AINSWORTH WILLIAM HARRISON

JACK SHEPPARD

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Jack Sheppard / A Romance:

Содержание

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

Life and Actions of Guzman d'Alfarache.

EPOCH THE FIRST.
1703.
JONATHAN WILD

CHAPTER I.
The Widow and her Child

On the night of Friday, the 26th of November, 1703, and at the hour of eleven, the door of a miserable habitation, situated in an obscure quarter of the Borough of Southwark, known as the Old Mint, was opened; and a man, with a lantern in his hand, appeared at the threshold. This person, whose age might be about forty, was attired in a brown double-breasted frieze coat, with very wide skirts, and a very narrow collar; a light drugget waistcoat, with pockets reaching to the knees; black plush breeches; grey worsted hose; and shoes with round toes, wooden heels, and high quarters, fastened by small silver buckles. He wore a three-cornered hat, a sandy-coloured scratch wig, and had a thick woollen wrapper folded round his throat. His clothes had evidently seen some service, and were plentifully begrimed with the dust of the workshop. Still he had a decent look, and decidedly the air of one well-to-do in the world. In stature, he

was short and stumpy; in person, corpulent; and in countenance, sleek, snub-nosed, and demure.

Immediately behind this individual, came a pale, poverty-stricken woman, whose forlorn aspect contrasted strongly with his plump and comfortable physiognomy. She was dressed in a tattered black stuff gown, discoloured by various stains, and intended, it would seem, from the remnants of rusty crape with which it was here and there tricked out, to represent the garb of widowhood, and held in her arms a sleeping infant, swathed in the folds of a linsey-woolsey shawl.

Notwithstanding her emaciation, her features still retained something of a pleasing expression, and might have been termed beautiful, had it not been for that repulsive freshness of lip denoting the habitual dram-drinker; a freshness in her case rendered the more shocking from the almost livid hue of the rest of her complexion. She could not be more than twenty; and though want and other suffering had done the work of time, had wasted her frame, and robbed her cheek of its bloom and roundness, they had not extinguished the lustre of her eyes, nor thinned her raven hair. Checking an ominous cough, that, ever and anon, convulsed her lungs, the poor woman addressed a few parting words to her companion, who lingered at the doorway as if he had something on his mind, which he did not very well know how to communicate.

"Well, good night, Mr. Wood," said she, in the deep, hoarse accents of consumption; "and may God Almighty bless and

reward you for your kindness! You were always the best of masters to my poor husband; and now you've proved the best of friends to his widow and orphan boy."

"Poh! poh! say no more about it," rejoined the man hastily. "I've done no more than my duty, Mrs. Sheppard, and neither deserve nor desire your thanks. 'Whoso giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord;' that's my comfort. And such slight relief as I can afford should have been offered earlier, if I'd known where you'd taken refuge after your unfortunate husband's—"

"Execution, you would say, Sir," added Mrs. Sheppard, with a deep sigh, perceiving that her benefactor hesitated to pronounce the word. "You show more consideration to the feelings of a hempen widow, than there is any need to show. I'm used to insult as I am to misfortune, and am grown callous to both; but I'm *not* used to compassion, and know not how to take it. My heart would speak if it could, for it is very full. There was a time, long, long ago, when the tears would have rushed to my eyes unbidden at the bare mention of generosity like yours, Mr. Wood; but they never come now. I have never wept since that day."

"And I trust you will never have occasion to weep again, my poor soul," replied Wood, setting down his lantern, and brushing a few drops from his eyes, "unless it be tears of joy. Pshaw!" added he, making an effort to subdue his emotion, "I can't leave you in this way. I must stay a minute longer, if only to see you smile."

So saying, he re-entered the house, closed the door, and,

followed by the widow, proceeded to the fire-place, where a handful of chips, apparently just lighted, crackled within the rusty grate.

The room in which this interview took place had a sordid and miserable look. Rotten, and covered with a thick coat of dirt, the boards of the floor presented a very insecure footing; the bare walls were scored all over with grotesque designs, the chief of which represented the punishment of Nebuchadnezzar. The rest were hieroglyphic characters, executed in red chalk and charcoal. The ceiling had, in many places, given way; the laths had been removed; and, where any plaster remained, it was either mapped and blistered with damps, or festooned with dusty cobwebs. Over an old crazy bedstead was thrown a squalid, patchwork counterpane; and upon the counterpane lay a black hood and scarf, a pair of bodice of the cumbrous form in vogue at the beginning of the last century, and some other articles of female attire. On a small shelf near the foot of the bed stood a couple of empty phials, a cracked ewer and basin, a brown jug without a handle, a small tin coffee-pot without a spout, a saucer of rouge, a fragment of looking-glass, and a flask, labelled "*Rosa Solis.*" Broken pipes littered the floor, if that can be said to be littered, which, in the first instance, was a mass of squalor and filth.

Over the chimney-piece was pasted a handbill, purporting to be "*The last Dying Speech and Confession of* TOM SHEPPARD, *the Notorious Housebreaker, who suffered at Tyburn on the 25th*

of February, 1703." This placard was adorned with a rude wood-cut, representing the unhappy malefactor at the place of execution. On one side of the handbill a print of the reigning sovereign, Anne, had been pinned over the portrait of William the Third, whose aquiline nose, keen eyes, and luxuriant wig, were just visible above the diadem of the queen. On the other a wretched engraving of the Chevalier de Saint George, or, as he was styled in the label attached to the portrait, James the Third, raised a suspicion that the inmate of the house was not altogether free from some tincture of Jacobitism.

Beneath these prints, a cluster of hobnails, driven into the wall, formed certain letters, which, if properly deciphered, produced the words, "*Paul Groves, cobler;*" and under the name, traced in charcoal, appeared the following record of the poor fellow's fate, "*Hung himsel in this rum for luv off licker;*" accompanied by a graphic sketch of the unhappy suicide dangling from a beam. A farthing candle, stuck in a bottle neck, shed its feeble light upon the table, which, owing to the provident kindness of Mr. Wood, was much better furnished with eatables than might have been expected, and boasted a loaf, a knuckle of ham, a meat-pie, and a flask of wine.

"You've but a sorry lodging, Mrs. Sheppard," said Wood, glancing round the chamber, as he expanded his palms before the scanty flame.

"It's wretched enough, indeed, Sir," rejoined the widow; "but, poor as it is, it's better than the cold stones and open streets."

"Of course—of course," returned Wood, hastily; "anything's better than that. But take a drop of wine," urged he, filling a drinking-horn and presenting it to her; "it's choice canary, and'll do you good. And now, come and sit by me, my dear, and let's have a little quiet chat together. When things are at the worst, they'll mend. Take my word for it, your troubles are over."

"I hope they are, Sir," answered Mrs. Sheppard, with a faint smile and a doubtful shake of the head, as Wood drew her to a seat beside him, "for I've had my full share of misery. But I don't look for peace on this side the grave."

"Nonsense!" cried Wood; "while there's life there's hope. Never be down-hearted. Besides," added he, opening the shawl in which the infant was wrapped, and throwing the light of the candle full upon its sickly, but placid features, "it's sinful to repine while you've a child like this to comfort you. Lord help him! he's the very image of his father. Like carpenter, like chips."

"That likeness is the chief cause of my misery," replied the widow, shuddering. "Were it not for that, he would indeed be a blessing and a comfort to me. He never cries nor frets, as children generally do, but lies at my bosom, or on my knee, as quiet and as gentle as you see him now. But, when I look upon his innocent face, and see how like he is to his father,—when I think of that father's shameful ending, and recollect how free from guilt *he* once was,—at such times, Mr. Wood, despair will come over me; and, dear as this babe is to me, far dearer than my own wretched life, which I would lay down for him any minute, I have prayed

to Heaven to remove him, rather than he should grow up to be a man, and be exposed to his father's temptations—rather than he should live as wickedly and die as disgracefully as his father. And, when I have seen him pining away before my eyes, getting thinner and thinner every day, I have sometimes thought my prayers were heard."

"Marriage and hanging go by destiny," observed Wood, after a pause; "but I trust your child is reserved for a better fate than either, Mrs. Sheppard."

The latter part of this speech was delivered with so much significance of manner, that a bystander might have inferred that Mr. Wood was not particularly fortunate in his own matrimonial connections.

"Goodness only knows what he's reserved for," rejoined the widow in a desponding tone; "but if Mynheer Van Galgebrok, whom I met last night at the Cross Shovels, spoke the truth, little Jack will never die in his bed."

"Save us!" exclaimed Wood. "And who is this Van Gal—Gal —what's his outlandish name?"

"Van Galgebrok," replied the widow. "He's the famous Dutch conjuror who foretold King William's accident and death, last February but one, a month before either event happened, and gave out that another prince over the water would soon enjoy his own again; for which he was committed to Newgate, and whipped at the cart's tail. He went by another name then,—Rykhart Scherprechter I think he called himself. His fellow-

prisoners nicknamed him the gallows-provider, from a habit he had of picking out all those who were destined to the gibbet. He was never known to err, and was as much dreaded as the jail-fever in consequence. He singled out my poor husband from a crowd of other felons; and you know how right he was in that case, Sir."

"Ay, marry," replied Wood, with a look that seemed to say that he did not think it required any surprising skill in the art of divination to predict the doom of the individual in question; but whatever opinion he might entertain, he contented himself with inquiring into the grounds of the conjuror's evil augury respecting the infant. "What did the old fellow judge from, eh, Joan?" asked he.

"From a black mole under the child's right ear, shaped like a coffin, which is a bad sign; and a deep line just above the middle of the left thumb, meeting round about in the form of a noose, which is a worse," replied Mrs. Sheppard. "To be sure, it's not surprising the poor little thing should be so marked; for, when I lay in the women-felons' ward in Newgate, where he first saw the light, or at least such light as ever finds entrance into that gloomy place, I had nothing, whether sleeping or waking, but halters, and gibbets, and coffins, and such like horrible visions, for ever dancing round me! And then, you know, Sir—but, perhaps, you don't know that little Jack was born, a month before his time, on the very day his poor father suffered."

"Lord bless us!" ejaculated Wood, "how shocking! No, I did

not know that."

"You may see the marks on the child yourself, if you choose, Sir," urged the widow.

"See the devil!—not I," cried Wood impatiently. "I didn't think you'd been so easily fooled, Joan."

"Fooled or not," returned Mrs. Sheppard mysteriously, "old Van told me *one* thing which has come true already."

"What's that?" asked Wood with some curiosity.

"He said, by way of comfort, I suppose, after the fright he gave me at first, that the child would find a friend within twenty-four hours, who would stand by him through life."

"A friend is not so soon gained as lost," replied Wood; "but how has the prediction been fulfilled, Joan, eh?"

"I thought you would have guessed, Sir," replied the widow, timidly. "I'm sure little Jack has but one friend beside myself, in the world, and that's more than I would have ventured to say for him yesterday. However, I've not told you all; for old Van *did* say something about the child saving his new-found friend's life at the time of meeting; but how that's to happen, I'm sure I can't guess."

"Nor any one else in his senses," rejoined Wood, with a laugh. "It's not very likely that a babby of nine months old will save *my* life, if I'm to be his friend, as you seem to say, Mrs. Sheppard. But I've not promised to stand by him yet; nor will I, unless he turns out an honest lad,—mind that. Of all crafts,—and it was the only craft his poor father, who, to do him justice, was one of

the best workmen that ever handled a saw or drove a nail, could never understand,—of all crafts, I say, to be an honest man is the master-craft. As long as your son observes that precept I'll befriend him, but no longer."

"I don't desire it, Sir," replied Mrs. Sheppard, meekly.

"There's an old proverb," continued Wood, rising and walking towards the fire, "which says,—'Put another man's child in your bosom, and he'll creep out at your elbow.' But I don't value that, because I think it applies to one who marries a widow with encumbrances; and that's not my case, you know."

"Well, Sir," gasped Mrs. Sheppard.

"Well, my dear, I've a proposal to make in regard to this babby of yours, which may, or may not, be agreeable. All I can say is, it's well meant; and I may add, I'd have made it five minutes ago, if you'd given me the opportunity."

"Pray come to the point, Sir," said Mrs. Sheppard, somewhat alarmed by this preamble.

"I *am* coming to the point, Joan. The more haste, the worse speed—better the feet slip than the tongue. However, to cut a long matter short, my proposal's this:—I've taken a fancy to your bantling, and, as I've no son of my own, if it meets with your concurrence and that of Mrs. Wood, (for I never do anything without consulting my better half,) I'll take the boy, educate him, and bring him up to my own business of a carpenter."

The poor widow hung her head, and pressed her child closer to her breast.

"Well, Joan," said the benevolent mechanic, after he had looked at her steadfastly for a few moments, "what say you?—silence gives consent, eh?"

Mrs. Sheppard made an effort to speak, but her voice was choked by emotion.

"Shall I take the babby home with me!" persisted Wood, in a tone between jest and earnest.

"I cannot part with him," replied the widow, bursting into tears; "indeed, indeed, I cannot."

"So I've found out the way to move her," thought the carpenter; "those tears will do her some good, at all events. Not part with him!" added he aloud. "Why you wouldn't stand in the way of his good fortune sure*ly*? I'll be a second father to him, I tell you. Remember what the conjuror said."

"I *do* remember it, Sir," replied Mrs. Sheppard, "and am most grateful for your offer. But I dare not accept it."

"Dare not!" echoed the carpenter; "I don't understand you, Joan."

"I mean to say, Sir," answered Mrs. Sheppard in a troubled voice, "that if I lost my child, I should lose all I have left in the world. I have neither father, mother, brother, sister, nor husband —I have only *him*."

"If I ask you to part with him, my good woman, it's to better his condition, I suppose, ain't it?" rejoined Wood angrily; for, though he had no serious intention of carrying his proposal into effect, he was rather offended at having it declined. "It's not an

offer," continued he, "that I'm likely to make, or you're likely to receive every day in the year."

And muttering some remarks, which we do not care to repeat, reflecting upon the consistency of the sex, he was preparing once more to depart, when Mrs. Sheppard stopped him.

"Give me till to-morrow," implored she, "and if I *can* bring myself to part with him, you shall have him without another word."

"Take time to consider of it," replied Wood sulkily, "there's no hurry."

"Don't be angry with me, Sir," cried the widow, sobbing bitterly, "pray don't. I know I am undeserving of your bounty; but if I were to tell you what hardships I have undergone—to what frightful extremities I have been reduced—and to what infamy I have submitted, to earn a scanty subsistence for this child's sake, —if you could feel what it is to stand alone in the world as I do, bereft of all who have ever loved me, and shunned by all who have ever known me, except the worthless and the wretched,—if you knew (and Heaven grant you may be spared the knowledge!) how much affliction sharpens love, and how much more dear to me my child has become for every sacrifice I have made for him, —if you were told all this, you would, I am sure, pity rather than reproach me, because I cannot at once consent to a separation, which I feel would break my heart. But give me till to-morrow —only till to-morrow—I may be able to part with him then."

The worthy carpenter was now far more angry with himself

than he had previously been with Mrs. Sheppard; and, as soon as he could command his feelings, which were considerably excited by the mention of her distresses, he squeezed her hand warmly, bestowed a hearty execration upon his own inhumanity, and swore he would neither separate her from her child, nor suffer any one else to separate them.

"Plague on't!" added he: "I never meant to take your babby from you. But I'd a mind to try whether you really loved him as much as you pretended. I was to blame to carry the matter so far. However, confession of a fault makes half amends for it. A time *may* come when this little chap will need my aid, and, depend upon it, he shall never want a friend in Owen Wood."

As he said this, the carpenter patted the cheek of the little object of his benevolent professions, and, in so doing, unintentionally aroused him from his slumbers. Opening a pair of large black eyes, the child fixed them for an instant upon Wood, and then, alarmed by the light, uttered a low and melancholy cry, which, however, was speedily stilled by the caresses of his mother, towards whom he extended his tiny arms, as if imploring protection.

"I don't think he would leave me, even if I could part with him," observed Mrs. Sheppard, smiling through her tears.

"I don't think he would," acquiesced the carpenter. "No friend like the mother, for the babby knows no other."

"And that's true," rejoined Mrs. Sheppard; "for if I had *not* been a mother, I would not have survived the day on which I

became a widow."

"You mustn't think of that, Mrs. Sheppard," said Wood in a soothing tone.

"I can't help thinking of it, Sir," answered the widow. "I can never get poor Tom's last look out of my head, as he stood in the Stone-Hall at Newgate, after his irons had been knocked off, unless I manage to stupify myself somehow. The dismal tolling of St. Sepulchre's bell is for ever ringing in my ears—oh!"

"If that's the case," observed Wood, "I'm surprised you should like to have such a frightful picture constantly in view as that over the chimney-piece."

"I'd good reasons for placing it there, Sir; but don't question me about them now, or you'll drive me mad," returned Mrs. Sheppard wildly.

"Well, well, we'll say no more about it," replied Wood; "and, by way of changing the subject, let me advise you on no account to fly to strong waters for consolation, Joan. One nail drives out another, it's true; but the worst nail you can employ is a coffin-nail. Gin Lane's the nearest road to the churchyard."

"It may be; but if it shortens the distance and lightens the journey, I care not," retorted the widow, who seemed by this reproach to be roused into sudden eloquence. "To those who, like me, have never been able to get out of the dark and dreary paths of life, the grave is indeed a refuge, and the sooner they reach it the better. The spirit I drink may be poison,—it may kill me,—perhaps it *is* killing me:—but so would hunger, cold, misery,

—so would my own thoughts. I should have gone mad without it. Gin is the poor man's friend,—his sole set-off against the rich man's luxury. It comforts him when he is most forlorn. It may be treacherous, it may lay up a store of future woe; but it insures present happiness, and that is sufficient. When I have traversed the streets a houseless wanderer, driven with curses from every door where I have solicited alms, and with blows from every gateway where I have sought shelter,—when I have crept into some deserted building, and stretched my wearied limbs upon a bulk, in the vain hope of repose,—or, worse than all, when, frenzied with want, I have yielded to horrible temptation, and earned a meal in the only way I could earn one,—when I have felt, at times like these, my heart sink within me, I have drank of this drink, and have at once forgotten my cares, my poverty, my guilt. Old thoughts, old feelings, old faces, and old scenes have returned to me, and I have fancied myself happy,—as happy as I am now." And she burst into a wild hysterical laugh.

"Poor creature!" ejaculated Wood. "Do you call this frantic glee happiness?"

"It's all the happiness I have known for years," returned the widow, becoming suddenly calm, "and it's short-lived enough, as you perceive. I tell you what, Mr. Wood," added she in a hollow voice, and with a ghastly look, "gin may bring ruin; but as long as poverty, vice, and ill-usage exist, it will be drunk."

"God forbid!" exclaimed Wood, fervently; and, as if afraid of prolonging the interview, he added, with some precipitation,

"But I must be going: I've stayed here too long already. You shall hear from me to-morrow."

"Stay!" said Mrs. Sheppard, again arresting his departure. "I've just recollected that my husband left a key with me, which he charged me to give you when I could find an opportunity."

"A key!" exclaimed Wood eagerly. "I lost a very valuable one some time ago. What's it like, Joan?"

"It's a small key, with curiously-fashioned wards."

"It's mine, I'll be sworn," rejoined Wood. "Well, who'd have thought of finding it in this unexpected way!"

"Don't be too sure till you see it," said the widow. "Shall I fetch it for you, Sir?"

"By all means."

"I must trouble you to hold the child, then, for a minute, while I run up to the garret, where I've hidden it for safety," said Mrs. Sheppard. "I think I *may* trust him with you, Sir," added she, taking up the candle.

"Don't leave him, if you're at all fearful, my dear," replied Wood, receiving the little burthen with a laugh. "Poor thing!" muttered he, as the widow departed on her errand, "she's seen better days and better circumstances than she'll ever see again, I'm sure. Strange, I could never learn her history. Tom Sheppard was always a close file, and would never tell whom he married. Of this I'm certain, however, she was much too good for him, and was never meant to be a journeyman carpenter's wife, still less what is she now. Her heart's in the right place, at all events;

and, since that's the case, the rest may perhaps come round,—that is, if she gets through her present illness. A dry cough's the trumpeter of death. If that's true, she's not long for this world. As to this little fellow, in spite of the Dutchman, who, in my opinion, is more of a Jacobite than a conjurer, and more of a knave than either, he shall never mount a horse foaled by an acorn, if I can help it."

The course of the carpenter's meditations was here interrupted by a loud note of lamentation from the child, who, disturbed by the transfer, and not receiving the gentle solace to which he was ordinarily accustomed, raised his voice to the utmost, and exerted his feeble strength to escape. For a few moments Mr. Wood dandled his little charge to and fro, after the most approved nursery fashion, essaying at the same time the soothing influence of an infantine melody proper to the occasion; but, failing in his design, he soon lost all patience, and being, as we have before hinted, rather irritable, though extremely well-meaning, he lifted the unhappy bantling in the air, and shook him with so much good will, that he had well-nigh silenced him most effectually. A brief calm succeeded. But with returning breath came returning vociferations; and the carpenter, with a faint hope of lessening the clamour by change of scene, took up his lantern, opened the door, and walked out.

CHAPTER II.
The Old Mint

Mrs. Sheppard's habitation terminated a row of old ruinous buildings, called Wheeler's Rents; a dirty thoroughfare, part street, and part lane, running from Mint Street, through a variety of turnings, and along the brink of a deep kennel, skirted by a number of petty and neglected gardens in the direction of Saint George's Fields. The neighbouring houses were tenanted by the lowest order of insolvent traders, thieves, mendicants, and other worthless and nefarious characters, who fled thither to escape from their creditors, or to avoid the punishment due to their different offenses; for we may observe that the Old Mint, although it had been divested of some of its privileges as a sanctuary by a recent statute passed in the reign of William the Third, still presented a safe asylum to the debtor, and even continued to do so until the middle of the reign of George the First, when the crying nature of the evil called loudly for a remedy, and another and more sweeping enactment entirely took away its immunities. In consequence of the encouragement thus offered to dishonesty, and the security afforded to crime, this quarter of the Borough of Southwark was accounted (at the period of our narrative) the grand receptacle of the superfluous villainy of the metropolis. Infested by every description of vagabond and miscreant, it was, perhaps, a few

degrees worse than the rookery near Saint Giles's and the desperate neighbourhood of Saffron Hill in our own time. And yet, on the very site of the sordid tenements and squalid courts we have mentioned, where the felon openly made his dwelling, and the fraudulent debtor laughed the object of his knavery to scorn —on this spot, not two centuries ago, stood the princely residence of Charles Brandon, the chivalrous Duke of Suffolk, whose stout heart was a well of honour, and whose memory breathes of loyalty and valour. Suffolk House, as Brandon's palace was denominated, was subsequently converted into a mint by his royal brother-in-law, Henry the Eighth; and, after its demolition, and the removal of the place of coinage to the Tower, the name was still continued to the district in which it had been situated.

Old and dilapidated, the widow's domicile looked the very picture of desolation and misery. Nothing more forlorn could be conceived. The roof was partially untiled; the chimneys were tottering; the side-walls bulged, and were supported by a piece of timber propped against the opposite house; the glass in most of the windows was broken, and its place supplied with paper; while, in some cases, the very frames of the windows had been destroyed, and the apertures were left free to the airs of heaven. On the groundfloor the shutters were closed, or, to speak more correctly, altogether nailed up, and presented a very singular appearance, being patched all over with the soles of old shoes, rusty hobnails, and bits of iron hoops, the ingenious device of the former occupant of the apartment, Paul Groves, the cobbler, to

whom we have before alluded.

It was owing to the untimely end of this poor fellow that Mrs. Sheppard was enabled to take possession of the premises. In a fit of despondency, superinduced by drunkenness, he made away with himself; and when the body was discovered, after a lapse of some months, such was the impression produced by the spectacle—such the alarm occasioned by the crazy state of the building, and, above all, by the terror inspired by strange and unearthly noises heard during the night, which were, of course, attributed to the spirit of the suicide, that the place speedily enjoyed the reputation of being haunted, and was, consequently, entirely abandoned. In this state Mrs. Sheppard found it; and, as no one opposed her, she at once took up her abode there; nor was she long in discovering that the dreaded sounds proceeded from the nocturnal gambols of a legion of rats.

A narrow entry, formed by two low walls, communicated with the main thoroughfare; and in this passage, under the cover of a penthouse, stood Wood, with his little burthen, to whom we shall now return.

As Mrs. Sheppard did not make her appearance quite so soon as he expected, the carpenter became a little fidgetty, and, having succeeded in tranquillizing the child, he thought proper to walk so far down the entry as would enable him to reconnoitre the upper windows of the house. A light was visible in the garret, feebly struggling through the damp atmosphere, for the night was raw and overcast. This light did not remain stationary, but

could be seen at one moment glimmering through the rents in the roof, and at another shining through the cracks in the wall, or the broken panes of the casement. Wood was unable to discover the figure of the widow, but he recognised her dry, hacking cough, and was about to call her down, if she could not find the key, as he imagined must be the case, when a loud noise was heard, as though a chest, or some weighty substance, had fallen upon the floor.

Before Wood had time to inquire into the cause of this sound, his attention was diverted by a man, who rushed past the entry with the swiftness of desperation. This individual apparently met with some impediment to his further progress; for he had not proceeded many steps when he turned suddenly about, and darted up the passage in which Wood stood.

Uttering a few inarticulate ejaculations,—for he was completely out of breath,—the fugitive placed a bundle in the arms of the carpenter, and, regardless of the consternation he excited in the breast of that personage, who was almost stupified with astonishment, he began to divest himself of a heavy horseman's cloak, which he threw over Wood's shoulder, and, drawing his sword, seemed to listen intently for the approach of his pursuers.

The appearance of the new-comer was extremely prepossessing; and, after his trepidation had a little subsided, Wood began to regard him with some degree of interest. Evidently in the flower of his age, he was scarcely less

remarkable for symmetry of person than for comeliness of feature; and, though his attire was plain and unpretending, it was such as could be worn only by one belonging to the higher ranks of society. His figure was tall and commanding, and the expression of his countenance (though somewhat disturbed by his recent exertion) was resolute and stern.

At this juncture, a cry burst from the child, who, nearly smothered by the weight imposed upon him, only recovered the use of his lungs as Wood altered the position of the bundle. The stranger turned his head at the sound.

"By Heaven!" cried he in a tone of surprise, "you have an infant there?"

"To be sure I have," replied Wood, angrily; for, finding that the intentions of the stranger were pacific, so far as he was concerned, he thought he might safely venture on a slight display of spirit. "It's very well you haven't crushed the poor little thing to death with this confounded clothes'-bag. But some people have no consideration."

"That child may be the means of saving me," muttered the stranger, as if struck by a new idea: "I shall gain time by the expedient. Do you live here?"

"Not exactly," answered the carpenter.

"No matter. The door is open, so it is needless to ask leave to enter. Ha!" exclaimed the stranger, as shouts and other vociferations resounded at no great distance along the thoroughfare, "not a moment is to be lost. Give me that precious

charge," he added, snatching the bundle from Wood. "If I escape, I will reward you. Your name?"

"Owen Wood," replied the carpenter; "I've no reason to be ashamed of it. And now, a fair exchange, Sir. Yours?"

The stranger hesitated. The shouts drew nearer, and lights were seen flashing ruddily against the sides and gables of the neighbouring houses.

"My name is Darrell," said the fugitive hastily. "But, if you are discovered, answer no questions, as you value your life. Wrap yourself in my cloak, and keep it. Remember! not a word!"

So saying, he huddled the mantle over Wood's shoulders, dashed the lantern to the ground, and extinguished the light. A moment afterwards, the door was closed and bolted, and the carpenter found himself alone.

"Mercy on us!" cried he, as a thrill of apprehension ran through his frame. "The Dutchman was right, after all."

This exclamation had scarcely escaped him, when the discharge of a pistol was heard, and a bullet whizzed past his ears.

"I have him!" cried a voice in triumph.

A man, then, rushed up the entry, and, seizing the unlucky carpenter by the collar, presented a drawn sword to his throat. This person was speedily followed by half a dozen others, some of whom carried flambeaux.

"Mur—der!" roared Wood, struggling to free himself from his assailant, by whom he was half strangled.

"Damnation!" exclaimed one of the leaders of the party in a

furious tone, snatching a torch from an attendant, and throwing its light full upon the face of the carpenter; "this is not the villain, Sir Cecil."

"So I find, Rowland," replied the other, in accents of deep disappointment, and at the same time relinquishing his grasp. "I could have sworn I saw him enter this passage. And how comes his cloak on this knave's shoulders?"

"It is his cloak, of a surety," returned Rowland "Harkye, sirrah," continued he, haughtily interrogating Wood; "where is the person from whom you received this mantle?"

"Throttling a man isn't the way to make him answer questions," replied the carpenter, doggedly. "You'll get nothing out of me, I can promise you, unless you show a little more civility."

"We waste time with this fellow," interposed Sir Cecil, "and may lose the object of our quest, who, beyond doubt, has taken refuge in this building. Let us search it."

Just then, the infant began to sob piteously.

"Hist!" cried Rowland, arresting his comrade. "Do you hear that! We are not wholly at fault. The dog-fox cannot be far off, since the cub is found."

With these words, he tore the mantle from Wood's back, and, perceiving the child, endeavoured to seize it. In this attempt he was, however, foiled by the agility of the carpenter, who managed to retreat to the door, against which he placed his back, kicking the boards vigorously with his heel.

"Joan! Joan!" vociferated he, "open the door, for God's sake, or I shall be murdered, and so will your babby! Open the door quickly, I say."

"Knock him on the head," thundered Sir Cecil, "or we shall have the watch upon us."

"No fear of that," rejoined Rowland: "such vermin never dare to show themselves in this privileged district. All we have to apprehend is a rescue."

The hint was not lost upon Wood. He tried to raise an outcry, but his throat was again forcibly griped by Rowland.

"Another such attempt," said the latter, "and you are a dead man. Yield up the babe, and I pledge my word you shall remain unmolested."

"I will yield it to no one but its mother," answered Wood.

"'Sdeath! do you trifle with me, sirrah?" cried Rowland fiercely. "Give me the child, or—"

As he spoke the door was thrown open, and Mrs. Sheppard staggered forward. She looked paler than ever; but her countenance, though bewildered, did not exhibit the alarm which might naturally have been anticipated from the strange and perplexing scene presented to her view.

"Take it," cried Wood, holding the infant towards her; "take it, and fly."

Mrs. Sheppard put out her arms mechanically. But before the child could be committed to her care, it was wrested from the carpenter by Rowland.

"These people are all in league with him," cried the latter. "But don't wait for me, Sir Cecil. Enter the house with your men. I'll dispose of the brat."

This injunction was instantly obeyed. The knight and his followers crossed the threshold, leaving one of the torch-bearers behind them.

"Davies," said Rowland, delivering the babe, with a meaning look, to his attendant.

"I understand, Sir," replied Davies, drawing a little aside. And, setting down the link, he proceeded deliberately to untie his cravat.

"My God! will you see your child strangled before your eyes, and not so much as scream for help?" said Wood, staring at the widow with a look of surprise and horror. "Woman, your wits are fled!"

And so it seemed; for all the answer she could make was to murmur distractedly, "I can't find the key."

"Devil take the key!" ejaculated Wood. "They're about to murder your child—*your* child, I tell you! Do you comprehend what I say, Joan?"

"I've hurt my head," replied Mrs. Sheppard, pressing her hand to her temples.

And then, for the first time, Wood noticed a small stream of blood coursing slowly down her cheek.

At this moment, Davies, who had completed his preparations, extinguished the torch.

"It's all over," groaned Wood, "and perhaps it's as well her senses are gone. However, I'll make a last effort to save the poor little creature, if it costs me my life."

And, with this generous resolve, he shouted at the top of his voice, "Arrest! arrest! help! help!" seconding the words with a shrill and peculiar cry, well known at the time to the inhabitants of the quarter in which it was uttered.

In reply to this summons a horn was instantly blown at the corner of the street.

"Arrest!" vociferated Wood. "Mint! Mint!"

"Death and hell!" cried Rowland, making a furious pass at the carpenter, who fortunately avoided the thrust in the darkness; "will nothing silence you?"

"Help!" ejaculated Wood, renewing his cries. "Arrest!"

"Jigger closed!" shouted a hoarse voice in reply. "All's bowman, my covey. Fear nothing. We'll be upon the ban-dogs before they can shake their trotters!"

And the alarm was sounded more loudly than ever.

Another horn now resounded from the further extremity of the thoroughfare; this was answered by a third; and presently a fourth, and more remote blast, took up the note of alarm. The whole neighbourhood was disturbed. A garrison called to arms at dead of night on the sudden approach of the enemy, could not have been more expeditiously, or effectually aroused. Rattles were sprung; lanterns lighted, and hoisted at the end of poles; windows thrown open; doors unbarred; and, as if by magic, the

street was instantaneously filled with a crowd of persons of both sexes, armed with such weapons as came most readily to hand, and dressed in such garments as could be most easily slipped on. Hurrying in the direction of the supposed arrest, they encouraged each other with shouts, and threatened the offending parties with their vengeance.

Regardless as the gentry of the Mint usually were (for, indeed, they had become habituated from their frequent occurrence to such scenes,) of any outrages committed in their streets; deaf, as they had been, to the recent scuffle before Mrs. Sheppard's door, they were always sufficiently on the alert to maintain their privileges, and to assist each other against the attacks of their common enemy—the sheriff's officer. It was only by the adoption of such a course (especially since the late act of suppression, to which we have alluded,) that the inviolability of the asylum could be preserved. Incursions were often made upon its territories by the functionaries of the law; sometimes attended with success, but more frequently with discomfiture; and it rarely happened, unless by stratagem or bribery, that (in the language of the gentlemen of the short staff) an important caption could be effected. In order to guard against accidents or surprises, watchmen, or scouts, (as they were styled,) were stationed at the three main outlets of the sanctuary ready to give the signal in the manner just described: bars were erected, which, in case of emergency; could be immediately stretched across the streets: doors were attached to the alleys; and were

never opened without due precautions; gates were affixed to the courts, wickets to the gates, and bolts to the wickets. The back windows of the houses (where any such existed) were strongly barricaded, and kept constantly shut; and the fortress was, furthermore, defended by high walls and deep ditches in those quarters where it appeared most exposed. There was also a Maze, (the name is still retained in the district,) into which the debtor could run, and through the intricacies of which it was impossible for an officer to follow him, without a clue. Whoever chose to incur the risk of so doing might enter the Mint at any hour; but no one was suffered to depart without giving a satisfactory account of himself, or producing a pass from the Master. In short, every contrivance that ingenuity could devise was resorted to by this horde of reprobates to secure themselves from danger or molestation. Whitefriars had lost its privileges; Salisbury Court and the Savoy no longer offered places of refuge to the debtor; and it was, therefore, doubly requisite that the Island of Bermuda (as the Mint was termed by its occupants) should uphold its rights, as long as it was able to do so.

Mr. Wood, meantime, had not remained idle. Aware that not a moment was to be lost, if he meant to render any effectual assistance to the child, he ceased shouting, and defending himself in the best way he could from the attacks of Rowland, by whom he was closely pressed, forced his way, in spite of all opposition, to Davies, and dealt him a blow on the head with such good will that, had it not been for the intervention of the wall, the

ruffian must have been prostrated. Before he could recover from the stunning effects of the blow, Wood possessed himself of the child: and, untying the noose which had been slipped round its throat, had the satisfaction of hearing it cry lustily.

At this juncture, Sir Cecil and his followers appeared at the threshold.

"He has escaped!" exclaimed the knight; "we have searched every corner of the house without finding a trace of him."

"Back!" cried Rowland. "Don't you hear those shouts? Yon fellow's clamour has brought the whole horde of jail-birds and cut-throats that infest this place about our ears. We shall be torn in pieces if we are discovered. Davies!" he added, calling to the attendant, who was menacing Wood with a severe retaliation, "don't heed him; but, if you value a whole skin, come into the house, and bring that woman with you. She may afford us some necessary information."

Davies reluctantly complied. And, dragging Mrs. Sheppard, who made no resistance, along with him, entered the house, the door of which was instantly shut and barricaded.

A moment afterwards, the street was illumined by a blaze of torchlight, and a tumultuous uproar, mixed with the clashing of weapons, and the braying of horns, announced the arrival of the first detachment of Minters.

Mr. Wood rushed instantly to meet them.

"Hurrah!" shouted he, waving his hat triumphantly over his head. "Saved!"

"Ay, ay, it's all bob, my covey! You're safe enough, that's certain!" responded the Minters, baying, yelping, leaping, and howling around him like a pack of hounds when the huntsman is beating cover; "but, where are the lurchers?"

"Who?" asked Wood.

"The traps!" responded a bystander.

"The shoulder-clappers!" added a lady, who, in her anxiety to join the party, had unintentionally substituted her husband's nether habiliments for her own petticoats.

"The ban-dogs!" thundered a tall man, whose stature and former avocations had procured him the nickname of "The long drover of the Borough market." "Where are they?"

"Ay, where are they?" chorussed the mob, flourishing their various weapons, and flashing their torches in the air; "we'll starve 'em out."

Mr. Wood trembled. He felt he had raised a storm which it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to allay. He knew not what to say, or what to do; and his confusion was increased by the threatening gestures and furious looks of the ruffians in his immediate vicinity.

"I don't understand you, gentlemen," stammered he, at length.

"What does he say?" roared the long drover.

"He says he don't understand flash," replied the lady in gentleman's attire.

"Cease your confounded clutter!" said a young man, whose swarthy visage, seen in the torchlight, struck Wood as being

that of a Mulatto. "You frighten the cull out of his senses. It's plain he don't understand our lingo; as, how should he? Take pattern by me;" and as he said this he strode up to the carpenter, and, slapping him on the shoulder, propounded the following questions, accompanying each interrogation with a formidable contortion of countenance. "Curse you! Where are the bailiffs? Rot you! have you lost your tongue? Devil seize you! you could bawl loud enough a moment ago!"

"Silence, Blueskin!" interposed an authoritative voice, immediately behind the ruffian. "Let me have a word with the cull!"

"Ay! ay!" cried several of the bystanders, "let Jonathan kimbaw the cove. He's got the gift of the gab."

The crowd accordingly drew aside, and the individual, in whose behalf the movement had been made immediately stepped forward. He was a young man of about two-and-twenty, who, without having anything remarkable either in dress or appearance, was yet a noticeable person, if only for the indescribable expression of cunning pervading his countenance. His eyes were small and grey; as far apart and as sly-looking as those of a fox. A physiognomist, indeed, would have likened him to that crafty animal, and it must be owned the general formation of his features favoured such a comparison. The nose was long and sharp, the chin pointed, the forehead broad and flat, and connected, without any intervening hollow, with the eyelid; the teeth when displayed, seemed to reach from ear to ear.

Then his beard was of a reddish hue, and his complexion warm and sanguine. Those who had seen him slumbering, averred that he slept with his eyes open. But this might be merely a figurative mode of describing his customary vigilance. Certain it was, that the slightest sound aroused him. This astute personage was somewhat under the middle size, but fairly proportioned, inclining rather to strength than symmetry, and abounding more in muscle than in flesh.

It would seem, from the attention which he evidently bestowed upon the hidden and complex machinery of the grand system of villany at work around him, that his chief object in taking up his quarters in the Mint, must have been to obtain some private information respecting the habits and practices of its inhabitants, to be turned to account hereafter.

Advancing towards Wood, Jonathan fixed his keen gray eyes upon him, and demanded, in a stern tone whether the persons who had taken refuge in the adjoining house, were bailiffs.

"Not that I know of," replied the carpenter, who had in some degree recovered his confidence.

"Then I presume you've not been arrested?"

"I have not," answered Wood firmly.

"I guessed as much. Perhaps you'll next inform us why you have occasioned this disturbance."

"Because this child's life was threatened by the persons you have mentioned," rejoined Wood.

"An excellent reason, i' faith!" exclaimed Blueskin, with a

roar of surprise and indignation, which was echoed by the whole assemblage. "And so we're to be summoned from our beds and snug firesides, because a kid happens to squall, eh? By the soul of my grandmother, but this is too good!"

"Do you intend to claim the privileges of the Mint?" said Jonathan, calmly pursuing his interrogations amid the uproar. "Is your person in danger?"

"Not from my creditors," replied Wood, significantly.

"Will he post the cole? Will he come down with the dues? Ask him that?" cried Blueskin.

"You hear," pursued Jonathan; "my friend desires to know if you are willing to pay your footing as a member of the ancient and respectable fraternity of debtors?"

"I owe no man a farthing, and my name shall never appear in any such rascally list," replied Wood angrily. "I don't see why I should be obliged to pay for doing my duty. I tell you this child would have been strangled. The noose was at its throat when I called for help. I knew it was in vain to cry 'murder!' in the Mint, so I had recourse to stratagem."

"Well, Sir, I must say you deserve some credit for your ingenuity, at all events," replied Jonathan, repressing a smile; "but, before you put out your foot so far, it would have been quite as prudent to consider how you were to draw it back again. For my own part, I don't see in what way it is to be accomplished, except by the payment of our customary fees. Do not imagine you can at one moment avail yourself of our excellent regulations

(with which you seem sufficiently well acquainted), and the next break them with impunity. If you assume the character of a debtor for your own convenience, you must be content to maintain it for ours. If you have not been arrested, we have been disturbed; and it is but just and reasonable you should pay for occasioning such disturbance. By your own showing you are in easy circumstances,—for it is only natural to presume that a man who owes nothing must be in a condition to pay liberally,—and you cannot therefore feel the loss of such a trifle as ten guineas."

However illogical and inconclusive these arguments might appear to Mr. Wood, and however he might dissent from the latter proposition, he did not deem it expedient to make any reply; and the orator proceeded with his harangue amid the general applause of the assemblage.

"I am perhaps exceeding my authority in demanding so slight a sum," continued Jonathan, modestly, "and the Master of the Mint may not be disposed to let you off so lightly. He will be here in a moment or so, and you will then learn his determination. In the mean time, let me advise you as a friend not to irritate him by a refusal, which would be as useless as vexatious. He has a very summary mode of dealing with refractory persons, I assure you. My best endeavours shall be used to bring you off, on the easy terms I have mentioned."

"Do you call ten guineas easy terms?" cried Wood, with a look of dismay. "Why, I should expect to purchase the entire freehold of the Mint for less money."

"Many a man has been glad to pay double the amount to get his head from under the Mint pump," observed Blueskin, gruffly.

"Let the gentleman take his own course," said Jonathan, mildly. "I should be sorry to persuade him to do anything his calmer judgment might disapprove."

"Exactly my sentiments," rejoined Blueskin. "I wouldn't force him for the world: but if he don't tip the stivers, may I be cursed if he don't get a taste of the *aqua pompaginis*. Let's have a look at the kinchen that *ought* to have been throttled," added he, snatching the child from Wood. "My stars! here's a pretty lullaby-cheat to make a fuss about—ho! ho!"

"Deal with me as you think proper, gentlemen," exclaimed Wood; "but, for mercy's sake don't harm the child! Let it be taken to its mother."

"And who is its mother?" asked Jonathan, in an eager whisper. "Tell me frankly, and speak under your breath. Your own safety—the child's safety—depends upon your candour."

While Mr. Wood underwent this examination, Blueskin felt a small and trembling hand placed upon his own, and, turning at the summons, beheld a young female, whose features were partially concealed by a loo, or half mask, standing beside him. Coarse as were the ruffian's notions of feminine beauty, he could not be insensible to the surpassing loveliness of the fair creature, who had thus solicited his attention. Her figure was, in some measure, hidden by a large scarf, and a deep hood drawn over the head contributed to her disguise; still it was evident, from her

lofty bearing, that she had nothing in common, except an interest in their proceedings, with the crew by whom she was surrounded.

Whence she came,—who she was,—and what she wanted,—were questions which naturally suggested themselves to Blueskin, and he was about to seek for some explanation, when his curiosity was checked by a gesture of silence from the lady.

"Hush!" said she, in a low, but agitated voice; "would you earn this purse?"

"I've no objection," replied Blueskin, in a tone intended to be gentle, but which sounded like the murmuring whine of a playful bear. "How much is there in it!"

"It contains gold," replied the lady; "but I will add this ring."

"What am I to do to earn it?" asked Blueskin, with a disgusting leer,—"cut a throat—or throw myself at your feet—eh, my dear?"

"Give me that child," returned the lady, with difficulty overcoming the loathing inspired by the ruffian's familiarity.

"Oh! I see!" replied Blueskin, winking significantly, "Come nearer, or they'll observe us. Don't be afraid—I won't hurt you. I'm always agreeable to the women, bless their kind hearts! Now! slip the purse into my hand. Bravo!—the best cly-faker of 'em all couldn't have done it better. And now for the fawney—the ring I mean. I'm no great judge of these articles, Ma'am; but I trust to your honour not to palm off paste upon me."

"It is a diamond," said the lady, in an agony of distress,—"the child!"

"A diamond! Here, take the kid," cried Blueskin, slipping the infant adroitly under her scarf. "And so this is a diamond," added he, contemplating the brilliant from the hollow of his hand: "it does sparkle almost as brightly as your ogles. By the by, my dear, I forgot to ask your name—perhaps you'll oblige me with it now? Hell and the devil!—gone!"

He looked around in vain. The lady had disappeared.

CHAPTER III.
The Master of the Mint

Jonathan, meanwhile, having ascertained the parentage of the child from Wood, proceeded to question him in an under tone, as to the probable motives of the attempt upon its life; and, though he failed in obtaining any information on this point, he had little difficulty in eliciting such particulars of the mysterious transaction as have already been recounted. When the carpenter concluded his recital, Jonathan was for a moment lost in reflection.

"Devilish strange!" thought he, chuckling to himself; "queer business! Capital trick of the cull in the cloak to make another person's brat stand the brunt for his own—capital! ha! ha! Won't do, though. He must be a sly fox to get out of the Mint without my knowledge. I've a shrewd guess where he's taken refuge; but I'll ferret him out. These bloods will pay well for his capture; if not, *he'll* pay well to get out of their hands; so I'm safe either way —ha! ha! Blueskin," he added aloud, and motioning that worthy, "follow me."

Upon which, he set off in the direction of the entry. His progress, however, was checked by loud acclamations, announcing the arrival of the Master of the Mint and his train.

Baptist Kettleby (for so was the Master named) was a "goodly portly man, and a corpulent," whose fair round paunch bespoke

the affection he entertained for good liquor and good living. He had a quick, shrewd, merry eye, and a look in which duplicity was agreeably veiled by good humour. It was easy to discover that he was a knave, but equally easy to perceive that he was a pleasant fellow; a combination of qualities by no means of rare occurrence. So far as regards his attire, Baptist was not seen to advantage. No great lover of state or state costume at any time, he was generally, towards the close of an evening, completely in dishabille, and in this condition he now presented himself to his subjects. His shirt was unfastened, his vest unbuttoned, his hose ungartered; his feet were stuck into a pair of pantoufles, his arms into a greasy flannel dressing-gown, his head into a thrum-cap, the cap into a tie-periwig, and the wig into a gold-edged hat. A white apron was tied round his waist, and into the apron was thrust a short thick truncheon, which looked very much like a rolling-pin.

The Master of the Mint was accompanied by another gentleman almost as portly as himself, and quite as deliberate in his movements. The costume of this personage was somewhat singular, and might have passed for a masquerading habit, had not the imperturbable gravity of his demeanour forbidden any such supposition. It consisted of a close jerkin of brown frieze, ornamented with a triple row of brass buttons; loose Dutch slops, made very wide in the seat and very tight at the knees; red stockings with black clocks, and a fur cap. The owner of this dress had a broad weather-beaten face, small twinkling eyes,

and a bushy, grizzled beard. Though he walked by the side of the governor, he seldom exchanged a word with him, but appeared wholly absorbed in the contemplations inspired by a broadbowled Dutch pipe.

Behind the illustrious personages just described marched a troop of stalwart fellows, with white badges in their hats, quarterstaves, oaken cudgels, and links in their hands. These were the Master's body-guard.

Advancing towards the Master, and claiming an audience, which was instantly granted, Jonathan, without much circumlocution, related the sum of the strange story he had just learnt from Wood, omitting nothing except a few trifling particulars, which he thought it politic to keep back; and, with this view, he said not a word of there being any probability of capturing the fugitive, but, on the contrary, roundly asserted that his informant had witnessed that person's escape.

The Master listened, with becoming attention, to the narrative, and, at its conclusion, shook his head gravely, applied his thumb to the side of his nose, and, twirling his fingers significantly, winked at his phlegmatic companion. The gentleman appealed to shook his head in reply, coughed as only a Dutchman *can* cough, and raising his hand from the bowl of his pipe, went through precisely the same mysterious ceremonial as the Master.

Putting his own construction upon this mute interchange of opinions, Jonathan ventured to observe, that it certainly was a very perplexing case, but that he thought something *might* be

made of it, and, if left to him, he would undertake to manage the matter to the Master's entire satisfaction.

"Ja, ja, Muntmeester," said the Dutchman, removing the pipe from his mouth, and speaking in a deep and guttural voice, "leave the affair to Johannes. He'll settle it bravely. And let ush go back to our brandewyn, and hollandsche genever. Dese ere not schouts, as you faind, but jonkers on a vrolyk; and if dey'd chanshed to keel de vrow Sheppard's pet lamb, dey'd have done her a servish, by shaving it from dat unpleasant complaint, de hempen fever, with which its laatter days are threatened, and of which its poor vader died. Myn Got! haanging runs in some families, Muntmeester. It's hereditary, like de jigt, vat you call it—gout—haw! haw!"

"If the child *is* destined to the gibbet, Van Galgebrok," replied the Master, joining in the laugh, "it'll never be choked by a footman's cravat, that's certain; but, in regard to going back empty-handed," continued he, altering his tone, and assuming a dignified air, "it's quite out of the question. With Baptist Kettleby, to engage in a matter is to go through with it. Besides, this is an affair which no one but myself can settle. Common offences may be decided upon by deputy; but outrages perpetrated by men of rank, as these appear to be, must be judged by the Master of the Mint in person. These are the decrees of the Island of Bermuda, and I will never suffer its excellent laws to be violated. Gentlemen of the Mint," added he, pointing with his truncheon towards Mrs. Sheppard's house, "forward!"

"Hurrah!" shouted the mob, and the whole phalanx was put in motion in that direction. At the same moment a martial flourish, proceeding from cow's horns, tin canisters filled with stones, bladders and cat-gut, with other sprightly, instruments, was struck up, and, enlivened by this harmonious accompaniment, the troop reached its destination in the best possible spirits for an encounter.

"Let us in," said the Master, rapping his truncheon authoritatively against the boards, "or we'll force an entrance."

But as no answer was returned to the summons, though it was again, and more peremptorily, repeated, Baptist seized a mallet from a bystander and burst open the door. Followed by Van Galgebrok and others of his retinue, he then rushed into the room, where Rowland, Sir Cecil, and their attendants, stood with drawn swords prepared to receive them.

"Beat down their blades," cried the Master; "no bloodshed."

"Beat out their brains, you mean," rejoined Blueskin with a tremendous imprecation; "no half measures now, Master."

"Hadn't you better hold a moment's parley with the gentlemen before proceeding to extremities?" suggested Jonathan.

"Agreed," responded the Master. "Surely," he added, staring at Rowland, "either I'm greatly mistaken, or it is—"

"You are not mistaken, Baptist," returned Rowland with a gesture of silence; "it is your old friend. I'm glad to recognise you."

"And I'm glad your worship's recognition doesn't come too

late," observed the Master. "But why didn't you make yourself known at once?"

"I'd forgotten the office you hold in the Mint, Baptist," replied Rowland. "But clear the room of this rabble, if you have sufficient authority over them. I would speak with you."

"There's but one way of clearing it, your worship," said the Master, archly.

"I understand," replied Rowland. "Give them what you please. I'll repay you."

"It's all right, pals," cried Baptist, in a loud tone; "the gentlemen and I have settled matters. No more scuffling."

"What's the meaning of all this?" demanded Sir Cecil. "How have you contrived to still these troubled waters?"

"I've chanced upon an old ally in the Master of the Mint," answered Rowland. "We may trust him," he added in a whisper; "he is a staunch friend of the good cause."

"Blueskin, clear the room," cried the Master; "these gentlemen would be private. They've *paid* for their lodging. Where's Jonathan?"

Inquiries were instantly made after that individual, but he was nowhere to be found.

"Strange!" observed the Master; "I thought he'd been at my elbow all this time. But it don't much matter—though he's a devilish shrewd fellow, and might have helped me out of a difficulty, had any occurred. Hark ye, Blueskin," continued he, addressing that personage, who, in obedience to his commands,

had, with great promptitude, driven out the rabble, and again secured the door, "a word in your ear. What female entered the house with us?"

"Blood and thunder!" exclaimed Blueskin, afraid, if he admitted having seen the lady, of being compelled to divide the plunder he had obtained from her among his companions, "how should I know? D'ye suppose I'm always thinking of the petticoats? I observed no female; but if any one *did* join the assault, it must have been either Amazonian Kate, or Fighting Moll."

"The woman I mean did not join the assault," rejoined the Master, "but rather seemed to shun observation; and, from the hasty glimpse I caught of her, she appeared to have a child in her arms."

"Then, most probably, it was the widow Sheppard," answered Blueskin, sulkily.

"Right," said the Master, "I didn't think of her. And now I've another job for you."

"Propose it," returned Blueskin, inclining his head.

"Square accounts with the rascal who got up the sham arrest; and, if he don't tip the cole without more ado, give him a taste of the pump, that's all."

"He shall go through the whole course," replied Blueskin, with a ferocious grin, "unless he comes down to the last grig. We'll lather him with mud, shave him with a rusty razor, and drench him with *aqua pompaginis*. Master, your humble servant.

—Gentlemen, your most obsequious trout."

Having effected his object, which was to get rid of Blueskin, Baptist turned to Rowland and Sir Cecil, who had watched his proceedings with much impatience, and remarked, "Now, gentlemen, the coast's clear; we've nothing to interrupt us. I'm entirely at your service."

CHAPTER IV.
The Roof and the Window

Leaving them to pursue their conference, we shall follow the footsteps of Jonathan, who, as the Master surmised, and, as we have intimated, had unquestionably entered the house. But at the beginning of the affray, when he thought every one was too much occupied with his own concerns to remark his absence, he slipped out of the room, not for the purpose of avoiding the engagement (for cowardice was not one of his failings), but because he had another object in view. Creeping stealthily up stairs, unmasking a dark lantern, and glancing into each room as he passed, he was startled in one of them by the appearance of Mrs. Sheppard, who seemed to be crouching upon the floor. Satisfied, however, that she did not notice him, Jonathan glided away as noiselessly as he came, and ascended another short flight of stairs leading to the garret. As he crossed this chamber, his foot struck against something on the floor, which nearly threw him down, and stooping to examine the object, he found it was a key. "Never throw away a chance," thought Jonathan. "Who knows but this key may open a golden lock one of these days?" And, picking it up, he thrust it into his pocket.

Arrived beneath an aperture in the broken roof, he was preparing to pass through it, when he observed a little heap of tiles upon the floor, which appeared to have been recently

dislodged. "He *has* passed this way," cried Jonathan, exultingly; "I have him safe enough." He then closed the lantern, mounted without much difficulty upon the roof, and proceeded cautiously along the tiles.

The night was now profoundly dark. Jonathan had to feel his way. A single false step might have precipitated him into the street; or, if he had trodden upon an unsound part of the roof, he must have fallen through it. He had nothing to guide him; for though the torches were blazing ruddily below, their gleam fell only on the side of the building. The venturous climber gazed for a moment at the assemblage beneath, to ascertain that he was not discovered; and, having satisfied himself in this particular, he stepped out more boldly. On gaining a stack of chimneys at the back of the house, he came to a pause, and again unmasked his lantern. Nothing, however, could be discerned, except the crumbling brickwork. "Confusion!" ejaculated Jonathan: "can he have escaped? No. The walls are too high, and the windows too stoutly barricaded in this quarter, to admit such a supposition. He can't be far off. I shall find him yet. Ah! I have it," he added, after a moment's deliberation; "he's there, I'll be sworn." And, once more enveloping himself in darkness, he pursued his course.

He had now reached the adjoining house, and, scaling the roof, approached another building, which seemed to be, at least, one story loftier than its neighbours. Apparently, Jonathan was well acquainted with the premises; for, feeling about in the dark, he speedily discovered a ladder, up the steps of which he hurried.

Drawing a pistol, and unclosing his lantern with the quickness of thought, he then burst through an open trap-door into a small loft.

The light fell upon the fugitive, who stood before him in an attitude of defence, with the child in his arms.

"Aha!" exclaimed Jonathan, acting upon the information he had obtained from Wood; "I have found you at last. Your servant, Mr. Darrell."

"Who are you!" demanded the fugitive, sternly.

"A friend," replied Jonathan, uncocking the pistol, and placing it in his pocket.

"How do I know you are a friend?" asked Darrell.

"What should I do here alone if I were an enemy? But, come, don't let us waste time in bandying words, when we might employ it so much more profitably. Your life, and that of your child, are in my power. What will you give me to save you from your pursuers?"

"*Can* you do so?" asked the other, doubtfully.

"I can, and will. Now, the reward?"

"I have but an ill-furnished purse. But if I escape, my gratitude —"

"Pshaw!" interrupted Jonathan, scornfully. "Your gratitude will vanish with your danger. Pay fools with promises. I must have something in hand."

"You shall have all I have about me," replied Darrell.

"Well—well," grumbled Jonathan, "I suppose I must be content. An ill-lined purse is a poor recompense for the risk

I have run. However, come along. I needn't tell you to tread carefully. You know the danger of this breakneck road as well as I do. The light would betray us." So saying, he closed the lantern.

"Harkye, Sir," rejoined Darrell; "one word before I move. I know not who you are; and, as I cannot discern your face, I may be doing you an injustice. But there is something in your voice that makes me distrust you. If you attempt to play the traitor, you will do so at the hazard of your life."

"I have already hazarded my life in this attempt to save you," returned Jonathan boldly, and with apparent frankness; "this ought to be sufficient answer to your doubts. Your pursuers are below. What was to hinder me, if I had been so inclined, from directing them to your retreat?"

"Enough," replied Darrell. "Lead on!"

Followed by Darrell, Jonathan retraced his dangerous path. As he approached the gable of Mrs. Sheppard's house, loud yells and vociferations reached his ears; and, looking downwards, he perceived a great stir amid the mob. The cause of this uproar was soon manifest. Blueskin and the Minters were dragging Wood to the pump. The unfortunate carpenter struggled violently, but ineffectually. His hat was placed upon one pole, his wig on another. His shouts for help were answered by roars of mockery and laughter. He continued alternately to be tossed in the air, or rolled in the kennel until he was borne out of sight. The spectacle seemed to afford as much amusement to Jonathan as to the actors engaged in it. He could not contain his satisfaction, but chuckled,

and rubbed his hands with delight.

"By Heaven!" cried Darrell, "it is the poor fellow whom I placed in such jeopardy a short time ago. I am the cause of his ill-usage."

"To be sure you are," replied Jonathan, laughing. "But, what of that? It'll be a lesson to him in future, and will show him the folly of doing a good-natured action!"

But perceiving that his companion did not relish his pleasantry and fearing that his sympathy for the carpenter's situation might betray him into some act of imprudence, Jonathan, without further remark, and by way of putting an end to the discussion, let himself drop through the roof. His example was followed by Darrell. But, though the latter was somewhat embarrassed by his burthen, he peremptorily declined Jonathan's offer of assistance. Both, however, having safely landed, they cautiously crossed the room, and passed down the first flight of steps in silence. At this moment, a door was opened below; lights gleamed on the walls; and the figures of Rowland and Sir Cecil were distinguished at the foot of the stairs.

Darrell stopped, and drew his sword.

"You have betrayed me," said he, in a deep whisper, to his companion; "but you shall reap the reward of your treachery."

"Be still!" returned Jonathan, in the same under tone, and with great self-possession: "I can yet save you. And see!" he added, as the figures drew back, and the lights disappeared; "it's a false alarm. They have retired. However, not a moment is to be lost.

Give me your hand."

He then hurried Darrell down another short flight of steps, and entered a small chamber at the back of the house. Closing the door, Jonathan next produced his lantern, and, hastening towards the window, undrew a bolt by which it was fastened. A stout wooden shutter, opening inwardly, being removed, disclosed a grating of iron bars. This obstacle, which appeared to preclude the possibility of egress in that quarter, was speedily got rid of. Withdrawing another bolt, and unhooking a chain suspended from the top of the casement, Jonathan pushed the iron framework outwards. The bars dropped noiselessly and slowly down, till the chain tightened at the staple.

"You are free," said he, "that grating forms a ladder, by which you may descend in safety. I learned the trick of the place from one Paul Groves, who used to live here, and who contrived the machine. He used to call it his fire-escape—ha! ha! I've often used the ladder for my own convenience, but I never expected to turn it to such good account. And now, Sir, have I kept faith with you?"

"You have," replied Darrell. "Here is my purse; and I trust you will let me know to whom I am indebted for this important service."

"It matters not who I am," replied Jonathan, taking the money. "As I said before, I have little reliance upon *professions* of gratitude."

"I know not how it is," sighed Darrell, "but I feel an

unaccountable misgiving at quitting this place. Something tells me I am rushing on greater danger."

"You know best," replied Jonathan, sneeringly; "but if I were in your place I would take the chance of a future and uncertain risk to avoid a present and certain peril."

"You are right," replied Darrell; "the weakness is past. Which is the nearest way to the river?"

"Why, it's an awkward road to direct you," returned Jonathan. "But if you turn to the right when you reach the ground, and keep close to the Mint wall, you'll speedily arrive at White Cross Street; White Cross Street, if you turn again to the right, will bring you into Queen Street; Queen Street, bearing to the left, will conduct you to Deadman's Place; and Deadman's Place to the water-side, not fifty yards from Saint Saviour's stairs, where you're sure to get a boat."

"The very point I aim at," said Darrell as he passed through the outlet.

"Stay!" said Jonathan, aiding his descent; "you had better take my lantern. It may be useful to you. Perhaps you'll give me in return some token, by which I may remind you of this occurrence, in case we meet again. Your glove will suffice."

"There it is;" replied the other, tossing him the glove. "Are you sure these bars touch the ground?"

"They come within a yard of it," answered Jonathan.

"Safe!" shouted Darrell, as he effected a secure landing. "Good night!"

"So," muttered Jonathan, "having started the hare, I'll now unleash the hounds."

With this praiseworthy determination, he was hastening down stairs, with the utmost rapidity, when he encountered a female, whom he took, in the darkness, to be Mrs. Sheppard. The person caught hold of his arm, and, in spite of his efforts to disengage himself, detained him.

"Where is he?" asked she, in an agitated whisper. "I heard his voice; but I saw them on the stairs, and durst not approach him, for fear of giving the alarm."

"If you mean the fugitive, Darrell, he has escaped through the back window," replied Jonathan.

"Thank Heaven!" she gasped.

"Well, you women are forgiving creatures, I must say," observed Jonathan, sarcastically. "You thank Heaven for the escape of the man who did his best to get your child's neck twisted."

"What do you mean?" asked the female, in astonishment.

"I mean what I say," replied Jonathan. "Perhaps you don't know that this Darrell so contrived matters, that your child should be mistaken for his own; by which means it had a narrow escape from a tight cravat, I can assure you. However, the scheme answered well enough, for Darrell has got off with his own brat."

"Then this is not my child?" exclaimed she, with increased astonishment.

"If you have a child there, it certainly is not," answered

Jonathan, a little surprised; "for I left your brat in the charge of Blueskin, who is still among the crowd in the street, unless, as is not unlikely, he's gone to see your other friend disciplined at the pump."

"Merciful providence!" exclaimed the female. "Whose child can this be?"

"How the devil should I know!" replied Jonathan gruffly. "I suppose it didn't drop through the ceiling, did it? Are you quite sure it's flesh and blood?" asked he, playfully pinching its arm till it cried out with pain.

"My child! my child!" exclaimed Mrs. Sheppard, rushing from the adjoining room. "Where is it?"

"Are you the mother of this child?" inquired the person who had first spoken, addressing Mrs. Sheppard.

"I am—I am!" cried the widow, snatching the babe, and pressing it to her breast with rapturous delight "God be thanked, I have found it!"

"We have both good reason to be grateful," added the lady, with great emotion.

"'Sblood!" cried Jonathan, who had listened to the foregoing conversation with angry wonder, "I've been nicely done here. Fool that I was to part with my lantern! But I'll soon set myself straight. What ho! lights! lights!"

And, shouting as he went, he flung himself down stairs.

"Where shall I fly?" exclaimed the lady, bewildered with terror. "They will kill me, if they find me, as they would have

killed my husband and child. Oh God! my limbs fail me."

"Make an effort, Madam," cried Mrs. Sheppard, as a storm of furious voices resounded from below, and torches were seen mounting the stairs; "they are coming!—they are coming!—fly! —to the roof! to the roof."

"No," cried the lady, "this room—I recollect—it has a back window."

"It is shut," said Mrs. Sheppard.

"It is open," replied the lady, rushing towards it, and springing through the outlet.

"Where is she?" thundered Jonathan, who at this moment reached Mrs. Sheppard.

"She has flown up stairs," replied the widow.

"You lie, hussy!" replied Jonathan, rudely pushing her aside, as she vainly endeavoured to oppose his entrance into the room; "she is here. Hist!" cried he, as a scream was heard from without. "By G—! she has missed her footing."

There was a momentary and terrible silence, broken only by a few feeble groans.

Sir Cecil, who with Rowland and some others had entered the room rushed to the window with a torch.

He held down the light, and a moment afterwards beckoned, with a blanched cheek, to Rowland.

"Your sister is dead," said he, in a deep whisper.

"Her blood be upon her own head, then," replied Rowland, sternly. "Why came she here?"

"She could not resist the hand of fate which drew her hither," replied Sir Cecil, mournfully.

"Descend and take charge of the body," said Rowland, conquering his emotion by a great effort, "I will join you in a moment. This accident rather confirms than checks my purpose. The stain upon our family is only half effaced: I have sworn the death of the villain and his bastard, and I will keep my oath. Now, Sir," he added, turning to Jonathan, as Sir Cecil and his followers obeyed his injunctions, "you say you know the road which the person whom we seek has taken?"

"I do," replied Jonathan. "But I give no information gratis!"

"Speak, then," said Rowland, placing money in his hand.

"You'll find him at St. Saviours's stairs," answered Jonathan. "He's about to cross the river. You'd better lose no time. He has got five minutes' start of you. But I sent him the longest way about."

The words were scarcely pronounced, when Rowland disappeared.

"And now to see the end of it," said Jonathan, shortly afterwards passing through the window. "Good night, Master."

Three persons only were left in the room. These were the Master of the Mint, Van Galgebrok, and Mrs. Sheppard.

"A bad business this, Van," observed Baptist, with a prolonged shake of the head.

"Ja, ja, Muntmeester," said the Hollander, shaking his head in reply;—"very bad—very."

"But then they're staunch supporters of our friend over the water," continued Baptist, winking significantly; "so we must e'en hush it up in the best way we can."

"Ja," answered Van Galgebrok. "But—sapperment!—I wish they hadn't broken my pipe."

"JONATHAN WILD promises well," observed the Master, after a pause: "he'll become a great man. Mind, I, Baptist Kettleby, say so."

"He'll be hanged nevertheless," replied the Hollander, giving his collar an ugly jerk. "Mind, I, Rykhart Van Galgebrok predict it. And now let's go back to the Shovels, and finish our brandewyn and bier, Muntmeester."

"Alas!" cried Mrs. Sheppard, relieved by their departure, and giving way to a passionate flood of tears; "were it not for my child, I should wish to be in the place of that unfortunate lady."

CHAPTER V.
The Denunciation

For a short space, Mrs. Sheppard remained dissolved in tears. She then dried her eyes, and laying her child gently upon the floor, knelt down beside him. "Open my heart, Father of Mercy!" she murmured, in a humble tone, and with downcast looks, "and make me sensible of the error of my ways. I have sinned deeply; but I have been sorely tried. Spare me yet a little while, Father! not for my own sake, but for the sake of this poor babe." Her utterance was here choked by sobs. "But if it is thy will to take me from him," she continued, as soon as her emotion permitted her,—"if he must be left an orphan amid strangers, implant, I beseech thee, a mother's feelings in some other bosom, and raise up a friend, who shall be to him what I would have been. Let him not bear the weight of my punishment. Spare him!—pity me!"

With this she arose, and, taking up the infant, was about to proceed down stairs, when she was alarmed by hearing the street-door opened, and the sound of heavy footsteps entering the house.

"Halloa, widow!" shouted a rough voice from below, "where the devil are you?"

Mrs. Sheppard returned no answer.

"I've got something to say to you," continued the speaker, rather less harshly; "something to your advantage; so come out o'

your hiding-place, and let's have some supper, for I'm infernally hungry.—D'ye hear?"

Still the widow remained silent.

"Well, if you won't come, I shall help myself, and that's unsociable," pursued the speaker, evidently, from the noise he made, suiting the action to the word. "Devilish nice ham you've got here!—capital pie!—and, as I live, a flask of excellent canary. You're in luck to-night, widow. Here's your health in a bumper, and wishing you a better husband than your first. It'll be your own fault if you don't soon get another and a proper young man into the bargain. Here's his health likewise. What! mum still. You're the first widow I ever heard of who could withstand that lure. I'll try the effect of a jolly stave." And he struck up the following ballad:—

SAINT GILES'S BOWL.[1]

[1] At the hospital of Saint Giles for Lazars, the prisoners conveyed from the City of London towards Tyburn, there to be executed for treasons, felonies, or other trespasses, were presented with a Bowl of Ale, thereof to drink, as their last refreshing in this life. —*Strype's Stow.* Book. IX. ch. III.

Transcribers Note: These versions of the music are included with this file:

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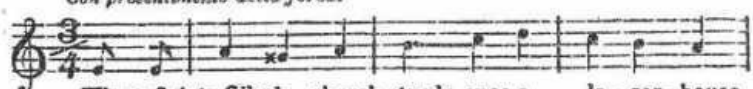
PNG (page 2)

SAINT GILES'S BOWL.*

I.

Con presentimento della forca.



I

Where Saint Giles' church stands, once a lazar-house stood;
And, chain'd to its gates, was a vessel of wood;
A broad-bottom'd bowl, from which all the fine fellows,
Who pass'd by that spot, on their way to the gallows,
Might tipple strong beer,
Their spirits to cheer,
And drown in a sea of good liquor all fear!
For nothing the transit to Tyburn beguiles
So well as a draught from the Bowl of Saint Giles!

II

By many a highwayman many a draught
Of nutty-brown ale at Saint Giles's was quaft,
Until the old lazar-house chanced to fall down,
And the broad-bottom'd bowl was removed to the Crown.
Where the robber may cheer
His spirit with beer,
And drown in a sea of good liquor all fear!
For nothing the transit to Tyburn beguiles
So well as a draught from the Bowl of Saint Giles!

III

There MULSACK and SWIFTNECK, both prigs from their birth,
OLD MOB and TOM COX took their last draught on earth:
There RANDAL, and SHORTER, and WHITNEY pulled up,
And jolly JACK JOYCE drank his finishing cup!
For a can of ale calms,
A highwayman's qualms,
And makes him sing blithely his dolorous psalms
And nothing the transit to Tyburn beguiles
So well as a draught from the Bowl of Saint Giles!

"Singing's dry work," observed the stranger, pausing to take a pull at the bottle. "And now, widow," he continued, "attend to the next verse, for it consarns a friend o' yours."

IV

When gallant TOM SHEPPARD to Tyburn was led,—
"Stop the cart at the Crown—stop a moment," he said.
He was offered the Bowl, but he left it and smiled,
Crying, "Keep it till call'd for by JONATHAN WILD!

"*The rascal one day,*
"*Will pass by this way,*
"*And drink a full measure to moisten his clay!*
"*And never will Bowl of Saint Giles have beguiled*
"*Such a thorough-paced scoundrel as* JONATHAN WILD!"

V

Should it e'er be *my* lot to ride backwards that way,
At the door of the Crown I will certainly stay;
I'll summon the landlord—I'll call for the Bowl,
And drink a deep draught to the health of my soul!
Whatever may hap,
I'll taste of the tap,
To keep up my spirits when brought to the crap!
For nothing the transit to Tyburn beguiles
So well as a draught from the Bowl of St. Giles!

"Devil seize the woman!" growled the singer, as he brought his ditty to a close; "will nothing tempt her out? Widow Sheppard, I say," he added, rising, "don't be afraid. It's only a gentleman come to offer you his hand. 'He that woos a maid',—fol-de-rol—(hiccupping).—I'll soon find you out."

Mrs. Sheppard, whose distress at the consumption of the provisions had been somewhat allayed by the anticipation of the

intruder's departure after he had satisfied his appetite, was now terrified in the extreme by seeing a light approach, and hearing footsteps on the stairs. Her first impulse was to fly to the window; and she was about to pass through it, at the risk of sharing the fate of the unfortunate lady, when her arm was grasped by some one in the act of ascending the ladder from without. Uttering a faint scream, she sank backwards, and would have fallen, if it had not been for the interposition of Blueskin, who, at that moment, staggered into the room with a candle in one hand, and the bottle in the other.

"Oh, you're here, are you?" said the ruffian, with an exulting laugh: "I've been looking for you everywhere."

"Let me go," implored Mrs. Sheppard,—"pray let me go. You hurt the child. Don't you hear how you've made it cry?"

"Throttle the kid!" rejoined Blueskin, fiercely. "If you don't stop its squalling, I will. I hate children. And, if I'd my own way, I'd drown 'em all like a litter o' puppies."

Well knowing the savage temper of the person she had to deal with, and how likely he was to put his threat into execution, Mrs. Sheppard did not dare to return any answer; but, disengaging herself from his embrace, endeavoured meekly to comply with his request.

"And now, widow," continued the ruffian, setting down the candle, and applying his lips to the bottle neck as he flung his heavy frame upon a bench, "I've a piece o' good news for you."

"Good news will be news to me. What is it?"

"Guess," rejoined Blueskin, attempting to throw a gallant expression into his forbidding countenance.

Mrs. Sheppard trembled violently; and though she understood his meaning too well, she answered,—"I can't guess."

"Well, then," returned the ruffian, "to put you out o' suspense, as the topsman remarked to poor Tom Sheppard, afore he turned him off, I'm come to make you an honourable proposal o' marriage. You won't refuse me, I'm sure; so no more need be said about the matter. To-morrow, we'll go to the Fleet and get spliced. Don't shake so. What I said about your brat was all stuff. I didn't mean it. It's my way when I'm ruffled. I shall take to him as nat'ral as if he were my own flesh and blood afore long.—I'll give him the edication of a prig,—teach him the use of his forks betimes,—and make him, in the end, as clever a cracksman as his father."

"Never!" shrieked Mrs. Sheppard; "never! never!"

"Halloa! what's this?" demanded Blueskin, springing to his feet. "Do you mean to say that if I support your kid, I shan't bring him up how I please—eh?"

"Don't question me, but leave me," replied the widow wildly; "you had better."

"Leave you!" echoed the ruffian, with a contemptuous laugh; "—not just yet."

"I am not unprotected," rejoined the poor woman; "there's some one at the window. Help! help!"

But her cries were unheeded. And Blueskin, who, for a

moment, had looked round distrustfully, concluding it was a feint, now laughed louder than ever.

"It won't do, widow," said he, drawing near her, while she shrank from his approach, "so you may spare your breath. Come, come, be reasonable, and listen to me. Your kid has already brought me good luck, and may bring me still more if his edication's attended to. This purse," he added, chinking it in the air, "and this ring, were given me for him just now by the lady, who made a false step on leaving your house. If I'd been in the way, instead of Jonathan Wild, that accident wouldn't have happened."

As he said this, a slight noise was heard without.

"What's that?" ejaculated the ruffian, glancing uneasily towards the window. "Who's there?—Pshaw! it's only the wind."

"It's Jonathan Wild," returned the widow, endeavouring to alarm him. "I told you I was not unprotected."

"*He* protect *you*," retorted Blueskin, maliciously; "you haven't a worse enemy on the face of the earth than Jonathan Wild. If you'd read your husband's dying speech, you'd know that he laid his death at Jonathan's door,—and with reason too, as I can testify."

"Man!" screamed Mrs. Sheppard, with a vehemence that shook even the hardened wretch beside her, "begone, and tempt me not."

"What should I tempt you to?" asked Blueskin, in surprise.

"To—to—no matter what," returned the widow distractedly.

"Go—go!"

"I see what you mean," rejoined Blueskin, tossing a large case-knife, which he took from his pocket, in the air, and catching it dexterously by the haft as it fell; "you owe Jonathan a grudge;—so do I. He hanged your first husband. Just speak the word," he added, drawing the knife significantly across his throat, "and I'll put it out of his power to do the same by your second. But d—n him! let's talk o' something more agreeable. Look at this ring;—it's a diamond, and worth a mint o' money. It shall be your wedding ring. Look at it, I say. The lady's name's engraved inside, but so small I can scarcely read it. A-L-I-V-A—Aliva—T-R-E-N—Trencher that's it. Aliva Trencher."

"Aliva Trenchard!" exclaimed Mrs. Sheppard, hastily; "is that the name?"

"Ay, ay, now I look again it *is* Trenchard. How came you to know it? Have you heard the name before?"

"I think I have—long, long ago, when I was a child," replied Mrs. Sheppard, passing her hand across her brow; "but my memory is gone—quite gone. Where *can* I have heard it!"

"Devil knows," rejoined Blueskin. "Let it pass. The ring's yours, and you're mine. Here, put it on your finger."

Mrs. Sheppard snatched back her hand from his grasp, and exerted all her force to repel his advances.

"Set down the kid," roared Blueskin, savagely.

"Mercy!" screamed Mrs. Sheppard, struggling to escape, and holding the infant at arm's length; "have mercy on this helpless

innocent!"

And the child, alarmed by the strife, added its feeble cries to its mother's shrieks.

"Set it down, I tell you," thundered Blueskin, "or I shall do it a mischief."

"Never!" cried Mrs. Sheppard.

Uttering a terrible imprecation, Blueskin placed the knife between his teeth, and endeavoured to seize the poor woman by the throat. In the struggle her cap fell off. The ruffian caught hold of her hair, and held her fast. The chamber rang with her shrieks. But her cries, instead of moving her assailant's compassion, only added to his fury. Planting his knee against her side, he pulled her towards him with one hand, while with the other he sought his knife. The child was now within reach; and, in another moment, he would have executed his deadly purpose, if an arm from behind had not felled him to the ground.

When Mrs. Sheppard, who had been stricken down by the blow that prostrated her assailant, looked up, she perceived Jonathan Wild kneeling beside the body of Blueskin. He was holding the ring to the light, and narrowly examining the inscription.

"Trenchard," he muttered; "Aliva Trenchard—they were right, then, as to the name. Well, if she survives the accident—as the blood, who styles himself Sir Cecil, fancies she may do—this ring will make my fortune by leading to the discovery of the chief parties concerned in this strange affair."

"Is the poor lady alive?" asked Mrs. Sheppard, eagerly.

"'Sblood!" exclaimed Jonathan, hastily thrusting the ring into his vest, and taking up a heavy horseman's pistol with which he had felled Blueskin,—"I thought you'd been senseless."

"Is she alive?" repeated the widow.

"What's that to you?" demanded Jonathan, gruffly.

"Oh, nothing—nothing," returned Mrs. Sheppard. "But pray tell me if her husband has escaped?"

"Her husband!" echoed Jonathan scornfully. "A *husband* has little to fear from his wife's kinsfolk. Her *lover*, Darrell, has embarked upon the Thames, where, if he's not capsized by the squall, (for it's blowing like the devil,) he stands a good chance of getting his throat cut by his pursuers—ha! ha! I tracked 'em to the banks of the river, and should have followed to see it out, if the watermen hadn't refused to take me. However, as things have turned up, it's fortunate that I came back."

"It is, indeed," replied Mrs. Sheppard; "most fortunate for me."

"For *you!*" exclaimed Jonathan; "don't flatter yourself that I'm thinking of you. Blueskin might have butchered you and your brat before I'd have lifted a finger to prevent him, if it hadn't suited my purposes to do so, and *he* hadn't incurred my displeasure. I never forgive an injury. Your husband could have told you that."

"How had he offended you?" inquired the widow.

"I'll tell you," answered Jonathan, sternly. "He thwarted my

schemes twice. The first time, I overlooked the offence; but the second time, when I had planned to break open the house of his master, the fellow who visited you to-night,—Wood, the carpenter of Wych Street,—he betrayed me. I told him I would bring him to the gallows, and I was as good as my word."

"You were so," replied Mrs Sheppard; "and for that wicked deed you will one day be brought to the gallows yourself."

"Not before I have conducted your child thither," retorted Jonathan, with a withering look.

"Ah!" ejaculated Mrs. Sheppard, paralysed by the threat.

"If that sickly brat lives to be a man," continued Jonathan, rising, "I'll hang him upon the same tree as his father."

"Pity!" shrieked the widow.

"I'll be his evil genius!" vociferated Jonathan, who seemed to enjoy her torture.

"Begone, wretch!" cried the mother, stung beyond endurance by his taunts; "or I will drive you hence with my curses."

"Curse on, and welcome," jeered Wild.

Mrs. Sheppard raised her hand, and the malediction trembled upon her tongue. But ere the words could find utterance, her maternal tenderness overcame her indignation; and, sinking upon her knees, she extended her arms over her child.

"A mother's prayers—a mother's blessings," she cried, with the fervour almost of inspiration, "will avail against a fiend's malice."

"We shall see," rejoined Jonathan, turning carelessly upon his

heel.

And, as he quitted the room, the poor widow fell with her face upon the floor.

CHAPTER VI.
The Storm

As soon as he was liberated by his persecutors, Mr. Wood set off at full speed from the Mint, and, hurrying he scarce knew whither (for there was such a continual buzzing in his ears and dancing in his eyes, as almost to take away the power of reflection), he held on at a brisk pace till his strength completely failed him.

On regaining his breath, he began to consider whither chance had led him; and, rubbing his eyes to clear his sight, he perceived a sombre pile, with a lofty tower and broad roof, immediately in front of him. This structure at once satisfied him as to where he stood. He knew it to be St. Saviour's Church. As he looked up at the massive tower, the clock tolled forth the hour of midnight. The solemn strokes were immediately answered by a multitude of chimes, sounding across the Thames, amongst which the deep note of Saint Paul's was plainly distinguishable. A feeling of inexplicable awe crept over the carpenter as the sounds died away. He trembled, not from any superstitious dread, but from an undefined sense of approaching danger. The peculiar appearance of the sky was not without some influence in awakening these terrors. Over one of the pinnacles of the tower a speck of pallid light marked the position of the moon, then newly born and newly risen. It was still profoundly dark; but the wind, which had begun

to blow with some violence, chased the clouds rapidly across the heavens, and dispersed the vapours hanging nearer the earth. Sometimes the moon was totally eclipsed; at others, it shed a wan and ghastly glimmer over the masses rolling in the firmament. Not a star could be discerned, but, in their stead, streaks of lurid radiance, whence proceeding it was impossible to determine, shot ever and anon athwart the dusky vault, and added to the ominous and threatening appearance of the night.

Alarmed by these prognostications of a storm, and feeling too much exhausted from his late severe treatment to proceed further on foot, Wood endeavoured to find a tavern where he might warm and otherwise refresh himself. With this view he struck off into a narrow street on the left, and soon entered a small alehouse, over the door of which hung the sign of the "Welsh Trumpeter."

"Let me have a glass of brandy," said he, addressing the host.

"Too late, master," replied the landlord of the Trumpeter, in a surly tone, for he did not much like the appearance of his customer; "just shut up shop."

"Zounds! David Pugh, don't you know your old friend and countryman?" exclaimed the carpenter.

"Ah! Owen Wood, is it you?" cried David in astonishment. "What the devil makes you out so late? And what has happened to you, man, eh?—you seem in a queer plight."

"Give me the brandy, and I'll tell you," replied Wood.

"Here, wife—hostess—fetch me that bottle from the second shelf in the corner cupboard.—There, Mr. Wood," cried David,

pouring out a glass of the spirit, and offering it to the carpenter, "that'll warm the cockles of your heart. Don't be afraid, man,—off with it. It's right Nantz. I keep it for my own drinking," he added in a lower tone.

Mr. Wood having disposed of the brandy, and pronounced himself much better, hurried close to the fire-side, and informed his friend in a few words of the inhospitable treatment he had experienced from the gentlemen of the Mint; whereupon Mr. Pugh, who, as well as the carpenter, was a descendant of Cadwallader, waxed extremely wrath; gave utterance to a number of fierce-sounding imprecations in the Welsh tongue; and was just beginning to express the greatest anxiety to catch some of the rascals at the Trumpeter, when Mr. Wood cut him short by stating his intention of crossing the river as soon as possible in order to avoid the storm.

"A storm!" exclaimed the landlord. "Gadzooks! I thought something was coming on; for when I looked at the weather-glass an hour ago, it had sunk lower than I ever remember it."

"We shall have a durty night on it, to a sartinty, landlord," observed an old one-eyed sailor, who sat smoking his pipe by the fire-side. "The glass never sinks in that way, d'ye see, without a hurricane follerin', I've knowed it often do so in the West Injees. Moreover, a souple o' porpusses came up with the tide this mornin', and ha' bin flounderin' about i' the Thames abuv Lunnun Bridge all day long; and them say-monsters, you know, always proves sure fore runners of a gale."

"Then the sooner I'm off the better," cried Wood; "what's to pay, David?"

"Don't affront me, Owen, by asking such a question," returned the landlord; "hadn't you better stop and finish the bottle?"

"Not a drop more," replied Wood. "Enough's as good as a feast. Good night!"

"Well, if you won't be persuaded, and must have a boat, Owen," observed the landlord, "there's a waterman asleep on that bench will help you to as tidy a craft as any on the Thames. Halloa, Ben!" cried he, shaking a broad-backed fellow, equipped in a short-skirted doublet, and having a badge upon his arm, —"scullers wanted."

"Holloa! my hearty!" cried Ben, starting to his feet.

"This gentleman wants a pair of oars," said the landlord.

"Where to, master?" asked Ben, touching his woollen cap.

"Arundel Stairs," replied Wood, "the nearest point to Wych Street."

"Come along, master," said the waterman.

"Hark 'ee, Ben," said the old sailor, knocking the ashes from his pipe upon the hob; "you may try, but dash my timbers if you'll ever cross the Thames to-night."

"And why not, old saltwater?" inquired Ben, turning a quid in his mouth.

"'Cos there's a gale a-getting up as'll perwent you, young freshwater," replied the tar.

"It must look sharp then, or I shall give it the slip," laughed

Ben: "the gale never yet blowed as could perwent my crossing the Thames. The weather's been foul enough for the last fortnight, but I've never turned my back upon it."

"May be not," replied the old sailor, drily; "but you'll find it too stiff for you to-night, anyhow. Howsomdever, if you *should* reach t'other side, take an old feller's advice, and don't be foolhardy enough to venter back again."

"I tell 'ee what, saltwater," said Ben, "I'll lay you my fare—and that'll be two shillin'—I'm back in an hour."

"Done!" cried the old sailor. "But vere'll be the use o' vinnin'? you von't live to pay me."

"Never fear," replied Ben, gravely; "dead or alive I'll pay you, if I lose. There's my thumb upon it. Come along, master."

"I tell 'ee what, landlord," observed the old sailor, quietly replenishing his pipe from a huge pewter tobacco-box, as the waterman and Wood quitted the house, "you've said good-b'ye to your friend."

"Odd's me! do you think so?" cried the host of the Trumpeter. "I'll run and bring him back. He's a Welshman, and I wouldn't for a trifle that any accident befel him."

"Never mind," said the old sailor, taking up a piece of blazing coal with the tongs, and applying it to his pipe; "let 'em try. They'll be back soon enough—or not at all."

Mr. Wood and the waterman, meanwhile, proceeded in the direction of St. Saviour's Stairs. Casting a hasty glance at the old and ruinous prison belonging to the liberty of the Bishop of

Winchester (whose palace formerly adjoined the river), called the Clink, which gave its name to the street, along which he walked: and noticing, with some uneasiness, the melancholy manner in which the wind whistled through its barred casements, the carpenter followed his companion down an opening to the right, and presently arrived at the water-side.

Moored to the steps, several wherries were dancing in the rushing current, as if impatient of restraint. Into one of these the waterman jumped, and, having assisted Mr. Wood to a seat within it, immediately pushed from land. Ben had scarcely adjusted his oars, when the gleam of a lantern was seen moving towards the bank. A shout was heard at a little distance, and, the next moment, a person rushed with breathless haste to the stair-head.

"Boat there!" cried a voice, which Mr. Wood fancied he recognised.

"You'll find a waterman asleep under his tilt in one of them ere craft, if you look about, Sir," replied Ben, backing water as he spoke.

"Can't you take me with you?" urged the voice; "I'll make it well worth your while. I've a child here whom I wish to convey across the water without loss of time."

"A child!" thought Wood; it must be the fugitive Darrell. "Hold hard," cried he, addressing the waterman; "I'll give the gentleman a lift."

"Unpossible, master," rejoined Ben; "the tide's running down

like a mill-sluice, and the wind's right in our teeth. Old saltwater was right. We shall have a reg'lar squall afore we gets across. D'ye hear how the wanes creaks on old Winchester House? We shall have a touch on it ourselves presently. But I shall lose my wager if I stay a moment longer—so here goes." Upon which, he plunged his oars deeply into the stream, and the bark shot from the strand.

Mr. Wood's anxiety respecting the fugitive was speedily relieved by hearing another waterman busy himself in preparation for starting; and, shortly after, the dip of a second pair of oars sounded upon the river.

"Curse me, if I don't think all the world means to cross the Thames this fine night," observed Ben. "One'd think it rained fares, as well as blowed great guns. Why, there's another party on the stair-head inquiring arter scullers; and, by the mass! they appear in a greater hurry than any on us."

His attention being thus drawn to the bank, the carpenter beheld three figures, one of whom bore a torch, leap into a wherry of a larger size than the others, which immediately put off from shore. Manned by a couple of watermen, who rowed with great swiftness, this wherry dashed through the current in the track of the fugitive, of whom it was evidently in pursuit, and upon whom it perceptibly gained. Mr. Wood strained his eyes to catch a glimpse of the flying skiff. But he could only discern a black and shapeless mass, floating upon the water at a little distance, which, to his bewildered fancy, appeared absolutely

standing still. To the practised eye of the waterman matters wore a very different air. He perceived clearly enough, that the chase was moving quickly; and he was also aware, from the increased rapidity with which the oars were urged, that every exertion was made on board to get out of the reach of her pursuers. At one moment, it seemed as if the flying bark was about to put to shore. But this plan (probably from its danger) was instantly abandoned; not, however, before her momentary hesitation had been taken advantage of by her pursuers, who, redoubling their efforts at this juncture, materially lessened the distance between them.

Ben watched these manoeuvres with great interest, and strained every sinew in his frame to keep ahead of the other boats.

"Them's catchpoles, I s'pose, Sir, arter the gemman with a writ?" he observed.

"Something worse, I fear," Wood replied.

"Why, you don't think as how they're crimps, do you?" Ben inquired.

"I don't know what I think," Wood answered sulkily; and he bent his eyes upon the water, as if he wished to avert his attention forcibly from the scene.

There is something that inspires a feeling of inexpressible melancholy in sailing on a dark night upon the Thames. The sounds that reach the ear, and the objects that meet the eye, are all calculated to awaken a train of sad and serious contemplation. The ripple of the water against the boat, as its keel cleaves

through the stream—the darkling current hurrying by—the indistinctly-seen craft, of all forms and all sizes, hovering around, and making their way in ghost-like silence, or warning each other of their approach by cries, that, heard from afar, have something doleful in their note—the solemn shadows cast by the bridges—the deeper gloom of the echoing arches—the lights glimmering from the banks—the red reflection thrown upon the waves by a fire kindled on some stationary barge—the tall and fantastic shapes of the houses, as discerned through the obscurity;—these, and other sights and sounds of the same character, give a sombre colour to the thoughts of one who may choose to indulge in meditation at such a time and in such a place.

But it was otherwise with the carpenter. This was no night for the indulgence of dreamy musing. It was a night of storm and terror, which promised each moment to become more stormy and more terrible. Not a bark could be discerned on the river, except those already mentioned. The darkness was almost palpable; and the wind which, hitherto, had been blowing in gusts, was suddenly lulled. It was a dead calm. But this calm was more awful than the previous roaring of the blast.

Amid this portentous hush, the report of a pistol reached the carpenter's ears; and, raising his head at the sound, he beheld a sight which filled him with fresh apprehensions.

By the light of a torch borne at the stern of the hostile wherry, he saw that the pursuers had approached within a short distance of the object of their quest. The shot had taken effect upon the

waterman who rowed the chase. He had abandoned his oars, and the boat was drifting with the stream towards the enemy. Escape was now impossible. Darrell stood erect in the bark, with his drawn sword in hand, prepared to repel the attack of his assailants, who, in their turn, seemed to await with impatience the moment which should deliver him into their power.

They had not to tarry long. In another instant, the collision took place. The watermen, who manned the larger wherry, immediately shipped their oars, grappled with the drifting skiff, and held it fast. Wood, then, beheld two persons, one of whom he recognised as Rowland, spring on board the chase. A fierce struggle ensued. There was a shrill cry, instantly succeeded by a deep splash.

"Put about, waterman, for God's sake!" cried Wood, whose humanity got the better of every personal consideration; "some one is overboard. Give way, and let us render what assistance we can to the poor wretch."

"It's all over with him by this time, master," replied Ben, turning the head of his boat, and rowing swiftly towards the scene of strife; "but d—n him, he was the chap as hit poor Bill Thomson just now, and I don't much care if he should be food for fishes."

As Ben spoke, they drew near the opposing parties. The contest was now carried on between Rowland and Darrell. The latter had delivered himself from one of his assailants, the attendant, Davies. Hurled over the sides of the skiff, the ruffian

speedily found a watery grave. It was a spring-tide at half ebb; and the current, which was running fast and furiously, bore him instantly away. While the strife raged between the principals, the watermen in the larger wherry were occupied in stemming the force of the torrent, and endeavouring to keep the boats, they had lashed together, stationary. Owing to this circumstance, Mr. Wood's boat, impelled alike by oar and tide, shot past the mark at which it aimed; and before it could be again brought about, the struggle had terminated. For a few minutes, Darrell seemed to have the advantage in the conflict. Neither combatant could use his sword; and in strength the fugitive was evidently superior to his antagonist. The boat rocked violently with the struggle. Had it not been lashed to the adjoining wherry, it must have been upset, and have precipitated the opponents into the water. Rowland felt himself sinking beneath the powerful grasp of his enemy. He called to the other attendant, who held the torch. Understanding the appeal, the man snatched his master's sword from his grasp, and passed it through Darrell's body. The next moment, a heavy plunge told that the fugitive had been consigned to the waves.

Darrell, however, rose again instantly; and though mortally wounded, made a desperate effort to regain the boat.

"My child!" he groaned faintly.

"Well reminded," answered Rowland, who had witnessed his struggles with a smile of gratified vengeance; "I had forgotten the accursed imp in this confusion. Take it," he cried, lifting the babe from the bottom of the boat, and flinging it towards its

unfortunate father.

The child fell within a short distance of Darrell, who, hearing the splash, struck out in that direction, and caught it before it sank. At this juncture, the sound of oars reached his ears, and he perceived Mr. Wood's boat bearing up towards him.

"Here he is, waterman," exclaimed the benevolent carpenter. "I see him!—row for your life!"

"That's the way to miss him, master," replied Ben coolly. "We must keep still. The tide'll bring him to us fast enough."

Ben judged correctly. Borne along by the current, Darrell was instantly at the boat's side.

"Seize this oar," vociferated the waterman.

"First take the child," cried Darrell, holding up the infant, and clinging to the oar with a dying effort.

"Give it me," returned the carpenter; "all's safe. Now lend me your own hand."

"My strength fails me," gasped the fugitive. "I cannot climb the boat. Take my child to—it is—oh God!—I am sinking—take it—take it!"

"Where?" shouted Wood.

Darrell attempted to reply. But he could only utter an inarticulate exclamation. The next moment his grasp relaxed, and he sank to rise no more.

Rowland, meantime, alarmed by the voices, snatched a torch from his attendant, and holding it over the side of the wherry, witnessed the incident just described.

"Confusion!" cried he; "there is another boat in our wake. They have rescued the child. Loose the wherry, and stand to your oars—quick—quick!"

These commands were promptly obeyed. The boat was set free, and the men resumed their seats. Rowland's purposes were, however, defeated in a manner as unexpected as appalling.

During the foregoing occurrences a dead calm prevailed. But as Rowland sprang to the helm, and gave the signal for pursuit, a roar like a volley of ordnance was heard aloft, and the wind again burst its bondage. A moment before, the surface of the stream was black as ink. It was now whitening, hissing, and seething like an enormous cauldron. The blast once more swept over the agitated river: whirled off the sheets of foam, scattered them far and wide in rain-drops, and left the raging torrent blacker than before. The gale had become a hurricane: that hurricane was the most terrible that ever laid waste our city. Destruction everywhere marked its course. Steeples toppled, and towers reeled beneath its fury. Trees were torn up by the roots; many houses were levelled to the ground; others were unroofed; the leads on the churches were ripped off, and "shrivelled up like scrolls of parchment." Nothing on land or water was spared by the remorseless gale. Most of the vessels lying in the river were driven from their moorings, dashed tumultuously against each other, or blown ashore. All was darkness, horror, confusion, ruin. Men fled from their tottering habitations, and returned to them scared by greater dangers. The end of the world seemed at hand.

At this time of universal havoc and despair,—when all London quaked at the voice of the storm,—the carpenter, who was exposed to its utmost fury, fared better than might have been anticipated. The boat in which he rode was not overset. Fortunately, her course had been shifted immediately after the rescue of the child; and, in consequence of this movement, she received the first shock of the hurricane, which blew from the southwest, upon her stern. Her head dipped deeply into the current, and she narrowly escaped being swamped. Righting, however, instantly afterwards, she scudded with the greatest rapidity over the boiling waves, to whose mercy she was now entirely abandoned. On this fresh outburst of the storm, Wood threw himself instinctively into the bottom of the boat, and clasping the little orphan to his breast, endeavoured to prepare himself to meet his fate.

While he was thus occupied, he felt a rough grasp upon his arm, and presently afterwards Ben's lips approached close to his ear. The waterman sheltered his mouth with his hand while he spoke, or his voice would have been carried away by the violence of the blast.

"It's all up, master," groaned Ben, "nothin' short of a merracle can save us. The boat's sure to run foul o' the bridge; and if she 'scapes stavin' above, she'll be swamped to a sartainty below. There'll be a fall of above twelve foot o' water, and think o' that on a night as 'ud blow a whole fleet to the devil."

Mr. Wood *did* think of it, and groaned aloud.

"Heaven help us!" he exclaimed; "we were mad to neglect the old sailor's advice."

"That's what troubles me," rejoined Ben. "I tell 'ee what, master, if you're more fortinate nor I am, and get ashore, give old saltwater your fare. I pledged my thumb that, dead or alive, I'd pay the wager if I lost; and I should like to be as good as my word."

"I will—I will," replied Wood hastily. "Was that thunder?" he faltered, as a terrible clap was heard overhead.

"No; it's only a fresh gale," Ben returned: "hark! now it comes."

"Lord have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!" ejaculated Wood, as a fearful gust dashed the water over the side of the boat, deluging him with spray.

The hurricane had now reached its climax. The blast shrieked, as if exulting in its wrathful mission. Stunning and continuous, the din seemed almost to take away the power of hearing. He, who had faced the gale, would have been instantly stifled. Piercing through every crevice in the clothes, it, in some cases, tore them from the wearer's limbs, or from his grasp. It penetrated the skin; benumbed the flesh; paralysed the faculties. The intense darkness added to the terror of the storm. The destroying angel hurried by, shrouded in his gloomiest apparel. None saw, though all felt, his presence, and heard the thunder of his voice. Imagination, coloured by the obscurity, peopled the air with phantoms. Ten thousand steeds appeared to be trampling

aloft, charged with the work of devastation. Awful shapes seemed to flit by, borne on the wings of the tempest, animating and directing its fury. The actual danger was lost sight of in these wild apprehensions; and many timorous beings were scared beyond reason's verge by the excess of their fears.

This had well nigh been the case with the carpenter. He was roused from the stupor of despair into which he had sunk by the voice of Ben, who roared in his ear, "The bridge!—the bridge!"

CHAPTER VII.
Old London Bridge

London, at the period of this history, boasted only a single bridge. But that bridge was more remarkable than any the metropolis now possesses. Covered with houses, from one end to the other, this reverend and picturesque structure presented the appearance of a street across the Thames. It was as if Gracechurch Street, with all its shops, its magazines, and ceaseless throng of passengers, were stretched from the Middlesex to the Surrey shore. The houses were older, the shops gloomier, and the thoroughfare narrower, it is true; but the bustle, the crowd, the street-like air was the same. Then the bridge had arched gateways, bristling with spikes, and garnished (as all ancient gateways ought to be) with the heads of traitors. In olden days it boasted a chapel, dedicated to Saint Thomas; beneath which there was a crypt curiously constructed amid the arches, where "was sepultured Peter the Chaplain of Colechurch, who began the Stone Bridge at London:" and it still boasted an edifice (though now in rather a tumbledown condition) which had once vied with a palace,—we mean Nonesuch House. The other buildings stood close together in rows; and so valuable was every inch of room accounted, that, in many cases, cellars, and even habitable apartments, were constructed in the solid masonry of the piers.

Old London Bridge (the grandsire of the present erection) was supported on nineteen arches, each of which

> Would a Rialto make for depth and height!

The arches stood upon enormous piers; the piers on starlings, or jetties, built far out into the river to break the force of the tide.

Roused by Ben's warning, the carpenter looked up and could just perceive the dusky outline of the bridge looming through the darkness, and rendered indistinctly visible by the many lights that twinkled from the windows of the lofty houses. As he gazed at these lights, they suddenly seemed to disappear, and a tremendous shock was felt throughout the frame of the boat. Wood started to his feet. He found that the skiff had been dashed against one of the buttresses of the bridge.

"Jump!" cried Ben, in a voice of thunder.

Wood obeyed. His fears supplied him with unwonted vigour. Though the starling was more than two feet above the level of the water, he alighted with his little charge—which he had never for an instant quitted—in safety upon it. Poor Ben was not so fortunate. Just as he was preparing to follow, the wherry containing Rowland and his men, which had drifted in their wake, was dashed against his boat. The violence of the collision nearly threw him backwards, and caused him to swerve as he sprang. His foot touched the rounded edge of the starling, and glanced off, precipitating him into the water. As he fell, he caught

at the projecting masonry. But the stone was slippery; and the tide, which here began to feel the influence of the fall, was running with frightful velocity. He could not make good his hold. But, uttering a loud cry, he was swept away by the headlong torrent.

Mr. Wood heard the cry. But his own situation was too perilous to admit of his rendering any assistance to the ill-fated waterman. He fancied, indeed, that he beheld a figure spring upon the starling at the moment when the boats came in contact; but, as he could perceive no one near him, he concluded he must have been mistaken.

In order to make Mr. Wood's present position, and subsequent proceedings fully intelligible, it may be necessary to give some notion of the shape and structure of the platform on which he had taken refuge. It has been said, that the pier of each arch, or lock of Old London Bridge, was defended from the force of the tide by a huge projecting spur called a starling. These starlings varied in width, according to the bulk of the pier they surrounded. But they were all pretty nearly of the same length, and built somewhat after the model of a boat, having extremities as sharp and pointed as the keel of a canoe. Cased and ribbed with stone, and braced with horizontal beams of timber, the piles, which formed the foundation of these jetties, had resisted the strong encroachments of the current for centuries. Some of them are now buried at the bottom of the Thames. The starling, on which the carpenter stood, was the fourth from the Surrey shore. It might be three

yards in width, and a few more in length; but it was covered with ooze and slime, and the waves continually broke over it. The transverse spars before mentioned were as slippery as ice; and the hollows between them were filled ankle-deep with water.

The carpenter threw himself flat upon the starling to avoid the fury of the wind. But in this posture he fared worse than ever. If he ran less risk of being blown over, he stood a much greater chance of being washed off, or stifled. As he lay on his back, he fancied himself gradually slipping off the platform. Springing to his feet in an ecstasy of terror, he stumbled, and had well nigh realized his worst apprehensions. He, next, tried to clamber up the flying buttresses and soffits of the pier, in the hope of reaching some of the windows and other apertures with which, as a man-of-war is studded with port-holes, the sides of the bridge were pierced. But this wild scheme was speedily abandoned; and, nerved by despair, the carpenter resolved to hazard an attempt, from the execution, almost from the contemplation, of which he had hitherto shrunk. This was to pass under the arch, along the narrow ledge of the starling, and, if possible, attain the eastern platform, where, protected by the bridge, he would suffer less from the excessive violence of the gale.

Assured, if he remained much longer where he was, he would inevitably perish, Wood recommended himself to the protection of Heaven, and began his perilous course. Carefully sustaining the child which, even in that terrible extremity, he had not the heart to abandon, he fell upon his knees, and, guiding himself

with his right hand, crept slowly on. He had scarcely entered the arch, when the indraught was so violent, and the noise of the wind so dreadful and astounding, that he almost determined to relinquish the undertaking. But the love of life prevailed over his fears. He went on.

The ledge, along which he crawled, was about a foot wide. In length the arch exceeded seventy feet. To the poor carpenter it seemed an endless distance. When, by slow and toilsome efforts, he had arrived midway, something obstructed his further progress. It was a huge stone placed there by some workmen occupied in repairing the structure. Cold drops stood upon Wood's brow, as he encountered this obstacle. To return was impossible,—to raise himself certain destruction. He glanced downwards at the impetuous torrent, which he could perceive shooting past him with lightning swiftness in the gloom. He listened to the thunder of the fall now mingling with the roar of the blast; and, driven almost frantic by what he heard and saw, he pushed with all his force against the stone. To his astonishment and delight it yielded to the pressure, toppled over the ledge, and sank. Such was the hubbub and tumult around him, that the carpenter could not hear its plunge into the flood. His course, however, was no longer interrupted, and he crept on.

After encountering other dangers, and being twice, compelled to fling himself flat upon his face to avoid slipping from the wet and slimy pathway, he was at length about to emerge from the lock, when, to his inexpressible horror, he found he had lost the

child!

All the blood in his veins rushed to his heart, and he shook in every limb as he made this discovery. A species of vertigo seized him. His brain reeled. He fancied that the whole fabric of the bridge was cracking over head,—that the arch was tumbling upon him,—that the torrent was swelling around him, whirling him off, and about to bury him in the deafening abyss. He shrieked with agony, and clung with desperate tenacity to the roughened stones. But calmer thoughts quickly succeeded. On taxing his recollection, the whole circumstance rushed to mind with painful distinctness. He remembered that, before he attempted to dislodge the stone, he had placed the child in a cavity of the pier, which the granite mass had been intended to fill. This obstacle being removed, in his eagerness to proceed, he had forgotten to take his little charge with him. It was still possible the child might be in safety. And so bitterly did the carpenter reproach himself with his neglect, that he resolved, at all risks, to go back in search of it. Acting upon this humane determination, he impelled himself slowly backwards,—for he did not dare to face the blast,—and with incredible labour and fatigue reached the crevice. His perseverance was amply rewarded. The child was still safe. It lay undisturbed in the remotest corner of the recess.

So overjoyed was the carpenter with the successful issue of his undertaking, that he scarcely paused a moment to recruit himself; but, securing the child, set out upon his return. Retracing his

steps, he arrived, without further accident, at the eastern platform of the starling. As he anticipated, he was here comparatively screened from the fury of the wind; and when he gazed upon the roaring fall beneath him, visible through the darkness in a glistening sheet of foam, his heart overflowed with gratitude for his providential deliverance.

As he moved about upon the starling, Mr. Wood became sensible that he was not alone. Some one was standing beside him. This, then, must be the person whom he had seen spring upon the western platform at the time of the collision between the boats. The carpenter well knew from the obstacle which had interfered with his own progress, that the unknown could not have passed through the same lock as himself. But he might have crept along the left side of the pier, and beneath the further arch; whereas, Wood, as we have seen, took his course upon the right. The darkness prevented the carpenter from discerning the features or figure of the stranger; and the ceaseless din precluded the possibility of holding any communication by words with him. Wood, however, made known his presence to the individual by laying his hand upon his shoulder. The stranger started at the touch, and spoke. But his words were borne away by the driving wind.

Finding all attempts at conversation with his companion in misfortune in vain, Wood, in order to distract his thoughts, looked up at the gigantic structure standing, like a wall of solid darkness, before him. What was his transport on perceiving that

a few yards above him a light was burning. The carpenter did not hesitate a moment. He took a handful of the gravelly mud, with which the platform was covered, and threw the small pebbles, one by one, towards the gleam. A pane of glass was shivered by each stone. The signal of distress was evidently understood. The light disappeared. The window was shortly after opened, and a rope ladder, with a lighted horn lantern attached to it, let down.

Wood grasped his companion's arm to attract his attention to this unexpected means of escape. The ladder was now within reach. Both advanced towards it, when, by the light of the lantern, Wood beheld, in the countenance of the stranger, the well-remembered and stern features of Rowland.

The carpenter trembled; for he perceived Rowland's gaze fixed first upon the infant, and then on himself.

"It *is* her child!" shrieked Rowland, in a voice heard above the howling of the tempest, "risen from this roaring abyss to torment me. Its parents have perished. And shall their wretched offspring live to blight my hopes, and blast my fame? Never!" And, with these words, he grasped Wood by the throat, and, despite his resistance, dragged him to the very verge of the platform.

All this juncture, a thundering crash was heard against the side of the bridge. A stack of chimneys, on the house above them, had yielded to the storm, and descended in a shower of bricks and stones.

When the carpenter a moment afterwards stretched out his hand, scarcely knowing whether he was alive or dead, he

found himself alone. The fatal shower, from which he and his little charge escaped uninjured, had stricken his assailant and precipitated him into the boiling gulf.

"It's an ill wind that blows nobody good," thought the carpenter, turning his attention to the child, whose feeble struggles and cries proclaimed that, as yet, life had not been extinguished by the hardships it had undergone. "Poor little creature!" he muttered, pressing it tenderly to his breast, as he grasped the rope and clambered up to the window: "if thou hast, indeed, lost both thy parents, as that terrible man said just now, thou art not wholly friendless and deserted, for I myself will be a father to thee! And in memory of this dreadful night, and the death from which I have, been the means of preserving thee, thou shalt bear the name of THAMES DARRELL."

No sooner had Wood crept through the window, than nature gave way, and he fainted. On coming to himself, he found he had been wrapped in a blanket and put to bed with a couple of hot bricks to his feet. His first inquiries were concerning the child, and he was delighted to find that it still lived and was doing well. Every care had been taken of it, as well as of himself, by the humane inmates of the house in which he had sought shelter.

About noon, next day, he was able to move; and the gale having abated, he set out homewards with his little charge.

The city presented a terrible picture of devastation. London Bridge had suffered a degree less than most places. But it was almost choked up with fallen stacks of chimneys, broken beams

of timber, and shattered tiles. The houses overhung in a frightful manner, and looked as if the next gust would precipitate them into the river. With great difficulty, Wood forced a path through the ruins. It was a work of no slight danger, for every instant a wall, or fragment of a building, came crashing to the ground. Thames Street was wholly impassable. Men were going hither and thither with barrows, and ladders and ropes, removing the rubbish, and trying to support the tottering habitations. Gracechurch Street was entirely deserted, except by a few stragglers, whose curiosity got the better of their fears; or who, like the carpenter, were compelled to proceed along it. The tiles lay a foot thick in the road. In some cases they were ground almost to powder; in others, driven deeply into the earth, as if discharged from a piece of ordnance. The roofs and gables of many of the houses had been torn off. The signs of the shops were carried to incredible distances. Here and there, a building might be seen with the doors and windows driven in, and all access to it prevented by the heaps of bricks and tilesherds.

Through this confusion the carpenter struggled on;—now ascending, now descending the different mountains of rubbish that beset his path, at the imminent peril of his life and limbs, until he arrived in Fleet Street. The hurricane appeared to have raged in this quarter with tenfold fury. Mr. Wood scarcely knew where he was. The old aspect of the place was gone. In lieu of the substantial habitations which he had gazed on overnight, he beheld a row of falling scaffoldings, for such they seemed.

It was a dismal and depressing sight to see a great city thus suddenly overthrown; and the carpenter was deeply moved by the spectacle. As usual, however, on the occasion of any great calamity, a crowd was scouring the streets, whose sole object was plunder. While involved in this crowd, near Temple Bar,—where the thoroughfare was most dangerous from the masses of ruin that impeded it,—an individual, whose swarthy features recalled to the carpenter one of his tormentors of the previous night, collared him, and, with bitter imprecations accused him of stealing his child. In vain Wood protested his innocence. The ruffian's companions took his part. And the infant, in all probability, would have been snatched from its preserver, if a posse of the watch (sent out to maintain order and protect property) had not opportunely arrived, and by a vigorous application of their halberts dispersed his persecutors, and set him at liberty.

Mr. Wood then took to his heels, and never once looked behind him till he reached his own dwelling in Wych Street. His wife met him at the door, and into her hands he delivered his little charge.

END OF THE FIRST EPOCH

EPOCH THE SECOND.
1715.
THAMES DARRELL

CHAPTER I.
The Idle Apprentice

Twelve years! How many events have occurred during that long interval! how many changes have taken place! The whole aspect of things is altered. The child has sprung into a youth; the youth has become a man; the man has already begun to feel the advances of age. Beauty has bloomed and faded. Fresh flowers of loveliness have budded, expanded, died. The fashions of the day have become antiquated. New customs have prevailed over the old. Parties, politics, and popular opinions have changed. The crown has passed from the brow of one monarch to that of another. Habits and tastes are no longer the same. We, ourselves, are scarcely the same we were twelve years ago.

Twelve years ago! It is an awful retrospect. Dare we look back upon the darkened vista, and, in imagination retrace the path we have trod? With how many vain hopes is it shaded! with how many good resolutions, never fulfilled, is it paved!

Where are the dreams of ambition in which, twelve years ago, we indulged? Where are the aspirations that fired us—the passions that consumed us then? Has our success in life been commensurate with our own desires—with the anticipations formed of us by others? Or, are we not blighted in heart, as in ambition? Has not the loved one been estranged by doubt, or snatched from us by the cold hand of death? Is not the goal, towards which we pressed, further off than ever—the prospect before us cheerless as the blank behind?—Enough of this. Let us proceed with our tale.

Twelve years, then, have elapsed since the date of the occurrences detailed in the preceding division of this history. At that time, we were beneath the sway of Anne: we are now at the commencement of the reign of George the First. Passing at a glance over the whole of the intervening period; leaving in the words of the poet,

> —The growth untried
> Of that wide gap—

we shall resume our narrative at the beginning of June, 1715.

One Friday afternoon, in this pleasant month, it chanced that Mr. Wood, who had been absent on business during the greater part of the day, returned (perhaps not altogether undesignedly) at an earlier hour than was expected, to his dwelling in Wych Street, Drury Lane; and was about to enter his workshop,

when, not hearing any sound of labour issue from within, he began to suspect that an apprentice, of whose habits of industry he entertained some doubt, was neglecting his employment. Impressed with this idea, he paused for a moment to listen. But finding all continue silent, he cautiously lifted the latch, and crept into the room, resolved to punish the offender in case his suspicions should prove correct.

The chamber, into which he stole, like all carpenters' workshops, was crowded with the implements and materials of that ancient and honourable art. Saws, hammers, planes, axes, augers, adzes, chisels, gimblets, and an endless variety of tools were ranged, like a stand of martial weapons at an armoury, in racks against the walls. Over these hung levels, bevels, squares, and other instruments of measurement. Amid a litter of nails without heads, screws without worms, and locks without wards, lay a glue-pot and an oilstone, two articles which their owner was wont to term "his right hand and his left." On a shelf was placed a row of paint-jars; the contents of which had been daubed in rainbow streaks upon the adjacent closet and window sill. Divers plans and figures were chalked upon the walls; and the spaces between them were filled up with an almanack for the year; a godly ballad, adorned with a rude wood-cut, purporting to be "*The History of Chaste Susannah*;" an old print of the Seven Golden Candlesticks; an abstract of the various Acts of Parliament against drinking, swearing, and all manner of profaneness; and a view of the interior of

Doctor Daniel Burgess's Presbyterian meeting-house in Russell Court, with portraits of the reverend gentleman and the principal members of his flock. The floor was thickly strewn with sawdust and shavings; and across the room ran a long and wide bench, furnished at one end with a powerful vice; next to which three nails driven into the boards served, it would appear from the lump of unconsumed tallow left in their custody, as a substitute for a candlestick. On the bench was set a quartern measure of gin, a crust of bread, and a slice of cheese. Attracted by the odour of the latter dainty, a hungry cat had contrived to scratch open the paper in which it was wrapped, displaying the following words in large characters:—"THE HISTORY OF THE FOUR KINGS, OR CHILD'S BEST GUIDE TO THE GALLOWS." And, as if to make the moral more obvious, a dirty pack of cards was scattered, underneath, upon the sawdust. Near the door stood a pile of deal planks, behind which the carpenter ensconced himself in order to reconnoitre, unobserved, the proceedings of his idle apprentice.

Standing on tiptoe, on a joint-stool, placed upon the bench, with his back to the door, and a clasp-knife in his hand, this youngster, instead of executing his appointed task, was occupied in carving his name upon a beam, overhead. Boys, at the time of which we write, were attired like men of their own day, or certain charity-children of ours; and the stripling in question was dressed in black plush breeches, and a gray drugget waistcoat, with immoderately long pockets, both of which were evidently

the cast-off clothes of some one considerably his senior. Coat, on the present occasion, he had none, it being more convenient, as well as agreeable to him, to pursue his avocations in his shirtsleeves; but, when fully equipped, he wore a large-cuffed, long-skirted garment, which had once been the property of his master.

In concealing himself behind the timber, Mr. Wood could not avoid making a slight shuffling sound. The noise startled the apprentice, who instantly suspended his labour, and gazed anxiously in the direction whence he supposed it proceeded. His face was that of a quick, intelligent-looking boy, with fine hazel eyes, and a clear olive complexion. His figure was uncommonly slim even for his age, which could not be more than thirteen; and the looseness of his garb made him appear thinner than he was in reality. But if his frame was immature, his looks were not so. He seemed to possess a penetration and cunning beyond his years —to hide a man's judgment under a boy's mask. The glance, which he threw at the door, was singularly expressive of his character: it was a mixture of alarm, effrontery, and resolution. In the end, resolution triumphed, as it was sure to do, over the weaker emotions, and he laughed at his fears. The only part of his otherwise-interesting countenance, to which one could decidedly object, was the mouth; a feature that, more than any other, is conceived to betray the animal propensities of the possessor. If this is true, it must be owned that the boy's mouth showed a strong tendency on his part to coarse indulgence. The eyes,

too, though large and bright, and shaded by long lashes, seemed to betoken, as hazel eyes generally do in men, a faithless and uncertain disposition. The cheek-bones were prominent: the nose slightly depressed, with rather wide nostrils; the chin narrow, but well-formed; the forehead broad and lofty; and he possessed such an extraordinary flexibility of muscle in this region, that he could elevate his eye-brows at pleasure up to the very verge of his sleek and shining black hair, which, being closely cropped, to admit of his occasionally wearing a wig, gave a singular bullet-shape to his head. Taken altogether, his physiognomy resembled one of those vagabond heads which Murillo delighted to paint, and for which Guzman d'Alfarache, Lazarillo de Tormes, or Estevanillo Gonzalez might have sat:—faces that almost make one in love with roguery, they seem so full of vivacity and enjoyment. There was all the knavery, and more than all the drollery of a Spanish picaroon in the laughing eyes of the English apprentice; and, with a little more warmth and sunniness of skin on the side of the latter, the resemblance between them would have been complete.

Satisfied, as he thought, that he had nothing to apprehend, the boy resumed his task, chanting, as he plied his knife with redoubled assiduity, the following—not inappropriate strains:—

THE NEWGATE STONE

When Claude Du Val was in Newgate thrown,

He carved his name on the dungeon stone;
Quoth a dubsman, who gazed on the shattered wall,
"You have carved your epitaph, Claude Du Val,
With your chisel so fine, tra la!"

"This S wants a little deepening," mused the apprentice, retouching the letter in question; "ay, that's better."

Du Val was hang'd, and the next who came
On the selfsame stone inscribed his name:
"Aha!" quoth the dubsman, with devilish glee,
"Tom Waters *your* doom is the triple tree!
With your chisel so fine, tra la!"

"Tut, tut, tut," he cried, "what a fool I am to be sure! I ought to have cut John, not Jack. However, it don't signify. Nobody ever called me John, that I recollect. So I dare say I was christened Jack. Deuce take it! I was very near spelling my name with one P.

Within that dungeon lay Captain Bew,
Rumbold and Whitney—a jolly crew!
All carved their names on the stone, and all
Share the fate of the brave Du Val!
With their chisels so fine, tra la!

"Save us!" continued the apprentice, "I hope this beam doesn't resemble the Newgate stone; or I may chance, like the great men the song speaks of, to swing on the Tyburn tree for my

pains. No fear o' that.—Though if my name should become as famous as theirs, it wouldn't much matter. The prospect of the gallows would never deter me from taking to the road, if I were so inclined.

> Full twenty highwaymen blithe and bold,
> Rattled their chains in that dungeon old;
> Of all that number there 'scaped not one
> Who carved his name on the Newgate Stone.
> *With his chisel so fine, tra la!*

"There!" cried the boy, leaping from the stool, and drawing back a few paces on the bench to examine his performance, —"that'll do. Claude du Val himself couldn't have carved it better —ha! ha!"

The name inscribed upon the beam (of which, as it has been carefully preserved by the subsequent owners of Mr. Wood's habitation in Wych Street, we are luckily enabled to furnish a facsimile) was

"I've half a mind to give old Wood the slip, and turn highwayman," cried Jack, as he closed the knife, and put it in

his pocket.

"The devil you have!" thundered a voice from behind, that filled the apprentice with dismay. "Come down, sirrah, and I'll teach you how to deface my walls in future. Come down, I say, instantly, or I'll make you." Upon which, Mr. Wood caught hold of Jack's leg, and dragged him off the bench.

"And so you'll turn highwayman, will you, you young dog?" continued the carpenter, cuffing him soundly,—"rob the mails, like Jack Hall, I suppose."

"Yes, I will," replied Jack sullenly, "if you beat me in that way."

Amazed at the boy's assurance, Wood left off boxing his ears for a moment, and, looking at him steadfastly, said in a grave tone, "Jack, Jack, you'll come to be hanged!"

"Better be hanged than hen-pecked," retorted the lad with a malicious grin.

"What do you mean by that, sirrah?" cried Wood, reddening with anger. "Do you dare to insinuate that Mrs. Wood governs me?"

"It's plain you can't govern yourself, at all events," replied Jack coolly; "but, be that as it may, I won't be struck for nothing."

"Nothing," echoed Wood furiously. "Do you call neglecting your work, and singing flash songs nothing? Zounds! you incorrigible rascal, many a master would have taken you before a magistrate, and prayed for your solitary confinement in Bridewell for the least of these offences. But I'll be more lenient, and

content myself with merely chastising you, on condition—"

"You may do as you please, master," interrupted Jack, thrusting his hand into his pocket, as if in search of the knife; "but I wouldn't advise you to lay hands on me again."

Mr. Wood glanced at the hardy offender, and not liking the expression of his countenance, thought it advisable to postpone the execution of his threats to a more favourable opportunity. So, by way of gaining time, he resolved to question him further.

"Where did you learn the song I heard just now?" he demanded, in an authoritative tone.

"At the Black Lion in our street," replied Jack, without hesitation.

"The worst house in the neighbourhood—the constant haunt of reprobates and thieves," groaned Wood. "And who taught it you—the landlord, Joe Hind?"

"No; one Blueskin, a fellow who frequents the Lion," answered Jack, with a degree of candour that astonished his master nearly as much as his confidence. "It was that song that put it into my head to cut my name on the beam."

"A white wall is a fool's paper, Jack,—remember that," rejoined Wood. "Pretty company for an apprentice to keep!—pretty houses for an apprentice to frequent! Why, the rascal you mention is a notorious house-breaker. He was tried at the last Old Bailey sessions; and only escaped the gallows by impeaching his accomplices. Jonathan Wild brought him off."

"Do you happen to know Jonathan Wild, master?" inquired

Jack, altering his tone, and assuming a more respectful demeanour.

"I've seen him some years ago, I believe," answered Wood; "and, though he must be much changed by this time, I dare say I should know him again."

"A short man, isn't he, about your height, Sir,—with a yellow beard, and a face as sly as a fox's?"

"Hem!" replied Wood, coughing slightly to conceal a smile; "the description's not amiss. But why do you ask?"

"Because—" stammered the boy.

"Speak out—don't be alarmed," said Wood, in a kind and encouraging tone. "If you've done wrong, confess it, and I'll forgive you!"

"I don't deserve to be forgiven!" returned Jack, bursting into tears; "for I'm afraid I've done very wrong. Do you know this, Sir?" he added, taking a key from his pocket.

"Where did you find it!" asked Wood.

"It was given me by a man who was drinking t'other night with Blueskin at the Lion! and who, though he slouched his hat over his eyes, and muffled his chin in a handkerchief, must have been Jonathan Wild."

"Where did *he* get it?" inquired Wood, in surprise.

"That I can't say. But he promised to give me a couple of guineas if I'd ascertain whether it fitted your locks."

"Zounds!" exclaimed Wood; "it's my old master-key. This key," he added, taking it from the boy, "was purloined from me

by your father, Jack. What he intended to do with it is of little consequence now. But before he suffered at Tyburn, he charged your mother to restore it. She lost it in the Mint. Jonathan Wild must have stolen it from her."

"He must," exclaimed Jack, hastily; "but only let me have it till to-morrow, and if I don't entrap him in a snare from which, with all his cunning, he shall find it difficult to escape, my name's not Jack Sheppard."

"I see through your design, Jack," returned the carpenter, gravely; "but I don't like under-hand work. Even when you've a knave to deal with, let your actions be plain, and above-board. That's my maxim; and it's the maxim of every honest man. It would be a great matter, I must own, to bring Jonathan Wild to justice. But I can't consent to the course you would pursue—at least, not till I've given it due consideration. In regard to yourself, you've had a very narrow escape. Wild's intention, doubtless, was to use you as far as he found necessary, and then to sell you. Let this be a caution to you in future—with whom, and about what you deal. We're told, that 'Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul.' Avoid taverns and bad company, and you may yet do well. You promise to become a first-rate workman. But you want one quality, without which all others are valueless. You want industry—you want steadiness. Idleness is the key of beggary, Jack. If you don't conquer this disgraceful propensity in time, you'll soon come to want; and then nothing can save you. Be warned by your father's fate. As you brew so must you drink.

I've engaged to watch over you as a son, and I *will* do so as far as I'm able; but if you neglect my advice, what chance have I of benefitting you? On one point I've made up my mind—you shall either obey me, or leave me. Please yourself. Here are your indentures, if you choose to seek another master."

"I *will* obey you, master,—indeed I will!" implored Jack, seriously alarmed at the carpenter's calm displeasure.

"We shall see. Good words, without deeds, are rushes and reeds. And now take away those cards, and never let me see them again. Drive away the cat; throw that measure of gin through the window; and tell me why you've not so much as touched the packing-case for Lady Trafford, which I particularly desired you to complete against my return. It must be sent home this evening. She leaves town to-morrow."

"It shall be ready in two hours," answered Jack, seizing a piece of wood and a plane; "it isn't more than four o'clock. I'll engage to get the job done by six. I didn't expect you home before that hour, Sir."

"Ah, Jack," said Wood, shaking his head, "where there's a will there's a way. You can do anything you please. I wish I could get you to imitate Thames Darrell."

"I'm sure I understand the business of a carpenter much better than he does," replied Jack, adroitly adjusting the board, and using the plane with the greatest rapidity.

"Perhaps," replied Wood, doubtfully.

"Thames was always your favourite," observed Jack, as he

fastened another piece of wood on the teeth of the iron stopper.

"I've made no distinction between you, hitherto," answered Wood; "nor shall I do so, unless I'm compelled."

"I've had the hard work to do, at all events," rejoined Jack, "But I won't complain. I'd do anything for Thames Darrell."

"And Thames Darrell would do anything for you, Jack," replied a blithe voice. "What's the matter, father!" continued the new-comer, addressing Wood. "Has Jack displeased you? If so, overlook his fault this once. I'm sure he'll do his best to content you. Won't you, Jack?"

"That I will," answered Sheppard, eagerly.

"When it thunders, the thief becomes honest," muttered Wood.

"Can I help you, Jack?" asked Thames, taking up a plane.

"No, no, let him alone," interposed Wood. "He has undertaken to finish this job by six o'clock, and I wish to see whether he'll be as good as his word."

"He'll have hard work to do it by that time, father," remonstrated Thames; "you'd better let me help him."

"On no account," rejoined Wood peremptorily. "A little extra exertion will teach him the advantage of diligence at the proper season. Lost ground must be regained. I need scarcely ask whether you've executed your appointed task, my dear? You're never behindhand."

Thames turned away at the question, which he felt might be construed into a reproach. But Sheppard answered for him.

"Darrell's job was done early this morning," he said; "and if I'd attended to his advice, the packing-case would have been finished at the same time."

"You trusted too much to your own skill, Jack," rejoined Thames. "If I could work as fast as you, I might afford to be as idle. See how he gets on, father," he added, appealing to Wood: "the box seems to grow under his hands."

"You're a noble-hearted little fellow, Thames," rejoined Wood, casting a look of pride and affection at his adopted son, whose head he gently patted; "and give promise of a glorious manhood."

Thames Darrell was, indeed, a youth of whom a person of far greater worldly consequence than the worthy carpenter might have been justly proud. Though a few months younger than his companion Jack Sheppard, he was half a head taller, and much more robustly formed. The two friends contrasted strikingly with each other. In Darrell's open features, frankness and honour were written in legible characters; while, in Jack's physiognomy, cunning and knavery were as strongly imprinted. In all other respects they differed as materially. Jack could hardly be accounted good-looking: Thames, on the contrary, was one of the handsomest boys possible. Jack's complexion was that of a gipsy; Darrell's as fresh and bright as a rose. Jack's mouth was coarse and large; Darrell's small and exquisitely carved, with the short, proud upper lip, which belongs to the highest order of beauty. Jack's nose was broad and flat; Darrell's straight and fine

as that of Antinous. The expression pervading the countenance of the one was vulgarity; of the other, that which is rarely found, except in persons of high birth. Darrell's eyes were of that clear gray which it is difficult to distinguish from blue by day and black at night; and his rich brown hair, which he could not consent to part with, even on the promise of a new and modish peruke from his adoptive father, fell in thick glossy ringlets upon his shoulders; whereas Jack's close black crop imparted the peculiar bullet-shape we have noticed, to his head.

While Thames modestly expressed a hope that he might not belie the carpenter's favourable prediction, Jack Sheppard thought fit to mount a small ladder placed against the wall, and, springing with the agility of an ape upon a sort of frame, contrived to sustain short spars and blocks of timber, began to search about for a piece of wood required in the work on which he was engaged. Being in a great hurry, he took little heed where he set his feet; and a board giving way, he must have fallen, if he had not grasped a large plank laid upon the transverse beam immediately over his head.

"Take care, Jack," shouted Thames, who witnessed the occurrence; "that plank isn't properly balanced. You'll have it down."

But the caution came too late. Sheppard's weight had destroyed the equilibrium of the plank: it swerved, and slowly descended. Losing his presence of mind, Jack quitted his hold, and dropped upon the frame. The plank hung over his head.

A moment more and he would have been crushed beneath the ponderous board, when a slight but strong arm arrested its descent.

"Get from under it, Jack!" vociferated Thames. "I can't hold it much longer—it'll break my wrist. Down we come!" he exclaimed, letting go the plank, which fell with a crash, and leaping after Sheppard, who had rolled off the frame.

All this was the work of a minute.

"No bones broken, I hope," said Thames, laughing at Jack, who limped towards the bench, rubbing his shins as he went.

"All right," replied Sheppard, with affected indifference.

"It's a mercy you both escaped!" ejaculated Wood, only just finding his tongue. "I declare I'm all in a cold sweat. How came you, Sir," he continued, addressing Sheppard, "to venture upon that frame. I always told you some accident would happen."

"Don't scold him, father," interposed Thames; "he's been frightened enough already."

"Well, well, since you desire it, I'll say no more," returned Wood. "You hay'n't hurt your arm, I trust, my dear?" he added, anxiously.

"Only sprained it a little, that's all," answered Thames; "the pain will go off presently."

"Then you *are* hurt," cried the carpenter in alarm. "Come down stairs directly, and let your mother look at your wrist. She has an excellent remedy for a sprain. And do you, Jack, attend to your work, and mind you don't get into further mischief."

"Hadn't Jack better go with us?" said Thames. "His shin may need rubbing."

"By no means," rejoined Wood, hastily. "A little suffering will do him good. I meant to give him a drubbing. That bruise will answer the same purpose."

"Thames," said Sheppard in a low voice, as he threw a vindictive glance at the carpenter, "I shan't forget this. You've saved my life."

"Pshaw! you'd do as much for me any day, and think no more about it. It'll be your turn to save mine next."

"True, and I shan't be easy till my turn arrives."

"I tell you what, Jack," whispered Thames, who had noticed Sheppard's menacing glance, and dreaded some further indiscretion on his part, "if you really wish to oblige me, you'll get that packing-case finished by six o'clock. You *can* do it, if you will."

"And I *will*, if I can, depend upon it," answered Sheppard, with a laugh.

So saying, he manfully resumed his work; while Wood and Thames quitted the room, and went down stairs.

CHAPTER II.
Thames Darrell

Thames Darrell's arm having been submitted to the scrutiny of Mrs. Wood, was pronounced by that lady to be very much sprained; and she, forthwith, proceeded to bathe it with a reddish-coloured lotion. During this operation, the carpenter underwent a severe catechism as to the cause of the accident; and, on learning that the mischance originated with Jack Sheppard, the indignation of his helpmate knew no bounds; and she was with difficulty prevented from flying to the workshop to inflict summary punishment on the offender.

"I knew how it would be," she cried, in the shrill voice peculiar to a shrew, "when you brought that worthless hussy's worthless brat into the house. I told you no good would come of it. And every day's experience proves that I was right. But, like all your overbearing sex, you must have your own way. You'll never be guided by me—never!"

"Indeed, my love, you're entirely mistaken," returned the carpenter, endeavouring to deprecate his wife's rising resentment by the softest looks, and the meekest deportment.

So far, however, was this submission from producing the desired effect, that it seemed only to lend additional fuel to her displeasure. Forgetting her occupation in her anger, she left off bathing Darrell's wrist; and, squeezing his arm so tightly that

the boy winced with pain, she clapped her right hand upon her hip, and turned, with flashing eyes and an inflamed countenance, towards her crest-fallen spouse.

"What!" she exclaimed, almost choked with passion,—"*I* advised you to burthen yourself with that idle and good-for-nothing pauper, who'm you ought rather to send to the workhouse than maintain at your own expense, did I! *I* advised you to take him as an apprentice; and, so far from getting the regular fee with him, to give him a salary? *I* advised you to feed him, and clothe him, and treat him like his betters; to put up with his insolence, and wink at his faults? *I* counselled all this, I suppose. You'll tell me next, I dare say, that I recommended you to go and visit his mother so frequently under the plea of charity; to give her wine, and provisions, and money; to remove her from the only fit quarters for such people—the Mint; and to place her in a cottage at Willesden, of which you must needs pay the rent? Marry, come up! charity should begin at home. A discreet husband would leave the dispensation of his bounty, where women are concerned, to his wife. And for my part, if I were inclined to exercise my benevolence at all, it should be in favour of some more deserving object than that whining, hypocritical Magdalene."

"It was the knowledge of this feeling on your part, my love, that made me act without your express sanction. I did all for the best, I'm sure. Mrs. Sheppard is—"

"I know what Mrs. Sheppard is, without your information, Sir. I haven't forgotten her previous history. You've your own reasons,

no doubt, for bringing up her son—perhaps, I ought rather to say *your* son, Mr. Wood."

"Really, my love, these accusations are most groundless—this violence is most unnecessary."

"I can't endure the odious baggage. I hope I may never come near her."

"I hope you never may, my love," humbly acquiesced the carpenter.

"Is my house to be made a receptacle for all your natural children, Sir? Answer me that."

"Winny," said Thames, whose glowing cheek attested the effect produced upon him by the insinuation; "Winny," said he, addressing a pretty little damsel of some twelve years of age, who stood by his side holding the bottle of embrocation, "help me on with my coat, please. This is no place for me."

"Sit down, my dear, sit down," interposed Mrs. Wood, softening her asperity. "What I said about natural children doesn't apply to *you*. Don't suppose," she added, with a scornful glance at her helpmate, "that I would pay him the compliment of thinking he could possibly be the father of such a boy as you."

Mr. Wood lifted up his hands in mute despair.

"Owen, Owen," pursued Mrs. Wood, sinking into a chair, and fanning herself violently,—"what a fluster you have put me into with your violence, to be sure! And at the very time, too, when you know I'm expecting a visit from Mr. Kneebone, on his return from Manchester. I wouldn't have him see me in this state for the

world. He'd never forgive you."

"Poh, poh, my dear! Mr. Kneebone invariably takes part with me, when any trifling misunderstanding arises between us. I only wish he was not a Papist and a Jacobite."

"Jacobite!" echoed Mrs. Wood. "Marry, come up! Mightn't he just as reasonably complain of your being a Hanoverian and a Presbyterian? It's all matter of opinion. And now, my love," she added, with a relenting look, "I'm content to make up our quarrel. But you must promise me not to go near that abandoned hussy at Willesden. One can't help being jealous, you know, even of an unworthy object."

Glad to make peace on any terms, Mr. Wood gave the required promise, though he could not help thinking that if either of them had cause to be jealous he was the party.

And here, we may be permitted to offer an observation upon the peculiar and unaccountable influence which ladies of a shrewish turn so frequently exercise over—we can scarcely, in this case, say—their lords and masters; an influence which seems not merely to extend to the will of the husband, but even to his inclinations. We do not remember to have met with a single individual, reported to be under petticoat government, who was not content with his lot,—nay, who so far from repining, did not exult in his servitude; and we see no way of accounting for this apparently inexplicable conduct—for which, among other phenomena of married life, various reasons have been assigned, though none entirely satisfactory to us—except upon the ground

that these domineering dames possess some charm sufficiently strong to counteract the irritating effect of their tempers; some secret and attractive quality of which the world at large is in ignorance, and with which their husbands alone can be supposed to be acquainted. An influence of this description appeared to be exerted on the present occasion. The worthy carpenter was restored to instant good humour by a glance from his helpmate; and, notwithstanding the infliction he had just endured, he would have quarrelled with any one who had endeavoured to persuade him that he was not the happiest of men, and Mrs. Wood the best of wives.

"Women must have their wills while they live, since they can make none when they die," observed Wood, as he imprinted a kiss of reconciliation on the plump hand of his consort;—a sentiment to the correctness of which the party chiefly interested graciously vouchsafed her assent.

Lest the carpenter should be taxed with too much uxoriousness, it behoves us to ascertain whether the personal attractions of his helpmate would, in any degree, justify the devotion he displayed. In the first place, Mrs. Wood had the advantage of her husband in point of years, being on the sunny side of forty,—a period pronounced by competent judges to be the most fascinating, and, at the same time, most critical epoch of woman's existence,—whereas, he was on the shady side of fifty,—a term of life not generally conceived to have any special recommendation in female eyes. In the next place, she really

had some pretensions to beauty. Accounted extremely pretty in her youth, her features and person expanded as she grew older, without much detriment to their original comeliness. Hers was beauty on a large scale no doubt; but it was beauty, nevertheless: and the carpenter thought her eyes as bright, her complexion as blooming, and her figure (if a little more buxom) quite as captivating as when he led her to the altar some twenty years ago.

On the present occasion, in anticipation of Mr. Kneebone's visit, Mrs. Wood was dressed with more than ordinary care, and in more than ordinary finery. A dove-coloured kincob gown, embroidered with large trees, and made very low in front, displayed to the greatest possible advantage, the rounded proportions of her figure; while a high-heeled, red-leather shoe did not detract from the symmetry of a very neat ankle, and a very small foot. A stomacher, fastened by imitation-diamond buckles, girded that part of her person, which should have been a waist; a coral necklace encircled her throat, and a few black patches, or mouches, as they were termed, served as a foil to the bloom of her cheek and chin. Upon a table, where they had been hastily deposited, on the intelligence of Darrell's accident, lay a pair of pink kid gloves, bordered with lace, and an enormous fan; the latter, when opened, represented the metamorphosis and death of Actæon. From her stomacher, to which it was attached by a multitude of glittering steel chains, depended an immense turnip-shaped watch, in a pinchbeck case. Her hair was gathered up behind, in a sort of pad, according to the then prevailing mode;

and she wore a muslin cap, and pinners with crow-foot edging. A black silk fur-belowed scarf covered her shoulders; and over the kincob gown hung a yellow satin apron, trimmed with white Persian.

But, in spite of her attractions, we shall address ourselves to the younger, and more interesting couple.

"I could almost find in my heart to quarrel with Jack Sheppard for occasioning you so much pain," observed little Winifred Wood, as, having completed her ministration to the best of her ability, she helped Thames on with his coat.

"I don't think you could find in your heart to quarrel with any one, Winny; much less with a person whom I like so much as Jack Sheppard. My arm's nearly well again. And I've already told you the accident was not Jack's fault. So, let's think no more about it."

"It's strange you should like Jack so much dear Thames. He doesn't resemble you at all."

"The very reason why I like him, Winny. If he *did* resemble me, I shouldn't care about him. And, whatever you may think, I assure you, Jack's a downright good-natured fellow."

Good-natured fellows are always especial favourites with boys. And, in applying the term to his friend, Thames meant to pay him a high compliment. And so Winifred understood him.

"Well," she said, in reply, "I may have done Jack an injustice. I'll try to think better of him in future."

"And, if you want an additional inducement to do so, I can tell you there's no one—not even his mother—whom he loves so

well as you."

"Loves!" echoed Winifred, slightly colouring.

"Yes, loves, Winny. Poor fellow! he sometimes indulges the hope of marrying you, when he grows old enough."

"Thames!"

"Have I said anything to offend you?"

"Oh! no. But if you wouldn't have me positively dislike Jack Sheppard, you'll never mention such a subject again. Besides," she added, blushing yet more deeply, "it isn't a proper one to talk upon."

"Well then, to change it," replied Thames, gravely, "suppose I should be obliged to leave you."

Winifred looked as if she could not indulge such a supposition for a single moment.

"Surely," she said, after a pause, "you don't attach any importance to what my mother has just said. *She* has already forgotten it."

"But *I* never can forget it, Winny. I will no longer be a burthen to those upon whom I have no claim, but compassion."

As he said this, in a low and mournful, but firm voice, the tears gathered thickly in Winifred's dark eyelashes.

"If you are in earnest, Thames," she replied, with a look of gentle reproach, "you are very foolish; and, if in jest, very cruel. My mother, I'm sure, didn't intend to hurt your feelings. She loves you too well for that. And I'll answer for it, she'll never say a syllable to annoy you again."

Thames tried to answer her, but his voice failed him.

"Come! I see the storm has blown over," cried Winifred, brightening up.

"You're mistaken, Winny. Nothing can alter my determination. I shall quit this roof to-morrow."

The little girl's countenance fell.

"Do nothing without consulting my father—*your* father, Thames," she implored. "Promise me that."

"Willingly. And what's more, I promise to abide by his decision."

"Then, I'm quite easy," cried Winifred, joyfully.

"I'm sure he won't attempt to prevent me," rejoined Thames.

The slight smile that played upon Winifred's lips seemed to say that *she* was not quite so sure. But she made no answer.

"In case he should consent—"

"He never will," interrupted Winifred.

"In case he *should*, I say," continued Thames, "will *you* promise to let Jack Sheppard take my place in your affections, Winny?"

"Never!" replied the little damsel, "I can never love any one so much as you."

"Excepting your father."

Winifred was going to say "No," but she checked herself; and, with cheeks mantling with blushes, murmured, "I wish you wouldn't tease me about Jack Sheppard."

The foregoing conversation, having been conducted

throughout in a low tone, and apart, had not reached the ears of Mr. and Mrs. Wood, who were, furthermore, engaged in a little conjugal *tête-à-tête* of their own. The last observation, however, caught the attention of the carpenter's wife.

"What's that you're saying about Jack Sheppard?" she cried.

"Thames was just observing—"

"Thames!" echoed Mrs. Wood, glancing angrily at her husband. "There's another instance of your wilfulness and want of taste. Who but *you* would have dreamed of giving the boy such a name? Why, it's the name of a river, not a Christian. No gentleman was ever called Thames, and Darrell *is* a gentleman, unless the whole story of his being found in the river is a fabrication!"

"My dear, you forget—"

"No, Mr. Wood, I forget nothing. I've an excellent memory, thank God! And I perfectly remember that everybody was drowned upon that occasion—except yourself and the child!"

"My love you're beside yourself—"

"I was beside myself to take charge of your—"

"Mother?" interposed Winifred.

"It's of no use," observed Thames quietly, but with a look that chilled the little damsel's heart;—"my resolution is taken."

"You at least appear to forget that Mr. Kneebone is coming, my dear," ventured Mr. Wood.

"Good gracious! so I do," exclaimed his amiable consort. "But you *do* agitate me so much. Come into the parlour, Winifred, and

dry your eyes directly, or I'll send you to bed. Mr. Wood, I desire you'll put on your best things, and join us as soon as possible. Thames, you needn't tidy yourself, as you've hurt your arm. Mr. Kneebone will excuse you. Dear me! if there isn't his knock. Oh! I'm in such a fluster!"

Upon which, she snatched up her fan, cast a look into the glass, smoothed down her scarf, threw a soft expression into her features, and led the way into the next room, whither she was followed by her daughter and Thames Darrell.

CHAPTER III.
The Jacobite

Mr. William Kneebone was a woollen-draper of "credit and renown," whose place of business was held at the sign of the Angel (for, in those days, every shop had its sign), opposite Saint Clement's church in the Strand. A native of Manchester, he was the son of Kenelm Kneebone, a staunch Catholic, and a sergeant of dragoons, who lost his legs and his life while fighting for James the Second at the battle of the Boyne, and who had little to bequeath his son except his laurels and his loyalty to the house of Stuart.

The gallant woollen-draper was now in his thirty-sixth year. He had a handsome, jolly-looking face; stood six feet two in his stockings; and measured more than a cloth-yard shaft across the shoulders—athletic proportions derived from his father the dragoon. And, if it had not been for a taste for plotting, which was continually getting him into scrapes, he might have been accounted a respectable member of society.

Of late, however, his plotting had assumed a more dark and dangerous complexion. The times were such that, with the opinions he entertained, he could not remain idle. The spirit of disaffection was busy throughout the kingdom. It was on the eve of that memorable rebellion which broke forth, two months later, in Scotland. Since the accession of George the First to

the throne in the preceding year, every effort had been made by the partisans of the Stuarts to shake the credit of the existing government, and to gain supporters to their cause. Disappointed in their hopes of the restoration of the fallen dynasty after the death of Anne, the adherents of the Chevalier de Saint George endeavoured, by sowing the seeds of dissension far and wide, to produce a general insurrection in his favour. No means were neglected to accomplish this end. Agents were dispersed in all directions—offers the most tempting held out to induce the wavering to join the Chevalier's standard. Plots were hatched in the provinces, where many of the old and wealthy Catholic families resided, whose zeal for the martyr of their religion (as the Chevalier was esteemed), sharpened by the persecutions they themselves endured, rendered them hearty and efficient allies. Arms, horses, and accoutrements were secretly purchased and distributed; and it is not improbable that, if the unfortunate prince, in whose behalf these exertions were made, and who was not deficient in courage, as he proved at the battle of Malplaquet, had boldly placed himself at the head of his party at an earlier period, he might have regained the crown of his ancestors. But the indecision, which had been fatal to his race, was fatal to him. He delayed the blow till the fortunate conjuncture was past. And when, at length, it *was* struck, he wanted energy to pursue his advantages.

But we must not anticipate the course of events. At the precise period of this history, the Jacobite party was full

of hope and confidence. Louis the Fourteenth yet lived, and expectations were, therefore, indulged of assistance from France. The disgrace of the leaders of the late Tory administration had strengthened, rather than injured, their cause. Mobs were gathered together on the slightest possible pretext; and these tumultuous assemblages, while committing the most outrageous excesses, loudly proclaimed their hatred to the house of Hanover, and their determination to cut off the Protestant succession. The proceedings of this faction were narrowly watched by a vigilant and sagacious administration. The government was not deceived (indeed, every opportunity was sought by the Jacobites of parading their numbers,) as to the force of its enemies; and precautionary measures were taken to defeat their designs. On the very day of which we write, namely, the 10th of June 1715, Bolingbroke and Oxford were impeached of high treason. The Committee of Secrecy—that English Council of Ten—were sitting, with Walpole at their head; and the most extraordinary discoveries were reported to be made. On the same day, moreover, which, by a curious coincidence, was the birthday of the Chevalier de Saint George, mobs were collected together in the streets, and the health of that prince was publicly drunk under the title of James the Third; while, in many country towns, the bells were rung, and rejoicings held, as if for a reigning monarch:—the cry of the populace almost universally being, "No King George, but a Stuart!"

The adherents of the Chevalier de Saint George, we have said,

were lavish in promises to their proselytes. Posts were offered to all who chose to accept them. Blank commissions, signed by the prince, to be filled up by the name of the person, who could raise a troop for his service, were liberally bestowed. Amongst others, Mr. Kneebone, whose interest was not inconsiderable with the leaders of his faction, obtained an appointment as captain in a regiment of infantry, on the conditions above specified. With a view to raise recruits for his corps, the warlike woollen-draper started for Lancashire, under the colour of a journey on business. He was pretty successful in Manchester,—a town which may be said to have been the head-quarters of the disaffected. On his return to London, he found that applications had been made from a somewhat doubtful quarter by two individuals, for the posts of subordinate officers in his troop. Mr. Kneebone, or, as he would have preferred being styled, Captain Kneebone, was not perfectly satisfied with the recommendations forwarded by the applicants. But this was not a season in which to be needlessly scrupulous. He resolved to judge for himself. Accordingly, he was introduced to the two military aspirants at the Cross Shovels in the Mint, by our old acquaintance, Baptist Kettleby. The Master of the Mint, with whom the Jacobite captain had often had transactions before, vouched for their being men of honour and loyalty; and Kneebone was so well satisfied with his representations, that he at once closed the matter by administering to the applicants the oath of allegiance and fidelity to King James the Third, and several other oaths besides, all of which those gentlemen took

with as little hesitation as the sum of money, afterwards tendered, to make the compact binding. The party, then, sat down to a bowl of punch; and, at its conclusion, Captain Kneebone regretted that an engagement to spend the evening with Mrs. Wood, would preclude the possibility of his remaining with his new friends as long as his inclinations prompted. At this piece of information, the two subordinate officers were observed to exchange glances; and, after a little agreeable raillery on their captain's gallantry, they begged permission to accompany him in his visit. Kneebone, who had drained his glass to the restoration of the house of Stuart, and the downfall of the house of Hanover, more frequently than was consistent with prudence, consented; and the trio set out for Wych Street, where they arrived in the jolliest humour possible.

CHAPTER IV.
Mr. Kneebone and his Friends

Mrs. Wood was scarcely seated before Mr. Kneebone made his appearance. To her great surprise and mortification he was not alone; but brought with him a couple of friends, whom he begged to introduce as Mr. Jeremiah Jackson, and Mr. Solomon Smith, chapmen, (or what in modern vulgar parlance would be termed bagmen) travelling to procure orders for the house of an eminent cloth manufacturer in Manchester. Neither the manners, the looks, nor the attire of these gentlemen prepossessed Mrs. Wood in their favour. Accordingly, on their presentation, Mr. Jeremiah Jackson and Mr. Solomon Smith received something very like a rebuff. Luckily, they were not easily discomposed. Two persons possessing a more comfortable stock of assurance could not be readily found. Imitating the example of Mr. Kneebone, who did not appear in the slightest degree disconcerted by his cool reception, each sank carelessly into a chair, and made himself at home in a moment. Both had very singular faces; very odd wigs, very much pulled over their brows; and very large cravats, very much raised above their chins. Besides this, each had a large black patch over his right eye, and a very queer twist at the left side of his mouth, so that if their object had been disguise, they could not have adopted better precautions. Mrs. Wood thought them both remarkably plain,

but Mr. Smith decidedly the plainest of the two. His complexion was as blue as a sailor's jacket, and though Mr. Jackson had one of the ugliest countenances imaginable, he had a very fine set of teeth. That was something in his favour. One peculiarity she did not fail to notice. They were both dressed in every respect alike. In fact, Mr. Solomon Smith seemed to be Mr. Jeremiah Jackson's double. He talked in the same style, and pretty nearly in the same language; laughed in the same manner, and coughed, or sneezed at the same time. If Mr. Jackson took an accurate survey of the room with his one eye, Mr. Smith's solitary orb followed in the same direction. When Jeremiah admired the Compasses in the arms of the Carpenter's Company over the chimney-piece, or the portraits of the two eminent masters of the rule and plane, William Portington, and John Scott, Esquires, on either side of it, Solomon was lost in wonder. When Mr. Jackson noticed a fine service of old blue china in an open japan closet, Mr. Smith had never seen anything like it. And finally, when Jeremiah, having bestowed upon Mrs. Wood a very free-and-easy sort of stare, winked at Mr. Kneebone, his impertinence was copied to the letter by Solomon. All three, then, burst into an immoderate fit of laughter. Mrs. Wood's astonishment and displeasure momentarily increased. Such freedoms from such people were not to be endured. Her patience was waning fast. Still, in spite of her glances and gestures, Mr. Kneebone made no effort to check the unreasonable merriment of his companions, but rather seemed to encourage it. So Mrs. Wood went on

fuming, and the trio went on laughing for some minutes, nobody knew why or wherefore, until the party was increased by Mr. Wood, in his Sunday habiliments and Sunday buckle. Without stopping to inquire into the cause of their mirth, or even to ask the names of his guests, the worthy carpenter shook hands with the one-eyed chapmen, slapped Mr. Kneebone cordially on the shoulder, and began to laugh as heartily as any of them.

Mrs. Wood could stand it no longer.

"I think you're all bewitched," she cried.

"So we are, Ma'am, by your charms," returned Mr. Jackson, gallantly.

"Quite captivated, Ma'am," added Mr. Smith, placing his hand on his breast.

Mr. Kneebone and Mr. Wood laughed louder than ever.

"Mr. Wood," said the lady bridling up, "my request may, perhaps, have some weight with *you*. I desire, Sir, you'll recollect yourself. Mr. Kneebone," she added, with a glance at that gentleman, which was meant to speak daggers, "will do as he pleases."

Here the chapmen set up another boisterous peal.

"No offence, I hope, my dear Mrs. W," said Mr. Kneebone in a conciliatory tone. "My friends, Mr. Jackson and Mr. Smith, may have rather odd ways with them; but—"

"They *have* very odd ways," interrupted Mrs. Wood, disdainfully.

"Our worthy friend was going to observe, Ma'am, that we

never fail in our devotion to the fair sex," said Mr. Jackson.

"Never, Ma'am!" echoed Mr. Smith, "upon my conscience."

"My dear," said the hospitable carpenter, "I dare say Mr. Kneebone and his friends would be glad of a little refreshment."

"They shall have it, then," replied his better half, rising. "You base ingrate," she added, in a whisper, as she flounced past Mr. Kneebone on her way to the door, "how could you bring such creatures with you, especially on an occasion like this, when we haven't met for a fortnight!"

"Couldn't help it, my life," returned the gentleman addressed, in the same tone; "but you little know who those individuals are."

"Lord bless us! you alarm me. Who are they?"

Mr. Kneebone assumed a mysterious air; and bringing his lips close to Mrs. Wood's ear, whispered, "secret agents from France —you understand—friends to the cause—hem!"

"I see,—persons of rank!"

Mr. Kneebone nodded.

"Noblemen."

Mr. Kneebone smiled assent.

"Mercy on us! Well, I thought their manners quite out o' the common. And so, the invasion really is to take place after all; and the Chevalier de Saint George is to land at the Tower with fifty thousand Frenchmen; and the Hanoverian usurper's to be beheaded; and Doctor Sacheverel's to be made a bishop, and we're all to be—eh?"

"All in good time," returned Kneebone, putting his finger

to his lips; "don't let your imagination run away with you, my charmer. That boy," he added, looking at Thames, "has his eye upon us."

Mrs. Wood, however, was too much excited to attend to the caution.

"O, lud!" she cried; "French noblemen in disguise! and so rude as I was! I shall never recover it!"

"A good supper will set all to rights," insinuated Kneebone. "But be prudent, my angel."

"Never fear," replied the lady. "I'm prudence personified. You might trust me with the Chevalier himself,—I'd never betray him. But why didn't you let me know they were coming. I'd have got something nice. As it is, we've only a couple of ducks—and they were intended for you. Winny, my love, come with me. I shall want you.—Sorry to quit your lord—worships, I mean,—I don't know what I mean," she added, a little confused, and dropping a profound curtsey to the disguised noblemen, each of whom replied by a bow, worthy, in her opinion, of a prince of the blood at the least,—"but I've a few necessary orders to give below."

"Don't mind us, Ma'am," said Mr. Jackson: "ha! ha!"

"Not in the least, Ma'am," echoed Mr. Smith: "ho! ho!"

"How condescending!" thought Mrs. Wood. "Not proud in the least, I declare. Well, I'd no idea," she continued, pursuing her ruminations as she left the room, "that people of quality laughed so. But it's French manners, I suppose."

CHAPTER V.
Hawk and Buzzard

Mrs. Wood's anxiety to please her distinguished guests speedily displayed itself in a very plentiful, if not very dainty repast. To the duckling, peas, and other delicacies, intended for Mr. Kneebone's special consumption, she added a few impromptu dishes, tossed off in her best style; such as lamb chops, broiled kidneys, fried ham and eggs, and toasted cheese. Side by side with the cheese (its never-failing accompaniment, in all seasons, at the carpenter's board) came a tankard of swig, and a toast. Besides these there was a warm gooseberry-tart, and a cold pigeon pie—the latter capacious enough, even allowing for its due complement of steak, to contain the whole produce of a dovecot; a couple of lobsters and the best part of a salmon swimming in a sea of vinegar, and shaded by a forest of fennel. While the cloth was laid, the host and Thames descended to the cellar, whence they returned, laden with a number of flasks of the same form, and apparently destined to the same use as those depicted in Hogarth's delectable print—the Modern Midnight Conversation.

Mrs. Wood now re-appeared with a very red face; and, followed by Winifred, took her seat at the table. Operations then commenced. Mr. Wood carved the ducks; Mr. Kneebone helped to the pigeon-pie; while Thames unwired and uncorked

a bottle of stout Carnarvonshire ale. The woollen-draper was no despicable trencherman in a general way; but his feats with the knife and fork were child's sport compared with those of Mr. Smith. The leg and wing of a duck were disposed of by this gentleman in a twinkling; a brace of pigeons and a pound of steak followed with equal celerity; and he had just begun to make a fierce assault upon the eggs and ham. His appetite was perfectly Gargantuan. Nor must it be imagined, that while he thus exercised his teeth, he neglected the flagon. On the contrary, his glass was never idle, and finding it not filled quite so frequently as he desired, he applied himself, notwithstanding the expressive looks and muttered remonstrances of Mr. Jackson, to the swig. The latter gentleman did full justice to the good things before him; but he drank sparingly, and was visibly annoyed by his companion's intemperance. As to Mr. Kneebone, what with flirting with Mrs. Wood, carving for his friends, and pledging the carpenter, he had his hands full. At this juncture, and just as a cuckoo-clock in the corner struck sis, Jack Sheppard walked into the room, with the packing-case under his arm.

"I was in the right, you see, father," observed Thames, smiling; "Jack *has* done his task."

"So I perceive," replied Wood.

"Where am I to take it to?" asked Sheppard.

"I told you that before," rejoined Wood, testily. "You must take it to Sir Rowland Trenchard's in Southampton Fields. And, mind, it's for his sister, Lady Trafford."

"Very well, Sir," replied Sheppard.

"Wet your whistle before you start, Jack," said Kneebone, pouring out a glass of ale. "What's that you're taking to Sir Rowland Trenchard's?"

"Only a box, Sir," answered Sheppard, emptying the glass.

"It's an odd-shaped one," rejoined Kneebone, examining it attentively. "But I can guess what it's for. Sir Rowland is one of *us*," he added, winking at his companions, "and so was his brother-in-law, Sir Cecil Trafford. Old Lancashire families both. Strict Catholics, and loyal to the backbone. Fine woman, Lady Trafford—a little on the wane though."

"Ah! you're so very particular," sighed Mrs. Wood.

"Not in the least," returned Kneebone, slyly, "not in the least. Another glass, Jack."

"Thank'ee, Sir," grinned Sheppard.

"Off with it to the health of King James the Third, and confusion to his enemies!"

"Hold!" interposed Wood; "that is treason. I'll have no such toast drunk at my table!"

"It's the king's birthday," urged the woollen draper.

"Not *my* king's," returned Wood. "I quarrel with no man's political opinions, but I will have my own respected!"

"Eh day!" exclaimed Mrs. Wood; "here's a pretty to-do about nothing. Marry, come up! I'll see who's to be obeyed. Drink the toast, Jack."

"At your peril, sirrah!" cried Wood.

"He was hanged that left his drink behind, you know, master," rejoined Sheppard. "Here's King James the Third, and confusion to his enemies!"

"Very well," said the carpenter, sitting down amid the laughter of the company.

"Jack!" cried Thames, in a loud voice, "you deserve to be hanged for a rebel as you are to your lawful king and your lawful master. But since we must have toasts," he added, snatching up a glass, "listen to mine: Here's King George the First! a long reign to him! and confusion to the Popish Pretender and his adherents!"

"Bravely done!" said Wood, with tears in his eyes.

"That's the kinchin as was to try the dub for us, ain't it?" muttered Smith to his companion as he stole a glance at Jack Sheppard.

"Silence!" returned Jackson, in a deep whisper; "and don't muddle your brains with any more of that Pharaoh. You'll need all your strength to grab him."

"What's the matter?" remarked Kneebone, addressing Sheppard, who, as he caught the single but piercing eye of Jackson fixed upon him, started and trembled.

"What's the matter?" repeated Mrs. Wood in a sharp tone.

"Ay, what's the matter, boy!" reiterated Jackson sternly. "Did you never see two gentlemen with only a couple of peepers between them before!"

"Never, I'll be sworn!" said Smith, taking the opportunity of

filling his glass while his comrade's back was turned; "we're a nat'ral cur'osity."

"Can I have a word with you, master?" said Sheppard, approaching Wood.

"Not a syllable!" answered the carpenter, angrily. "Get about your business!"

"Thames!" cried Jack, beckoning to his friend.

But Darrell averted his head.

"Mistress!" said the apprentice, making a final appeal to Mrs. Wood.

"Leave the room instantly, sirrah!" rejoined the lady, bouncing up, and giving him a slap on the cheek that made his eyes flash fire.

"May I be cursed," muttered Sheppard, as he slunk away with (as the woollen-draper pleasantly observed) 'a couple of boxes in charge,' "if ever I try to be honest again!"

"Take a little toasted cheese with the swig, Mr. Smith," observed Wood. "That's an incorrigible rascal," he added, as Sheppard closed the door; "it's only to-day that I discovered—"

"What?" asked Jackson, pricking up his ears.

"Don't speak ill of him behind his back, father," interposed Thames.

"If *I* were your father, young gentleman," returned Jackson, enraged at the interruption, "I'd teach *you* not to speak till you were spoken to."

Thames was about to reply, but a glance from Wood checked

him.

"The rebuke is just," said the carpenter; "at the same time, I'm not sorry to find you're a friend to fair play, which, as you seem to know, is a jewel. Open that bottle with a blue seal, my dear. Gentlemen! a glass of brandy will be no bad finish to our meal."

This proposal giving general satisfaction, the bottle circulated swiftly; and Smith found the liquor so much to his taste, that he made it pay double toll on its passage.

"Your son is a lad of spirit, Mr. Wood," observed Jackson, in a slightly-sarcastic tone.

"He's not my son," rejoined the carpenter.

"How, Sir?"

"Except by adoption. Thames Darrell is—"

"My husband nicknames him Thames," interrupted Mrs. Wood, "because he found him in the river!—ha! ha!"

"Ha! ha!" echoed Smith, taking another bumper of brandy; "he'll set the Thames on fire one of these days, I'll warrant him!"

"That's more than you'll ever do, you drunken fool!" growled Jackson, in an under tone: "be cautious, or you'll spoil all!"

"Suppose we send for a bowl of punch," said Kneebone.

"With all my heart!" replied Wood. And, turning to his daughter, he gave the necessary directions in a low tone.

Winifred, accordingly, left the room, and a servant being despatched to the nearest tavern, soon afterwards returned with a crown bowl of the ambrosian fluid. The tables were then cleared. Bottles and glasses usurped the place of dishes and plates. Pipes

were lighted; and Mr. Kneebone began to dispense the fragrant fluid; begging Mrs. Wood, in a whisper, as he filled a rummer to the brim, not to forget the health of the Chevalier de Saint George—a proposition to which the lady immediately responded by drinking the toast aloud.

"The Chevalier shall hear of this," whispered the woollen-draper.

"You don't say so!" replied Mrs. Wood, delighted at the idea.

Mr. Kneebone assured her that he *did* say so; and, as a further proof of his sincerity, squeezed her hand very warmly under the table.

Mr. Smith, now, being more than half-seas over, became very uproarious, and, claiming the attention of the table, volunteered the following

DRINKING SONG

I

Jolly nose! the bright rubies that garnish thy tip
Are dug from the mines of canary;
And to keep up their lustre I moisten my lip
With hogsheads of claret and sherry.

II

Jolly nose! he who sees thee across a broad glass
Beholds thee in all thy perfection;
And to the pale snout of a temperate ass
Entertains the profoundest objection.

III

For a big-bellied glass is the palette I use,
And the choicest of wine is my colour;
And I find that my nose takes the mellowest hues
The fuller I fill it—the fuller!

IV

Jolly nose! there are fools who say drink hurts the sight;
Such dullards know nothing about it.
'T is better, with wine, to extinguish the light,
Than live always, in darkness, without it!

"How long may it be since that boy was found in the way Mrs. Wood mentions?" inquired Jackson, as soon as the clatter that succeeded Mr. Smith's melody had subsided.

"Let me see," replied Wood; "exactly twelve years ago last November."

"Why, that must be about the time of the Great Storm," rejoined Jackson.

"Egad!" exclaimed Wood, "you've hit the right nail on the head, anyhow. It *was* on the night of the Great Storm that I found him."

"I should like to hear all particulars of the affair," said Jackson, "if it wouldn't be troubling you too much."

Mr. Wood required little pressing. He took a sip of punch and commenced his relation. Though meant to produce a totally different effect, the narrative seemed to excite the risible propensities rather than the commiseration of his auditor; and when Mr. Wood wound it up by a description of the drenching he had undergone at the Mint pump, the other could hold out no longer, but, leaning back in his chair, gave free scope to his merriment.

"I beg your pardon," he cried; "but really—ha! ha!—you must excuse me!—that is so uncommonly diverting—ha! ha! Do let me hear it again?—ha! ha! ha!"

"Upon my word," rejoined Wood, "you seem vastly entertained by my misfortunes."

"To be sure! Nothing entertains me so much. People always

rejoice at the misfortunes of others—never at their own! The droll dogs! how *they* must have enjoyed it!—ha! ha!"

"I dare say they did. But *I* found it no laughing matter, I can assure you. And, though it's a long time ago, I feel as sore on the subject as ever."

"Quite natural! Never forgive an injury!—*I* never do!—ha! ha!"

"Really, Mr. Jackson, I could almost fancy we had met before. Your laugh reminds me of—of–"

"Whose, Sir?" demanded Jackson, becoming suddenly grave.

"You'll not be offended, I hope," returned Wood, drily, "if I say that your voice, your manner, and, above all, your very extraordinary way of laughing, put me strangely in mind of one of the 'droll dogs,' (as you term them,) who helped to perpetrate the outrage I've just described."

"Whom do you mean?" demanded Jackson.

"I allude to an individual, who has since acquired an infamous notoriety as a thief-taker; but who, in those days, was himself the associate of thieves."

"Well, Sir, his name?"

"Jonathan Wild."

"'Sblood!" cried Jackson, rising, "I can't sit still and hear Mr. Wild, whom I believe to be as honest a gentleman as any in the kingdom, calumniated!"

"Fire and fury!" exclaimed Smith, getting up with the brandy-bottle in his grasp; "no man shall abuse Mr. Wild in my presence!

He's the right-hand of the community! We could do nothing without him!"

"*We!*" repeated Wood, significantly.

"Every honest man, Sir! He helps us to our own again."

"Humph!" ejaculated the carpenter.

"Surely," observed Thames, laughing, "to one who entertains so high an opinion of Jonathan Wild, as Mr. Jackson appears to do, it can't be very offensive to be told, that he's like him."

"I don't object to the likeness, if any such exists, young Sir," returned Jackson, darting an angry glance at Thames; "indeed I'm rather flattered by being thought to resemble a gentleman of Mr. Wild's figure. But I can't submit to hear the well-earned reputation of my friend termed an 'infamous notoriety.'"

"No, we can't stand that," hiccupped Smith, scarcely able to keep his legs.

"Well, gentlemen," rejoined Wood, mildly; "since Mr. Wild is a friend of yours, I'm sorry for what I said. I've no doubt he's as honest as either of you."

"Enough," returned Jackson, extending his hand; "and if I've expressed myself warmly, I'm sorry for it likewise. But you must allow me to observe, my good Sir, that you're wholly in the wrong respecting my friend. Mr. Wild never was the associate of thieves."

"Never," echoed Smith, emphatically, "upon my honour."

"I'm satisfied with your assurance," replied the carpenter, drily.

"It's more than I am," muttered Thames.

"I was not aware that Jonathan Wild was an acquaintance of yours, Mr. Jackson," said Kneebone, whose assiduity to Mrs. Wood had prevented him from paying much attention to the previous scene.

"I've known him all my life," replied the other.

"The devil you have! Then, perhaps, you can tell me when he intends to put his threat into execution?"

"What threat?" asked Jackson.

"Why, of hanging the fellow who acts as his jackal; one Blake, or Blueskin, I think he's called."

"You've been misinformed, Sir," interposed Smith. "Mr. Wild is incapable of such baseness."

"Bah!" returned the woollen-draper. "I see you don't know him as well as you pretend. Jonathan is capable of anything. He has hanged twelve of his associates already. The moment they cease to be serviceable, or become dangerous he lodges an information, and the matter's settled. He has always plenty of evidence in reserve. Blueskin is booked. As sure as you're sitting there, Mr. Smith, he'll swing after next Old Bailey sessions. I wouldn't be in his skin for a trifle!"

"But he may peach," said Smith casting an oblique glance at Jackson.

"It would avail him little if he did," replied Kneebone. "Jonathan does what he pleases in the courts."

"Very true," chuckled Jackson; "very true."

"Blueskin's only chance would be to carry *his* threat into effect," pursued the woollen-draper.

"Aha!" exclaimed Jackson. "*He* threatens, does he?"

"More than that," replied Kneebone; "I understand he drew a knife upon Jonathan, in a quarrel between them lately. And since then, he has openly avowed his determination of cutting his master's throat on the slightest inkling of treachery. But, perhaps Mr. Smith will tell you I'm misinformed, also, on that point."

"On the contrary," rejoined Smith, looking askance at his companion, "I happen to *know* you're in the right."

"Well, Sir, I'm obliged to you," said Jackson; "I shall take care to put Mr. Wild on his guard against an assassin."

"And I shall put Blueskin on the alert against the designs of a traitor," rejoined Smith, in a tone that sounded like a menace.

"In my opinion," remarked Kneebone, "it doesn't matter how soon society is rid of two such scoundrels; and if Blueskin dies by the rope, and Jonathan by the hand of violence, they'll meet the fate they merit. Wild was formerly an agent to the Jacobite party, but, on the offer of a bribe from the opposite faction, he unhesitatingly deserted and betrayed his old employers. Of late, he has become the instrument of Walpole, and does all the dirty work for the Secret Committee. Several arrests of importance have been intrusted to him; but, forewarned, forearmed, we have constantly baffled his schemes;—ha! ha! Jonathan's a devilish clever fellow. But he can't have his eyes always about him, or he'd have been with us this morning at the Mint, eh, Mr. Jackson!"

"So he would," replied the latter: "so he would."

"With all his cunning, he may meet with his match," continued Kneebone, laughing. "I've set a trap for him."

"Take care you don't fall into it yourself," returned Jackson, with a slight sneer.

"Were I in your place," said Smith, "I should be apprehensive of Wild, because he's a declared enemy."

"And were I in *yours*," rejoined the woollen-draper, "I should be doubly apprehensive, because he's a professed friend. But we're neglecting the punch all this time. A bumper round, gentlemen. Success to our enterprise!"

"Success to our enterprise!" echoed the others, significantly.

"May I ask whether you made any further inquiries into the mysterious affair about which we were speaking just now?" observed Jackson, turning to the carpenter.

"I can't say I did," replied Wood, somewhat reluctantly; "what with the confusion incident to the storm, and the subsequent press of business, I put it off till it was too late. I've often regretted that I didn't investigate the matter. However, it doesn't much signify. All concerned in the dark transaction must have perished."

"Are you sure of that," inquired Jackson.

"As sure as one reasonably can be. I saw their boat swept away, and heard the roar of the fall beneath the bridge; and no one, who was present, could doubt the result. If the principal instigator of the crime, whom I afterwards encountered on the platform, and

who was dashed into the raging flood by the shower of bricks, escaped, his preservation must have been indeed miraculous."

"Your own was equally so," said Jackson ironically. "What if he *did* escape?"

"My utmost efforts should be used to bring him to justice."

"Hum!"

"Have you any reason to suppose he survived the accident?" inquired Thames eagerly.

Jackson smiled and put on the air of a man who knows more than he cares to tell.

"I merely asked the question," he said, after he had enjoyed the boy's suspense for a moment.

The hope that had been suddenly kindled in the youth's bosom was as suddenly extinguished.

"If I thought he lived–" observed Wood.

"*If*," interrupted Jackson, changing his tone: "he *does* live. And it has been well for you that he imagines the child was drowned."

"Who is he?" asked Thames impatiently.

"You're inquisitive, young gentleman," replied Jackson, coldly. "When you're older, you'll know that secrets of importance are not disclosed gratuitously. Your adoptive father understands mankind better."

"I'd give half I'm worth to hang the villain, and restore this boy to his rights," said Mr. Wood.

"How do you know he *has* any rights to be restored to?"

returned Jackson, with a grin. "Judging from what you tell me, I've no doubt he's the illegitimate offspring of some handsome, but lowborn profligate; in which case, he'll neither have name, nor wealth for his inheritance. The assassination, as you call it, was, obviously, the vengeance of a kinsman of the injured lady, who no doubt was of good family, upon her seducer. The less said, therefore, on this point the better; because, as nothing is to be gained by it, it would only be trouble thrown away. But, if you have any particular fancy for hanging the gentleman, who chose to take the law into his own hands—and I think your motive extremely disinterested and praiseworthy—why, it's just possible, if you make it worth my while, that your desires may be gratified."

"I don't see how this is to be effected, unless you yourself were present at the time," said Wood, glancing suspiciously at the speaker.

"I had no hand in the affair," replied Jackson, bluntly; "but I know those who had; and could bring forward evidence, if you require it."

"The best evidence would be afforded by an accomplice of the assassin," rejoined Thames, who was greatly offended by the insinuation as to his parentage.

"Perhaps you could point out such a party, Mr. Jackson?" said Wood, significantly.

"I could," replied Thames.

"Then you need no further information from me," rejoined

Jackson, sternly.

"Stay!" cried Wood, "this is a most perplexing business—if you really are privy to the affair–"

"We'll talk of it to-morrow, Sir," returned Jackson, cutting him short. "In the mean time, with your permission, I'll just make a few minutes of our conversation."

"As many as you please," replied Wood, walking towards the chimney-piece, and taking down a constable's, staff, which hung upon a nail.

Jackson, mean time, produced a pocket-book; and, after deliberately sharpening the point of a pencil, began to write on a blank leaf. While he was thus occupied, Thames, prompted by an unaccountable feeling of curiosity, took up the penknife which the other had just used, and examined the haft. What he there noticed occasioned a marked change in his demeanour. He laid down the knife, and fixed a searching and distrustful gaze upon the writer, who continued his task, unconscious of anything having happened.

"There," cried Jackson, closing the book and rising, "that'll do. To-morrow at twelve I'll be with you, Mr. Wood. Make up your mind as to the terms, and I'll engage to find the man."

"Hold!" exclaimed the carpenter, in an authoritative voice: "we can't part thus. Thames, look the door." (An order which was promptly obeyed.) "Now, Sir, I must insist upon a full explanation of your mysterious hints, or, as I am headborough of the district, I shall at once take you into custody."

Jackson treated this menace with a loud laugh of derision.

"What ho!" he cried slapping Smith, who had fallen asleep with the brandy-bottle in his grasp, upon the shoulder. "It is time!"

"For what?" grumbled the latter, rubbing his eyes.

"For the caption!" replied Jackson, coolly drawing a brace of pistols from his pockets.

"Ready!" answered Smith, shaking himself, and producing a similar pair of weapons.

"In Heaven's name! what's all this?" cried Wood.

"Be still, and you'll receive no injury," returned Jackson. "We're merely about to discharge our duty by apprehending a rebel. Captain Kneebone! we must trouble you to accompany us."

"I've no intention of stirring," replied the woollen-draper, who was thus unceremoniously disturbed: "and I beg you'll sit down, Mr. Jackson."

"Come, Sir!" thundered the latter, "no trifling! Perhaps," he added, opening a warrant, "you'll obey this mandate?"

"A warrant!" ejaculated Kneebone, starting to his feet.

"Ay, Sir, from the Secretary of State, for *your* arrest! You're charged with high-treason."

"By those who've conspired with me?"

"No! by those who've entrapped you! You've long eluded our vigilance; but we've caught you at last!"

"Damnation!" exclaimed the woollen-draper; "that I should be

the dupe of such a miserable artifice!"

"It's no use lamenting now, Captain! You ought rather to be obliged to us for allowing you to pay this visit. We could have secured you when you left the Mint. But we wished to ascertain whether Mrs. Wood's charms equalled your description."

"Wretches!" screamed the lady; "don't dare to breathe your vile insinuations against me! Oh! Mr. Kneebone, are these your French noblemen?"

"Don't upbraid me!" rejoined the woollen-draper.

"Bring him along, Joe!" said Jackson, in a whisper to his comrade.

Smith obeyed. But he had scarcely advanced a step, when he was felled to the ground by a blow from the powerful arm of Kneebone, who, instantly possessing himself of a pistol, levelled it at Jackson's head.

"Begone! or I fire!" he cried.

"Mr. Wood," returned Jackson, with the utmost composure; "you're a headborough, and a loyal subject of King George. I call upon you to assist me in the apprehension of this person. You'll be answerable for his escape."

"Mr. Wood, I command you not to stir," vociferated the carpenter's better-half; "recollect you'll be answerable to me."

"I declare I don't know what to do," said Wood, burned by conflicting emotions. "Mr. Kneebone! you would greatly oblige me by surrendering yourself."

"Never!" replied the woollen-draper; "and if that treacherous

rascal, by your side, doesn't make himself scarce quickly, I'll send a bullet through his brain."

"My death will lie at your door," remarked Jackson to the carpenter.

"Show me your warrant!" said Wood, almost driven to his wit's-end; "perhaps it isn't regular?"

"Ask him who he is?" suggested Thames.

"A good idea!" exclaimed the carpenter. "May I beg to know whom I've the pleasure of adressing? Jackson, I conclude, is merely an assumed name."

"What does it signify?" returned the latter, angrily.

"A great deal!" replied Thames. "If you won't disclose your name, I will for you! You are Jonathan Wild!"

"Further concealment is needless," answered the other, pulling off his wig and black patch, and resuming his natural tone of voice; "I *am* Jonathan Wild!"

"Say you so!" rejoined Kneebone; "then be this your passport to eternity."

Upon which he drew the trigger of the pistol, which, luckily for the individual against whom it was aimed, flashed in the pan.

"I might now send you on a similar journey!" replied Jonathan, with a bitter smile, and preserving the unmoved demeanour he had maintained throughout; "but I prefer conveying you, in the first instance, to Newgate. The Jacobite daws want a scarecrow."

So saying, he sprang, with a bound like that of a tiger-cat, against the throat of the woollen-draper. And so sudden and

well-directed was the assault, that he completely overthrew his gigantic antagonist.

"Lend a hand with the ruffles, Blueskin!" he shouted, as that personage, who had just recovered from the stunning effects of the blow, contrived to pick himself up. "Look quick, d—n you, or we shall never master him!"

"Murder!" shrieked Mrs. Wood, at the top of her voice.

"Here's a pistol!" cried Thames, darting towards the undischarged weapon dropped by Blueskin in the scuffle, and pointing it at Jonathan. "Shall I shoot him?"

"Yes! yes! put it to his ear!" cried Mrs. Wood; "that's the surest way!"

"No! no! give it me!" vociferated Wood, snatching the pistol, and rushing to the door, against which he placed his back.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.