enter into conversation. When he was relieved he called the attention of the policeman who succeeded him on duty to the subject, and also reported it to the sergeant when he arrived at the station-house. When he gave his report, the policeman who had witnessed the dismissal of Jessie two nights before immediately reminded the sergeant that the master of the house had returned. On inquiry the sergeant found that no signs of the house being inhabited were observed the day before, and he immediately sent one of the reserve to knock at the door and inquire if all were right. The man did so, and returned with the information that although he had knocked as loudly as he could several times, he could not succeed in making any one hear him. The

sergeant then informed his inspector of the above facts, who put another policeman on duty to watch the house during the night, resolving the next morning to take more energetic steps to discover the reason of the house being apparently shut up.

When the policeman returned the next morning to the station, he reported that no one had appeared at the house, nor had any one called at it. The inspector now proceeded with a locksmith and a reserve to the house, and examined carefully the front exterior without coming to any conclusion. He then applied for permission at one of the side houses to go to the rear of their premises and scale the wall which separated the garden. Permission was readily given, but the house was found to be as fast closed at the back as at the front. The locksmith attempted to open the door, but without success ; it was bolted in the inside, and he could not touch the bolts. They again went to the front, and the locksmith tried with a skeleton key to open the street-door. This time he succeeded without difficulty, and the whole party entered the house, closing the street door after them. They first entered the parlour and opened the shutter. There was nothing to excite particular attention till they came upon a man's hat on the floor. On examining it they found some marks on it resembling dried blood, but in small quantity, and on looking carefully at the dark carpet on

the parlour floor they could easily distinguish the footsteps of a man apparently stained in blood. The inspector gave the hat into the care of the policeman, and then proceeded to enter the kitchen. Nothing here was seen worthy of notice, and they proceeded up-stairs. When they had arrived at the landing the footprints were still plainer than below. They pushed open the door of the bed-room, and notwithstanding the dim light occasioned by the curtains being drawn, enough was apparent to show that a terrible murder had been committed. The body of the old man could be seen, but it was so covered with blood as to leave the features scarcely distinguishable. As the policeman advanced to open the curtains the floor was crisp with dried blood. When the window-curtains were drawn back they examined the dead body more carefully, but the blood had so coagulated and dried upon it that it was impossible to remove it without water. The inspector then resolved on allowing the body to remain in the position in which it was till a surgeon had seen it, and the locksmith was dispatched for the district police surgeon, but with special directions not to allow the news of the murder to escape for the present.

While the locksmith was absent the inspector and policeman went on with their search. They found the crowbar and the canvas bag, both stained with blood. They found the plate-chest open, and some

silver remaining in it, of which they took a list. They then examined the other side of the room. Here a very different spectacle presented itself. All was in order. They examined the escritoire; it apparently had not been touched. Not a drop of blood was on the carpet on this side of the chamber, its thick texture having absorbed it nearer the body; there it appeared to have saturated it.

The inspector and policeman then examined the other rooms, but little beyond the tumbled state of the bed-clothes in Jessie's room, on which Walters had sat before perpetrating the murder, and the intact state of the servant's box, claimed their notice. The locksmith now returned with the district surgeon. The latter, after noting the position of the corpse, sent into the next house for a jug of hot water. With it he carefully washed the blood from the face of the dead man, which occupied him a considerable time, so firmly had it coagulated upon it. He then carefully examined the wounds, and afterwards pronounced his opinion that the skull of the dead man had first been fractured by a heavy blow, and that the throat had afterwards been cut by a blunt knife, or some instrument of the kind. The body was then carefully placed on the bed preparatory to a coroner's inquest, and the house was left in charge of the policeman who had accompanied the inspector.

Notice of the murder was immediately sent to the head office in Scotland Yard, and a coroner's inquest was called. The body was identified by Mr. Mostyn's heir-at-law, and the proceedings commenced. Nothing more was brought forward than is at present in the possession of the reader. Many inquiries were made about the girl Jessie who had been so abruptly dismissed, but of course no information concerning her could be given. The coroner expressed his opinion that it was essential the girl should be produced, for although not wishing to say one word to her prejudice, it frequently occurred that robbers were admitted into private houses by means of first obtaining the affections of the servants; in the present instance, however, it appeared somewhat unlikely, as it seemed the girl had been dismissed the house early in the evening. The coroner then adjourned the inquest for some days to allow the police time to make further inquiries.

Slowly, very slowly, was light cast on the affair. A reward of one hundred pounds was first offered for the murderers, which was afterwards increased to two hundred. Still no clue to the discovery of the deed could be obtained, although several minor circumstances were brought to light which might afterwards be used in clearing up the affair. In the first place the cabman who had brought Mr. Mostyn from the railway-station was discovered.

He stated that when they arrived at the house the door was opened by a man, who ran rapidly away. He had not time to take much notice of him, as he only caught a glimpse of his back as he was running down the street; but he seemed to be young. Of Jessie they could hear nothing beyond her having that evening drawn all her money from the savings bank. The police inquired minutely into her manners and pursuits in the neighbourhood, but could hear of nothing which did not tend to her credit. From the few female familiars she had, they learned that she stated she had a young man, but as none of them had ever seen him they thought she was only "bragging." Beyond that, they all considered her as a very respectable young woman. Later the inspector heard of a policeman who had seen a cab-driver without a hat near Brick Lane, Spitalfields. His attention had been attracted by the man having left his horse, which had walked off by itself. When he had asked the cabman what he had done with his hat, he replied that it was blown off his head into the river when crossing London Bridge. Thinking this had altogether a strange appearance, he had written in his note-book the number of the cab, 1702. The police then sought out the driver of the cab of that number, but the man proved so clearly that he had not been on the

stand that night, that it was plain the number on the cab which the policeman had seen was a fictitious one. One step, however, was gained—the policeman stated that he had no doubt he could swear positively to the driver if he saw him again. Jessie's box was examined, but nothing in it was found that could form any clue by which the perpetrators of the murder could be discovered.

We must now return to the elder Walters. He carefully kept away both from the vicinity of Mr. Mostyn's house and that of the lodging he had taken in Brick Lane. He contrived to keep himself acquainted with the principal facts which had transpired relative to the discovery of the murder, and the difficulty the police had in obtaining information on the subject. This at first was to him simply a matter of congratulation, as showing that suspicion was not leaning towards his son. For his own part he appeared to consider that great as his own crime really was, it sank into comparative insignificance beside his son's, and he seemed to think but lightly of any danger that might befall him personally. Presently he read the reward offered of one hundred pounds for the detection of the malefactors. This annoyed him greatly, far less at the prospect of danger arising to his son from it, as he now imagined him to be perfectly secure in some distant place, than because he himself had no opportunity of profiting in

a pecuniary manner by it. Presently the reward was increased to two hundred pounds. The temptation was now so great for him to interfere that he could resist it no longer, and he determined, if possible, to assist in the discovery, thinking he could not only probably obtain part of the prize-money, but also succeed in warding off the danger more successfully from his son and himself. But upon whom should he throw the blame? Not upon Meffy, he was by far too dangerous a person to offend; and, to do Walters justice, villain as he was, he abstained from seeking to throw it upon Jessie. While deliberating in his mind what step he should take, he accidentally heard that a large sum of money had been found in Mrs. Duke's house, and he resolved to throw the blame on her husband. True he was now in prison, but he had been at large at the time of the murder. He then set his brain to work to connect the poor little man with it in the most plausible manner possible. He first invented a conversation which he said had taken place between himself and Duke the evening of the murder, all of which, it is needless to say, was false. When he had thoroughly connected his story, he walked to the Scotland Yard station, and asked, if he should throw any light which would lead to anything important, whether he should be allowed to share in the reward. He was told he certainly would, and he then said he believed a man of the name of Duke, residing in

Smith's Rents, had been a party concerned in it; and that, from information he had received, Duke had a large portion of the money in his possession at that moment. After several questions had been put to him, he was greatly surprised to hear that the money was already in the hands of the police; but the inspector asked him how he knew that the money was a portion of the proceeds of the robbery committed at Mr. Mostyn's? He was now obliged to invent a further lie about his meeting Duke on Westminster Bridge, about ten o'clock on the night of the murder, going in the direction of Lambeth; that he spoke to him, and accidentally touching the pockets of the smock-frock Duke wore, something rattled like two pieces of iron together, at which Duke appeared particularly annoyed. Little more conversation passed between the inspector and Walters that day, and the latter left the station, promising to call on the morrow if he should be able to obtain any further information.

The next day Walters again called in Scotland Yard, and brought forward one or two statements of but little importance, and when he had concluded a voice behind him said, "But, Walters, did you not know something yourself of the old gentleman?" Walters suddenly turned pale, for he recognised in the voice of the speaker the policeman who had known him in Dublin, and who had met him the

night he had taken the silver sugar-basin from Mr. Mostyn's, It was some time before Walters recovered himself, and then he stated he did not know him. The policeman brought forward the conversation which had taken place between them, which Walters denied. Although the inspector present fully appreciated Walters's agitation, he made at the moment no remark, and Walters shortly afterwards left the place.

Walters was exceedingly annoyed at the man's recognising him, and more than once he cursed his own folly for interfering in the matter. He moreover felt that singular oppression fall on his spirits which frequently appears to precede coming misfortune. He wandered restlessly about the park for more than an hour, unable to trace out any definite path to follow, yet feeling the necessity, now he had proceeded so far, of not remaining idle. Tired and low-spirited, he sought his home, and as soon as he had entered it two policemen made their appearance.

"I was just wanting you, Walters," one said; "I have a search-warrant for your house; will you come with me? I have no doubt it will all end in nothing."

Walters said gloomily, "You can search where you please; I have nothing to conceal."

The policemen went on with their search without

meeting with anything suspicious. "There don't appear anything here," said one; "I do not know why they made us trouble you."

"Who has given any information against me?" said Walters. "I don't think there's a more unlikely fellow than myself to take part in anything of the kind."

"I don't know who it was, I am sure. At any rate, he seems to have made a fool of himself. What place is this?" he said, pointing to a low cupboard under the stairs.

"Oh! only a sort of hole into which we fling old things, till we send them away or do something with them."

"Is it open?"

"Yes, it is; do you want to see into it?"

"Well, we may as well."

Walters opened the door readily enough, and waited a little, but suddenly he turned pale and said angrily, "There now, haven't you examined that long enough?"

The policeman withdrew his head and part of his body from the cupboard, holding in his hand a plate of metal, which he cleared of the dust, and then read "1702." "This is a cab number, Walters, and I must arrest you."

Walters attempted to bully and then to ridicule the whole affair.

"Why, what can you want," he said, "with that stupid cab-plate, so beastly dirty as it is? Why, it has been here ever since I have been in the house. It belonged to the tenant before me, who was a cab-driver."

"Can't help that," said the policeman; "you must come with us, and consider yourself under arrest."

Walters in a moment saw it would be useless to attempt any opposition, so he put on his hat and accompanied the policemen to the station. When the charge was entered in the police-book, he made no remark, being perfectly aware, as an old policeman, that it would be useless; but he showed in the expression of his countenance great anger. He afterwards requested no one would tell his wife of his arrest, as it might frighten her, and the magistrate the next day would be sure to release him. The gaoler made no remark, but quietly turned the key on him in his cell.

It was too late that day for the case to be heard, but it was brought before the police-magistrate the next day, after the night charges had been disposed of. In some unaccountable manner the affair had got wind, and the court was crowded. The examination, though purely a preliminary one, told terribly against Walters, and before it was half over all his self-possession had left him. He was charged with the murder and robbery of Mr. Charles Mostyn. Not

much evidence was brought against him, but that was of the most conclusive description. The policeman who had stopped the cab-horse in Brick Lane was first called. He swore to the fact that he found the horse wandering without any one with it, and he was on the point of taking it to the green-yard when the prisoner stood forward and claimed it. He noticed that the prisoner was without his hat and appeared greatly agitated. He asked him what he had done with his hat, and received for reply that as he (the prisoner) was coming over London Bridge, a sudden gust of wind had caught it and blown it into the river. Thinking the whole affair seemed mysterious, he entered the number of the cab, 1702, in his memorandum book. On being asked by the magistrate at what house the cab had been stopping, the policeman replied that he had had no opportunity of remarking, as he had met the horse coming towards him, and from the distance the prisoner had run to overtake it, it must have been some distance off. On being asked whether he had any doubt as to the identity of the prisoner, he said none whatever; he had seen him under a gas-lamp, and he was positive he was not mistaken. Walters was asked whether he wished to ask the policeman any question, but he replied that he did not. The owner of the cab 1702 was next called, but he simply deposed that the cab licensed for that number had not left the yard that

night, and on being shown the plate which had been found at Walters's, bearing the number on it, he not only said it did not belong to him, but even pointed out some difference between the form of the figures and those generally used in metropolitan hackney carriages. Walters having no question to ask this witness, the police inspector said he had no further evidence to offer that day, but would request his worship to remand the prisoner for a week, after he had tried on him a hat which had been found at Mr. Mostyn's. He produced the hat, and immediately Walters saw it he turned ghastly pale, and appeared on the point of fainting. After he had recovered himself, the hat was placed on him and fitted him perfectly. The magistrate now asked Walters if he wished to say anything, reminding him that possibly it would be better to wait till he had a professional person to defend him, as anything which he might now say would hardly alter his determination to remand the case, without accepting bail, for one week. Walters simply said that he had no remark at that moment to make, but should reserve his defence, and he was then removed from the dock.

Walters was that day taken to the Tothill Fields prison, and confined in one of the cells, near a gas-lamp burning in the passage, and which threw its light into the cell through the hole made for ventilation over the door. He knew perfectly well for what

reason he was placed in it, namely, that he might be watched from time to time in the night without the warder on duty being seen, so that he could not attempt suicide without its being prevented. There was no necessity for a precaution of the kind, for Walters was by far too great a coward to attempt to evade his fate by anticipating it for an hour. He felt annoyed at it, however, as it disturbed his train of thought, and obliged him to wear upon his face an expression of innocence he did not feel. He slept but little that night, his mind was too disturbed; however, in the course of the next day he contrived to regain something of his self-possession. A curious pyschological phenomenon now began to develop itself in him. Instead of occupying himself with his own danger, he became extremely anxious about his son's. He feared he also might be apprehended, and if so he would certainly be hung. Now he was unable to help him, either by advice or in any other manner. True, Edward was cunning enough, perhaps naturally more so than his father, still he had not so considerable an amount of experience. The only way of averting the danger from Edward was to force the suspicion on somebody else, and he now more resolutely than ever resolved to press in on Duke. But in what way was he to accomplish it? and when should he begin? He at last resolved to take no steps in the matter till after

the next examination; in the meantime he sent for his wife to concert with her what steps should be taken for his defence.

Mrs. Walters obeyed the message her husband had sent, and called the same day at the prison. When she saw her husband she burst into tears, but found no words to console him. He allowed her some time to collect herself and then spoke kindly to her. He inquired if any one had called at the house since the previous day, and she told him no one. "No one whatever?" he inquired. "Nobody," was the answer. This took a certain amount of anxiety off Walters's mind. He knew perfectly well the house was watched by the police, and he feared Edward might have called.

"By-the-by, dear," Mrs. Walters inquired, "where is Edward? he has not been near me."

"I do not know," said Walters; "he is away in the country, I believe, on some job." Then trying to stop the conversation on that subject he said, "I wish you would call on Mr. Braham, the solicitor, in Bedford Place, as you go home, and ask him to come here to-morrow, and also bring me all the money you can collect together as soon as possible, for I shall need it all, I can easily foresee." Walters then, fearing his wife might again speak of their son in the presence of the warder who was in attendance, advised her to go at once, as he was afraid Mr.

Braham might otherwise be from home. Mrs. Walters, half broken-hearted, followed his advice, and left him.

The day fixed for the next examination arrived, and Walters, attended by Mr. Braham, was placed in the dock. The amount of circumstantial evidence that was that day brought forward was so conclusive, that even the experienced legal practitioner whom Walters had employed to defend him was overwhelmed by it. He saw at a glance how hopeless was the case he had to manage, and although resolved to go through with it, he felt there was no chance of his client's escaping.

The first witness examined was the owner of the cab which Walters had driven the night of the murder. He deposed to Walters, who was known to him as occasionally driving a cab, calling on him the afternoon of the murder for a night cab. He let him have 10,074. Walters returned about ten o'clock the next morning. The horse was fearfully tired and exhausted, and could hardly put one foot before the other. One of his men had called his attention to the interior of the cab, there being evident marks of blood upon the seat. He was very angry when he heard of it, and resolved never to allow Walters to have a cab again from his yard. When asked why, when he found there were marks of blood on the seat of the cab, he had not called the attention of

the police to the fact, he replied that he thought it probable it might have been hired by some butcher at one of the markets to take home a quantity of meat, a thing that frequently occurred, although cab-masters, as a rule, set their faces against the practice. The number-plate found in Walters's lodgings he knew nothing about. He had not particularly noticed how Walters was dressed; he remembered he wore a hat when he hired the cab, and a cap when he brought it back. Mr. Braham, on the part of Walters, having no question to ask the witness, he left the box.

The next witness was a sergeant of the detective police. He stated that from information he had received he had visited the house of an old woman in Anchor Court, Brick Lane. Noticing a quantity of soot on the floor of a room on the first story, he examined the chimney, and in it he found a quantity of silver plate, lodged on a board which had evidently been hastily and roughly placed across the chimney. He now produced the different articles, and called the attention of his worship to several of them being marked with blood, evidently from their having been handled with blood-stained hands. He spoke to the woman of the house on the subject, and she informed him that a middle-aged man, in description strongly resembling the prisoner, had taken the room of her.

Here Mr. Braham interfered, and asked if the

sergeant were in order. The inspector answered that there need be no difficulty on the subject, as the old woman who rented the house was now in court, and was ready with her evidence.

The detective left the box, and a diminutive, cunning-looking, ragged old woman entered it. She deposed that she kept a lodging-house in Anchor Court, and that about three weeks since the prisoner called on her and hired a room by the week, and he paid her a fortnight's rent, six shillings, in advance. He then went away, but one morning, about a fortnight since — she could not rightly remember the day—the prisoner called in the morning, and said he should come in that night, he could not tell exactly the time, but as it would be late she had better let him have the key of the street-door. This she refused, and told him her bed was in the front room near the door, and as she slept very lightly she should hear him when he knocked. He then went away, and she thought it must have been about one o'clock in the morning before he returned. She opened the door for him, and noticed that he had no hat on. He had in his hand a bag, which appeared heavy. As soon as she had let him in, she shut her room door, and she heard him go up-stairs. After that, as she was tired, she fell asleep, but woke early and went out, as she wanted to see some friends who were going to sea, and she did not return till

late at night. From that day till the present she had not seen the prisoner.

This witness was cross-examined by Mr. Braham. On the night mentioned, after she was certain that the prisoner was her tenant, she closed her bedroom door directly, as she did not like being seen in her night-dress (a laugh). She was very particular. When she went out in the morning it was to see some friends who were going on a sea voyage. No, they were not gentlemen, as they had not behaved like gentlemen to her. They had not paid her the money they owed her, but they made it all right before they went. She did not return till late at night; she had been engaged in business all day. She could not remember what business, but she was sure it was business. Her memory at times was very bad, and she could not remember what day it was. Why did he (the solicitor) want to know? she could not tell him, at any rate. If he was very particular about it he had better call at the Tower Hill station and find out, as she had been struck with a dizziness in the head on account of the sun, and a policeman had taken her there that she might not be made the victim of bad characters.

This was something more than Mr. Braham had bargained for, and he asked her no more questions.

The next witness was the policeman who had met Walters the night he had committed the robbery of the sugar-basin and milk-jug. He had hardly commenced when Mr. Braham objected to his deposition, as not bearing on the case, but the inspector pressed it, assuring the magistrate, on the contrary, that it was most necessary, as forming a connecting link in the chain of evidence. The policeman then went on, and related how he had noticed something under Walters's arm, which gave a metallic sound when he touched it. He knew Walters of old, and he followed him for a time at a long distance, when he met a policeman of his division in plain clothes, and he requested him to follow Walters, which he did.

The next who was examined was the policeman mentioned by the last witness. He merely stated that he had tracked Walters to a silversmith's shop near Westminster Bridge. When he came out he spoke to him on some excuse for the purpose of recognising his features, and that he afterwards went into the silversmith's, and asked him to put by the articles for a few days, which he readily agreed to.

The next witness was the silversmith. He deposed to purchasing of Walters, at their full value, the sugar-basin and jug, and that at the request of the policeman he had kept them by him.

The articles were produced, and compared with the

coffee and tea-pot. They were of precisely the same pattern, and evidently of the same set. The inspector said that at present he had no further evidence to offer, and submitted that there was already sufficient to send the prisoner for trial. Mr. Braham said that on the part of his client he should reserve his defence, and Walters was fully committed for trial for the murder of Mr. Mostyn. The magistrate refused Mr. Braham's application to take bail, which, knowing there was not the slightest probability of his worship's accepting it, Mr. Braham stated to be of the most respectable and responsible description.

Walters slept not for an instant that night. He saw the net by which he was encircled drawing closer and closer, and now, in spite of all the ingenuity he was master of, improved by experience, not a chance seemed left for him. He recapitulated over and over again in his mind the evidence brought forward at the two examinations, but, singular to state, the evidence of the cabman who had brought Mr. Mostyn from the railway station, and who had deposed to the door being opened by a young man, who had run swiftly away after Mr. Mostyn had spoken to him, caused him, if not more anxiety, certainly a prior anxiety to any other. To what would it lead? To the certainty there was another and a younger man engaged in the murder, and that again was strengthened by the idea that if he (Walters) had driven the

cab, some one else must have assisted in the crime, as it would have been impossible for him to have perpetrated it single-handed. There appeared, then, almost a certainty that suspicion would fall upon his son, and what could he do to avert it? He felt terribly his own position, but he felt equally the danger of his son, although perhaps he was even unaware that he had in him such a beautiful feeling as parental love. Often as he turned his mind to his own danger, so often did it return to his son's. Agitated and disturbed, he lay motionless on his narrow bed, not daring to move, knowing he was watched, and fearing that restlessness might be taken as a proof against him.

Dawn broke, and anxious and confused as his brain had been the whole night, it became clearer as daylight advanced. He now began to concentrate his thoughts, and contrive a definite course of action. After he had breakfasted, he requested the prison warder to bring him one of the bills offering a reward for the apprehension of the murderers, and promising a pardon to any accomplice who would turn Queen's evidence, provided he was not actually engaged in the murder. The warder brought him the placard, and after he had read it he pointed to the clause offering the pardon, and asking whether it might be relied on. The warder replied that he could give no opinion, but that he would mention it to the governor.

In a few minutes the governor of the prison entered the cell, and Walters again asked the question. He received for reply that he could give no definite answer, and that Walters, after reading the placard, must act on his own responsibility. All he could state was that the notice the prisoner held in his hand was an official one.

Walters reflected for a few moments, and then said he wished to make a declaration, which was to the following effect :—That he had hired the cab as stated, and changed the number-plate, and that he had been implicated in the robbery, but the murder had been perpetrated by his accomplice, a man of the name of Duke, residing in Smith's Rents. In answer to questions put to him, he stated that it was Duke who had been in the house when Mr. Mostyn arrived, and who had quitted it, but he had contrived to take with him the street-door key. That he (Walters) had remained with the cab at the corner of the next street, and that about midnight Duke returned to him and said he was going to try if the door could be opened. Walters told him it would be useless trying, as no doubt the bolts would be shut. Duke, however, went to the house, and in a few moments returned, saying that he had opened the door, and telling Walters to drive round quietly to the house in about a quarter of an hour, to take the swag. That Duke had at last opened the door,

and asked Walters to come in and help him, and told him that he had done the job. Walters then went into the house and placed his hat on a chair, and took out to the cab one canvas bag filled with plate; when he returned for the other, he noticed that Duke's hands were covered with blood, and on asking him the reason, he said he had done for the old fellow, and that he (Walters) thereupon refused to have anything more to do with the affair, and left the house. Duke followed him, and got into the cab, and not wishing to have any altercation with him, he drove him to Brick Lane, and that there Duke persuaded him to accept the plate and he would keep the money, and to this arrangement he (Walters) foolishly consented.

The governor hardly knew how to act on the occasion. He, however, had the deposition written out and forwarded to the solicitors engaged for the prosecution, for Mr. Mostyn's heir-at-law had now taken up the matter. In the afternoon Mr. Braham called at the prison, and informed Walters that a two hundred pound note (part of the moneys found in Mrs. Duke's house) had been traced, and that it had been a portion of some money lent by Mr. Mostyn some time since on a bill of exchange, and which had been paid. Walters told Mr. Braham he was delighted to hear it, as it assisted in bringing out the truth of the statement he had that day made

that Duke was his accomplice, and had committed the murder. Mr. Braham was thunderstruck, not at the complicity of his client, for from the first he had fully held him to be guilty, but at his audacity at taking any steps without his advice. As soon as he had a little recovered himself, he told Walters that he should throw up the case, such a method of proceeding being utterly at variance with respectable criminal practice—a conclusion he was helped to considerably from having found out that morning that his client was very poor, and that there was little or nothing to be got out of the affair. He then, with much virtuous indignation on his countenance, left Walters to carry on his own case as he best might.

# CHAPTER VII.

### MRS. DUKE SEARCHES FOR EXCULPATORY EVIDENCE FOR HER HUSBAND.

TO continue at any length the legal proceedings preparatory to the trial would be to give our narrative too much the appearance of a police report; we shall therefore be as brief as possible. The Crown, in consequence of the many discrepancies in Walters's deposition, refused to accept him as a witness against Duke—in fact, nothing but that feeling which prompts a drowning man to snatch at a straw could ever have induced Walters to invent the tale he did. Unfortunately, the *primâ facie* evidence seemed strong against Duke. The finding of the money itself was considered a proof to a certain extent, as Mrs. Duke had admitted that the act of bringing it to the police-station was not done by the

advice of her husband, he not even being aware of the circumstance, imprisoned as he was at the time. His innocence, though to her certain, was by no means so to the police, who rather seemed to think he had secreted the money in the spot in which it was found to make use of it later. Added to this, from the inquiries they had made, slight enough it is true, they could not very well make out how he had employed his time on that particular evening, and his wife, hearing that a suspicion of murder and robbery was afloat respecting her husband, declined to answer or evaded every question put to her. Her treatment of the police when they made inquiries of her on the subject by no means raised a favourable impression. Indignant at the suspicion cast upon her husband so unjustly, she received the inquiries in anything but a courteous manner, patience under insult being scarcely her principal characteristic.

But poor Mrs. Duke's troubles were soon increased by the certain knowledge that her husband was not only suspected, but positively accused, of the crimes of murder and robbery. At the expiration of his sentence for the illegal possession of the poultry, a policeman arrested him on the new charges, and again conveyed him to the police-station. His wife there met him, and sad indeed was the meeting. The gigantic woman wept like a child, and the

little man, though miserably down-hearted himself, used all the logic and argument in his power to cheer and console his better half. The examination before the police magistrate took place the next day, but none of the depositions or statements made by Walters were allowed to be mixed up with it. The money being found in Duke's house, part of the amount certainly having been Mr. Mostyn's, bore heavily against him. Again it was sworn to by a policeman that he had seen Duke one day in the passage of Mr. Mostyn's house, conversing with that gentleman, while offering some fowls for sale. He remembered the circumstance perfectly well, as Duke had asked him to keep an eye on his basket while he ran to get change for a sovereign with which Mr. Mostyn had paid him for a fowl he had purchased. Duke had on at the time a smock frock similar to the one he now wore. Another policeman swore to the fact that he had noticed Duke at Mr. Mostyn's, and that he had seen a person very near Mr. Mostyn's house the night of the murder who closely resembled Duke, but he could not swear to him positively. This and other slight circumstantial evidence tending to connect Duke (who was undefended) with the murder was brought forward, and the hearing concluded by Duke's being fully committed for trial on the charge of murder.

For the rest of the day poor Mrs. Duke remained

almost broken-hearted. Her circle of acquaintance was very restricted, as she considered herself somewhat select, and in return was looked upon by the majority of the inhabitants of the "Rents" as proud. But still she had some friends; yet whom to apply to in the present emergency she knew not. The first person who came to her aid was the sickly young thief who has been already casually mentioned in a former chapter. Mrs. Duke, though utterly reprobating his course of life, had been very kind to him in his illness, frequently giving him food, and mending his things for him, improving the occasion at the same time by giving him good advice, all of which he readily promised to follow, and it is needless to say he as easily forgot. This lad, who was perfectly acquainted with the routine of the police-court, called upon Mrs. Duke in the evening, and asked her if he could be of any service to her, as he would willingly assist her if he could.

Mrs. Duke really felt grateful to the lad for his offer. In the abundance of her sorrow his visit brought consolation with it, although she did not very clearly see in what he could aid her. She was however mistaken, for after asking her how things stood, he inquired what solicitor she had engaged.

"I do not know one," said Mrs. Duke, "and I did not know it was necessary."

The young thief looked at her with an expression

of sorrow and reproof on his countenance as he perceived the sad results of her restricted education.

"You must hire a lawyer," he said; "you can do nothing without one. If you don't know one, I do, and a precious sharp fellow he is. He got Limping Davey off when he was actually caught blowing his nose with the handkercher he had prigged, and a dozen other fellows I know. You'd better let me fetch him to-morrow. He'll do your job for you, if anybody can."

"I wish you would," said Mrs. Duke; "I shall then have a weight off my mind."

The young gentleman promised to bring his professional adviser early the next morning, and, after spending an hour with Mrs. Duke, and taking a cup of tea with her, consoling her the while with anecdotes tending to prove how contemptible was the power of the law in the hands of a clever solicitor, he bade her good night, and Jemima sought her solitary couch, but neither to sleep nor rest.

The next morning Master Perkins, the young thief, called with his professional friend, Mr. Merridew, a shrewd, slim, delicate, shabby-looking young man, about twenty-five years of age. He candidly told Mrs. Duke he did not exactly practise on his own account, and yet he did, and he asked if she

understood him. Mrs. Duke replied that she did, but she evidently did not. He then drew from his pocket and showed her the headings of several lengthy "police reports," stating that the prisoner was defended by Mr. Merridew, from the office of Messrs. Jones & Black, and he also pointed to the conclusion of them, in which the magistrate generally said he did not think there was sufficient evidence before him to send the prisoner to trial. He had quitted his late firm, and was on the point of engaging himself with another, but in the meantime he should be happy to conduct her affair. He should want some money from her, as there were considerable expenses attending the defence of a prisoner on so heavy a charge, and he wished to know what she could afford to expend on her husband's behalf.

Poor Mrs. Duke replied that she had not more than a sovereign in the house, and a few pounds in the savings bank. Mr. Merridew shook his head, and said he was afraid it would not go far in a case of the kind, but that he would certainly make it go as far as it could. Before commencing operations, he asked to see the savings bank book, which Mrs. Duke produced and placed in Mr. Merridew's hands, who, after convincing himself that there was fully seven pounds still remaining to her credit, began business.

Mr. Merridew when he came was fully possessed with the idea of the extreme probability of Duke's guilt, and he opened his plan of proceeding with that view so evidently before him that even Mrs. Duke could not help perceiving it, and she warmly repelled the idea of the possibility of anything of the kind. Mr. Merridew, perfectly accustomed to such denials, listened patiently to her statements, and then reminded her of the difficult task he should have in working up against the evidence of the day before, and he also mentioned to her that he had heard, on excellent authority, that Walters had offered to turn Queen's evidence, and stated that he could easily prove the murder was perpetrated by Duke. Mrs. Duke rebutted this statement with so much genuine warmth, and declared so determinedly that she could prove her husband had not left the house for one hour on the night of the murder, that Mr. Merridew, unaccustomed as he was to believe in protestations of innocence, began to be staggered. He told her if all she stated was really the case and she could prove it, there was no doubt her husband would be acquitted; but it unfortunately happened that when really honest men were accused of acts of dishonesty, it was very difficult to prove their innocence. He, in his experience, had frequently met with cases of the kind. However, if she could obtain credible witnesses to the fact that her husband

was at home that night, there was not a doubt he would be acquitted of the murder at any rate. He then left her, promising to call the next day, or the day afterwards at the latest; in the meantime she had better give notice as soon as she could at the savings bank office that she intended to withdraw her account.

Mrs. Duke now began to consider what would be the best means of proving that her husband had been at home that night. She remembered that, after the death of the soldier's wife and child, Duke had informed her that the blind basket-maker on the second-floor had come into his room while he, Duke, was in bed, and had conversed with him upon different matters for some time. Although Duke by no means complained to his wife of the blind man's visit, still she remembered that he had said he had been prevented by it from sleeping. Now, if Trivet, the blind basket-maker, had not forgotten the circumstance, he would be able greatly to assist her. She determined to appeal to him immediately on the subject, and for that purpose she went up-stairs to the second-floor and tapped at the door. She was requested to come in, and when she entered the room she found Mrs. Trivet sitting up in bed making soldiers' shirts, and the younger children playing about the room. The father and the three elder children were all absent.

"This is very kind of you to come and see me," said the sick woman. "You cannot think how dull I feel."

"I did not know you were ill," said Mrs. Duke, "or I should have come before. How long have you been poorly?"

"About a week; but I have to thank my own imprudence for it."

"How is that?"

"Well, Mrs. Jackson one afternoon comes to me and says, 'Mrs. Trivet,' says she, 'I don't know what to do, I have not a single farthing left, and the children are as hungry as they can be. I have been obliged, worse luck, to pawn my shoes, and now Mrs. Wilson has lent me a couple of score of red herrings, and if I had got my shoes at home I could have gone into the Broadway and sold them.' Well, my boots were at home, and I did not think I should want to use them that night, so I told her she could take them if she liked, as I thought they would fit her, but she must let me have them again that evening, and she said she would, and she kept her word, I will say that. Well, she was very thankful for my offer, and tried the boots on, and they fitted her as if they had been made for her. She had not been gone half-an-hour before our little Johnny was seized with the spasms, so I thought I'd run to the doctor's shop for a pennyworth of Daffy's Elixir, when all of a sudden I re-

membered I had not got my boots. What to do I did not know. The night was damp and cold, and I did not want to go out, but there was Johnny crying, and at last I thought as it was dark nobody would see me, so I ran out; but I soon found the cold strike to me, and when I came back my face and hands were quite blue. Then I began spitting blood again the next day, and my cough, which had been so much better, returned, and here I am. But, now how are you?"

"Almost broken-hearted," said Mrs. Duke, beginning to cry; "I suppose you have heard they've accused poor Duke of murder?"

"No, I never heard it; but then I've been in bed, you know. Who accuses him?"

"That villain Walters, I understand, while I am sure Duke never spoke a dozen times to him in his life."

"That man is a villain, and I always said so," remarked Mrs. Trivet. "But what are you going to do?"

"I've hired a lawyer, and he says I must get as many people as I can to show that Duke was at home the night the murder was committed. Now, my dear, I want you to help me."

"I will if I can, you may be sure; but how can I do it?"

"I want your husband to prove that the night

I made the chicken-broth for the poor woman over the way, he went down to Duke when he was in bed and sat talking with him for some time."

"That he did, sure enough, and very angry I was with him for it, for I was tired and wanted to go to sleep; and he did not come up till nigh two o'clock in the morning. But what has that got to do with it?"

"Why that was the night of the murder."

"Well that seems clear enough, if you are sure that was the night. My husband, you may depend on it, will do all he can for you as soon as he comes back, for you are a great favourite of his."

"Oh! I am in no hurry: to-morrow will do."

"I mean, as soon as he comes back from the country."

"From the country?" inquired Mrs. Duke, aghast.

"Yes, he had been ailing for some time past, and I thought that the air of the country would do him good, but we did not know how to manage it, for things don't go particularly well with us; when one day Mr. Sweets, the lame man that plays the flute about the streets, and lives at No. 7, came in to say good-bye, as he was going round the country for a change, as the police began to annoy him in London. We asked him what part he was going to, and

he said he should try Kent this time. Well, my husband remembered that the brewer's wife who lived near here, and who had, on several occasions, been very kind to us, told him if ever he came near Dartford she would give him a good job to bottom the kitchen chairs and make some garden-baskets, as well as try to find him other work in the neighbourhood. Thinking it might be a good opportunity for my husband to get out in the fresh air, I asked Mr. Sweets if he was likely to go near Dartford, and he said he should go right through it. I then asked him if he would take my husband with him, and he said with great pleasure; at the same time he should remember he could not go many miles a-day as he was asthmatic, and when a man was lame, and had an asthma, walking was very hard work, particularly if he had to play the flute at the same time, and it was all the harder for him, for he had to hide his asthma as much as he could, as people otherwise would not think his music was good. I told him I did not care how slow he walked as my husband was far from strong; and he then said he should like him for a companion very much, as Trivet could talk to him on serious subjects—which my husband can do very well—when he was not playing, and his music would amuse Trivet when he was, and so it would be pleasant for both. Well, my husband got a stock of cane for bottoming the chairs, the willow for the

baskets he could get in any town, and they started off together. All I know is they got to Dartford, and that Trivet got on very well there; Mrs. Jones, the brewer's wife, gave him more than a week's work. He used to go at about eight every morning to the house, and he had his breakfast and dinner there every day. Sweets used to take him there and bring him back to their lodgings every evening, and generally had his supper at the house as well. Sweets behaved very kindly all along, and used to put his flute in his pocket when he took my husband there of a morning and fetched him back in the evening, that he might make Trivet appear the more respectable."

"Do you expect your husband to be back soon?" asked Mrs. Duke.

"I don't know at all. I told him not to hurry himself."

"Where is he now?"

"I haven't the least idea. He left Dartford about a fortnight ago, and he sent me some money by Mr. Stokes, the tinman, who met him at Dartford, and he said also where he intended going to, but I am sure I don't remember where it was."

"But Mr. Stokes is in trouble himself, so I don't think it will be of much use trying to get anything out of him," said Mrs. Duke.

"Yes, but his time must be out now in a day or

two, and I'm sure he'll tell you willingly, and assist you in any way he can. He's as good a husband and father, and as kind a fellow as ever lived when he's sober, and when he is not he's more mad than anything else, and so is to be pitied. You know, I suppose, what he's in for?"

Mrs. Duke did not, and Mrs. Trivet thereupon proceeded to inform her that it was for flinging a kettle of boiling water at his wife's head; but as she was somewhat prolix in her narrative, and after all left a great deal untold, we will attempt a short sketch of the life of Mr. Stokes.

Of Mr. Stokes's ancestors we cannot speak, as he had never known either father or mother, and was even unacquainted with their names. Whence he had obtained the one he bore, that of John Stokes, it is impossible to say. He was brought up in one of the Metropolitan workhouse schools, and when old enough to leave it, he was apprenticed to a tinman. His apprenticeship was unsatisfactory, both to master and pupil. The former accused the lad of being idle and impertinent, although he admitted his perfect integrity; and the latter stated that his master was exacting, tyrannical, and mean, and, in fact, half-starved him. He complained also that he learnt nothing of the art and mystery of tinmanship, beyond mending pots and kettles. Domiciled as he was in Westminster, it is not to be wondered

at if he admired those superb young men who hang about Delahay Street and Duke Street, with uniforms fitting them as tightly as their skins, and with streamers tied to their caps; nor was it more astonishing if he wished to exchange the squalid attire of the parish apprentice tinman, for the magnificent trappings of the soldier. Giving way, at last, to the temptation, he enlisted into a regiment in the East India Company's service, the proximate cause being the seductive tales of delight told by a recruiting officer of the terrestrial paradise the life of a private was in the East Indies, with one servant to carry his knapsack, another to cook his dinner, leaving him barely anything to do for himself, except to take care of the diamonds and prize-money, and other valuables which would fall to him when the booty of Rajahs' palaces was shared among the soldiers, which generally occurred once every three months. Thus, full of hope he left England for the sunny East, leaving his master to apply for another apprentice at the workhouse. In his regiment, John Stokes acquired the reputation of a steady, good soldier, always attentive to his duty, and not more drunken in his habits than the average of his comrades. In fact, drunkenness was really the only fault he could justly have been accused of; and that, as he was never known to be drunk on duty, was never registered against him. After he had been in India about

eight years, a corporal in the regiment died, leaving a widow and four young children. Stokes had always been on excellent terms with both husband and wife, and he did the best in his power to comfort and assist the poor woman in her trouble. He succeeded, and so well, that six months after the death of her husband, she married John Stokes. The time between the decease of her first husband and her marriage with the second certainly seems short, but in India matrimonial alliances with the widows of privates and non-commissioned officers take place quickly, if they take place at all.

Stokes was now a happy man in more ways than one, for he not only inherited the widow of his deceased friend, but his chevrons as well, for the week after his marriage he was made corporal. He behaved after his promotion perfectly well, and gave great satisfaction to his superiors. His habits of drinking were certainly something less, and being aware how derogatory it was to the dignity of a non-commissioned officer to be seen drunk, he contrived to acquire the habit of simulating sobriety when more than half-intoxicated; about as dangerous a practice as could well be adopted in India, and most noxious in its effect on the brain.

He continued corporal for two years, when one day he suffered a sun-stroke, and when he had partially recovered from its effects he was still retained

in the hospital as a lunatic. He soon, however, somewhat recovered, sufficiently so to be allowed to go at large, but not so as to be fit to go on duty; and, in consequence, he received his discharge, and was sent with his wife and family, and some other invalids, to England.

When he arrived in England, he found himself in a most unfortunate position indeed. He was not adapted for any occupation, and the knowledge of the cause of his discharge, which was entered on his certificate, precluded him from any situation of trust. At last, he determined to try his original occupation, as far as he had learned it—that of a tinman. He equitably mortgaged his trifling pension, and with the proceeds purchased one of those travelling barrows, or trucks, combining with it a grindstone, which are so frequently seen about the London streets.

Stokes rapidly adopted the manners and habits of the civilian. He was a most affectionate and tender husband; and his wife having no family to him, he treated the four children she had had by her former husband with as much affection as if they had been his own. On her part, she loved him very sincerely. She was a good mother, and, what is not often met with in her class of society, a good manager as well. Thus their life was on the whole a happy one, but with occasional and terrible exceptions. Stokes

rarely got tipsy, but when he did, a more complete metamorphosis could not take place than occurred in the character and disposition of the man. From the kind, docile, and even submissive husband, he became both in language and brutal treatment the most repulsive blackguard. He was on these occasions a very maniac, and in his mania appeared that frequent phase of insanity which impels the patient to attack those whom in his sane moments he holds in the greatest love. His neighbours, when these fits were on him, generally interfered to protect his wife, and miserable indeed was her existence and those of his children during the time the paroxysm lasted. When over, he was again the quiet affectionate husband, and steady, honest, industrious man. His drunken bouts were sometimes two or three months asunder, and during that time he appeared to take excessive pains to eradicate the bad impression his past conduct had had on his wife.

The eldest boy was now nearly fifteen years of age, and was clever and active; but unfortunately he had picked up some bad acquaintances, and had once been punished at the police court for some act of dishonesty. His mother and her husband thought he was reformed when he left the prison, but like many other lads similarly situated, the sentence he had received appeared to have done him more harm

than good, inasmuch as it had added hypocrisy to his other faults. Unknown to his parents he got acquainted with some professed thieves, and committed with them a considerable robbery. Cheated by his companions out of his share of the plunder, and finding that more blame was liable to fall to his share than to the others, the boy decamped, and some time afterwards Stokes heard he was connected with a gang of young thieves, then infesting the neighbourhood of Gravesend. His mother was almost broken-hearted at the intelligence, and Stokes, although his finances at the time were at low-water mark, determined to go after the boy; and, if possible, bring him back with him, or find him some honest employment. With this view he started off, and searched unremittingly every locality he thought he was likely to hear of the young fellow in, but without success; and, at last, penniless and downhearted, he returned home. In passing through Dartford, he had met Trivet, who sent a message by him to his wife, as well as some money. He also told him to inform her that work had been abundant, and that he had been recommended from one house to another, and that he should continue away some time longer. He concluded by adding that his health had much improved during his journey, and that she should hear of his movements whenever he met any one he knew going to London.

When Stokes arrived in Smith's Rents, he brought great joy to the blind man's family, and great sorrow to his own. Mrs. Stokes wept bitterly when she heard of the bad success of his mission, and would not be comforted. Poor Stokes tried all the persuasions and consolations in his power, but without effect, and he left the house to deliver his message to Mrs. Trivet, on whom he had not yet called. She received him most kindly for his own sake, for the old soldier was a great favourite in the Rents—when sober. His information, also, of the improved state of her husband's health, and the considerable amount of money he had brought with him—more than thirty shillings—combined to make her supremely happy, and in the fulness of her heart she asked Stokes if she could be of any use to him in return. Stokes, like an old soldier, immediately improved the occasion, and borrowed five shillings, stating at the time what was the perfect truth—that neither he nor his wife had a shilling. Without a moment's hesitation Mrs. Trivet granted the loan, and Stokes started off in somewhat better spirits to purchase some household necessaries. He had scarcely arrived in the Broadway when he met an old comrade, an Irishman. He noticed poor Stokes's cast-down appearance, and, hurt at seeing his old friend in trouble, he offered him a drop of the "cratur,"

which Stokes readily accepted. The gin was swallowed, and the effect was miraculous on Stokes. It was only a glass, and yet that glass had in an instant cancelled all the disappointment and fatigue the poor fellow had met with, and had changed him into a jolly, rollicking companion. But even then his love for his wife did not for a moment subside. He thought of her while he was drinking, and after he had drunk, his first thought was what he could do for her benefit. He was soon resolved. With part of his five shillings he immediately purchased a pint bottle of glorious Old Tom for one-and-tenpence, bottle included, and put it into his pocket. He invested the remainder in tea, sugar, bread, and meat, and then started tolerably well-laden for his home, of course having first returned the treat his Irish friend had given him, as he was not the man to be beholden to an old comrade even for a glass of gin.

Arrived at home he found Mrs. Stokes with her youngest child, a sickly boy about four years of age, on her lap. She was still weeping over the apparent loss of her first-born, and Stokes went up to her, and commenced placing his purchases, which she did not even look at, on the table. Without saying a word he filled the tea-kettle with water, placing it on the hob; he then seated himself by his wife, and, kindly putting his arm round her

waist, attempted to cheer her with his conversation. To a certain extent he succeeded, and then, perceiving the impression he had made, he took up the gin bottle from the table, and showed it to his wife, winking playfully at her the while. Mrs. Stokes shook her head sorrowfully but by no means angrily. He repeated his dumb solicitation, and she partly smiled. Stokes, who when sober perfectly understood his wife's psychology, without uttering a word rose from his seat, and, taking a tea-cup (the establishment did not boast of a drinking-glass), he put in two lumps of sugar, a quantity of gin, and then filled it up with hot water from the kettle. He next placed a spoon in it, which he first with great delicacy wiped on the tail of his coat, and, all being in readiness, he offered it to his wife with the bewitching smile of entreaty he had found so efficacious when, single and a private, he used to offer bashful beauties in a public-house his glass to drink out of. With a sigh she took the tea-cup from his hand, and, after stirring its contents, she applied it to her lips. In the meantime Stokes took another tea-cup, and, half filling it with gin, he drank it off. In a short time the spirit certain divines tell us was given to man by a beneficent Providence for his moderate use and comfort, began to have its effect. The wife began to talk, and her husband to answer her. The conversation, which commenced amicably

enough, began to assume some sharpness. The spirit, as is usual with it, acted in its own peculiar way on the peculiar temperament of the drinkers. It made the wife loquacious and spirited; it made the kind-hearted gentle husband, with his easily disordered brain, mad. The misunderstanding commenced after the second draught, but the good sense and affectionate feeling of both husband and wife not being completely obscured, they made up their quarrel, and took another dose of the poison to cement their loves. It had not the effect desired, and their quarrel recommenced, the original fault really being on the side of the wife. She accused Stokes of not using sufficient energy in his researches after the missing boy, and Stokes, raving like a madman, denied the accusation. The quarrel continued till Stokes, utterly demented, seized the boiling tea-kettle and flung it at his wife. In a moment the poor woman and sick child were deluged with the scalding water, and their screams soon brought the neighbours into the room. Owing to the mad behaviour of Stokes they were obliged to send for a policeman, who took him with great difficulty to the station, and the wife and child were carried to the Westminster Hospital. As soon as the woman was able to appear she was taken to the police-court to give evidence, which she did with many tears, concluding with the hope, so often heard

in our police-courts, that his worship would not be hard upon him, for when sober a better husband never lived, but when drunk he was more mad than anything else. The magistrate declined to listen to her plea, and told Stokes he was a disgrace to the name of a British soldier. He would take care that no insanity should be urged in his excuse for some time to come, and he sentenced him to three months' imprisonment with hard labour. Stokes was removed from the dock, his wife was again taken to the hospital, and the two remaining children were cared for by the other lodgers in the house.

After Mrs. Duke had quitted Mrs. Trivet she went direct to the savings-bank office, and gave notice of her intention to withdraw her deposits. She then called on Mrs. Stokes, who was now able to leave the hospital with her child. She found her at home, sad and dispirited, bitter poverty was painfully apparent in her room, and her children appeared half famished. Stokes the bread-finder was still incarcerated, and she was reduced to parish allowance, with the addition of slices of bread continually thrust into the hands of the children when met by those of the inhabitants of the "Rents" who were better off than the poor mother. Mrs. Stokes received her visitor with much kind feeling, as one more to be pitied than herself, the report of Duke's

being accused of murder of course having reached her. Mrs. Duke told her the object of her visit was, if possible, to obtain some knowledge of the whereabouts of the blind basket-maker, as he alone could establish the fact, that from twelve to two on the night of the murder Duke was at home and in bed. Mrs. Stokes told her that she personally knew but little about it, but as her husband's punishment would end in three days, she had better accompany her to the prison to meet him as he came out, and then she could obtain from him all the information she required. Mrs. Duke, after a short visit, thanked Mrs. Stokes for her kindness, and promised to go with her to the prison, and then went home. There, before going to bed, she humbly and earnestly (and she could pray earnestly) prayed God to assist her in her exertions to procure the proofs of her husband's innocence. That night she slept more soundly than she had done for some time previously, for she felt a sort of assurance she should succeed, and the next morning she arose early, and systematically commenced her task of collecting witnesses in her husband's favour, to be brought forward at the trial.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### PREPARATIONS FOR THE DEFENCE.

WHEN Mrs. Duke arose the next morning, before commencing operations she went on her knees and devoutly asked the assistance of the Almighty in the work she was about to undertake. She prayed as most respectable poor women pray—beautifully. Few specimens of more pure, devotional phraseology could possibly be imagined than that they occasionally make use of. There is no circumlocution in it. It is generally as simple as the exquisite English of the Bible itself. It is always the direct appeal for help or consolation, not a word more than is necessary to express their thoughts is used; but frequently the few words contain most eloquent meaning. This was especially the case with Mrs. Duke's. It was no lengthened prayer, in elaborately dictated sentences. The best idea that can be given of it is by stating

it was greatly in the manner of "Lord, help me, or I perish."

Her prayer over, she breakfasted, and then coolly thought over the step she was about to take. She understood tolerably well what she had to do, and the end she wished to arrive at. To ensure the acquittal of her husband it would be necessary for her to account for the manner he had spent his time on the night of the murder. Her greatest difficulty was to account for the hours from eleven to three. Up till two o'clock she had already got over by the evidence of the blind basket-maker. She now began to think of proving Duke was at home in the earlier part of the evening. Suddenly she remembered that Gobby had seen him, when he had requested her assistance to the poor soldier's wife. It would be necessary then to secure his evidence. There was another person also who had seen Duke (Mrs. O'Flaherty), but to seek her evidence was more than Mrs. Duke's wife-like dignity could do without suffering the greatest pain, if not degradation. She kept, then, Mrs. O'Flaherty's evidence in reserve, resolving only to apply to her in the last emergency. She now put on her bonnet and shawl to cross over to Gobby's. As she left her house she saw him emerging from his, but with considerable difficulty, and accompanied by a rattling noise. When he was clear of his door his hat

fell off, and he was unable to pick it up again, for he was perfectly enveloped in a labyrinth or network of dolls' bedsteads, which precluded his stooping. Mrs. Duke picked up his hat for him and placed it on his head, for which he thanked her. "I want to speak to you," she said, "if you can wait a minute."

"I will wait ten, if you want me," he said.

"Do you remember," said Mrs. Duke, "the night the poor woman died who lodged over you?"

"Quite well; I ain't likely to forget it."

"You have heard, I suppose, my husband is wrongfully accused of murdering an old gentleman in Lambeth? It took place on that night. Now, you can remember his being in the room when you came over to ask me to go and see the poor creature?"

"Certainly. I ain't likely to forget anything that took place that night, as I said before. It ain't often one meets with a sadder affair than that was."

"Will you give evidence of it? If you will, it'll help poor Duke very much."

"I will help him in that or any way I can," said Gobby, "for he's a good fellow, and a kind neighbour. But I saw him twice that night. The other time was when that brute of a woman kicked up a row. He came to the door to see what it was all

about. Oh, if you're certain that was the night, he's all right."

"I am certain of it," said Mrs. Duke.

"Then make your mind easy, for he's safe enough. Let me know when I am wanted, and I'll be ready. Now I wish you'd help me in not letting these here dolls' bedsteads knock against the wall as I go out into the street. Every one of them which gets the least scratched no child will buy, and they remain on my hands; bedsteads is not a very good thing to get off at the best of times, even when in the finest condition."

Mrs. Duke immediately complied with his request, and gently kept the bedsteads from the wall till Gobby had emerged into the high road, when he thanked her and pursued his way over Westminster Bridge to Lambeth.

Gobby had scarcely parted from Mrs. Duke when some one touched her on the arm; she looked round and found it was Master Perkins. "You are the very person I wanted to see," said Mrs. Duke; "come with me;" and the lad followed her into the house. When they were in the room, Mrs. Duke closed the door, and said to him very seriously, "I want you to be my friend and assist me in my trouble; will you do it?"

"Of course I will, you know that."

"Yes, but I want you first to promise me you will

do nothing dishonest while you are helping me. If you don't, I shall not ask you to do anything."

"I don't want to do nothing dishonest if I can help it," said the boy; "but I must eat, mustn't I?"

"Certainly, but that's no reason for being dishonest."

"It's very easy talking, but if you had been without any better roof to cover you than a market-basket for months together, perhaps you wouldn't be much honester than I have been."

"But you've got a roof to cover you now, so that's no excuse."

"I know it, but I only got that by having such a cold and cough as I had; and them chaps first took pity on me and let me into their crib, and you afterwards giv' me something to eat."

"If you will behave honestly, I will not only give you something to eat, but pay you as well, as long as I've anything to pay with; though, God help me, perhaps that won't be long. Now, will you be honest?"

"Try me, and if I take anything that don't belong to me, I hope I shall be struck dead. I wouldn't take a farthing of yours if I was starving."

"But I do not mean only of mine. I mean of anybody's."

"I won't do anything wrong unless I'm drove to it by hunger; and that ain't likely with you."

"Very well; I will trust you. Have you had your breakfast this morning?"

"No; how should I? I haven't a farthing in the world."

"Well, there's some bread and butter for you. I shall be back before you have finished it."

So saying Mrs. Duke placed before the boy some bread and butter and milk and water, and then went into the street to make some purchases. When she returned she found her young friend had finished his meal and was awaiting her orders.

"Are you ready," she inquired, "for a long walk?"

"Quite. I did not feel very strong just now; but I am better. Where do you want me to go to?"

"I have heard my husband say that he used very often to have a chat with the toll-keeper at Vauxhall Bridge. I wish you would go to him and inquire if he saw Duke the morning of the night the murder was committed. He must have passed through the gate about five o'clock, judging from the time he left home, and very frequently he used to say a few words to the toll-collector."

Master Perkins willingly accepted the commission, and started off at the shambling pace his ragged fraternity show when going on any definite errand. At last he arrived at the foot of the bridge, and was

walking up boldly to the toll-house, when to his horror he found the collector speaking to a policeman who had had more than once the painful duty of taking him into custody. Master Perkins turned back so rapidly when he saw the policeman as to call the attention of the latter to the movement, and as soon as he saw who it was he kept his eye strictly on the lad, imagining, and not without excuse, that he was bent on some act of dishonesty. The poor boy shuffled off for some time till he thought the policeman had forgotten him, but as soon as he returned he found the policeman still on the look-out. He went away a second time, and remained away for at least an hour. When he returned he found all clear, and was on the point of putting his head into the toll-house to speak to the collector, there being no passengers passing at the moment, when he felt his collar grasped by a powerful hand which drew him violently back, and he then found himself in the clutches of the very policeman he had tried to avoid, and who had simply for the moment hidden himself that he might secure his prey with greater certainty. "So, my fine fellow, I have caught you at last," he said. "I've been watching you all the morning."

"If you please, sir, I was not about anything wrong. I only wanted to speak to the toll-collector."

"That I am sure of," said X 49, with a sneer. "Now be off, and if I find you here again, I'll lock you up for attempting to commit a felony."

"What felony?" inquired Master Perkins angrily.

"Stealing the collector's money. Now, once more, be off while your skin is sound; if you stay here any longer you'll come to grief, I can tell you."

Master Perkins did as he was requested, and slunk sorrowfully back, concocting in his brain some excuse to tell Mrs. Duke; but before he had arrived at her house he changed his mind and told her the truth.

Mrs. Duke now in her turn went to the bridge. Without any hesitation, as soon as she found the collector disengaged, she addressed him, and told him she wanted particularly to find out the collector who was on duty the night of the murder of Mr. Mostyn, in Lambeth. He replied she was unfortunate in her application, the man having left them for good, but that on the morning after he himself had been on duty from four o'clock till eight.

"But do you mean the same night?" said Mrs. Duke.

"Yes; I mean the same night. Why do you ask?"

"Well, my husband is falsely accused of being

one of the murderers, and I want to prove, if possible, that he came through here at five o'clock from his own house."

"I can't help you in that," said the collector; "we have so many persons passing it is impossible to remember one in particular."

"I am very sorry," said Mrs. Duke; "but as he passed here very often at that time I thought you might remember him, especially as he used to say you sometimes spoke to him."

"What sort of a man is he?"

"He's a short man, and he used to wear a smock-frock and deal in poultry."

"Oh, stop. I remember him perfectly well. You don't mean to say he is suspected of murder. Why he always seemed to me a very civil, honest sort of fellow."

"He's as honest a man as ever lived, and it's all a mistake; but could you remember whether he came through here that morning? You would save his life if you could."

"Well, upon a thing of that serious kind I should not like to speak off-hand, but I'll turn it over in my mind, and if I can help you, I will. By-the-by, did not he get into trouble about some poultry?"

"Yes, the same day."

"Well then, I did see him. For a man I know

to be a detective came here about six o'clock to ask me if I had seen him go through, and I told him I had; and I remember seeing them come back together talking in a friendly sort of way. I should think you would have no difficulty, but I'll turn it over in my mind, and if you'll come here some morning I'll let you know all I can remember; and if it's in my power to assist you with my evidence I'll do it willingly."

Mrs. Duke then sincerely thanked him for his kindness, and left him.

The next day she saw her legal adviser, and told him what she had done. He commended her diligence, and told her if she could get the three witnesses to swear to the facts as she had stated them to him, there was no cause for alarm as far as complicity in the actual commission of the murder was concerned. The robbery would be a different affair; but even then the fact of her finding the money and returning it would tell greatly in Duke's favour. He advised her by no means to fail in obtaining the evidence of the blind man, for, as far as he could understand the case, he would be a most important witness, as his testimony would prove the impossibility of her husband's being at Mr. Mostyn's house at the time the murder was committed. In conclusion, he inquired if she had given notice at the savings-bank, and on being told that she had, he

expressed his satisfaction, as nothing could be done without money, he said, and then wished her good morning.

But it was fated that Mrs. Duke's exertions on behalf of her husband should be attended with difficulties. On the appointed day she called on Mrs. Stokes to accompany her to the prison, to meet her husband on his release. They proceeded together till they arrived at the gates, and there they waited with the crowd of relatives and friends of the prisoners whose time had expired, and who were then to be liberated. One by one the prisoners left the building, and were received by those waiting for them with such words and marks of joy and affection as proved that as pure and disinterested love and friendship can exist among the lowest and most depraved as may be found in any class of society. The wretched mendicant had another to take him by the hand and congratulate him on his liberation; the thief had his friend ready to accompany him to his home; and the lost unhappy girl found at least one other of the fallen sisterhood to clasp her in her arms and conduct her to the nearest gin-shop, there to take that draught which was again to be the first step towards destroying the good lessons she had received from the prison chaplain. Mrs. Stokes and her friend waited in vain for Stokes's appearance; he came not, and they remained till they

found themselves alone. They then consulted what steps they should take, neither liking to propose the only course open to them—that of inquiring of the porter at the gate why Stokes had not left with the others. Mrs. Stokes knew perfectly well that the only way she could be informed was by applying to the man, but her terror at the probability of hearing that her husband had again misbehaved himself, and had been subjected to a further term of imprisonment, withheld her. Still there was no other alternative left, and, taking Mrs. Duke with her for support, she advanced to the lodge, and inquired why Stokes, whose term of imprisonment had expired, had not been liberated with the others.

"Are you his wife?" inquired the man.

"I am."

"Then I am sorry to tell you your husband is very ill."

"Can't I see him?" she asked.

"No; he is not here."

The poor woman now became so terribly alarmed that she was near fainting. The porter perceived it, and kindly invited her into his lodge, and gave her a seat. As soon as she had somewhat recovered from the shock, he told her that, two days since, insanity, which the prison doctor had for some time suspected, had fully developed itself in her husband, and that he had been removed by a Secretary of

State's order to the Colney Hatch Lunatic Asylum, where she would now find him. He further stated that the prison authorities had sent to inform her of the circumstance, but that, in consequence of some error in her address, the messenger had been unable to find her house.

The grief of the poor woman on receiving this intelligence was so overpowering that the porter himself, albeit unused to the melting mood, was visibly affected by it; and Mrs. Duke, although the intelligence caused her great terror, as it increased her difficulty in finding the blind basket-maker, forgot her own sorrow for the moment, and wept like a child, from pure sympathy for her friend. When Mrs. Stokes was able to listen to reason, the porter advised her to go down immediately to the lunatic asylum and see her husband, as well as leave there her own address. "You will have no difficulty," he said; "he is no longer a prisoner, and I am sure the people there will give you all the assistance they can. It's a very sad case, and I am sorry I cannot help you further in the matter." The two women, after ascertaining where the asylum was situated, left the prison with the purpose of immediately visiting the poor man.

The porter at the prison had advised them to take the Great Northern Railway as the quickest and easiest method of arriving at Colney Hatch; but

neither of the poor women had a shilling with them, and, as it would take them some time to get back to the Rents, they proposed walking. Mrs. Duke, although now terribly alarmed at the possibility of finding Stokes unable to give her any information respecting Trivet, did all in her power to comfort her poor companion; and sorely she needed it. With all his unfortunate propensity to drink, and the sad results which generally followed his drinking bouts, Stokes was a good and affectionate husband, and, moreover, the bread-finder of his family. Since his incarceration they had suffered great privation, and had even been obliged to apply to the parish for relief, which they certainly received, but in such small proportion as to be utterly inadequate to the maintenance of life, and Mrs. Stokes and her children showed the effects of insufficient food very visibly in their persons; added to which, their landlady was pressing for her rent, which had been allowed to stand over solely with the idea that as Stokes was on that day to be released, in all probability he would soon be able to pay off the arrears. But now that hope was crushed, and there was nothing but the workhouse before her, in which she would be reduced to the dreadful necessity of being separated from her children; and her pet, the youngest, being of a most delicate constitution, would make the infliction the

more terrible. She explained so graphically her position to the kind-hearted Mrs. Duke, that she promised, as soon as she could obtain her money from the savings-bank, she would lend her sufficient to pay her current rent for the next month (twelve shillings), if the landlady would let the arrears stand over, which no doubt she could be brought willingly to do, as turning the poor creature and her children into the streets would be a dead loss. She would thus, Mrs. Duke said, have a roof over her head for some time to come, and that would give her an opportunity to look round her. More she could not do, as every other farthing she could scrape together would be required for Duke's defence. Mrs. Stokes warmly and fervently expressed her gratitude for her friend's kindness, and thus conversing together on subjects connected with their affairs, they at last reached the asylum.

They told their tale with all the simple eloquence which poor women use in their distress, and their application to see Stokes having been carried to the superior authorities, permission was immediately granted. They found him an utter maniac, totally insensible to every question put to him, garrulous enough, it is true, but quite incapable of bringing his mind to bear on one subject for two moments together. After remaining in the asylum for a short time, the two women left it, one thoroughly broken-

hearted, and the other disappointed and terrified at the probability of not finding the principal witness in her husband's defence.

It was late in the afternoon before they arrived at home. They were both thoroughly exhausted and footsore, having been absent from five o'clock in the morning, walking the greater part of the time, without a mouthful of food having entered their lips. Sad as was Mrs. Duke's condition, it was even less to be pitied than Mrs. Stokes's, for the former had at least some provisions in the house; her companion had none. Mrs. Duke, however, saw one of Mrs. Stokes's children enter the court, and she beckoned to him to approach. She then divided her loaf and sent it by the boy, with some cheese, to his mother. Mrs. Duke then proceeded to place her own tea-pot in requisition, and before half-an-hour had elapsed she was seated at her table, enjoying as comfortable a meal as it was possible to eat under the anxiety of mind from which she was suffering.

When her fatigue had somewhat subsided, Mrs. Duke began to think what steps could be taken to find Trivet, but the more she considered the question, the more difficult did it appear of solution. A dozen different plans did she start, and each, after a moment's reflection, she was obliged to throw aside as impracticable. Presently she determined she would pay Mrs. Trivet a visit, and consult her on the

subject. She was about rising from her chair for that purpose, when Master Perkins entered the room. He had that morning executed some little commission for her, and had come to give in a report of his proceedings. As he appeared tired, she offered him the remaining contents of her tea-pot, which he readily accepted, and she remained with him while he took his meal. She told him, in the course of conversation, the disappointment she had met with in the morning, and the embarrassment she was that moment in to determine on some means to discover the whereabouts of the blind man. Perkins told her that he knew several chaps on that beat, and moreover he had once gone through Kent himself, in company with some hoppers. If he could assist her in the matter, he would readily do so.

If Master Perkins had been an angel sent from heaven (to use Mrs. Duke's own phraseology), instead of a young thief, his offer could not have been more gratefully accepted. She took him with her up-stairs to Mrs. Trivet, and got her to inform him of the circumstances of her husband's journey, as far as she knew them. As we have already stated, her information went no farther than Dartford, but she was able to give him so good a description of the position of the country house of the brewer's wife as to make it easy for him to find it. He had also heard of

Stokes's misfortune, and he expressed himself in strong terms on the disgraceful manner in which young Stokes, with whom he had the honour of an acquaintance, had left his mother alone in her trouble.*

Perkins inquired if they were proud people, as in that case he would do himself up carefully; and on being told that the brewer was a very wealthy man, he immediately began to consider in what way he could improve his appearance to create the best effect. As his wardrobe was of the most limited description, the whole being carried about with him unless in very hot weather, what he should wear caused him but little difficulty; but how he should wear it so as to conceal the dilapidated portions of it, was a

* It may here be remarked, that among the young London thieves there always exists a singular and intense love for their mother. Their father they appear to care little about; yet, although they may give but little attention to the teachings of their mother, they generally hold her in great affection. This peculiarity has frequently been noticed by prison chaplains, and the records of the Feltham and Red Hill Reformatories also prove it in a remarkable manner. Perhaps after all this is little to be wondered at when it is borne in mind that the mother is not only the first to forgive a young thief his fault, but the more the public hold him in aversion the more she nerves herself for his protection. Even when the mother is herself a thief or a drunkard this love for her continues. In the Red Hill Reformatory a child lately died who had been nine times convicted of thefts instigated by his mother; yet to the last his affection for her was of the most touching and beautiful description.

different affair. He confided his perplexity to Mrs. Duke, who kindly assisted him in the matter with her needle and thread, and after placing seven shillings and sixpence in his hand for travelling expenses during the time he should be out (we may as well state the whole truth, and say she obtained the money at the time by pawning Duke's watch), she told him to take the parliamentary train to Dartford the next morning, and then wishing him God speed, she bade him good night.

Before four o'clock the next morning Master Perkins was up and stirring. With his toilet he took great pains, polishing his face with soap till it shone again. His boots were cleaned, and he really appeared as respectable as it was possible for a boy to do, all of whose clothes were three sizes too large for him, and utterly threadbare besides. When dressed, he packed up his luggage, which consisted of a piece of yellow soap, in brown paper, and having carefully placed it in his pocket, he left the Rents.

He made his way to the railway station, and, like a gentleman, took his third-class ticket to Dartford. When he had arrived at his destination, he inquired for, and easily found out, the house to which he was bound. It was a handsome villa, and altogether an establishment which it required no little nerve to ask to be admitted to. Bashfulness, however, was one of the least of Master Perkins's

faults, and without hesitation he rang the bell. A woman-servant, who was dusting the hall (it was yet early), opened the door and asked the boy what he wanted. Master Perkins had already concocted a tale that Trivet's wife was very ill, and wanted to see him immediately, and that she had commissioned him to find him. The girl quickly sympathised with the boy, but told him that Trivet had left the house a long time since, and she had no idea where he had gone to. She said, however, perhaps her mistress knew, but as she was then getting up she did not like to disturb her, and she advised Perkins to go round to the back of the house into the kitchen and wait there till the lady should be at leisure, when she would ask her if she could give him any information.

Perkins found his way round to the back door without more difficulty or annoyance than that caused by the growling and barking of a large house-dog, chained fortunately; but as in the course of his experience he had frequently met with adventures with house-dogs of a far more unpleasant description, he took but little notice of the circumstance. The barking of the brute, however, aroused the attention of the cook, a fat, good-natured, middle-aged woman, who came to the back door to discover what had raised Boxer's anger to such an extraordinary degree, and there she saw Perkins, who told her his errand,

and that he had been sent to the back door by the housemaid. The cook, who had seen a good deal of Trivet when he was working at the house, and had conceived a very friendly feeling towards him, listened with great attention to Perkins's statement. She also told him she could give him no information on the subject, not having heard of the blind man since he left Dartford, but possibly her mistress might know more about him. She invited Perkins into the kitchen, and told him to take a seat by the fire, as the weather was cold. She then entered into conversation with him about Trivet's family, and in reply to the questions she asked, it is only justice to admit that Master Perkins showed great inventive and poetical powers. She then questioned him on the chapel he attended, a subject far more difficult for the young gentleman to answer than any relative to the Trivet family, and he began to feel rather uneasy, when the cook suddenly stopped and regarded the boy attentively for some moments; then, after wiping her mouth with her apron, she asked him if he were hungry. Master Perkins was, for the purpose of keeping up his independence, on the point of saying no, but the word would not leave his lips. The cook appeared to understand him, and taking up a quartern loaf she proceeded to cut him a sandwich of such dimensions as nothing but the stomach of a hungry young thief would have had the courage

to attack. As she proceeded to place the beef artistically between the slices of bread, the eyes of the lad dilated in proportion, and in the end began to fill with tears; so seldom had he experienced from a person of respectability the slightest kindness, that it really had a powerful effect upon him. As soon as she had placed the sandwich before him, she took an earthen mug and filled it with warm milk and water, which she also gave him, and then quietly stood by watching him eat. Possessing herself the delicacy of constitution peculiar to stout cooks, she fairly envied the boy his appetite; for, as she afterwards expressed herself to the housemaid, "It really did me good to see how heartily he got through it." He had hardly finished it, when the cook left the kitchen for a moment, and when she returned she told Perkins that her mistress knew no more about Trivet than that when he left her she had sent him to a gentleman's house near Gravesend, where he was likely to obtain work. The boy thanked her for the information, engrafted the address well on his memory, and then thanking the cook again for her kindness, he left the house, and they saw each other no more.

Young Perkins now sauntered leisurely along towards Gravesend. He felt that his breakfast had done him good, and he apparently resolved not to injure its beneficial effect by too rapid exercise im-

mediately after a full meal. In about an hour, however, he got into full swing, or rather shuffle, and continued it for some time, when suddenly he stopped and began to reflect profoundly, for a circumstance had that morning occurred to him he could in no way account for. While in the kitchen at Dartford he had noticed on the dresser, while the cook had left the room, a silver table-spoon, and yet during the whole of the time not one thought of appropriating it to his own use ever entered his head. He could not account for it, and it was indeed remarkable, as in the war these young gentlemen carry on against society at large, a silver table-spoon is considered a prize of the highest kind; it is so easy to carry, and so readily converted into cash. It is true that he had promised Mrs. Duke while acting as her agent he would commit no deed of dishonesty, but a temptation of such a description would naturally have proved an exception. It never entered his mind that the gratitude he had felt had neutralised his desire to steal; still more singular did it appear to him that he felt no anger against himself for the omission. He began, on the contrary, to be perfectly satisfied with his conduct on the occasion; he had received great kindness from the cook, and by leaving the spoon behind him he had returned it with interest. He had, in fact, more than paid for his breakfast twenty times over, without in the slightest degree

destroying the gratitude he felt for the kindness he had received.

As soon as he had come to this conclusion he raised his head from the meditative position it had been in, and continued his route at peace with himself and all the world.

It was nearly evening before he arrived at Gravesend. With little difficulty he found the house he was to call at, but before ringing the bell he cast a rapid glance, both mental and physical, at his toilet. He perceived that his trousers were muddy, and also that his hands were excessively dirty; moreover he suspected, and with truth, that his face was in no better condition. Calculating, and justly, that his personal cleanliness had acted favourably in his behalf with the cook at Dartford, he drew from his pocket his small brown-paper parcel, and took from it the piece of yellow soap. He then sought for a ditch where there was some clean water, and having found one he proceeded with his toilet. He first intended polishing his face, and had taken his handkerchief from his pocket to act as his towel, but on looking at its condition he began to suspect it would be quite as likely to leave marks on his countenance as to obliterate the dirt already obscuring it. He prudently, therefore, determined first to try the effect on his hands. He washed them thoroughly, but when he proceeded to dry them with his handkerchief

his worst suspicions were realised, for it left them even dirtier than before. Thankful for his foresight he rubbed his shoes carefully with it, and then placed it in his pocket, contenting himself with drying his hands on the legs of his trousers, and when that was completed he boldly walked up to the house and rang the bell. The door was opened, not by a kind-hearted, sympathising maid-servant, but by a stern, pompous-looking footman, who asked him sharply what he wanted. Perkins told him, and received for answer that all he knew about Trivet was, that when he had done his job there, he had left for Chatham; so saying he closed the door abruptly in young Perkins's face. The boy slowly moved from the house reflecting in his mind on the great difference of temper occasionally found in human beings, and comparing the behaviour of the cook at Dartford with that of the footman at Gravesend.

He now began to consider how he should pass the night, as it was getting late and he was too tired to proceed to Chatham. He first thought of bivouacking under a cart, his usual method of passing the night when on professional tours in the country, but upon reflection he considered himself justly entitled to a night's lodging at Mrs. Duke's expense, which, however, would not exceed fourpence, possibly less. He then, with a feeling of courage and independence no doubt engendered by his liberal and honourable

behaviour in the morning in the matter of the silver spoon, went up to a policeman and asked him where he could obtain a bed in a respectable house, and the policeman immediately directed him to one, somewhat puzzled at the fastidiousness of a young gentleman whose outward appearance bore so strong a resemblance to a youth preparing for a reformatory. Perkins, after treating himself to a penny roll and a sausage, with a ha'porth of genuine Gravesend shrimps, went straight to the lodging-house, and in it passed a comfortable night. He rose at a somewhat late hour the next day, and after having soaped himself to a state of high polish—there was a looking-glass in the room—he left the house to go on his search, but was fairly puzzled where to begin. There was no doubt he could find his way easily enough to Chatham, but he was aware that Rochester and Stroud were joined to it, and that it was a very large city, and he had not the slightest clue as to what part he should commence at. Downhearted and annoyed he wandered for a short time about the streets of Gravesend, looking into the shop-windows, and mechanically, without the slightest sinister intention, casting inquisitive glances at the pockets of all well-dressed persons he passed, when suddenly he heard the melancholy tones of a flute. They gave him but little interest, as naturally he was not fond of music, but his steps uncon-

sciously led him towards the player, whom he immediately recognised to be Sweets, of Smith's Rents, with whom Trivet had left Westminster.

It would be difficult to describe Master Perkins's joy at this rencontre. There would now in all probability be something to work upon, as there was little doubt Sweets would be able to give him some information on the subject. He approached to address him, but as he found he was playing to three children and a lady at a parlour window, he thought it would be indiscreet to interrupt him at that moment, and he stood quietly aside till Sweets should leave off playing, anxiously, however, wishing the time was over. At last Sweets stopped, and was moving off, casting a sorrowful and disappointed look at the lady, when suddenly the window opened and she threw him a penny. Sweets took up the money, and in a fit of gratitude, after touching his hat, and to Master Perkins's extreme disgust, recommenced playing, and went three times through, "In the Strand, in the Strand." All things, however, must have a termination, as has been very justly said before, and at last Sweets' tune came to a conclusion, and he moved off.

Perkins now addressed him, told him who he was, without describing particularly his profession, and related the nature of his errand. Sweets was thunderstruck at the position poor Duke was

in, and inquired if he personally could be of any use.

"None whatever," said Perkins, "beyond telling me where I can find Trivet, the blind basket-maker."

"That I can do easy enough," said Sweets; "but what do you want Trivet for?"

"To prove that Duke was in his own house the night of the murder, which Trivet can easily do, as he sat talking with Duke beside his bed exactly at the time the murder was committed, and an hour before and after it. Duke is sure to be found not guilty, if he can get Trivet up as a witness. Do you know where he is, that I may go and find him?"

"Yes, I know where he is," said Sweets; "he's in Chatham, but I can't for the life of me remember the name of the street. He's to remain there a week longer, and then I am to go and fetch him. A little girl at the house he lodges at takes him every morning to his work, and brings him home again in the evening. How annoying now, I can't think where it is he's living."

"I'll wait with you here till you do," said Perkins, "perhaps you'll remember it presently."

"Do, there's a good boy; perhaps I may. Now tell me all about the murder, for I have a sad dull life of it here, after all."

Master Perkins began explaining to Sweets the different circumstances connected with the crime, in

all of which Sweets was intensely interested. When Perkins was in the middle of the murder scene, as described at the coroner's inquest, a lady's school made its appearance, and Sweets immediately raised his flute and plunged into the "Last rose of summer," nudging Perkins at the same time to continue his narrative, and bending his head slightly down towards him that he might hear him the better. Sweets got nothing from the school, as the young ladies agreed that he played dreadfully out of time, which was a fact. When they had passed, he said to Perkins, "I find I can't remember the street Trivet lives in, but I like Duke, and am glad to be able to do him a good turn, and I'll tell you what I'll do. Although business is very good here and very bad at Chatham, unless you play in public-houses, which I don't particularly like, I'll go there with you and show you the house."

"You'll be a very kind-hearted man if you do," said Perkins; "and I am sure you'll save Duke's life."

"I'll do it then, and we'll start at once, if you like; leastwise, after I have been to the house and got my bag, and you'd better get yours at the same time."

Perkins said that would not take him long, as he'd got on him at that time all he possessed in the world, but he would go with Sweets while he packed up his things.

While Sweets was in the lodging-house, Master

Perkins disappeared for a few moments. We regret to say it was to commit a gross act of extravagance; in fact, to invest threepence in shrimps; but he attempted to excuse himself by the reflection that it was hardly more than once in a fellow's life that he could get the Gravesend shrimps pure and unadulterated, and he might easily be pardoned for indulging in them a little too freely. He offered some to Sweets, who declined them, saying that although he was as fond of them as anybody, they didn't agree with the flute, as they were apt to make it husky.

They now started for Chatham, but their progress was of the slowest, owing to Mr. Sweets' lameness and his habit of playing a tune before each house they passed. It was dark before they arrived at their destination, but they found Trivet had not yet gone to bed. He listened with intense surprise and interest to the account he heard of Duke's misfortunes, and expressed his resolution to go back to London the next morning for the purpose of rendering him all the assistance in his power. It was at last arranged that Perkins should call for him the next morning, and they would go up by the parliamentary train together. As the house Trivet lodged in was full, with the exception of one bed, which was taken by Sweets, he directed Perkins where he could find a lodging for the night.

Master Perkins, when he left the house, in vain

tried to find the lodging Trivet had recommended him to. He got into a very disreputable-looking street, and from that into a court which was worse. At last an old woman asked him if he wanted a bed, as there was part of a one to let in her house. He told her that he did, and she led him into a filthy room with four beds, all tenanted, and one in which there were two boys already she pointed out to him as that which was to receive him, requesting three-pence in advance for the accommodation. Perkins paid her the money, which completed two shillings and sixpence he had expended since leaving London. He had now a five-shilling piece left, and its custody in the society he was in gave him the greatest uneasiness. He saw perfectly the character of the company he was in, and the danger he ran of losing his money. He undressed himself leisurely enough, and cautiously took the crown piece from his pocket, holding it in his hand unseen by any one. He then got into bed, still holding it securely. He was tired and wished to sleep, but he was afraid if he slept his fingers would open and he would lose his treasure. At last he thought of putting it in his mouth, as it would then be difficult for any one to take it without his being aware of it. But his mouth was small and the crown piece in proportion large, and altogether it felt exceedingly uncomfortable. He kept on, falling into a troubled slumber, and again awaking and trying

to take up a more easy position, when his nearest bedfellow, losing all patience, said, "I'll tell you what it is, young fellow; if you don't keep quiet, I'll kick you out of bed." The voice startled him, for he recognised it immediately. Perkins quickly slipped unseen the five-shilling piece into his hand, and then inquired if his bedfellow were not Frank Stokes, from Smith's Rents?

"And who are you?" said Stokes, avoiding the question, as he did not particularly wish to be known by all the world.

"I'm George Perkins, and I live at No. 7, in the Rents. I've seen you often enough."

"What lay are you upon here?" inquired Stokes.

"I have come to find blind Trivet as a witness in Duke's favour in that murder affair."

"And have you found him?"

"Yes, and I go back with him to-morrow. When do you come back?"

"Never, if I can help it; so if you see the old fellow at our place don't say you met me."

"I ain't very likely to see him, as I ain't very likely to go after him. He's not so pleasant an acquaintance."

"Where is he, then?"

"He's gone mad, and is in Colney Hatch Lunatic Asylum."

"You don't say so; and what's mother about?"

"Starving, I believe, or next door to it. I can't

think how you can leave her so. If I'd ever had a mother, I never could have left her when she's as bad off as yours is."

"How should I know she was bad off? I never heard a word about it till this minute."

"Well, you know it now," said Perkins, turning round and going to sleep.

He woke shortly afterwards, and found day was fast breaking. Stokes was sitting up in bed with so thoughtful a countenance that Perkins got frightened, and sought for his five-shilling piece, which had slipped from his hand, but which he soon found.

"Perkins," said Stokes, "I want to go back to London; can you lend me some blunt?"

"No, I haven't got a farthing."

"How did you get here then?"

"By cadging."

"I don't want much," said Stokes. "I've got enough for the train all but ninepence."

"I'll ask Trivet to lend you that," said Perkins; "I know he's got some money now."

"I'll pay you faithfully," said Stokes, "if you will; but I can't bear the idea of the old woman being in trouble and I here."

It need hardly be said the ninepence was in the end advanced from the five-shilling piece, and Perkins, when he gave Stokes the money, congratulated himself that he had saved four and threepence by

his caution in the night. That evening the young thief had the satisfaction of conducting not only the blind man home, but also young Stokes to his mother.

# CHAPTER IX.

### THE TRIAL.

WHILE these energetic measures were being taken by Mrs. Duke for the defence of her husband, and with every probability of success, nothing whatever could be found by Mrs. Walters in her husband's favour, notwithstanding her utmost exertions. She had contrived to obtain the assistance of one of those disreputable harpies who infest the purlieus of our police and criminal courts, but in spite of all his tact, and he certainly possessed a considerable amount of it, as well as experience, till the very day of the trial they had not succeeded in finding one favourable witness without running the danger in cross-examination of producing some fact in the wretched man's history which would completely counterbalance the favourable evidence the witness had

given. Again, the singularity of his position tended greatly to his disadvantage. He dared not admit to his legal adviser or his wife anything that would bear on the true circumstances of the case, and the former had quite penetration enough to detect that all the data his client was giving him were false. Over and over again he had thought of implicating Meffy in the transaction, but the deep cunning of that individual completely terrified him, for he could see how easy it would be for him to deny all complicity in the affair, and how certainly, if only out of a spirit of revenge, he would implicate Edward Walters. Again, after the refusal of the Crown to accept his evidence against Duke, how could his accusations against Meffy be received? Although the statement he had made on that occasion might not prejudice him on his trial, still it would cast great doubts on any others he might make. On the score of his son's safety he began now to be comparatively easy, as not a word had been heard from him, which he held as a sign that he was in perfect concealment. The fate of Jessie, however, puzzled him extremely. The only conclusion he could arrive at was the true one—that she had gone off with his son; but then, why should she have left all her boxes behind her? The whole affair was so complicated, and mixed up with so much mystery, he was completely puzzled how to move in it. Each day he

invented some fresh system of defence, and the next he abandoned it as impracticable. In this state of mind day after day passed till the eve of the trial, when he found himself, with the exception of a brief cunningly enough drawn up by his attorney, showing the improbability, if not impossibility, of his having committed the affair, unprovided with defence. Then, again, he had no counsel engaged, for his wife was too poor to procure one, and the attorney relied on the judge placing the case for the defence in the hands of the junior barrister in court. Here again arose a circumstance against him. The barrister who would be called upon to undertake the defence would certainly be inexperienced, while the one engaged for the prosecution was among the most celebrated of those usually employed in criminal cases. However, hope, feeble as it was, still supported Walters, and on the morning of the trial he felt, without being able to give the slightest reason for the feeling, an amount of courage he had not experienced since his arrest for the murder.

When the case was called, Walters entered the dock without the slightest symptom of fear or hesitation. His appearance was considerably in his favour. Although somewhat in the decline of life, he seemed to be hardly more than forty years of age. His face was rather prepossessing than otherwise, at least at first sight; and of this he was

fully aware, and had composed his features into a certain appearance of *bonhomie*, which certainly told in his favour. He had been too often in court not to know the value of a good command of countenance, and he maintained his almost through the whole day's proceedings. But to the close observer, that organ, equally expressive with the face, the hand, told a very different tale; not for an instant was it quiet. The fingers moved without purpose, and were continually employed on some object, evidently without the control of the brain, partaking of the nervous fear and irritability of the mind, without the slightest restraint from reason. He surveyed the Court with apparent calmness, and took not the slightest notice of the hum of voices or the expression of curiosity in the faces of the crowd present. When his fellow-prisoner entered the dock, he cast on him for a moment an angry expression of countenance, but it quickly vanished; nor did he again turn his face towards him during the remainder of the trial.

When Duke first entered the dock, his appearance presented a marked difference from that of Walters. An expression of shame, annoyance, and possibly fear, was distinguishable on his homely features, which made anything but a favourable impression on the beholders. He soon, however, somewhat rallied, for on looking round the court, he perceived

those in it who gave him considerable consolation. He had already been informed how excellent was his case, and now the expression of perfect satisfaction and confidence in the face of his wife and witnesses completely reassured him, if for a moment his courage had somewhat failed. First, there was the wife of his bosom, Jemima, looking perfectly happy, her hair appearing even redder than usual, her one eye beaming on him with more love in it than any ordinary woman could express with two, and her size looking larger than usual, possibly from the somewhat slim figures of those of her friends who surrounded her.

First, and nearest to her on one side, stood Master Perkins, specially got up for the occasion. The date of the trial was contemporaneous with the re-establishment of shoe-blacks in London, and he had formed the acquaintance of a lad who had quitted bad ways, and had taken to that method of earning a livelihood. This boy he employed not only to polish his boots, but to brush his clothes as well. The last operation required considerable artist-like delicacy of touch; for although Mrs. Duke had, with great ingenuity, mended certain rents which, for the sake of propriety alone, urgently required repair, and sewn on certain buttons in important situations, still the drapery of the young gentleman was of the most delicate and fragile

description, such, in fact, as no rude or inexperienced hand should be allowed to approach. His boots, also, were polished, till they almost resembled the surface of a mirror. Nor was that all; there were two fissures in them, which plainly allowed the skin of his feet—for he despised socks—to be seen beneath them: into these holes the shoe-black skilfully inserted the blacking-brush, and then carefully turned it round, so that the blacking should spread well underneath the leather, and he then applied the polishing-brush over all, and brought both skin and leather up to the same point of beauty, so that a few yards off it was impossible for any but those gifted with extraordinary power of vision to detect that Master Perkins had not on a sound pair of boots, with the strong possibility of a clean pair of socks beneath them. But the most lavish expenditure of time had been spent on getting up his face and hair. The amount of soap he had used in this operation might have been deemed, with perfect justice, extravagant. His face shone with a lustre scarcely second to his boots. He had also with the soap carefully smoothed down his hair, till it absolutely stuck to his head. His countenance he had composed to a pious, chapel-going expression; and altogether, as he stood by Mrs. Duke's side, he was as nice a boy, in appearance, as any mother might wish to own.

On the other side of Mrs. Duke, leaning his head

back against the wall, was Trivet, the blind basket-maker. His appearance was certainly most respectable. The poor fellow, notwithstanding his infirmity, had really a noble expression of countenance through which the natural piety and resignation of the man was fully discernible. His wife was not present; she was too ill to leave her bed. Master Perkins had conducted Trivet to the court, and in doing so had increased the good opinion that those who did not know him began to entertain of him.

Near the blind man stood Gobby. He was quietly and neatly dressed; there was little in his countenance calling for remark; he had evidently come there to give his evidence honestly, and he was fully prepared to do so. In a different part of the court was the policeman who had seen Duke at the time of the altercation between the two women, as well as the toll-taker at Vauxhall Bridge.

There was also another person in court, whose presence caused so much sorrow and shame in the breast of Mrs. Duke as to neutralise to some extent the satisfaction she otherwise felt: this was Mrs. O'Flaherty — and drunk too; at least, so much so as to make her conversation most loud and objectionable, without incapacitating her from moving about. She occupied herself till she was turned out of court by informing the bystanders that she had come to "give evidence for Jemmy

Ducks, one of the kindest-hearted little fellows that ever lived. He no more committed that murder than she did, and she was willing to take her oath of it, and she'd do it too. A better little fellow she never knew, although he was married to that one-eyed gunner in petticoats, on the other side of the court." She then went on to explain her opinion of Mrs. Duke so explicitly, as well as so loudly, that she was forthwith handed out of court by two policemen.

As for Walters, there was but one person in court who seemed interested in him, and that was a little, poorly dressed, delicate-looking woman—his wife. She looked at him but seldom, but wept incessantly—not clamorously or in such a manner as to claim attention, but so subdued and calmly that she appeared almost to try to conceal the noise her falling tears might make in their descent. From time to time, but very rarely, he glanced at her, and then the forced expression of candour and innocence on his countenance appeared to subside, and a look of affection the wretch could hardly be imagined capable of feeling supplied its place. These occasions lasted but for a moment, and again his whole attention was riveted on the proceedings of the court.

It is not our intention to give a minute, detailed description of the trial, as it would only be to a great extent a repetition of facts already stated. Mrs.

Duke had obtained the services of counsel, and the junior barrister present was requested by the judge to act on behalf of Walters. The brief for the defence was placed in his hands, and he hurriedly glanced his eye over it. But rapid as had been his investigation, it was sufficient to prove to him the hopeless nature of the task he had undertaken. Doubts, and doubts alone, were all he could bring forward in defence of his client. These, it is true, were important, but still not sufficiently so to offer the slightest probability of a favourable verdict, unless supported by material facts, and of these there did not appear to be one. He had only to rely on the chapter of accidents bringing forward something in favour of the prisoner, and endeavour to clear up the many mysterious points in the case as he best could.

Nothing, however, occurred in the course of the trial tending to relieve Walters from the heavy accusation against him, nor could his counsel in his really talented cross-examination elicit anything in his favour; on the contrary, on more than one occasion, the answers his questions drew forth had more an injurious tendency than otherwise.

On Duke's side, on the contrary, the cross-examination of the witnesses was certainly favourable to him. Not an adverse circumstance, more than is already known, was brought against him; the prin-

cipal cause of suspicion was the fact of the money of which Mr. Mostyn had been robbed having been found in his house, and although it had been voluntarily returned by the prisoner's wife, it was proved to have been without either his consent or knowledge, and not till a heavy reward had been offered for the robber and murderer.

The defence was then commenced, and the sole object of Duke's counsel was to prove an alibi. This appeared easy enough by the brief, but was hardly so easy in performance. Duke's attorney, not knowing her character, had subpœnaed Mrs. O'Flaherty, who had seen the prisoner in Smith's Rents the night of the murder. Mrs. O'Flaherty, it will be remembered, had been turned out of court, and she had improved the occasion from that time till she was called for examination in a neighbouring gin-shop. When she appeared in court she was so thoroughly intoxicated that the judge would not allow her evidence to be taken, and she was sent ignominiously away.

The next witness was George Perkins. The oath was administered to him, and he mounted the step of the dock in a quiet, self-possessed manner, as if impressed with the solemn nature of the proceedings, but still not afraid. The object of his evidence was to show that on the night of the murder he had witnessed the row between Mrs. Duke and Mrs.

O'Flaherty, and had seen Duke attempt to separate them previous to the appearance of the policeman. As far as that went, his evidence was clear and lucid enough, but unfortunately he went beyond it, and showed his powers of memory as well as volubility to be so great that the counsel for the defence became perfectly terrified at the behaviour of his own witness, and attempted to stop him, although for some time without effect.

When at last he had succeeded in making Master Perkins understand that his evidence had been thoroughly satisfactory, and that he did not want to hear any more, the cross-examination began.

*Counsel.* "I suppose, Master Perkins, that, as you have no doubt been well and properly brought up, you understand what is meant by the moral obligation of an oath."

*Perkins.* "Yes, sir, of course I do."

*Counsel.* "Will you have the kindness to explain it?"

*Perkins.* "You take the book in your right hand and swear to speak the truth, and the whole truth, and you then kiss the book. I have seen them taken hundreds of times."

*Counsel.* "That is all very well as far as it goes; but is that the full meaning of the moral obligation of an oath?"

*Perkins.* "No, sir; if you have a glove on your right hand you must take it off."

*Counsel.* "Very well; now I am satisfied. But you mentioned just now you had seen oaths taken in a court of law hundreds of times. Might I ask on what occasions?"

*Perkins* (*somewhat uneasy*). "Oh, I don't remember exactly on what occasions."

*Counsel.* "Nor in what courts?"

*Perkins.* "Well, in different courts; Westminster and Lambeth principally."

*Counsel.* "Indeed! Now let me ask you seriously a question. As you appear to understand perfectly the moral obligation of an oath, did you ever, on any one occasion, hear them sworn when you were the defendant?"

*Perkins.* "I don't understand you."

*Counsel.* "In plainer English then, were you not once charged with robbery—about a handkerchief or something of that sort?"

*Perkins* (*doggedly*). "I ain't obliged to answer that question, and I shan't."

*Counsel.* "Pardon me, but you must. I am sure his lordship will inform you I am perfectly in order."

*Judge.* "You must answer the question."

*Perkins.* "Well, then, yes, I was, but it was more of an accident than anything else."

*Counsel.* "I should be sorry to let an accidental circumstance injure you, and I will not say more about it. But, tell me, were you not a second time convicted?"

*Perkins.* "Yes; but I was driven to that by distress."

*Counsel.* "Well then, as that was the case, I will not press that question; but, candidly, were you not a third time convicted?"

*Perkins.* "Yes; but that was to screen another boy."

*Counsel.* "Most disinterested behaviour on your part, certainly, and I will not dwell on that conviction; but were you not a fourth time convicted?"

*Perkins* (*moodily*). "Yes."

*Counsel.* "And a fifth?"

*Perkins* (*penitentially*). "Yes."

*Counsel.* "And a sixth?"

*Perkins* (*triumphantly*). "No. The magistrate said he should hardly be justified, considering the helpless state of intoxication of the prosecutor, in accepting his evidence without further proof, and he therefore gave the prisoner the benefit of the doubt; and so I was honourably acquitted."

*Counsel.* "I sincerely congratulate you, Master Perkins. You may stand down."

Master Perkins accordingly did stand down, and two minutes afterwards, with a facility peculiar to

his profession, had made his way not only through a densely crowded court, but to the bottom of Ludgate Hill as well.

The next witness called was George Wilson, and Gobby walked deliberately up, took the oath, and mounted the witness-box. His evidence went to prove that he had seen Duke about ten o'clock, and that about four o'clock in the morning, when he had accompanied Mrs. Duke across the Rents to her house after the death of the soldier's wife, he had heard Duke's voice, which he knew perfectly well, asking who was there when she opened the door, and that Mrs. Duke had replied, "Me, love."

In cross-examination Gobby was asked whether he had not been in trouble himself. He attempted for some minutes to evade the question, but on the judge informing him it must be answered, he replied candidly and boldly, "Yes, I have been, and I worked out my time, and have, since I returned to England, gained an honest living, and have never wronged any one of a shilling. I am an unlearned man, and was never taught better when I was a boy, or I might have been as respectable as you, sir. There is Mr. Briggs, the inspector of police. I challenge him to say one word against me."

The judge asked the inspector if he knew the witness, and he replied that he had known him by

sight in Westminster for some years as a very inoffensive, honest man, who gained a livelihood by selling children's toys about the streets.

Gobby here left the box, his evidence having apparently made a considerable and favourable effect on the jury.

The next witness examined in defence of Duke was the blind basket-maker. It was with some difficulty he was got into the witness-box, but when once there he gave his evidence clearly and to the point. He proved having sat beside Duke's bed conversing with him from midnight till two o'clock in the morning on the night of the murder. In his cross-examination he was severely questioned as to how he knew the time, as well as to his certainty of the particular night, all of which he answered clearly and distinctly, although the counsel for the prosecution tried the usual measures employed by the Old Bailey bar to shake his evidence.

"You are, I believe," said the counsel, "a basket-maker; have you any other means of gaining a livelihood?"

"None whatever," said Trivet, "with the exception of my wife assisting me by working for an army clothier when she is strong enough."

"I did not allude to that. I wish to know if you do not also get money by asking for charity in the public streets?"

"Certainly not," said Trivet, indignantly; "I never asked for charity in the streets in my life, although, God knows, I have frequently from poverty been almost under the necessity of doing so. I am no more a street-beggar," he continued, still more angrily, "than yourself, sir. Ask the police if ever they saw me ask a farthing of anybody."

"There is no occasion to do that," said the counsel, more good-naturedly, "if you deny it; but I am instructed that you are in the habit of relying on charity for your subsistence."

"If you mean, sir, that charitable people have sometimes relieved me at home—I mean those that know me—I admit it to be true, and I am most grateful to them for it; but when a man is blind, and has a sick wife and five helpless children, he may sometimes receive help without it shaming him much."

And so the jury and all present evidently thought, from the expression of their countenances, and the approving murmur which arose from all parts of the court. The counsel himself apparently thought so also, for he sat down without asking Trivet any further questions.

The next witness was the policeman, who swore to seeing Duke the evening of the murder at the altercation between his wife and Mrs. O'Flaherty. He even went beyond that, and stated that about two

o'clock in the morning he entered the "Rents" to see that all was quiet, and looked into Duke's house, as the door was open. He then distinctly heard Duke's voice in conversation with some one, who he believed was the last witness. On being questioned whether he was sufficiently acquainted with Duke to recognise his voice, he replied that he was; that he had frequently conversed with him, and did not consider it possible he could be mistaken.

The last witness examined in Duke's favour was the toll-collector at Vauxhall Bridge, who swore positively to seeing him go through the gates about five o'clock in the morning.

Duke's counsel now asked the judge whether he thought there was any case against his client to go to the jury. He submitted that an alibi had been established in the clearest manner, and that not a shadow of suspicion of murder could rest on the prisoner for whom he appeared. The judge applied to the counsel for the prosecution if he had any objection to make, who replied that he had none. He had brought forward all the evidence he had against the prisoner, and if the judge and jury considered the alibi sufficiently established, no one would rejoice more sincerely than himself; at the same time there had been no explanation of the bank-notes having been found in Duke's house. The judge reminded the counsel that all the evi-

dence went simply to prove that as soon as the notes were found Duke's wife had immediately placed them in the hands of the police, but how they came to be concealed there there was no evidence adduced which directly tended against the prisoner. The counsel merely remarked that he was entirely in the hands of the Court, and the jury expressed their opinion that the alibi had been already proved, and that not a shadow of suspicion could rest on Duke as having been concerned in the murder, upon which the judge immediately ordered him to be dismissed.

Duke left the court directly in company with his wife and friends.

On Duke's release from the dock, for the first time during the trial did Walters's firmness forsake him. He had watched attentively the course of the trial, and had paid great attention to the witnesses as they were successively examined, without expressing in his countenance the slightest annoyance or fear. He had heard the most damning proofs brought against him, he had seen one by one the cab-plates, his hat, the silver articles, and other *pièces de conviction* brought forward and compared and examined, and then handed to the jury, without a remark, but the removal of his fellow-prisoner from his side for the time completely unnerved him. He looked for some moments at the spot on which

Duke had stood with a sort of bewildered air. While he had been there Walters appeared to think the danger was divided, but when his fellow-prisoner was released the danger seemed all his own. But the effect of Duke's removal did not act solely on Walters. The little woman, who had been silently crying during the whole of the proceedings, now broke out into a loud irrepressible fit of sobbing, so much so as to disturb for the moment the business of the court. Her cry reached Walters, and he turned his head towards the spot from whence the sound proceeded. A policeman at that instant advanced to lead her from the court, and as she went she for a moment raised her eyes to the prisoner. Walters, brutal as he was, was powerless against that glance; and as he looked at her his lips quivered and his eyes filled with tears. The next minute she had left the court, and Walters, with a sudden effort, recovered his self-possession, but not so completely as he had hitherto shown. It was easy to perceive his courage had fled, and that his present bearing was perfectly artificial; nor did he recover himself entirely during the remainder of the proceedings.

The case for the defence being now ended, the counsel for the prosecution replied, and the judge proceeded to sum up. He cautioned the jury not to allow themselves to be influenced in their verdict

by any out-of-door rumours which might have reached them, but to decide solely on the evidence they had heard. He then brought forward in detail all the several points sworn to by the different witnesses. He recapitulated the evidence almost verbatim, showing, as he proceeded, its different bearings against the prisoner, and with even-handed justice pointed to the many parts which appeared obscure. He dwelt especially on the necessity of their seeing every point clearly, and if on any one they were in doubt, they would give the prisoner the benefit of that doubt. He would now, he said, leave it in the hands of the jury, who, he was satisfied, would return a verdict, without favour or prejudice, according as their consciences should dictate.

The jury turned to consult together. The eye of Walters watched them with intense anxiety. He trembled at the idea of their debating over the subject in the jury box, and breathlessly looked at the foreman as he turned to speak, hoping it would be to say they wished to retire. He was terribly mistaken. "Gentlemen, are you agreed in your verdict?" "We are;" and they immediately returned a verdict of guilty. The wretched man now gazed for a moment longer, hoping it would be followed by a recommendation to mercy, but not a word was uttered.

The judge now rose and addressed the prisoner, who stood stupefied and aghast:—

"Theodore Walters, after a long and patient trial, you have been found guilty by the jury of one of the most infamous murders it has ever been my unfortunate duty to try. In that verdict I perfectly agree; indeed, it would in my opinion have been impossible for a jury to have arrived at any other conclusion. You entered the house of an aged and helpless man, and, in the dead of the night, you slew him in a most barbarous manner. But that was not the whole of your crime; it appears you had already robbed him of silver plate to a considerable amount. That many obscurities still exist, and that you might have had an accomplice whom you do not choose to name, I admit; still, of the murder having been perpetrated by you, or with your assistance, there cannot be the shadow of a doubt. But your infamy has gone still deeper, although, doubtless, unknown to the jury. You volunteered your evidence, in the hope of escaping the punishment richly your due, to inculpate as the principal the man who stood beside you in that dock, and who in the clearest manner was proved to be totally innocent of the crime. You thus attempted a second murder, equally infamous with the first. Providentially, you contradicted yourself so grossly that the Crown refused to accept your evi-

dence; still the infamy of your behaviour remains a stain upon you. It is my painful duty to pass on you the sentence of death, but, at the same time, I cannot hide from myself that you most richly deserve it. Let me beseech you to pass the few days which remain to you in this world in making, by sincere repentance, your peace with Heaven, for on earth there remains for you not one spark of hope."

The judge, in the usual form, then proceeded to pass the sentence of death, and the prisoner, utterly stupefied, helpless, and speechless, was removed from the dock by two officers.

That night was one of sincere rejoicing in the house of Mrs. Duke. She had managed to control her feelings to a very considerable degree till she had arrived at home, but she then went into strong, very strong hysterics, which lasted for the space of half-an-hour. She then recovered herself, and proceeded to kill the fatted calf in honour of her husband's acquittal. Gobby and the blind basket-maker and his wife were invited to the feast, which might be called magnificent, when it is remembered that the expense she had been put to in defending her husband had reduced all her available assets to the sum of eleven shillings; but not otherwise, for it consisted of tea, porter, bread and butter, and saveloys. Soon the tongues of the whole party were loosened, not even exempting that of Gobby.

Over and over again were the various events of the day brought forward, and as frequently did the compliments of the guests shower on Mrs. Duke, not only for her admirable behaviour during the whole of the proceedings of that day, but also for the exertions she had made in getting up the defence. Duke, at least twenty times in the course of the evening, rose from his chair for the purpose of embracing his wife, who, he said, had behaved more like a mother to him than anything else. The blind man also gave much good and pious consolation on the occasion. Once when Mrs. Duke naturally spoke of the low-water mark to which the expenses of the defence had reduced their finances, he became really eloquent. He reminded her that Heaven always acted just according to that which was best for us, and he had no doubt that sooner or later she would be amply rewarded for all the trouble and sorrow she had undergone. He illustrated his arguments by a circumstance which had occurred to himself. A large builder in the neighbourhood had charitably given him several bricklayers' baskets to make; in fact, was one of his best customers. A fire one night broke out in the builder's yard, and a vast quantity of materials was consumed. Trivet said he thought when he heard of the fire that his fortune would be made in replacing the baskets destroyed; but, to his utter disappointment, although much valuable pro-

perty had been burnt, not a basket was injured. However, he resolved to bear his loss with resignation to the best of his ability, and he did so, and what was the result? Three days afterwards, a certain benevolent lady sent for him, and gave him all her kitchen chairs to bottom. "So you see," he concluded, "that sooner or later we are sure to be recompensed, if we behave honestly, for any misfortune or disappointment which may happen to us."

The conversation continued in the same comfortable moral tone for some time. All seemed imbued with a sense of the justice of Providence, and Gobby even, ordinarily most taciturn, added his experience in support of the idea. He narrated a circumstance which occurred to him some two years before, which he considered bore remarkably on the subject. "I had that night," he said, "gone out with my first venture of dolls' bedsteads. I had chosen the Tottenham Court Road, and had placed myself beside the pavement near the corner of the second street on the left-hand side beyond the chapel. On one side of me was a poor woman with stay and boot laces, and on the other a lame man who sold coloured prints for children, and it ain't a bad-paying dodge either; I've tried it myself, and it answered capitally. Well, I wasn't badly placed, being near a gas-lamp, but the man with the prints was nearer to it than I was. He'd got a large umbrella which was open,

with the point on the ground, and the prints placed inside it all the way round, and a capital way it was too, for he kept turning the umbrella round so that every picture, one after the other, was brought to the light. And a precious good business he made of it too, I can tell you ; but as I sold pretty well I had no right to be jealous of it. Business altogether that night was good, and the poor woman with her stay-laces, who had got a bad cough, and a little girl standing by her side, did as well as either of us, considering. We went on in this way comfortably enough, and doing well, when a lady passed us and was on the point of going up the street, when she appeared suddenly to remember something, and she turned back to where I was standing, and stretching past me to the woman with the laces, asked for one, and offered the penny at the same time. She could not get near the woman because there was another choosing some laces just in front of her. Well, as I did not like the poor creature should lose a customer, I stepped back to give more room like, when a master butcher in his cart, with a pal with him, came driving very sharp along the road. They evidently, from the manner they were singing, had been drinking and was very fresh. I looked round to get out of their way, when one of them nudges the other on the arm and points to me. The other, who was driving, makes bolt at me, and drives smack into the middle

of the bedsteads as they was slung at my back. Fortunately they did not hurt me myself, but when I heard my bedsteads smash and rattle, I was precious savage, I can tell you, and I turned to go after them, although it would have been useless, as they had such a fast horse. Well, instead of pulling up and begging my pardon, or seeing if I was hurt, they first whipped their horse into a gallop, and then turned round and made a long nose at me. But they caught it in their turn. While looking after me they did not see which way they was going, and they ran against a lamp-post, about a couple of hundred yards ahead. They was both pitched out, but the one who had nudged the other on the arm to drive at me, fell on his skull and was taken up dead. When I heard of it outside the doctor's shop to which he had been taken, I said, There's Heaven's justice on that. I had not any more spirits to try and sell that night, so I walked straight home. Well, will you believe it, ma'am ?—but perhaps you won't, as it appears almost like a miracle,—but when I took off my bedsteads and examined them the damage done to the whole was not more than fourpence, which is the more wonderful as I believe dolls' bedsteads is the most delicate things in nature."

The auditors all admitted the justice of the butcher's sentence and the saving of the dolls' bed-

steads, and the conversation was beginning to assume a general tone, when the company was increased by the arrival of Master Perkins. He was considerably changed in appearance, for the afternoon had been very wet, and the streets were very muddy, and the whole of the gloss for which he had been so remarkable in the morning had vanished, and a considerable layer of dirt supplied its place.

He also looked somewhat cowed when he found himself in the presence of Mrs. Duke, whom he held in high veneration. She had heard his examination, and although she was aware his mode of life had not been exactly what it ought, still she could hardly, he thought, have been cognizant of the number of his misdeeds. Her kind reception soon, however, set him at his ease, and he readily joined in the conversation. He informed his friends of the verdict, which they had not yet heard, and moreover told them of Walters's offer to turn Queen's evidence and inculpate Duke, all of which he had heard from a friend, for he himself had hung about the purlieus of the court, being ashamed to enter it again.

It would be difficult to express the astonishment and indignation of the party when they received this information. They for some time could hardly realise it, so diabolical did it appear; and when they did, their astonishment for some time kept them dumb.

Presently Gobby asked what had become of Walters's wife. Perkins could only inform him that she had been compelled to leave the court before the trial had terminated, and he had not heard of her since. "After all," said Gobby, "that poor woman is much to be pitied."

Gobby was right; it would have been difficult to find a human being more worthy of pity than Mrs. Walters was that day. A spell had kept her in court till the fact of Duke's acquittal had impressed her with the really desperate position of her husband, and her feelings then had gained such an ascendancy over her that she was obliged to be led from it. To be so near to her husband, and to hear the candid remarks expressed by the bystanders and those that left the court as to his chance of escape, became so painful to her that she left the vicinity of the building and turned her steps towards Smithfield, not only without intention, but utterly ignorant of the path she was taking. She wandered on and around, totally indifferent to the rain, which was falling in torrents, and in a short time she was thoroughly drenched. Not for a moment did she think of turning her footsteps homewards. Night came on and still she walked on, turning into the different streets surrounding Newgate, never getting far away nor yet advancing towards it. To describe the state of her mind correctly would be impossible. She was bewil-

dered, yet she felt keenly that a terrible misfortune no power could avert was hanging over her. She sought consolation, not by reasoning, but solely by tears ; yet, although they came abundantly, she experienced no relief. They seemed simply to have the effect of keeping her grief from accumulating. As the darkness increased she came nearer to the prison, and as she did so she began to feel the necessity of some certainty as to the course events were taking; but how to obtain it? She thought she would go nearer still, and listen to the conversation of some of the groups of individuals she should be sure to find there. She made the attempt, and saw a group of men close to the court-house standing in earnest conversation. She approached somewhat nearer to them, but her courage failed her and she stopped short. Anxiety to know the result of the trial increased within her, but her dread of what it too probably was kept her for some moments motionless. She then suddenly started off and walked rapidly past the group of men, approaching them so closely as to touch them, with the sense of hearing sharpened to its utmost. She heard their conversation, but did not understand it. They were evidently not talking of anything which concerned her.

When she had passed the group about a hundred yards she stopped, and again returned towards the court-house, but this time slowly and loiteringly.

"He's booked, at any rate," said a man near her, "and richly he deserves it." Two or three rapid steps that she took carried her out of ear-shot. Her tears dried up in the terror she felt. Still they might have been speaking of somebody else. "Shall you come to see him hung?" said one boy passing to another. "That I will," was the reply; "even if it rains like this." Presently she received another confirmation, this time from a policeman, and all doubt, as well as all hope, vanished.

She now turned from the spot tearless and bent her steps homewards. She crouched down from the rain, but made no hurry to avoid it; on the contrary, her walk was exceedingly slow. She arrived at last in the Rents, and the feeble, shaking, miserable creature, whose garments, saturated with rain, clung to her as she passed along to a house at the end of the court, was the once happy wife of Theodore Walters.

We must now return to Duke and his guests. The conversation had continued as to the probable time of Walters's execution, and other subjects connected with it, for some time, when Gobby again said, "But what will become of the fellow's wife? I am sorry for her, for she's a harmless creature enough." Nobody, of course, could think of any other end but the parish, for her son, who was now out on a job, showed her not the slightest affection or attention.

"I wonder if she has come home," said Mrs. Duke.

"I wish, Perkins, you would go and see, if only for curiosity's sake."

Master Perkins did as he was desired. He first looked out, but saw no light in Mrs. Walters's windows. He then went to the house and found the door open. He asked a neighbour if she had seen Mrs. Walters, and she told him she had seen her open her door about half an hour since, apparently quite wet through, but she knew nothing more of her. With this news Perkins returned, and the conversation immediately turned on what condition she might be in. "I'll tell you what it is," said Gobby; "we've none of us any right to bear malice against that poor thing, whatever we may do to her husband. I shall go and see if she wants anything." So saying, he left the house and proceeded to Walters's. He also found the street-door open, and he knocked at the door of the room on the ground floor, in which he knew Mrs. Walters was accustomed to sit. He received no answer, and he turned the handle of the door and looked into the room. At first he could perceive nothing, but presently, as the shutters were not closed, he could dimly make out a female form seated in a chair. He spoke to it twice, and the second time he received an inarticulate answer. He approached, and placing his hand on her shoulder found it was wet and cold, but the figure said nothing.

Gobby now returned to Duke's and related his adventures. With one accord the whole party rose and proceeded to Walters's, Duke carrying a candle with him, which he shielded from the weather with his hand. They found Mrs. Walters hardly conscious. "Why don't you get a fire and dry yourself?" said Mrs. Duke; "you'll catch your death of cold if you remain so." She received no answer, for rain, fatigue, sorrow, and hunger had completely exhausted the poor creature.

Want of energy was no fault in the character of Mrs. Duke, and she soon collected some fuel and made a fire. "Now," she said to Mrs. Walters, "make an effort and rouse yourself. Get a candle (I can't leave you mine) and make yourself a cup of tea."

"I can't," whispered the poor woman, now thawing from the glow of the fire; "I have not any in the house, and I have not a farthing in the world."

Mrs. Duke was not proof against this, and she immediately advanced a shilling from the few yet remaining to her. Perkins was sent for a candle, and they all left the house. About half an hour later, Mrs. Duke was seen carrying a cup of hot tea, with a plate of bread and butter on the top of it, covering the whole with her apron, and going towards Mrs. Walters's. "There, my good soul," she

said, "take that, and I will call and see you to-morrow."

She placed the tea upon the table, and was about leaving the room, when Mrs. Walters rose from her chair and said—her eyes filling with tears the while —"He was always a kind husband to me, ma'am."

"Very likely, ma'am," said Mrs. Duke, as she left the room, silently wishing she had that kind husband in her clutches at that moment.

## CHAPTER X.

### THEODORE WALTERS'S LAST DAYS.

THE next morning Duke and his wife had a striking proof of the truth of the blind basketmaker's remark, that Providence never allowed those who were really honest to remain without some compensation for any misery they may have innocently suffered. They had risen at a somewhat late hour, and at their breakfast they talked over their present position and prospects, and sad enough they appeared. All their little savings had vanished, and they had to begin the world again without capital and without friends, at least such as were able to offer them any material assistance. Again, they would very likely suffer from annoyances caused by the late trial and the unfortunate possession of the stolen poultry. The latter had especially got wind in the only neighbourhood Duke was

accustomed to work in, and customers would hardly be likely to deal with a man who was known so lately to have left a prison, in which he had been incarcerated for an act of dishonesty, although in fact it was merely his innate simplicity which had got him into trouble. If he began again in the fish-hawking line, he must choose another beat in which he was unknown, but where to find one puzzled him extremely. Besides, he had sold his barrow, and he had not the money to buy another, hardly enough, in fact, to procure the thick woollen apron which is the sign of a respectable costermonger in that line of business. What to do they knew not. They talked over every probable means they could think of to obtain an honest livelihood, but without success; and they were on the point of sinking into a state of deep despondency, when some one tapped at their door, and a gentlemanly-looking man entered the room. As soon as he had assured himself they were the persons he wished to find, he told them he had come from the office of the solicitors for the prosecution on the part of the heir-at-law of the late Mr. Mostyn. He assured them how grieved the prosecutor felt at the inconvenience they had been subjected to, and also told them he was willing to make them some compensation if he could clearly see in what way it could be done to their advantage. He then inquired what were their present prospects,

that he might carry back with him some definite information on the subject.

Mrs. Duke, who was spokeswoman on the occasion, candidly told him all; how they had spent the whole of their money, and the great difficulty they had in again commencing the world. The gentleman then asked them if they wished to remain in Westminster, as he thought it probable, considering the notoriety the whole affair had occasioned, they might like to live in some other locality. Mrs. Duke replied, they had not yet sufficiently thought over the matter, but at the same time she imagined it possible, if they could clearly see their way, that they should like to move.

"Should you," said the gentleman, "like to emigrate? I ask that question because our client has great connections with Sydney, in New South Wales, and he thought it probable that, as your husband is an expert poulterer, there might be an opening for him there, and he would give him letters to several of his correspondents in that city, requesting them to deal with him and assist him in every way they could."

Both Duke and his wife were so astonished at the offer, they knew not what answer to make to it. Their only knowledge of New South Wales was from reports that had reached them of criminals having formerly been sent there, and they could

not understand how a voyage there could in any way benefit them. The gentleman then explained that Sydney was a very large and flourishing city, containing a wealthy population, who, as such, were likely to be good friends to a poulterer who thoroughly understood his business. "Understand me," he said: "our client has no wish you should go there against your own inclinations, he merely suggested it as a means by which he considers you might be able to make a good deal of money, and in which he might possibly have it in his power to assist you greatly in forming a connection. I tell you what you had better do. Turn over the project in your own minds during the next fortnight; I will then call on you again for your answer. In the meantime our client told me to present you with this ten-pound note; and also to tell you he had set aside fifty pounds more to start you in any way of business you like, provided he approved the plan you decide on. I should also tell you, in case you resolve on going to Australia, that he will not only provide you both with an outfit for the voyage, but procure for you a free passage as well. I shall now bid you good-bye, and you will see me again this day fortnight. Till then make yourselves as comfortable as you can; but take my advice, do not tell anybody of the conversation which has passed between us." So saying, he bade them good-bye,

leaving Duke and his wife not a little astonished at his visit.

As soon as their surprise had somewhat subsided they began to feel the gratitude due to Providence for its mercy towards them. They did not pray, but they, without clearly understanding the meaning of the phrase, resolved to make an offering of good works, and visit the wretched woman who was soon to be a widow, and whose husband had acted so infamously towards them. They took with them the few remaining shillings they had, without changing the ten-pound note, and proceeded to her house. They found her in the same clothes, and almost in the same position, they had left her in the evening before. They spoke kindly to her, but could offer her no consolation, as her terrible position precluded the possibility of hope as far as regarded her husband. After a short time the wretched, inert little woman began somewhat to recover her self-possession. She told them she had already sold every article of furniture she had, to assist her husband, with the exception of the few pieces that remained in her room, and that she was utterly destitute. Mrs. Duke then made a fire, prepared her breakfast for her, and then impressed on her the necessity of exerting herself in her own behalf. She gave Mrs. Walters also some money, and spoke what sentences of comfort she could to her, but they fell cold

and powerless on the poor creature's brain. When Mrs. Duke left she promised she would visit her again the next day, and in fact resolved in her own mind not to lose sight of her at any rate till after the execution of Walters.

Duke now conversed with his wife on the propriety of making some compensation to the blind man, Gobby, and the boy, but with the exception of the latter, Mrs. Duke proposed they should do it later, as the gentleman had advised them not to let their affairs at present be known, and if it got abroad that they were in possession of money, it might raise suspicion that they had received some assistance, the more so as it was believed in the Rents they were at low-water mark in relation to money matters. With respect to Perkins, they determined to give him his meals daily till they could do something better for him; but they both saw that the only effectual way of benefiting that young gentleman was to get him from the Rents, as the associates he had there were sure to bring him again into trouble.

We must now return to the wretched culprit in the condemned cell. During the night which followed his sentence he remained almost in a stupefied state, which gradually subsided into a disturbed sleep. The next morning he appeared more composed, and after breakfast he entered into conver-

sation with the warder in his cell, for till his execution he was not for a moment to be left alone. He told the warder he had no doubt he should be reprieved, for although he acknowledged he was implicated in the robbery, he had had nothing whatever to do with the murder. He had hitherto kept silent, as he did not like to betray any one if he could help it; but to be hung for another was not a thing he would do to please anybody! He then stopped short, and appeared somewhat confused, for his attempt to throw the blame on poor Duke, who had so triumphantly proved his innocence of the murder, came to his memory, and he was fully aware that the warder was acquainted with the circumstance.

He again became silent, and commenced turning over in his mind in what manner he could escape the death he had been sentenced to. Without the slightest reason for hope, he was most hopeful. He could not realise the certainty of his fate, and he felt convinced he should escape it. But when he began to consider what plan he should adopt, what excuse he should frame, he soon became utterly bewildered. Not that he lacked invention, but every plan as he framed it he threw aside as impracticable. There was only one which dwelt with any constancy on his mind, and that was to accuse Meffy. He considered it would be easy to arrange such an account

of the transaction as would throw the blame on him, still he felt so great a terror of that man's deep cunning that he resolved only to use it in the last emergency. He never for a moment thought of casting the blame on his son, although from his silence he believed him to be concealed in some place of perfect safety. Singular as it may appear in so thorough-paced a scoundrel, he even feared the possibility of his son's reputation being injured by suspicion being cast on him, notwithstanding the fact of his being personally free from danger.

Some days passed over, and still Walters had decided on no settled plan, although his hope of escape seemed greater as the probability of it grew less. Occasionally the terrible calculation came before him of how many days had elapsed since the trial, and how few there were remaining before his execution, and then he became terribly depressed.

One morning the sheriffs called on him to ask if he had any revelation to make relative to the murder, for it was apparent to them that some other individual had been concerned in it. They told him that, if he could prove that he personally had had no hand in the murder, it was more than probable that his life would be spared, although they were not authorised to make any statement on the subject. Here was for him, indeed, a tempting offer, and he

reflected for a few minutes on it. While doing so, he remembered that only four days stood between him and the execution, and in a fit of desperation he said he would candidly tell all. He informed them that the murder had been perpetrated by a man of bad character of the name of Meffy, who lodged in Duke's house, and that he (Walters) had assisted him in hiding the plate in the chimney of the house in Anchor Court, Brick Lane. He rapidly invented the whole circumstances necessary to implicate Meffy in it, but in his hurry he made so many discrepancies that the sheriffs utterly disbelieved all he said. They reminded him of his statement about Duke, and its entire falsehood, and hoped he was not again trying to implicate an innocent man in his crime. Walters assured them solemnly he now stated the truth, and if they would take the trouble to inquire into Meffy's previous character they would find he was fully capable of a crime of the kind.

The sheriffs left him, strongly doubting his statement, but at the same time resolving to make full inquiries on the subject. They found it was true that Meffy's character was far from a good one, but that he was by no means a person to take part in a crime of such a brutal description as the murder of Mr. Mostyn, but was rather addicted to petty acts of swindling and cheating, and that there was not on record anything of a ruffianly character against him.

A detective also called at Duke's house to inquire after Meffy, and was told that about two months since he had left London to visit an uncle, to whom he was much attached, and that they had not heard one word of him since; moreover, they did not believe that the slightest acquaintance existed between Walters and Meffy, as both Duke and his wife had frequently seen them pass each other in the "Rents" without a word of recognition. Other inquiries the police made in following up Walters's statement were equally unsuccessful, and the sheriffs, convinced that the story told them was false, gave up any further investigations on the subject.

The conclusion they had arrived at was communicated to the prisoner the next morning, and the hope he had nourished was destroyed. There now only remained three days till the execution, and the terrible nature of his position became painfully apparent to Walters. When the chaplain, who had been unremitting in his attentions, saw him that day, the wretched creature begged to be allowed to join in prayer with him. His wish was accorded, and he prayed for some time with the clergyman, apparently with great devoutness. When it was over, he requested him to remain a little longer with him, as his presence gave him great consolation. In the course of their interview the clergyman asked him if he would not like to take leave of his family before his execu-

tion. Walters told him he should like to see his wife once more, and the chaplain promised that a messenger should that day be sent to her requesting her attendance, and asked him if there was no other member of his family he would like to see. Walters replied there was none. "Have you no children?" the chaplain inquired. Walters's suspicion was immediately aroused. He firmly and hurriedly answered, "I have only one son, sir, and he is on a job in the country, and I don't know his address. Besides, I should not like him to see me in the position I am in; it would shock him so, for he is as honest and hardworking a lad as ever lived." The reverend gentleman seemed pleased at his penitent's good feeling, and asked him no further questions, but shortly afterwards took his leave.

Mrs. Walters called the next morning to see her husband. The meeting was painful enough on both sides. With all his faults the wretch had not been an unkind husband, and his wife, in her quiet, undemonstrative manner, was much attached to him. He clasped her fondly in his arms, and wept bitterly for some time. Suddenly he stopped, and looking at her attentively, he said, with much solemnity of manner, "Martha, I have now not more than two days to live. I hope you do not believe me guilty of that murder, for, as I shall soon stand before God, I am as innocent of it as you are."

His wife implicitly believed him. "What will Edward say when he comes back and hears of it?" she remarked.

"Be sure you tell him what I said," he replied, "for I would no more like he should believe it than you should."

It would be a curious study to analyse the feeling the wretched man had for his son. He had never shown him any affection, nor was he even aware at the moment of the love he really bore him. It was simply latent in him. It had been planted in his breast by the Almighty, and it was simply a part of his nature, which he was no more capable of understanding or explaining than the theory of his life itself.

After his wife had left him he continued in a most despondent state till late at night, when he fell asleep. His slumber was deep and heavy, as in fact might be expected of a man whose mind had been for many hours painfully on the stretch. Still his brain was not for a moment inactive, and dreams of startling reality presented themselves to him, yet not one of a painful nature was among them. They were principally connected with circumstances long since gone by, and which, when waking, it is more than possible he had utterly forgotten.

At the commencement his dreams were of a kaleidoscopic character, combined principally of

events which had occurred during the last few days. As the night advanced they assumed a more continuous and consistent form. They then dated from years long passed and gone, and, as frequently happens when people are in great distress, they dwelt principally on scenes of happiness. They continued in this manner, with little interruption, till at last they rested on circumstances which had occurred during the first years of his married life. One was particularly vivid. He was then in the chamber of his wife, at the time very young, and he was watching her first attempt to give her child the breast. He watched her with interest, and at last the poor girl, proud of her success, glanced at him with no little satisfaction as her baby took its first meal. He heard the steps of some one on the stairs, and his mother-in-law entered the room. She attempted to close the door after her gently, for fear of disturbing the baby, but it shut with a loud and iron clang. He awoke, looked around, and found himself in his cell, the noise which had aroused him being caused by a warder who had entered with his breakfast. The wretched man gazed wildly around for a moment, as wishing to persuade himself he was still asleep. The stern reality soon impressed itself on him, and he burst into tears and wept like a child.

He had no appetite for his breakfast, and it was

removed untasted. The morning passed in silence, and about noon one of the sheriffs visited him to ask him if he had any disclosure to make relative to the murder, or on any other subject. The presence of the sheriff renewed for a moment his hope of escape, and he told him that he wished to confess the whole circumstances connected with the crime for which he was to suffer the next morning, but that it would take some time, perhaps a week, to prove the truth of his statements, and he asked if there were no means of obtaining a reprieve for that time. The sheriff, in reply, told him that such a demand would be hopeless; that no interest could obtain him a reprieve, even for an hour; and that he had better not delude himself with any idea of the kind. Walters, on hearing this, burst into a violent fit of tears, which the sheriff attempted in vain to stop.

In the afternoon the chaplain again visited him, and remained with him some time in prayer, which for a moment appeared to have a happy effect on the mind of the prisoner. The reverend gentleman asked him no questions relative to his crime, and even carefully avoided all conversation on the subject, fearing it might only lead the prisoner to the perpetration of some other falsehood.

Night came on, and brought with it sombre despair. He seemed almost to feel that the fading of

the light was the fading of his life. As night advanced, a sensation of fatigue came over him, but he wrestled against it. Midnight sounded, and the wish to sleep was almost overpowering, but he dreaded to close his eyes. He remembered the vision of the night before, and feared his waking so intensely that the certainty of death in comparison seemed less terrible.

But it was not from Walters's couch alone that sleep was driven. In one room in the Rents it was equally banished. His wife passed the night in little less misery than her husband. On her side, however, she was surrounded with kind friends, while he had no one with him but the unsympathising, half-sleeping warders. Mrs. Duke, Gobby, the blind basket-maker, and Perkins did all in their power to console the wretched little woman. Her grief, which at the commencement of the evening was deep and subdued, increased in energy as the night passed. In the room was a common Dutch clock, which did not strike the hours, and as the night advanced she from time to time cast a glance at it, and a fresh and more poignant burst of anguish followed each occasion. The dawn broke, and any unreality which the night might have brought with it vanished, and the stern unmixed certainty that in scarcely more than one hour her husband would be executed became pain-

fully apparent. When near eight o'clock, and her sorrow and terror were at their height, Perkins, unseen by any one, advanced the hand of the clock to a quarter past eight. As soon as he had accomplished it he pointed to it. "It is all over," he said, "it is a quarter past eight."

"Thank God," said the poor woman. "I hope he is happy; with all his faults he was a good husband to me." Her tears were now a relief to her, and she gave them full sway.

Suddenly the Abbey clock tolled eight, the hour of the execution, and the poor woman gave one unearthly scream and sank senseless on the ground.

# CHAPTER XI.

### CONCLUSION.

AS our drama is now approaching its termination, we must withdraw, one by one, our actors from the scene, to clear the stage. The first on the list is Mrs. Walters. She never recovered from the shock produced by her husband's death, aggravated as it was by the clumsy though well-meant expedient of Perkins. She remained in a state of almost unconsciousness for some days, and when reaction came on, it was weak and uncertain. She received from her friends in the Rents the greatest kindness and consideration. One day Mrs. Duke ventured to ask her what were her future prospects, as, although her neighbours were perfectly willing to assist her in any way they could, still, as they were all poor, she ought to do something to help herself.

"I wish," said Mrs. Walters, "to remain here till I die."

"But you must do something, for all that," said the practical Mrs. Duke; "you can't live upon nothing."

"I shall sell the few things I have one by one, ma'am, and they will last me as long as I stay here."

"Nonsense! you must rouse yourself, and get some needlework or something."

"I can't indeed; I have not the strength. I get weaker and weaker every day. I am sure I shall soon die. God will not leave me here as miserable as I am. He could not have the heart to do it, ma'am."

The poor woman was right; she never recovered the shock, but gradually sank, her life appearing the while simply to fade away, without disease or any other visible cause.

The next on the list is Mrs. O'Flaherty. In the course of this lady's promenades in the neighbourhood of the Broadway and Tothill Street, she was one afternoon seized with a giddiness in the head, and fell into a hole in the road which had been made by some gas-fitters, severely lacerating the skin over the shin-bone in her fall. She took but little notice of it for some time, probably thinking it might heal of itself; but with so dilapidated a constitution

as hers this was a far more difficult matter than she had counted on, and her leg, instead of getting better, got gradually worse. The inflammation at last arrived at such a height that she was scarcely able to put her foot to the ground, and she then resolved on applying to the hospital for assistance. She had no patient's letter of recommendation, as, with an amount of delicacy those who knew her would hardly have given her credit for, she declined applying, as she was advised by the porter at the hospital to do, to any of the governors' houses for one, thinking they would not like a person of her appearance to be seen at their doors. She took her place with the other female applicants, and waited her turn to see the surgeon. At last it came.

"You must take great care of that wound," he said, "or you will get your leg into a very bad state. I will give you some ointment to dress it with, and some medicine to take, and you must nurse yourself quietly at home."

"But I want to be taken into the hospital, sir."

"That I cannot do for you," he replied; "it is against the rules to take in tedious cases of that description."

"But I have no home, sir."

"Then you must get your friends to assist you."

"Good God!" said the wretched creature, her

eyes filling with tears; "where should I find a friend in the world?"

"I can't help that. We can't take you in."

As Mrs. O'Flaherty was preparing to leave the room, one of the assistant surgeons entered it. He looked at her for a moment, and then said:

"Are you not the woman who used to come here with a patient with a cancer?"

"Yes, sir, I am."

"What has become of him?"

"Oh, he's dead and gone, and I wish I was along with him."

The surgeon now inquired what she had come for, and his colleague told him.

"Oh!" said the other, "let us take her in, if there is a bed vacant; she behaved very kindly to that poor fellow, and we ought to stretch a point for her in return."

"With all my heart," said he, "if you know her. You can come in if you like," he continued, addressing Mrs. O'Flaherty; "but take my advice, go home and change those ragged, tawdry things of yours, or you will lead a precious life of it with the other women, I can tell you."

To those who only know Mrs. O'Flaherty by report, and are aware that her wardrobe generally consisted of the things she stood upright in, the recommendation of the surgeon would appear diffi-

cult to be followed. But such was not the case. The miserable sisterhood of which she was a member made contributions of such modest-looking clothing as they possessed to make Mrs. O'Flaherty look respectable ; for, lost as they were, they knew well the meaning of the word. And they succeeded in a marvellous manner, although her costume and bundle were made up from many contributions. They then wished her luck, and sent her on her way, promising they would *not* come near the hospital while she was in it, that they might not disgrace her.

Mrs. O'Flaherty during her residence in the hospital behaved as women of her class generally behave —unexceptionably. She was quiet and subdued in her manner ; and her illness, and the privations she had undergone previous to her entrance into the ward, having taken a good deal of her florid colour from her face, she really looked respectable. She was liked by the nurses for her readiness to assist them and the other patients on all occasions, and the chaplain and matron also looked on her with favour. The time however approached for her to leave the hospital, and sorrowfully she regarded it. She had begun to like respectability, and she trembled at the idea of resuming her former habit of life. But good fortune befriended her. A patient was brought into the hospital suffering from a disease so loathsome that he was ordered to be placed in a ward by him-

self, and a special nurse was to be found for him. Mrs. O'Flaherty, who had accidentally overheard the matron inquiring of the sister of the ward if she was acquainted with any person who would nurse the poor man, immediately volunteered her services, which were accepted, and she was to receive ten shillings a week for her trouble.

She nursed the poor creature tenderly and patiently, nor did she make use of one bad expression during the whole of the time. When the patient died, Mrs. O'Flaherty was again in a state of anxiety about her future, but the matron received a letter from the matron of an infirmary in one of the midland counties, stating that she was in want of a night-nurse for their accident ward, and requesting her to send her one if possible. The appointment was offered to Mrs. O'Flaherty, who gratefully accepted it. She has retained it ever since, and is much liked for her patience and humanity, so much so that the surgeons on two occasions have shut their eyes to the fact that Mrs. O'Flaherty, after receiving her wages and taking her holiday, had considerable difficulty in ascending the steps from the street leading to the hall; a difficulty which she said arose from a wound she had formerly received in the leg, and which they did not believe.

Master Perkins, notwithstanding the good feeding and excellent advice given him by Mrs. Duke, suf-

fered a relapse. After all, it was not altogether his fault. As he had considerably improved in health, his associates insisted he should take his part in their common dangers, and Perkins as a lad of courage was not deaf to the appeal. But from the time he had remained honest he had lost a considerable amount of skill, and the first pocket he attempted to pick ended in his being handed over to the police. As five previous convictions were proved against him, he was sentenced to two months' imprisonment, and at the end of his sentence to be sent for three years to the Red Hill Reformatory. Here he was taught the trade of a carpenter, at which he attained a considerable amount of skill. He behaved exceedingly well during his residence at Red Hill, and after his time had expired he emigrated under the auspices of the school managers to the Cape of Good Hope. Little was heard of him for the first three years, when he wrote a letter to the chaplain. He told him in it that he had remained in the same situation since his arrival in Africa, that he was much liked by both his master and mistress, and that already he had fifty pounds in the savings bank. The letter also contained a five-pound note, which he requested might be expended in decorating the school chapel in which he had learned to be an honest man.

Young Stokes remained with his mother, and

treated her with great kindness. He entered into partnership with a young man several years his senior, who was brought up as a working cutler. They go about the streets of London with Stokes's barrow, with its apparatus, young Stokes mending kettles and his companion sharpening knives. Report says they are doing well.

Of Gobby we have little to relate. He remained but a short time longer in the Rents. The secret of his sentence of transportation, which was drawn from him at his cross-examination, induced every thief in Westminster to attempt to form his acquaintance. This annoyed him greatly, as he wished to be considered respectable, and had firmly resolved never again to do a dishonest action. He, however, for some time submitted to the infliction; but one morning, immediately after the payment of his week's rent, he disappeared, leaving his key in the door, and owing not a farthing to any one. When his landlord entered on possession, he found his room perfectly clean and in good order, but not an article of any description, not even a scrap of paper, remained in it. It has been said that he was shortly after seen in Liverpool, selling memorandum books in the street, but the authority was too uncertain to be relied on.

Trivet, the blind basket-maker, shortly after the trial, removed to a kitchen in Brompton. Here

he contrived to form the acquaintance of some benevolent persons, who managed to get a considerable quantity of work for him. His circumstances now rapidly improved, till he was able to take a couple of rooms on the top floor of a house in Yeoman's Row. A great amelioration then took place in the health of his wife, who, in her turn, contrived to get more work to do. The first use he made of his improved finances was to send his children to the National Schools, where they managed to pick up the rudiments of a decent education. He is now in better circumstances than he has ever been in since the accident which deprived him of his sight. His children are all off his hands, having obtained respectable situations, and his wife is in constant work, earning twelve shillings a week, in the Government clothing stores in Pimlico.

Of Edward Walters and Jessie Morgan we have had no account. In this we admit our narrative is sadly deficient, as it would have given us, as well as the reader, great satisfaction if we had been able to record that he had met with a punishment adequate, if possible, to his villainy. Of this we may be sure, that the justice of Heaven would not allow so infamous a crime to pass unpunished, but of what that punishment consisted we must ever remain ignorant.

Duke and his wife remained for some time undecided what answer they should give to the solicitor of the heir-at-law relative to their emigration to Sydney. From the information they had contrived to obtain, it seemed to them that in a worldly point of view nothing could be more beneficial; still, they had a violent objection to leave Westminster, connected as it was with their earliest and dearest associations. Mrs. Duke, holding in view the promise of the fifty pounds, had hopes, if they remained, they should be able to remove to their former aristocratical (in comparison) lodgings in Pye Street; but Duke began to feel considerable annoyance at being perpetually pointed at as the man who had been suspected of the murder in Lambeth. He, however, tried all he could to treat the annoyance with the philosophical contempt exhibited by his wife, and good-naturedly listened to her arguments to remain in England. Still he felt uneasy, and had not the courage to think of entering on any other line of business.

One morning as he was sauntering down the Broadway, some one touched him on the arm, and, on looking round, he recognised Meffy. For some moments surprise kept him dumb, and he hardly knew whether to accept the hand that Meffy offered him. Good nature, however, was always predomi-

nant in Duke's character, and at last he shook hands with his old acquaintance.

"Why, Meffy," he said, "what have you done with yourself all this time? I thought you were never coming back to London. We have kept your room for you, and you never sent us a farthing for rent, although you must have known perfectly well that we must have wanted the money."

"Kept my room for me!" said Meffy, simulating the greatest surprise. "Why, the week after I left I sent Long Thompson to you with the week's rent, and another in advance, saying I should not want the room any more, as I was going to stay in Leicester. I met him there, and, as he was coming to London, I made him promise he would not be here an hour without coming to see you. Why, what a scoundrel that fellow must be! I thought you might have trusted him with anything. 'Pon my soul, there's no knowing who to trust," and he assumed a misanthropical expression of countenance, as if he were disgusted with the whole human race.

"But it's been a hard thing for us, Meffy," said Duke. "I dare say you have heard of my trial, and the narrow escape I had. Your money would have been very acceptable, I can tell you."

"Well," said Meffy, "it's a good thing now it's over; but you can't think how sorry I was for you.

When I heard it, I cried like a child. However, I was precious glad when I heard of your good fortune."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, the ten-pound note the prosecutor sent you, and the fifty pounds more you are to have."

"Why, who told you of that?" said Duke, greatly astonished.

"A boy in the lawyer's office that I know something of. I wanted to find you particularly, as I have got a speculation to offer you that will make both our fortunes."

"I don't much think it will," said Duke, "judging from the two things I took up by your advice."

"Let bygones be bygones," said Meffy. "Nobody can be more sorry than I am that they did not turn out better; but this is a sure go, I can tell you."

"What is it?"

"I cannot tell you here in the street; but if you'd come with me to my room, down by Vauxhall Bridge, I'd tell you all about it. Have you anything to do just now?"

"No, nothing particular."

"Then come at once, for there is no time to be lost. If you don't take it up, I know half a dozen fellows that will."

Duke immediately started off with Meffy. On

their road he asked him if he knew any one who had ever been in Australia?

"Plenty," said Meffy; "why do you ask?"

"Because I want to know something about the place. The lawyer says I shall be sure to make my fortune there, and he has offered me and my wife a free passage to Sydney."

"My dear fellow," said Meffy, with great earnestness, "don't think of going there; I would not if the streets of Sydney were paved with gold; it would not suit either of us, for I don't believe there is an honest man in the whole place. Besides, you don't know what a place it is. Why, what could you do there?"

"He says there is a capital opportunity to start in the poultry line."

"Nonsense; and if you did get a good price for your poultry, consider what your losses would be; why, the weather is so hot there, a fowl won't keep above a day when it's killed, and you'd be obliged to throw one-half of your stock away once a week; besides, the place won't suit your wife, I know."

"Why not?"

"Because water is scarce, and a clean woman like her would go mad. The whole place swarms with fleas."

This was, indeed, a stumbling-block for Duke, as

his wife was as clean a woman as there was in Westminster.

They walked along talking together in a very friendly manner till Meffy stopped at a house in a back street. He opened the door with a latch-key and ushered Duke into a room on the first floor, in which was a bed, a table, and a couple of chairs. He requested Duke to be seated, and he then began explaining the new and lucrative speculation in which he was about to plunge, as soon as he could find a partner with a little capital to assist him.

"My plan is this," said Meffy; "it is to get up a show, and I can do it well if you and your wife will join it."

"I don't understand that sort of business at all," said Duke.

"Now, Duke, do hold your tongue for five minutes, and let me talk. The show would be all your own, as well as all the profits arising from it. Now, don't speak till I've done," he continued, noticing an expression of doubt on Duke's countenance at this very liberal arrangement. "I shall have my profits in another way. When we have got our show together, I shall get a handsome suit of clothes, and take a respectable house in a good thoroughfare under pretence of opening a silversmith's shop. In it we will put the show, and as soon as the landlord finds out his mistake he will pay me to give up pos-

session of the premises, and that shall be my share of the profits."

"But that won't be fair," said Duke, who had already made up his mind to have nothing to do with the speculation.

"Now, Duke, hear me talk. I'll prove to you presently it will be all fair enough. I ain't a man to propose anything unfair to you, depend upon it. Well, the show will consist first of a spotted boy. I know a chap that has got a child with some spots upon him, and with a little caustic melted in water we can make as many more as we like. Well, this fellow has been about the country with a learned pig, and he will let us have it for a trifle, and mind the door as well. Now, here," said he, uncovering a large glass jar which stood on the table, "is another thing. I bought it at the sale of a surgeon's goods. It's a pair of bottled twins; what I want them for I'll explain afterwards. But here," he continued, with evident pride, "is the show coal of the whole; but to carry it out I must get your wife to help me."

So saying, he arose from his seat, carried his chair to the wall to stand upon, and proceeded to untie the strings of a large roll of canvas hung upon nails, which when unfolded, exhibited one of those large pictures seen outside caravans at country fairs. He then got off his chair, and looking at the picture with great admiration expressed on his countenance, he com-

menced a sort of showman's speech—"Walk in, walk in, ladies and gentlemen, and see the greatest collection of curiosities ever offered to the British public, and now exhibiting for the small charge of one penny! Here you will see the famous learned pig, who will pick out the handsomest lady in the room, and spell the name of her beloved on cards. Also the celebrated spotted boy, who was exhibited before her Majesty and the royal children at Windsor Castle. Likewise, ladies and gentlemen, the celebrated Queen of the Amazons, lately arrived in England to see the curiosities, and who has been prevailed upon to allow herself to be seen by the public before her return home. Here, ladies and gentlemen, you see her correct likeness, dressed in her native costume. You will particularly notice she is blind of the right eye. When the tyrant Alexander visited America, he was so enraged at the bravery of the women, that he ordered all their right eyes to be put out, that they should not see to take aim with the bow and arrow, and ever since the custom has existed in that barbarous nation of putting out the right eyes of their queens in honour of that memorable event. To prove that this is no deception, we have obtained a pair of their twins, in whom you will perceive their right eyes are perfect. Walk in, ladies and gentlemen; walk in, or you will never have another opportunity, as she

leaves England next week. Only a penny! Only a penny!—It is not quite true about the right eye," continued Meffy, turning to Duke—"but what's the matter with you?"

The question was a perfectly natural one, for Duke was standing by the chimney-piece deadly pale, and almost in a fainting condition. Nor was it to be wondered at. There, on the canvas, was portrayed his wife, due justice having been done to her golden hair and one eye, her full charms arrayed in "her native costume," as Meffy called it, which consisted of a towering plume of ostrich feathers on her head, a necklace of shells, a marabout petticoat, and a spear. It would be impossible to do justice to the horror of the little man when he saw the chaste wife of his bosom portrayed in such an indelicate manner.

"Meffy, you villain, what do you mean by drawing my wife in that manner! Why, she would rather die than be seen so."

"What on earth has the inside of a show to do with the outside? No, your wife will be dressed in red satin, like a lady."

"And what should I be about?" said Duke, with a sneer.

Meffy did not understand the sardonic allusion. "Why," said he, "you will be inside a green-baize curtain playing a barrel organ, with a china plate on

it to receive the coppers, all of which will be your own."

Duke, from the persecution he had lately suffered, had become exceedingly subdued in temper; but there are occasions on which the anger of the mildest among us would be aroused, and the present was one. Terrible as had been the blow to his feelings in seeing his wife painted in a costume so extremely *décolleté*, it was nothing to that occasioned by the proposition that he should grind an organ to invite persons of all classes to enter and see her for a penny a head. The ordinary mild expression of the little man vanished in a moment, and one of the ferocity of the tiger leaping on his prey supplied its place. He first struck Meffy such a violent blow on the face as would have certainly knocked him down had not as violent a kick established his equilibrium. He then collected all his strength to butt at Meffy like a bull; but that worthy, terrified at the horrible aspect of his foe, did not remain to receive the shock, but rushed wildly to the street-door, opened it, and vanished. Yes, vanished is the proper expression, for he was never afterwards seen. What became of him no one ever knew; whether he sank to the lower regions—a fact far from improbable, considering the Satanic nature of the wretch—or whether an angel of darkness, to preserve him, snatched him away—a circumstance equally probable, as there was a strong smell of

sulphur easily traceable across the river to Vauxhall —no one can tell; he was never heard of afterwards. The show was apparently seized by his landlord for rent, for we have occasionally seen it about the streets of London, but with the right eye painted in, as well as the portraits of her Majesty and the royal children gazing on the giantess in wonder and admiration.

Duke, with a feeling of delicacy which did him great credit, abstained from mentioning to his wife the meeting with Meffy. He however determined, in spite of all his wife's arguments to the contrary, to emigrate to Australia; and Jemima, too affectionate a wife to oppose her husband when he was determined to have his own way, withdrew her objections and made her preparations for the voyage. An obstacle occurred, however, at the very commencement. The shipbrokers refused to take Mrs. Duke as an ordinary steerage passenger, avariciously urging that she occupied the space of three statute adults. This difficulty was smoothed over, however, by the kind-hearted solicitor, and Mr. and Mrs. Duke embarked on their voyage. They arrived safely in Sydney, where they drew the fifty pounds and made a speculation in fowls and eggs, which, thanks to the letters of recommendation they had brought with them, turned out admirably. They continued to succeed, till one day, when Duke was absent, a hand-

some, elegantly-dressed lady drove up to the house in her carriage; she gave a large order for poultry, and told Mrs. Duke that as her husband (the Governor) had been requested to patronise them, they could for the future regularly supply her establishment. Mrs. Duke, in a high state of delight, thanked the lady for her kindness. When Duke returned, however, his wife did not mention the circumstance to him, as she intended to surprise him on his birthday, which would occur in a few days. As Duke returned that day from market, he found a board over his shop windows, on which was inscribed in large gold letters, "Duke, Purveyor of Poultry to His Excellency the Governor." Duke rushed into the house and inquired if it were really a fact, and on being informed that it was, he clasped his wife in his arms (at twice) and reminded her of the saying of the blind basket-maker—that virtue, industry, and honesty were, sooner or later, sure to meet with their reward.

THE END.

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