

DEFOE DANIEL

THE HISTORY OF THE
REMARKABLE LIFE OF
JOHN SHEPPARD

Daniel Defoe
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The History of the Remarkable Life of John Sheppard / Containing a
Particular Account of His Many Robberies and Escapes:*

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The History of the
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CONTAINING

A particular Account of his many

ROBBERIES and ESCAPES,

Viz.,

His robbing the Shop of Mr. *Bains* in White-Horse-Yard of 24 Yards of Fustian. Of his breaking and entering the House of the said Mr. *Bains*, and stealing in Goods and Money to the Value of 20 l. Of his robbing the House of Mr.

Charles in *May Fair* of Money, Rings, Plate, &c to the Value of 30 l. Of his robbing the House of Mrs. *Cook* in *Clare-Market*, along with his pretended Wife, and his Brother, to the Value of between 50 and 60 l. Of his breaking the Shop of Mr. *Philips* in *Drury-Lane*, with the same Persons, and stealing Goods of small Value. Of his entering the House of Mr. *Carter*, a Mathematical Instrument Maker in *Wytch Street*, along with *Anthony Lamb* and *Charles Grace*, and robbing of Mr. *Barton*, a Master Taylor who lodged therein, of Goods and Bonds to the Value of near 300 l. Of his breaking and entering the House of Mr. *Kneebone*, a Woollen-Draper, near the *New Church* in the *Strand*, in Company of *Joseph Blake* alias *Blewskin* and *William Field*, and stealing Goods to the Value of near 50 l. Of his robbing of Mr. *Pargiter* on the Highway near the Turnpike, on the Road *Hampstead*, along with the said *Blewskin*. Of his robbing a Lady's Woman in her Mistress's Coach on the same Road. Of his robbing also a Stage Coach, with the said *Blewskin*, on the *Hampstead Road*. Likewise of his breaking the Shop of Mr. *Martin* in *Fleet-street*, and stealing 3 silver Watches of 15 l. Value.

ALSO —

A particular Account of his rescuing his pretended Wife from St. *Giles's Round House*. Of the wonderful Escape himself made from the said Round-House. Of the miraculous Escape he and his said pretended Wife made together from *New-Prison*, on the 25th of *May* last. Of his surprizing Escape from the Condemn'd Hold of *Newgate* on the 31st of *August*: Together with the true manner of

his being retaken; and of his Behaviour in *Newgate*, till the most astonishing, and never to be forgotten Escape he made from thence, in the Night of the 15th of October. The Whole taken from the most authentick Accounts, as the Informations of divers Justices of the Peace, the several Shop-keepers above-mentioned, the principal Officers of *Newgate* and *New Prison*, and from the Confession of *Sheppard* made to the Rev. Mr. *Wagstaff*, who officiated for the Ordinary at *Newgate*.

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TO THE CITIZENS OF *London and Westminster*

GENTLEMEN,

Experience has confirm'd you in that everlasting Maxim, that there is no other way to protect the Innocent, but by Punishing the Guilty.

Crimes ever were, and ever must be unavoidably frequent in such populous Cities as yours are, being the necessary Consequences, either of the Wants, or the Depravity, of the lowest part of the humane Species.

At this time the most flagrant Offences, as Burning of Dwellings; Burglaries, and Highway Robberies abound; and Frauds common Felonies, and Forgeries are practic'd without Number; thus not only your Properties, but even your very Lives are every way struck at.

The Legislative Power has not been wanting in providing necessary and wholesome Laws against these Evils, the executive part whereof (according to your great Privileges) is lodged in your own Hands: And the Administration hath at all times applied proper Remedies and Regulations to the Defects which have happen'd in the Magistracy more immediately under their Jurisdiction.

Through the just and salutary Severities of the Magistrates,

publick excessive Gaming has been in a manner Surpress'd; and some late Examples of divine Vengeance have overtaken certain of the most notorious lewd Prostitutes of the Town, which together with the laudable endeavours of the great and worthy Societies, has given no small check to that enormous and spreading Vice.

But here's a Criminal bids Defiance to your Laws, and Justice who declar'd and has manifested that the Bars are not made that can either keep him Out, or keep him In, and accordingly hath a second time fled from the very Bosom Of Death.

His History will astonish! and is not compos'd of Fiction, Fable, or Stories plac'd at York, Rome, or Jamaica, but Facts done at your Doors, Facts unheard of, altogether new, Incredible, and yet Uncontestable.

He is gone once more upon his wicked Range in the World. Restless Vengeance is pursuing, and Gentlemen 'tis to be hoped that she will be assisted by your Endeavours to bring to Justice this notorious Offender.

THE LIFE OF *JOHN SHEPPARD*, &c

This *John Sheppard*, a Youth both in Age and Person, tho' an old Man in Sin; was Born in the Parish of *Stepney* near *London*, in the Year 1702, a Son, Grandson, and great Grandson of a *Carpenter*: His Father died when he was so very Young that he could not recollect that ever he saw him. Thus the burthen of his Maintenance, together with his Brother's and Sister's, lay upon the Shoulders of the Widow Mother, who soon procured an Admittance of her Son *John* into the *Work-House* in *Bishopsgate-street*, where he continued for the space of a Year and half, and in that time received an Education sufficient to qualifie him for the Trade his Mother design'd him, *viz.* a *Carpenter*: Accordingly she was recommended to Mr. *Wood* in *Witch-Street* near *Drury-Lane*, as a Master capable of entertaining and instructing her Son: They agreed and Bound he was for the space of seven Years; the Lad proved an early proficient, had a ready and ingenious Hand, and soon became Master of his Business, and gave entire Satisfaction to his Master Customers, and had the Character of a very sober and orderly Boy. But alas unhappy Youth! before he had compleated six Years of his Apprenticeship, he commenced a fatal Acquaintance with one *Elizabeth Lyon*, otherwise call'd *Edgworth Bess*, from a Town of that Name in *Middlesex* where she was Born, the reputed Wife of a Foot Soldier, and who lived a wicked and debauch'd Life; and our young *Carpenter* became

Enamour'd of her, and they must Cohabit together as Man and Wife.

Now was laid the Foundation of his Ruin; *Sheppard* grows weary of the Yoke of Servitude, and began to dispute with his Master; telling him that his way of Jobbing from House to House was not sufficient to furnish him with a due Experience in his Trade; and that if he would not set out to undertake some Buildings, he would step into the World for better Information. Mr. *Wood* a mild, sober, honest Man, indulg'd him; and Mrs. *Wood* with Tears, exhorted him against the Company of this lewd Prostitute: But her Man prompted and harden'd by his HARLOT, D – n'd *her Blood*, and threw a Stick at his Mistress, and beat her to the Ground. And being with his Master at Work at Mr. *Britt's* the *Sun* Ale-house near *Islington*, upon a very trivial Occasion fell upon his Master, and beat and bruised him in a most barbarous and shameful Manner. Such a sudden and deplorable Change was there in the Behaviour of this promising young Man. Next ensued a neglect of Duty, both to God and his Master, lying out of Nights, perpetual Jarrings, and Animosities; these and such like, were the Consequences of his intimacy with this she *Lyon*; who by the sequel will appear to have been a main loadstone in attracting of him up to this Eminence of Guilt.

Mr. *Wood* having Reason to suspect, that *Sheppard* had robb'd a Neighbour, began to be in great Fear and Terror for himself. And when his Man came not Home in due season at Nights bar'd him out; but he made a mere jest of the Locks and Bolts, and

enter'd in, and out at Pleasure; and when Mr. *Wood* and his Wife have had all the Reason in the World to believe him Lock't out, they have found him very quiet in his Bed the next Morning, such was the power of his early Magick.

Edgworth Bess having stol'n a Gold Ring from a Gentleman, whom she had pick'd up in the Streets, was sent to St. *Giles's* Round-house; *Sheppard* went immediately to his Consort, and after a short Discourse with Mr. *Brown* the Beadle, and his Wife, who had the Care of the Place, he fell upon the poor old Couple, took the Keys from them, and let his Lady out at the Door in spite of all the Out-cryes, and Opposition they were capable of making.

About *July* 1723, He was by his Master sent to perform a Repair, at the House of Mr. *Bains*, a Piece-Broker in *White-Horse Yard*; he from thence stole a Roll of Fustain, containing 24 Yards, which was afterwards found in his Trunk. This is supposed to be the first Robbery he ever committed and it was not long e're he Repeated another upon this same Mr. *Bains*, by breaking into his House in the Night-time, and taking out of the *Till* seven Pounds in Money, and Goods to the value of fourteen Pounds more. How he enter'd this House, was a Secret till his being last committed to *Newgate*, when he confessed that he took up the Iron Bars at the Cellar Window, and after he had done his Business, he nailed them down again, so that Mr. *Bains* never believed his House had been broke; and an innocent Woman a Lodger in the House lay all the while under the weight of a

suspicion of committing the Robbery.

Sheppard and his Master had now parted, ten Months before the expiration of his Apprenticeship, a woeful parting to the former; he was gone from a good and careful Patronage, and lay expos'd to, and comply'd with the Temptations of the most wicked Wretches this Town could afford as *Joseph Blake*, alias *Blewskins*, *William Field*, *Doleing*, *James Sykes*, alias *Hell* and *Fury*, which last was the first that betray'd, and put him into the Hands of Justice, as will presently appear.

Having deserted his Master's Service, he took Shelter in the House of Mr. *Charles* in *May-Fair*, near *Piccadilly*, and his Landlord having a Necessity for some Repairs in his House, engag'd one Mr. *Panton* a *Carpenter* to Undertake them, and *Sheppard* to assist him as a Journeyman; but on the 23rd of *October*, 1723, e're the Work was compleat, *Sheppard* took Occasion to rob the People of the Effects following, viz. seven Pound ten Shillings in Specie, five large silver Spoons, six plain Forks ditto, four Tea-Spoons, six plain Gold Rings, and a Cypher Ring; four Suits of Wearing Apparel, besides Linnen, to a considerable value. This Fact he confess'd to the Reverend Mr. *Wagstaff* before his Escape from the Condemn'd Hold of *Newgate*.

Sheppard had a Brother, nam'd *Thomas*, a *Carpenter* by Profession, tho' a notorious Thief and House-breaker by Practice. This *Thomas* being committed to *Newgate* for breaking the House of Mrs. *Mary Cook* a *Linnen-Draper*, in *Clare-street*,

Clare-Market, on the 5th of *February* last, and stealing Goods to the value of between 50, and 60 l. he impeach'd his Brother *John Sheppard*, and *Edgworth Bess* as being concerned with him in the Fact; and these three were also Charg'd with being concern'd together, in breaking the House of Mr. *William Phillips* in *Drury-Lane*, and stealing divers Goods, the Property of Mrs. *Kendrick* a Lodger in the House, on the 14th of the said *February*: All possible endeavours were us'd by Mrs. *Cook* and Mr. *Phillips*, to get *John Sheppard* and *Edgworth Bess* Apprehended, but to no purpose, till the following Accident.

Sheppard was now upon his wicked Range in *London*, committing Robberies every where at Discretion; but one Day meeting with his Acquaintance, *James Sykes*, alias *Hell* and *Fury*, sometimes a Chair-man, and at others a Running Foot-man. This *Sykes* invited him to go to one *Redgate's*, a Victualling-house near the *Seven Dials*, to play at *Skettles*, *Sheppard* comply'd, and *Sykes* secretly sent for Mr. *Price* a Constable in *St. Giles's Parish*, and Charg'd him with his Friend *Sheppard* for the Robbing of Mrs. *Cook*, &c. *Sheppard* was carried before Justice *Parry*, who order'd him to *St. Giles's Round-house* till the next Morning for farther Examination: He was Confin'd in the Upper part of the Place, being two Stories from the Ground, but 'ere two Hours came about, by only the help of a Razor, and the Stretcher of a Chair, he broke open the Top of the Round house, and tying together a Sheet and Blanket, by them descended into the Church-yard and Escap'd, leaving the Parish to Repair the

Damage, and Repent of the Affront put upon his Skill and Capacity.

On the 19th of *May* last in the Evening, *Sheppard* with another Robber named *Benson*, were passing thro' *Leicester-fields*, where a Gentleman stood accusing a Woman with an attempt to steal his Watch, a Mobb was gathered about the Disputants, and *Sheppard's* Companion being a *Master*, got in amongst them and pick'd the Gentleman's Pocket in good earnest of the Watch; the Scene was surprizingly chang'd, from an imaginary Robbery to a real one; and in a moment ensued an Out-cry of *stop Thief*, *Sheppard* and *Benson* took to their Heels, and *Sheppard* was seiz'd by a Serjeant of the Guard at *Leicester House*, crying out *stop Thief* with much earnestness. He was convey'd to *St. Ann's Round House* in *Soho*, and kept secure till the next Morning, when *Edgworth Bess* came to visit him, who was seiz'd also; they were carried before Justice *Walters*, when the People in *Drury-Lane* and *Clare-Market* appeared, and charged them with the Robberies aforemention'd: But *Sheppard* pretending to Impeach certain of his Accomplices, the Justice committed them to *New-Prison*, with intent to have them soon removed to *Newgate*, unless there came from them some useful Discoveries. *Sheppard* was now a second time in the hands of Justice, but how long he intended to keep in them, the Reader will soon be able to Judge.

He and his MATE were now in a strong and well guarded Prison, himself loaded with a pair of double *Links* and *Basils*[17] of about fourteen pounds weight, and confined together in the

safest Appartment call'd *Newgate Ward*; *Sheppard* conscious of his Crimes, and knowing the *Information* he had made to be but a blind Amusement that would avail him nothing; he began to Meditate an Escape. They had been thus detained for about four Days, and their Friends having the Liberty of seeing them, furnish'd him with Implements proper for his Design, accordingly Mr. *Sheppard* goes to work, and on the 25th of May being *Whit-son Monday* at about two of the Clock in the Morning, he had compleated a practicable breach, and sawed of his Fetters; having with unheard of Diligence and Dexterity, cut off an Iron Bar from the Window, and taken out a Muntin, or Bar of the most solid Oak of about nine Inches in thickness, by boring it thro' in many Places, a work of great Skill and Labour; they had still five and twenty Foot to descend from the Ground; *Sheppard* fasten'd a Sheet and Blanket to the Bars, and causes Madam to take off her Gown and Petticoat, and sent her out first, and she being more Corpulent than himself, it was with great Pain and Difficulty that he got her through the Interval, and observing his Directions, was instantly down, and more frightened than hurt; the *Phylosopher* follow'd, and lighted with Ease and Pleasure; But where are they Escap'd to? Why out of one Prison into another. The Reader is to understand, that the *New Prison* and *Clerkenwell Bridewell* lye Contiguous to one another, and they are got into the Yard of the latter, and have a Wall of twenty-two Foot high to Scale, before their Liberty is perfected; *Sheppard* far from being unprepared to surmount this Difficulty, has his Gimblets

and Peircers ready, and makes a Scaleing-Ladder. The Keepers and Prisoners of both Places are a sleep in their Beds; he Mounts his *Bagage*, and in less than ten Minutes carries both her and himself over this wall, and compleats an entire Escape. Altho' his Escape from the Condemn'd Hold of *Newgate*, has made a far greater Noise in the World, than that from this Prison hath. It has been allow'd by all the Jayl-Keepers in *London*, that one so Miraculous was never perform'd before in *England*; the broken Chains and Bars are kept at *New Prison* to Testifie, and preserve the Memory of this extraordinary Villain.

Sheppard not warn'd by this Admonition, returns like a *Dog to his Vomit*, and comes Secretly into his Master *Wood's* Neighbourhood in *Witch-street*, and conceits Measures with one *Anthony Lamb*, an Apprentice to Mr. *Carter* a Mathematical Instrument-maker, for Robbing of Mr. *Barton* a Master Taylor; a Man of Worth and Reputation, who Lodg'd in Mr. *Carter's* House. *Charles Grace*, a graceless Cooper was let into the Secret, and consented, and resolved to Act his Part. The 16th of *June* last was appointed, *Lamb* accordingly lets *Grace* and *Sheppard* into the House at Mid-Night; and they all go up to Mr. *Bartons* Appartment well arm'd with Pistols, and enter'd his Rooms, without being disturb'd. *Grace* was Posted at Mr. *Barton's* Bedside with a loaded Pistol, and positive Orders to shoot him through the Head, if in case he awak'd. *Sheppard* being engag'd in opening the Trunks and Boxes, the mean while. It luckily happen'd for Mr. *Barton*, that he slept Sounder than

usual that Night, as having come from a Merry-making with some Friends; tho' poor Man little Dreaming in what dreadful Circumstances. They carried off in Notes, and Bonds, Guineas, Cloaths, Made and Unmade, to the value of between two and three Hundred Pounds; besides a Padesuoy Suit of Cloaths, worth about eighteen or twenty Pounds more; which having been made for a Corpulent Gentleman, *Sheppard*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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